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Sayyed Rahim Moosavinia and Masome Baji

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“Tropological” possible worlds: Allegorical extratextual referentiality of postmodern space in Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*

Sayed Rahim Moosavinia & Masome Baji

Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Abstract: Through the poststructuralist interdisciplinary adaptations of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a plethora of ontological literary theories have been developed as the cognitive studies of the minds of the authors, readers and characters in terms of "state of affairs", "game of make believe", "cross-world identity" and "accessibility relations". Marie Laure Ryan's *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory* suggests a "world semantics" typology of possible worlds following "the logic of parallelism" for examining the self-referentiality of the mentally constructed possible worlds of the characters in the fictional narrative universe. However, the present study examines the extra-textual referentiality of these worlds to the Lacanian "Real" in the contexts of the psychoanalytic Marxism of Fredric Jameson and his theory on the linguistic unconscious of late capitalism. Accordingly, Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, as a set of qualitatively parsimonious spatial entities, are Marco's allegorical projections of the postmodern "social space", "heterotopian sites" and "dystopian spaces" of his knowledge, obligation and wish worlds.

Key Words: possible worlds, the Real, social space, heterotopian sites, dystopia.

I wanted to tell you of my fondness for geometrical forms, for symmetries, for numerical series, for all that is combinatory, for numerical proportions... (qtd. in Scheiber ix)

[Calvino calls] literature 'a combinatorial game that pursues the possibilities implicit in its own material, independent of the personality of the poet, but it is a game that at a certain point is invested with the unexpected meaning...!' (qtd. in Scheiber x)

1. Introduction

Ryan's definition of narrativity, besides her adaptations of Lubomir Doležel's systems of modalities and Umberto Eco's classification of possible worlds and sub-worlds, provides an appropriate context for studying *Invisible Cities*' parsimoniously qualitative¹ spatial structures. The Narrativity of *Invisible Cities*, which is comprised of spatial ideas discussed in dialogues rather than a set of actions and interactions acted by the characters, cannot be examined by the traditional definition of narrativity, which is the text's ability to represent a chronological sequence of events. Jan Alber and Rüdiger Heinze in their *Unnatural Narratives – Unnatural Narratology* suggest a connotative typology of unnaturalness in terms of Viktor Shklovsky's estrangement, Brian Richardson and Henrik Skov Nielsen's anti-mimetics and Jan Alber's physical and logical impossibilities. According to Richardson:

Since the time of Aristotle, narrative theory has had a pronounced mimetic bias.

Fictional works are largely treated as if they were life-like reproductions of human beings and human actions and could be analyzed according to real world notions of consistency, probability, individual and group psychology, and correspondences with accepted beliefs about the world. [...] An insistently

mimetic narrative theory, however is largely useless when faced with the rich tradition of works by non- or anti-mimetic author. (5)

Therefore, unnaturalness is regarded as a deviation from the mimetic reduction of the real. However, the unnatural characteristics of *Invisible Cities* rather than being the consequence of this narrative's deviations from the real, are the consequences of the mimetic representations of the impossibility of what Lacan calls the Real. According to Dino Felluga,

As far as humans are concerned, however, "the real is impossible," as Lacan was fond of saying. It is impossible in so far as we cannot express it in language because the very entrance into language marks our irrevocable separation from the real. Still, the real continues to exert its influence throughout our adult lives since it is the rock against which all our fantasies and linguistic structures ultimately fail. The real for example continues to erupt whenever we are made to acknowledge the materiality of our existence, an acknowledgement that is usually perceived as traumatic (since it threatens our very "reality"), ...

Therefore, the unnaturalness of the cities in Calvino's novel adheres to its Real historicity. In other words, the seemingly impossible structures of the spaces projected in this novel are the consequence of their extra-textual reference to the Real that is the construct of Marco's linguistic unconscious. The significance of Marie Laure Ryan's possible worlds theory is in its classifications of variable possibilities.

