Georgi Niagolov

Shakespeare's Wordplay and Possible Worlds

ГЕОРГИ СТАНИМИРОВ НЯГОЛОВ

НАУЧЕН РЪКОВОРДИТЕЛ: ДОЦЕНТ Д-Р ЕВГЕНИЯ ПАНЧЕВА

ШЕКСПИРОВИТЕ ИГРИ НА ДУМИ

И ВЪЗМОЖНИТЕ СВЕТОВЕ

(Shakespeare's wordplay and possible worlds)

Дисертационен труд за присъждане на образователната и
научна степен "доктор"

София, 2009

Contents

Abbreviations used for Shakespeare's works and works partly or wholly attributed to Shakespeare

AC	*Antony and Cleopatra*	*MM*	*Measure for Measure*
AW	*All's Well That Ends Well*	*MND*	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*
AYL	*As You Like It*	*MV*	*The Merchant of Venice*
CE	*The Comedy of Errors*	*MW*	*The Merry Wives of Windsor*
Cor	*Coriolanus*	*Oth*	*Othello*
Cym	*Cymbeline*	*PP*	*The Passionate Pilgrim*
E3	*King Edward III*	*Per*	*Pericles*
Ham	*Hamlet*	*Phoen*	*The Phoenix and Turtle*
1H4	*Henry IV Part 1*	*R2*	*Richard II*
2H4	*Henry IV Part 2*	*R3*	*Richard III*
H5	*Henry V*	*RJ*	*Romeo and Juliet*
1H6	*Henry VI Part 1*	*SS*	*Shakespeare's Sonnets*
2H6	*Henry VI Part 2*	*Tem*	*The Tempest*
3H6	*Henry VI Part 3*	*Tim*	*Timon of Athens*
H8	*Henry VIII*	*Tit*	*Titus Andronicus*
JC	*Julius Caesar*	*TC*	*Troilus and Cressida*
KJ	*King John*	*TM*	*Thomas More*
KL	*King Lear*	*TN*	*Twelfth Night*
LC	*A Lover's Complaint*	*TG*	*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
LLL	*Love's Labour's Lost*	*TNK*	*The Two Noble Kinsmen*
LC	*A Lover's Complaint*	*TS*	*The Taming of the Shrew*
Luc	*The Rape of Lucrece*	*VA*	*Venus and Adonis*
MA	*Much Ado About Nothing*	*WT*	*The Winter's Tale*
Mac	*Macbeth*		

Introduction

Rare words! brave world! (*1H4* III.iii.203)

       One of the foremost functions of literary criticism is to help readers make better sense of their aesthetic and reflectional response to literary works. Bearing in mind the above understanding, the main purpose of this dissertation is to propose a new approach to reading Shakespeare's wordplay – a stylistic effect that is generally recognized as a particularly slippery ground, which presents a serious challenge to any sort of theoretical domestication. Wordplay is indeed ubiquitous in the Shakespeare canon – it functions similarly in both his poetry and in his poetic drama – so henceforth in this dissertation examples from both genres will be considered indiscriminately. Interestingly, however, the viewers/readers' attitude to Shakespeare's wordplay has differed significantly over time: at the one end of the spectrum there are those who see it merely as a frivolous sideshow, which is an end in itself, an eccentric intellectual game with little, if any, relation to the rest of the work; at the other there are those who discern a close link between it and other tropes and patterns in the works and acknowledge its contribution to the breathtaking overall artistic effect of Shakespeare's language. This dissertation builds on the opinions of the latter group and looks to provide a coherent critical framework capable of addressing their cognitive responses methodologically.