In order to provide a close correspondence between theory and practice and to examine the ways this narrative allegorically renders visible that which was suggested by Plato to be

invisible², the present research gains a great advantage of Marie Laure Ryan's possible worlds (PWs) semantics theory. Ryan defines narrativity as

the text's ability to bring a world to life, to populate it with individuals through statements of events affecting its members, and to convey the feeling of its actuality, thus opposing it implicitly or explicitly to a set of merely possible worlds. (Ryan 1991, 112)

Furthermore, the narrative universe as a solar system is comprised of an "indexical" actual world (AW) surrounded by myriads of PWs "as entities that might be called ways things could have been" (Lewis 1979, 96-97). In David Lewis' terms, the AW is indexical because it refers to "I, here and now circumstances of an utterance" (1979, 97). As Rod Girle in *Possible Worlds* has noted "the variable possibilities can be varied by terms such as slightly, hardly, barely, faintly, vaguely, greatly, and quite (97)." However, Ryan uses a conceptualized rather than terminological typology that is based on "world semantics" rather than "word semantics" in terms of knowledge worlds, obligation worlds and wish worlds. Semantics as "the study of the meaning of linguistic sign" is approached from two different directions of "compositional semantics" and "logical semantics". The former suggests a semantics of words in combination as developed by Katz, Fodor and Greimas. The shortcoming of this approach is in its insistence on isolating the word from its pragmatic context. The semantics of the world is also known as logical semantics:

Rather than assigning semantic features to individual linguistic elements...this approach regards meaning as a function of the various ways the world might be... the various situations in which the sentence would be true (Martin, 64).

This logical semantics of the world provides models according to which "the relation[s] of language to reality" can be described (65). Therefore, compositional and logical semantics are respectively called "the semantics of the word" and "the semantics of the world" or the study of meaning on the level of the word and on a broader level than the level of the word. Subsequently, possible world semantics can be defined in accordance with the latter and its emphasis on the world in which the word is supposed to denote its assigned meaning (64) according to its place in the world. In Calvino's novel this meaning is tropologically established in relation to the Real.

As a result of the semantic worlds' projection of the words in this narrative, the latter becomes "a machine for producing possible worlds" (Eco, *The Role of the Reader* 246) that are projected by the fictional minds of the substitute speaker, Kublai Khan, and Marco Polo, and the substitute reader. The origin of possible worlds as mental constructs is a shared assumption among the proponents of possible worlds theory whether in metaphysics, fiction or history. All these theorists including Saul Kripke, Umberto Eco, Marie Laure Ryan, Lubomir Doležel, follow Gottfried Leibniz's theory about the stipulations of an infinity of such worlds in the God's mind, and suggest different typologies of these mentally constructed possible worlds. Eco respectively classifies these worlds as:

1. The PW imagined and addressed by the author, which consists of all the states presented actual by the fabula
2. The possible sub-worlds that are imagined, believed, wished [...] by the characters

3. The possible sub-worlds that the reader imagines, believes, and wishes in the course of reading and that the fabula either actualizes or “counter factualizes” by taking another fork (242)

Therefore, PWs theory as one conceptual framework of postclassical narratology with its cognitive approach explores the nature of the fictional minds or more precisely, according to *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theories*, the character’s mind, besides the author’s and reader’s. In the context of Mark Currie's *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*, What Umberto Eco defines as the possible sub-worlds of the reader are highly influenced by the possible sub-worlds of Marco Polo. The reader, in the course of reading, is influenced by his or her apprehension of "the connection of the unexpected to the [temporal] perspectival structure of [the] narrative". The so-called still unknown is a "phenomenon of temporal perspective" generated by the reader through what Husserl calls "presentification" and "presentifying", reading and perceiving, the active and the passive or acting and thinking. The second term of these binaries are also defined as a particular way of imagining the imagined or to "witness without witnessing". Marco's future oriented approach in the depiction of the cities is evident in his constant use of future tense and in the chess-like structure of his projected sub-world that signify the unpredictability of the future. On the other hand, in the course of the reading the sub-world of the reader is "constantly surrounded by a double horizon: (a) of parts already read which sink into the past of the work and (b) of those parts which have not yet been read and which are unknown up to the present". However, through Calvino's sub-worlds these two horizons of the reading are violated by the constant repetitions of the same chapters' titles: "Cities and Memories", "Cities and Desires", "Cities and Signs", "Cities and Names", "Thin Cities", "Hidden Cities" and "Cities and the Dead". Therefore, in contrast to the description of

Zaira that should contain all Zaira's past, the description of each city contains all its present and future as an unpredictable puzzle. Both the known and the unknown have the same chapter's name and described by the same present tense which incline the reader to perceive or presentify the content as different elements of the same formal puzzle (117-120).

For Doležel, narrative modalities are the necessary constraints imposed on the text to guarantee the coherence of the story and indicate the number of PWs that are supposed to result in what Doležel calls “atomic” and “molecular” stories. These modalities include alethic, deontic, axiological, and epistemic systems:

1. The *alethic* system of “classical” modalities [,] which consists of the concepts of possibility, impossibility and necessity
2. The *deontic* system formed by the concepts of permission, prohibition and obligation (von Wright)
3. The *axiological* system [,] which is assumed to be constituted by the concepts of goodness, badness and indifference (Ivin, 1970 and Rescher, 1969)
4. The *epistemic* system represented by the concepts of knowledge, ignorance and belief (Hintikka, 1962) (7)

Consequently, the coexistence of the last three modalities in the semantic narrative domain of *Invisible Cities* gives it a molecular structure. Using the second type of Eco's classification, Ryan defines PWs as the mental constructs of the characters and further classifies them into knowledge-world (K-World), obligation world (O-world), and wish world (W-world). These PWs semantically provide “a description of the cognitive categories in which readers classify the

information provided by the text in their effort to make sense of the represented events” (Ryan 1991, 110).

The coexistence of “pseudo-actuality” and “transfictionality” in Calvino’s novel exemplifies and intensifies the extra-textual referentiality of its “narrative semantics” that is supposed to guarantee the text’s self-referentiality. Transfictionality is regarded as the recurrence of the events, situations, and characters of actual world (AW) in fiction. Marco Polo and Kublai Khan as two historical figures appearing in the thirteen century fictional account of *The Travels of Marco Polo* are the two major characters of *Invisible Cities*. Furthermore, the pseudo-actuality of this novel is evident in “the absence of any world-creating predicate or operator that builds a bridge between the actual world and the alternative possible worlds” (Herman, Jahn, and Ryan 2010). According to Ryan, the theoretical advantage of PWs theory lies in providing a convenient method for assessing the truth value of a proposition without comparing it to our system of reality (49). Her suggested self-referentiality stands in direct opposition to “the logic of ramification” which distinguishes PWs from the fictional ones. Concerning this logic, Ruth Ronen’s *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* defines ramification as “the range of possibilities that emerge from an actual state of affair” (8). Thus, in philosophical logic, possibility is linked with extra-textual referentiality rather than self-referentiality. The present research examines the PWs of this novel in terms of the logic of ramification and extra-textual referentiality.

Doležel's *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History: the Postmodern Stage* seems to be the first application of possible worlds theory to the philosophy of history. By applying possible worlds theory to the distinction between history and fiction, Doležel rejects the postmodern thesis that "narrative history is indistinguishable from narrative fiction" (19). For him, "[t]he only worlds that human language is capable of creating or producing are possible worlds. This

concept, [he] believe[s], is crucial for finding a new response to the postmodern challenge that denies the distinction between historical and fictional representations"(30). In the second chapter entitled "Representation of the Past and Possible worlds", he distinguishes the possible worlds of fiction from the possible worlds of history in terms of " the freedom of the fiction maker and the constraints imposed on the historian" (39) and subsequently, "functional differences" (33), "basic structural differences" (35), "agential constellations" (36) and "treatment of incompleteness" (37). However, the present research studies the possible worlds of *Invisible Cities* as the contextualization of the Real world's tripartite spaces of the unconscious structure of late capitalism is examined. The latter, as Fredric Jameson explained, is a term originated from the Frankfurt School to refer to "the structure of feeling" that

...something has changed, that things are different, that we have gone through a transformation of the life world which is somehow decisive but incomparable with the older convulsions of modernization and industrialization, less perceptible and dramatic, somehow, but more permanent precisely because more thoroughgoing and all-pervasive (xxi)

This so-called structure of feeling towards the Real, in Calvino's novel, is reflected in the spatial structures of the cities that are constructed through the linguistic unconscious of the characters in general and Marco in particular.

The recent "spatial turn" in literary theory has led a number of poststructuralist theorists to carry out detailed extra-textual analyses of space in accord with society, ethnicity, race and gender (Ross 449). This research defines space as the extra-textual manifestation of spatial information that are classified into social space, heterotopian sites and dystopia. In fact, the conflict between the PWs of Marco and Kublai is studied in terms of their suggested structures of

space. As was previously mentioned, PWs are the mental constructs of possible entities and Polo says that everything he sees and does assumes “meaning in a mental space where the same calm reigns as here, the same penumbra, the same silence streaked by the rustling of leaves” (103). The K-world or the epistemic narrative system is inherent in Marco’s account of the cities as social spaces, his deontic narrative system is based on the principles of heterotopia, and his epistemic superiority stands in direct opposition to Kublai’s utopian desires.