       "Wordplay" is a portmanteau term for a whole arsenal of individual stylistic devices, which although their formal properties vary slightly, typically operate according to a common technical principle: a polysemous feature of linguistic structure, which may

be a single word or a larger syntactic scheme, combines two or more apparently unrelated meanings usually to a short-lived humorous effect (Cf. Simpson 45). Whereas many of Shakespeare's puns undeniably fall under such a definition, some seem to go beyond its bounds. The first and most immediate observation is that Shakespeare's wordplay is not always funny: e.g. although struggling with the harrowing affliction caused by the sight of his mutilated daughter, Titus Andronicus' unconsciously puns: *TA* III.i.91-92 "TITUS. It was my *deer*, and he that wounded her / Hath hurt me more than had he kill'd me dead." Second, Shakespeare's wordplay is not always local: e.g. in *The Structure of Complex Words* William Empson shows that the word *fool* recurs throughout *King Lear* in different contexts and its multiple senses communicate with each other projecting over vast stretches of the plot (125-158). Finally, puns are not always isolated from their stylistic environment – in fact, very often they interact meaningfully with other stylistic devices and patterns: e.g. in *Shakespeare's Wordplay* M. M. Mahood shows how the play on different words throughout the *Winter's Tale* coheres with the rich imagery of the play to enhance the complexity of the main characters and develop the central moral issue (146-163).

The instances where Shakespeare's punning transcends the limits of the traditional understanding of wordplay are significant because they uncover its unexpected structural function. As alternative senses of polysemous words and ambiguous phrases consistently cohere with each other and also entangle other features of their linguistic environment in their coherences, they establish alternative contexts, i.e. alternative versions of the message/story, which if preferred over the more intuitive ones and incorporated into the greater context of the work, may change the viewers/readers' understanding of the big picture. Moreover, the simultaneous existence of multiple versions of the same story, along with the spontaneous hesitation on the part of the viewer/reader which way to take, may result in cognitive traffic between such possibilities and the blending of logically

heterogeneous concepts in logically multifarious mental constructs. Therefore, this dissertation makes use of a tailored possible-world approach which relies on the conceivability of many differing parallel states of affairs. On the one hand, this is necessary in order to accommodate each concurrent cognitive coherence, engendered by Shakespeare's wordplay, into a separate conceivable place, thus, disentangling it from the intricate texture of the work and giving it virtually unlimited space to contextualize. On the other, it provides a way to imagine these possible coherences in parallel, outside implicit hierarchies and logical pre-eminence, which in turn allows their objective analysis and helps trace the connections that appear between them. What this dissertation sets out to demonstrate by adopting the above approach is that wordplay often has a structural function in Shakespeare and thus contributes significantly to the characteristically complex semiotic effect of Shakespeare's works. For the purposes of closer analysis three concrete dimensions of this all-pervasive effect are isolated in the three case studies below. They deal in turn with the ability of Shakespeare's wordplay i) to convey complex notions, ii) to present complex moral issues, and iii) to construct complex fictional personalities.

The study is organised into four chapters. Chapter one, "Shakespeare's wordplay and possible worlds," opens with a chronological overview of the critical consideration of Shakespeare's playful use of language. Taking into account the formidable amount of Shakespeare criticism that has been produced to date, it would be both impractical and impracticable to discuss all the theoretical work that bears relation to the topic – therefore only the major developments are examined in closer detail. The chapter goes on to present the logico-philosophical context of the related concepts of possible worlds, fictional worlds, discourse worlds, text worlds, and mental spaces and their implementation in literary theory. Then, it outlines the special kind of possible-world approach that is adopted in the dissertation and explains what motivates its use. Finally, it illustrates concisely the