Besides this spatial turn in the “epoch of space” (Foucault 1), there is a linguistic turn in postmodernist fiction towards the resurgence of allegory as a “metaphor inverse” with a double structure of reference:

In terms of Hrushovski’s model of the ontology of metaphor, allegory is metaphor’s *inverse*: where in a metaphor the metaphorical frame of reference is absent, the literal frame present, in allegory it is the literal frame of reference that is missing and must be supplied by the reader – only the metaphorical frame is given. Like metaphor, however, allegory offers itself as a tool for exploring ontological structure and foregrounding ontological themes; so in a sense we should hardly be surprised at the contemporary resurgence of allegory. (McHale 141)³

In spite of what Gadamer refers to as the circular relationship between the reader’s interpretation of a part and whole of the literary text without “prejudices”, it is the function of the reader to supply the text with its literal meaning based on his or her preconceptions. The Literal interpretations of the cities or more precisely their spatial structures necessitate associating them with extra-textual references to postmodern “social space”, “heterotopian sites”, and “dystopian spaces” that are studied as knowledge, obligation and wish worlds.

Ryan's PWs	Doležel's Narrative Domains	Postmodern Spatial Structures
K-world	Epistemic System	Social Space
O-world	Deontic System	Heterotopian Sites
W-world	Axiological System	Utopian vs. Dystopian Spaces

To summarize the whole introduction, the following table clarifies the suggested relationships between Ryan's classification of PWs, Doležel's classification on system of modalities and the depicted space of *Invisible Cities*:

Table1: The Structure of *Invisible Cities' Narrative Universe*

2. K-Worlds: Knowledge of Social Space

The conflict between Kublai's "territorial trap" (Agnew 51) and Marco's "intensified globalization" (qtd. in Brenner 138) is inherent in these characters' knowledge of *social space*. The K-world is a set of propositions characterized by the modal operator of the epistemic system that is evident in Kublai's transformation of ignorance into knowledge. In fact, Kublai considers drawing territorial fixed boundaries – territorization or territorial trap – as the only possibility for discerning the tracery of a subtle pattern in mapping his empire. On the other hand, Marco seems strongly inclined towards helping Kublai to overcome his territorial trap that was the consequence of his awareness of "trial by space" – or the relation between the knowledge of space and political power. In fact, the link between the spatial and the political power and the

ability to possess his empire was Kublai's strong reason for listening to Marco's account. Marco's awareness of this

link is implied in his comparison of cities to dreams because both of them are made of desire and fear, desire for acquiring the practical power by means of spatial knowledge and the fear of trial by space. However, the more Marco gives him information the more Kublai insists on reductions – or the link between cities according to their differences – and territorization.

On the other hand, Marco's "global babble" (Abu-Lughod 1991) marks his intensified globalization. He regards Kublai's empire as a global cosmopolis, which has no limit or boundaries. In his accounts, the problem of territorial correspondence between the scale of capital, state, urbanization and civil society is radically intensified. The consequence of this intensification is fragmentation. Ryan regards fragmentation as the fundamental characteristic of every K-world. Marco's depiction of the cities provides a geography of globalization that regards the social space of Kublai's empire as a product of social action, socially produced second nature and scaffolding on spatial scales or the coexistence of all the social scales and their forms.

The space as the consequence of previous social actions is social in the sense that "it is not one thing among other things, but an ensemble of links, communication, network, and circuit" (Lefebvre 73). In fact, the social action imposed on space allegorically transforms the structures of thin cities. All these cities are suspended in the air, and described vividly in terms of their network like structures, Zenobia stands on high pilings with balconies on stills, linked with ladders and hanging sidewalks (53), Armilla is on vertical pipes (49), and Octavia "the spider web city" is in a void between two steep mountains on a net (75). The spatiotemporal link between past, present and future is the other consequence of social action (Brenner 141). Zaira is the city that contains all its past and is built up according to "the relationships between the

measurements of its space and the events of its past” (10). In this city, an example of the consequence of social action is the relation between “the height of a lamppost and the distance from the ground of a hanged usurper’s swaying feet” (10). According to the substitute speaker, “futures not achieved are only dead branches of the past, dead branches”. Following Henri Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*, social space as the outcome of past actions “permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and yet prohibiting others” (88). When Kublai asks Marco “does your journey take place only in the past?” the latter answers that it was a past that changed gradually as he advanced on his journey (28).

The significant shift in attitudes from the previous global circulation of commodities through space to the production of space results in what Lefebvre calls “abstract space” which loses its force as “substratum or underpinning of representational spaces” (Lefebvre 49). According to Marco, the threat of such spaces’ discourse is secret, “their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else” (44). Penthesilea is an allegorical instance of such abstract spaces:

You advance for hours and it is not clear to you whether you are already in the city’s midst or still outside it. Like a lake with low shores lost in swamps, so Penthesilea spreads for miles around, a soupy city diluted in the plain; pale buildings back to back in mangy fields, among plank fences and corrugated-iron sheds. Every now and then at the edges of the street a cluster of constructions with shadow facades, very tall or very low, like a snuggle-toothed comb, seems to indicate that from there the city’s texture will thicken. But you continue and you find instead other vague space. (156)

These vague spaces are in fact the abstract spaces produced by intensified globalization. In spite of Ryan's suggestion that K-worlds are conceivable from the first or third person perspectives (Ryan 115), this city is conceived from the second person perspective. This perspective is reflected in the textual referential world (TRW) of Kublai's K-world, which is based on Marco's K-world. The TRW is the world regarded as real and for which the text claims facts (Ryan vii). Accordingly, Marco's awareness of this fact leads him to use the second person perspective to make his own experience of visiting this city and many other cities more personal and intimate.

The third characteristic of social space is the coexistence of spatial scales – global, national, and urban – which is adherent to a “system of equivalences oriented toward the universal suppression of difference” (Brenner 143) for the production of what Lefebvre's calls “second nature” or urban spaces (Lefebvre 344). In spite of David Lewis' claim that there is no overlap between different possible worlds, as the result of intensified globalization and therefore suppression of differences, Marco says that “traveling you realize differences are lost: each city [regarded as world in this study] takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents” (137). In addition, as it is evident in the indirect discourse of the substitute speaker, “Kublai Khan had noticed that Marco Polo's cities resembled one another, as if the passage from one to another involved not a journey but a change of elements” (38). The suppression of differences is also Marco's reason for regarding Kublai's depicted cities as “the number of imaginable cities we must exclude from the possible cities” because they are “assembled without a connection or threat, an inner rule, a perspective, a discourse” (43-44). Global space has become a second nature that geographically coexists with the entire world. Venice as a model of the global space coexists with the Khan's empire. That is why Marco says that “the more one was lost in unfamiliar quarters of distant cities, the more one

understood...the familiar places of his youth, and the surroundings of home, and a little square of Venice where he gambled as a child” (28). When Marco claims that his inexhaustible account is completed, Kublai says that he has never spoken of Venice. Then Marco answers: “What else do you believe I have been talking to you about? [...] Every time I described a city, I am saying something about Venice. To distinguish other cities’ [territorized] qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it is Venice” (86). Cities are highlighted in this novel as the associated forms of a socio-spatial organization of an urban social scale that is at the lowest level of the hierarchy. Spatial scales (global, national, and urban) and their associated forms of socio-spatial organization (capital, territorial states, and cities) coexist (Lefebvre 145).

Table 2. Lefebvre’s Socio-Spatial Hierarchal Organization

Social Spaces	Forms of Spatial Scales
Global	Capital
National	Territorial States
Urban	City

According to the third role of social space, all levels of this hierarchy are geographically intermingled as the consequence of intensified globalization.

3. O-Worlds: Obligation Imposed on Heterotopian Sites

The obligation world or O-world is classified into ethics and morality or respectively spatial rules imposed by the authority on the structure of space and spatial moral principles established by the characters themselves. This deontic system interprets actions as “credits (acquisition of merit), debts (acquisition of demerit), and neutral” (Ryan 117). These merits and demerits are

supposed to be either rewarded or punished. However, “a new sense of simultaneity which had already become the system of reference in the early twentieth century” (Badulescu 2012) leads the characters to reach the point of practical desanctification. While the previous norms were established according to the distinction between sacred and profane, the norms established by the contemporary society are arranged according to juxtaposition and simultaneity that result in regarding this era as the epoch of space (Foucault 1). Ethics as the constituent of postmodern society and culture imposes certain obligation on space that results in what is called heterotopian sites.