approach by applying it to the imagery of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 49*. The remaining three chapters contain three case studies dealing with the role of wordplay in conveying complex notions, presenting complex moral issues, and constructing complex fictional personalities, respectively. Each of them is twofold in structure: on the one hand, it addresses the particular effect created by wordplay through a related contemporary concept in order to pin it down in its own intellectual context; on the other, it probes deeper in it by means of close analysis of its realization in a Shakespeare play. Chapter two, "*Substance* and *shadows*: Shakespeare's wordplay and the conveyance of complex notions," works over the Platonic dichotomy between "substance" and "shadows," popular with Shakespeare and his contemporaries, to throw new light on early modern conceptualisation. It applies the possible-world approach to *Sonnet 53* and *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*, showing that the stylistic function of wordplay in them parallels the cognitive pattern observed in the dyadic concept and provides a mechanism of conveying complex notions. Chapter three, "The *state* of man: Shakespeare's wordplay and the presentation of complex moral issues," takes up the early modern rhetorical sense of "state," borrowed from the contemporary legal theory, which makes the attainment of any valid judgment conditional to a meticulously balanced consideration of both sides of a case. It applies the possible-world approach to Addition III to the anonymous play *Sir Thomas More* and *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight* to demonstrate how wordplay helps to present opposing politically and morally charged scenarios in complete ideological equilibrium, so that the complex moral issues at hand are passed on to the audience problematic and unresolved. Chapter four, "The *fatal Cleopatra* and a multiple Hamlet: Shakespeare's wordplay and the construction of complex personalities," reconsiders Samuel Johnson's use of the image of Cleopatra in criticising Shakespeare's tendency to play with words by showing the crucial importance of wordplay for the development of Cleopatra's character. Then it applies the possible-world approach to Hamlet's puzzling "antic disposition" to

illustrate the instrumental function of wordplay in the construction of Shakespeare's complex fictional personalities.

Chapter 1

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Shakespeare's wordplay and possible worlds

Sure he that made us with such large discourse,

Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and godlike reason

To fust in us unused. (*Ham* IV.iv. 35-38)

1.1 Shakespeare's wordplay

Elizabethans relished wordplay. The wiser sort were steeped in the strong tradition of rhetorical training that made a significant part of Early Modern education, while the more common sort emulated and parodied the eloquent public speeches and sermons, records of which still survive today. Therefore, many London theatregoers must have laughed heartily on a calm afternoon at the Rose, watching a new play in which a clownish rustic appeared and claimed that he was the father of Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans:

> PUCELLE. Peasant, avaunt! You have suborn'd this man
>
> Of purpose to obscure my *noble* birth.[1]
>
> SHEPHERD. 'Tis true, I gave a *noble* to the priest
>
> The morn that I was wedded to her mother. (*1H6* V. iv. 22-25)

It is likely that some of the learned viewers in the crowd could immediately identify the rhetorical figure used: "*Antanaclasis* is a figure which repeateth a word that hath two

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[1] My italics: here and hereafter in quotations from Shakespeare.

significations, and one of them contrary, or at least, unlike to the other. Uniting two wordes of one sounde, this figure distinguisheth them asunder by the diversitie of their sence, whereby it moueth many times a most pleasant kind of ciuile mirth, which is called of the Latines *Facetea*.[2]" Others, hearing the merry quip, may have recalled an example of "wilie usyng of woordes, that in sence haue double meanyng" provided by Thomas Wilson in his weighty textbook *The Rule of Reason*:

> Nobles signifie not onelie the perres of a Realme, but also they are good yelowe nobles in a mans purse. A Priest had a noble for preaching a funeral sermon, upon the death of a worshipfull manne, the Prieste purporyng to greatifie the dead, and with dewe praise to commende his libertie, saieth: surelie he was a good man, a verteous man, yea, he was noble Gentleman. I thinke if it hath been his happe to have had a roial, he had called him a roial gentleman to. (Fol. 9)

It is possible that Shakespeare was familiar with Wilson's book[3] because later in his career, while writing his ambitious *Life of King Henry the Fifth*, he worked into the texture of the play another of its fiscal examples:

> A crowne signifieth the Crowne of a mans heade, & also signifieth a crowne of golde, such as is currante, or els soche as kynges weare at the daie of their coronation. A shrewed boie seeying of late daies a Prieste, clarkely shauen in the croune, at what time Frenche crownes did beare, an highe price here in Englande, saied to the Prieste full unhappily in this wise: I praie you master Persone (q. he) howe goeth crownes now with you, whereat the Prieste was abashed, and woulde rather have loste a crowne in dede, then that his crowne shoulde have been so curstlie and in soche wise taunted. (Ibid.)