The cities in Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* are allegorical representations of the norms stipulated by the contemporary society and culture. The pure abstraction of these cities resides in the image of labyrinth reflected in this novel as “the image of our culture, and therefore the image of our world” (Eco, “Library as a Model for Culture”). Previous studies regard this text as obliquely engaged with the moral question regarding the statute of reliable and unreliable narration. However, it should be mentioned that the possible O-worlds of its two major characters are not comprised of “an expected body of universally accepted obligation” (Cavallaro 67) but rather of the experience of simultaneity and juxtaposition, that is why the postmodern era is defined as “the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side by side of the dispersed” (Foucault 1). According to Dani Cavallaro’s *The Mind of Italo Calvino: A Critical Exploration of His Thoughts and Writings*: Both Diomira and Irene mock the traveler’s ability to discriminate between reality and illusion by embodying, respectively the unrealizable promise of stability and the challenge of relentless transformation. (70) If memory is to be understood as the reconstruction of reality then it is not variable because “memory is redundant, it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist” (19).

Michel Foucault in his “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias” suggests a chronological classification of space as a place of emplacement, extension and site. Site or the contemporary place “is defined by relation of proximity between points or elements” (2). Accordingly, this French philosopher defines heterotopia as a real place or site in which “all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously, represented, contested, and inverted” (3).

Valdrada is an example of Foucault’s “joint or mixed heterotopia and utopia” (4). It is constructed on the shores of a lake “in a way that its every point would be reflected in its mirror [...] down in the water” (53). The city down in the water is a virtual space, “a placeless place” so a utopia. Simultaneously it is a heterotopia since compared with its image, the city and the lake do exist in reality and lead to awareness of this city’s inhabitants of their real surroundings. This simultaneous mythic and real existence of space is called “heterotopology” (Foucault 4). The twin cities of Valdrada are not equal because though the city down in the lake mirrors the real city, the former inverts the latter (53).

All “Cities and the Dead” in this novel represent heterotopian sites where culture is highly integrated with history. Marco’s hypothetical focalization of Adelma “where you arrive dying and where each finds again the people he has known” (95) indicates his disbelief in the immortality of the soul. The underground Eusapia of the dead also reflects postmodern shifts of belief to what is called “the cult of the dead” (Foucault 5) that is the consequence of regarding the dead body as the only trace of our existence in the world. In this city the corpses “are dried in such a way that the skeleton remains sheathed in yellow skin...” (109). The other city that reflects postmodern obsession with death is Agria where nothing can be seen except dirt so “the inhabitants can move about the city, widening the worm tunnels and the crevices where roots

twist” (126). In addition, Laudomia of the dead set beside Laudomia of the living represents Foucault’s idea of “individualization of death” in the postmodern era when cemetery rather than a sacred place built in church is positioned outside the city to avoid the “propagation of death” (Foucault 6).

Heterotopian sites linked to time are called ‘heterochronies’ (Foucault 6) and classified according to their existence in indefinite and temporal accumulation of time. The eternal heterotopias are museums and libraries. In Clarice there is a heterotopian site where the saved shards of the original city “are preserved under glass bells, locked in display cases, set on velvet cushions...”. In addition, the place where the miniature models of Fedora, as the imaginary representation of an ideal Fedora are placed in crystal globes is this city’s museum or heterochrony (32). The library of Hypatia with “shelves collapsing under the vellum bindings” (47) demonstrates the postmodern idea of library as “a sort of perpetual indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place [...]” (Foucault 7). On the other hand, Irene is an example of temporal heterotopian site or a new “heterotopia of festival”.⁴

Heterotopian sites of obligation demonstrate the conflict between Marco and Kublai in terms of their contradictory interests in heterotopias of allegorical illusion and compensation. These two extreme poles, as explained by Foucault’s sixth principle of heterotopias, respectively represent “a space of illusion that exposes every real space” and “a space of compensation that exposes real, perfect and well-arranged spaces” (8): “And yet I know,” he [Kublai] would say,

“that my empire is made of the stuff of crystals, its molecules are arranged in a perfect pattern. Amid the surge of the elements, a splendid hard diamond takes shape, an immense, faceted, transparent mountain. Why do your travel impressions stop at disappointing appearances, never catching this implacable

process? Why do you linger over inessential melancholies? Why do you hide from the emperor the grandeur of his destiny (60)?”

Furthermore, if memory is to be understood as a reconstruction of the cities visited by Marco then it is not valuable because as Marco mentions “memory is redundant...” (19). Thus the signs that are supposed to be repeated by memory are the signs of language that are always deceitful (48). Kublai’s atlas, where all the cities of his empire and the neighboring realms are drawn, is a representative example of heterotopias of compensation. Therefore, the cities represented in Kublai’s atlas in spite of the cities depicted by Marco do not assume meaning in “a mental space” (103).

4. W-Worlds: Utopian vs. Dystopian Spaces

The last possible world to be studied as the modal system of *Invisible Cities* is related to the axiological system of narrative modalities and is called Wish world or W-world. According to Risto Hilpinen’s “An Analysis of Relativized Modalities”, axiological modalities are classified into “relativized” and “codexal” or “absolute” modalities (182). This classification respectively distinguishes the possible state of affairs desired by a character from the possible state of affairs “assigned to supraindividual codex⁵” (Doelzel 12). The relativized modalities or W-world of Kublai contrasts sharply with Marco’s depicted dystopias and representation of absolute modalities and results in what is called modal discord or disagreement.

Kublai’s “maps of the promised lands” (164) indicate his relativized axiological system and postulate his negative escapism and utopian desire. His escapism is the escape from history and “the termites’ gnawing” (2) of his empire’s formless ruin” (5) to utopias depicted in fiction or supposed to be achieved in reality. Besides the fictional ideal lands that include Thomas

More's *Utopia*, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, Marquis de Sade's *Tamoe* and James Harrington's *Oceana*, his maps also depict New Harmony, New Lanark, Icaria and other real lands that were built with utopian desires. He thinks about one of these lands as the possible future of his empire; consequently, he accuses Marco as the one whose journey "is truly a journey through memory", or a voyage he returns from with the meager purchases of regrets (98).

In spite of Marco's awareness of Kublai's utopian desire, the former's epistemological supremacy leads him to examine the impossibility of the fulfillment of such desire in terms of a current inferno:

And Polo said: "The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space." (165)

Marco's suggested impossibility of Kublai's quest for utopia is consistent with Freud's three reasons for the impossibility of human happiness. These reasons include "the superior power of nature", "the feebleness of our bodies" and "the inadequacy of the regulations which adjust the mutual relationships of human beings in the family, the state, and society" (qtd. In Booker 9). Marco examines the first and second reasons in his depiction of Perinthia, the city of astronomers that was built according to the position of the sun, moon and stars. The astronomers supposed that if Perinthia reflected the harmony of heaven, then "nature's reason and the gods'

benevolence would shape the inhabitants' destinies". As the result of the superior power of nature, what is supposed to be a utopia turns out to be "the city of monsters" (144-145). Marco further describes the reason for such failure in terms of gods' order. This order is in fact one of the absolute axiological modalities that is described by Marco as the order that is reflected exactly in the city of monsters. Obviously, this absolute axiological modality as the gods' order of dystopia stands in direct opposition to Kublai's relativized modality of utopian desire. The weakness of human body in contrast with the superior power of nature is also highlighted here. Furthermore, the inferno or dystopia or "the inferno of the living" is defined by Kublai as the consequence of our failure to establish mutual relationships. It is described as the consequence of what "we form by being together".

5. Conclusion

This study examines the narrativity of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* in terms of the logical concepts of states of affair and ramification, postmodern space, and tropological worlds. For doing so, following Ryan, it defines narrativity of this novel in the context of possible worlds semantics as its extraordinary ability to project "monstrous possibilities" (White 129) of allegorical cities. According to this theory, the narrative universe of this novel is simply comprised of a set of PWs that are evaluated with respect to textual referential world, which is not distinguishable from the textual actual world and narratorial actual world. The classification of these worlds into K-world, O-world and W-world is the result of their definition as the mental construct of the characters according to their knowledge, obligations, and wishes. Each city of Calvino's narrative is an alternative state of affair creating "narrative domain" (Ryan 130), which is further classified according to narrative modality. The semantic structures of the cities described by Marco and Kublai are categorized according to a system of modalities: epistemic,