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[2] Cf. Peacham 57.

[3] *The Rule of Reason, conteyning the Arte of Logike, sette forthe in Englishe* was first published in 1551 and due to its popularity among Elizabethans was frequently reprinted throughout the remaining part of the 16th century.

KING HENRY. Indeed, the French may lay twenty French *crowns* to one

they will beat us, for they bear them on their shoulders; but it

is no English treason to cut French *crowns*, and to-morrow the

King himself will be a clipper. (*H5* IV. i. 14-17)

By this time the name of the figure was *Englished* and explained anew by George Puttenham: "Ye have another figure which by his nature we may call the *Rebound*, alluding to the tennis ball which being smitten with the racket rebounds backe againe, [thus playing] with one word written all alike but carrying diuers sences…[4]" King Henry's play on the meanings of *crown*,[5] however, resembles rather a whole game of tennis for it relies on a more complex interplay of meaning and imagery involving the whole context with our understanding rebounding from almost every word in the passage: "[L]ay twenty French crowns to one" evokes the image of coins, i.e. money that is being bid in the context of a wager, but in the context of the conversation it clearly refers to the correlation of powers in the eve of the battle. "Beat" stretches between the bidding and the battle. "For they bear them on their shoulders" continues the image of coins that the French carry on them, but at the same time reinforces the interpretation of "crowns" as heads, and yet adds another slip to the effect that: 'the French will beat us because they bear their heads on their shoulders, if they didn't, they wouldn't probably beat us' and points at "cut" in "it is no English treason to *cut* French crowns", which contains the foremost crux of meaning: to cut down their enemies' heads, or to cut or clip coins, i.e. shaving off a small fraction of the precious metal a coin for the sake of profit, which at the time was considered high treason along with counterfeiting and forgery. The wordplay reaches its climax in the final paradox "and to-morrow the King himself will be a *clipper*": at the same time valiant, princely knight chopping off the heads of his enemies, which throws a different light on "lay" from the

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[4] Cf. Puttenham 173-4.
[5] See also: "Some of your French crowns have no hair at all…" (*MND* I.ii.92).

beginning of the passage, and a base, condemnable fraudster stealing away tiny shreds of the king's property, which is more in line with the Hal we know from the two parts of *King Henry IV.*

Young Hal mastered this kind of rhetoric under a whole band of schoolmasters, the "squires of the night's body":

> FALSTAFF. Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her
>
> husband's purse; he hath a legion of *angels*.
>
> PISTOL. As many devils entertain; and 'To her, boy,' say I.
>
> NYM. The humour rises; it is good; humour me the *angels*. (*MW* I.iii.50-54)

and, as we can witness, surpassed them in a game in which, in Puttenham's words, "the obscurity of the sence lieth not in a single word, but in an entier speech, whereof we do not so easily conceiue the meaning, but as it were by coniecture, because it is wittie and subtile or darke, which makes me therefore call him in our vulgar the [*Close conceit*] as … a great counsellour somewhat forgetting his modestie, vsed these words: Gods lady I reckon my selfe as good a man as he you talke of, and yet I am not able to do so. Yea sir quoth the party, your L. is too good to be a man, I would ye were a Saint, meaning he would he were dead, for none are shrined for Saints before they be dead.[6]" And required what Wilson termed "*close vnderstanding*", i.e. "when more may bee gathered, then is openly expressed.[7]"

Wilson, Puttenham and Peacham are just three examples of a long line of Early Modern scholars including Desiderius Erasmus, Leonard Cox, Richard Sherry, William Fulwood, Dudley Fenner, Angell