deontic, and axiological narrative modalities. On the other hand, each of these narrative modalities follows a certain spatial rule governed by Henri Lefebvre's social space, Michael Foucault's heterotopian sites or Sigmund Freud's dystopias. Therefore, the qualitatively parsimonious classification of possible worlds is reflected in the allegorical depictions of three different kinds of spatial structures. The integration of these possible worlds and postmodernist spaces provides a linear concatenation of the possible worlds of this novel with the postmodern actual world. In fact, Ruth Ronen distinguishes possible worlds from fictional worlds respectively in terms of the logic of ramification and parallelism. Ramification determines "the range of possibilities that emerge from an actual state of affairs", while parallelism guarantees the autonomy of fictional world from the AW (Ronen 8). Therefore, the cities' allegorical relation to the real world is studied in terms of their possibility as tropological worlds following the logic of ramification. Subsequently, Calvino's language as studied in the Lacanian psychoanalytic version of Fredric Jameson's Marxism reveals the role of symbolic order in the structure of the Real. In spite of Doležel's suggested lack of affinity between the possible worlds of fiction and the possible worlds of history, the present study suggests that the textual structures of these worlds whether in history or fiction impose the ideologically based linguistic unconscious on the construction or reconstruction of what Lacan defines as the Real. The latter, in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, is evident in the consumer society of the late capitalism when postmodern or postmodernist "social spaces", "heterotopian sites" and "dystopian spaces" are simultaneously constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. This kind of Jamesonian/Lacanian historicity would reveal the Real textual narrativity/historicity of Calvino's seemingly a-historical and post-modernist fiction.

Endnotes

1. Regarding David Lewis' "Possible Worlds" that was printed in *The Possible and Actual: Readings in the Metaphysics of Modality*, "a doctrine is qualitatively parsimonious if it keeps down the number of fundamentally different kinds of entity... A doctrine is quantitatively parsimonious if it keeps down the number of instances of the kind it posits" (98). In this context, the possible worlds is regarded as the qualitatively parsimonious doctrine that embraces the non-quantitatively parsimonious spaces of Calvino's novel.

2. According to Plato's theory of ideas non-physical but substantial forms or ideas represent the most accurate reality; therefore, in Calvino's novel the term "invisible" refers to the substantial forms of the accurate reality of postmodern spaces.

3. It is worth noting that Brian McHale in his *Postmodernist Fiction* devotes a chapter to the adaptations of metaphor and allegory by postmodernist authors. These tropes result in what he calls "tropological worlds" that are the consequences of the dual ontological structures of frame and field of references.

4. In spite of the eternal heterotopias of museums and library, heterotopias of festival are "absolutely temporal" sites that denote the temporal existence of certain sites. However, in postmodern era new kinds of temporal heterotopias are invented as vacation villages (see Foucault's "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias").

5. Supraindividual codex are modalities used in a situation in which some PWs are supposed to depend on the properties of super-individual beings.

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Public Interest Statement

This article examines the model of narrative universe as constructed by Marie Laure Ryan who was influenced by Leibniz and therefore Plato's myth of creation. Leibniz derived his combinational theory from the old Kabbala's book of creation according to which God has created the world and everything to be created in the future from literally ordaining, hewing, combining, weighing and interchanging the twenty-two letters of Hebrew alphabet. However, Leibniz rejected "the mystical and metaphorical bent of most Kabbalists" in favor of the Platonic ideal world by suggesting that God created the world according to an ideal model of combinations in his mind (Natchomy 59). In *Invisible Cities*, these models are derived from the Lacanian Real and reconstructed in Marco's mind as the projections of the postmodern "social spaces" of knowledge, "heterotopian cites" of obligations and "dystopian vs. utopian spaces" of desires.

Natchomy, Ohad. "Leibniz and Calvino, Possible Worlds and Possible Cities, Philosophy and Fiction". *Journal of Early Modern Studies*. 5, 2: 53–79, 2016.

Author Information

Sayyed Rahim Moosavinia is an associate professor of English literature at the department of English Language and Literature, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. His research interests encompass postcolonial and postmodern literature, literary theory and narratology. He also serves as member of editorial board and director-in-charge of *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics (RALs)*. He has published widely in such journals as *The Explicator*, *Neohelicon* and *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*. Among his published books is *Untold Stories about India: Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Forster* (Sarup Book Publishers, 2009).

Masome Baji is an MA graduate from Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. Her research interests include postmodern fiction and theories of space and time in narratology and philosophy. She is also a PhD student at Shiraz University, Iran. The main concerns of her publications in the national and international journals have been the deconstruction and subsequently reconstruction of the theories of cognitive narratology and the linguistic structure of space.
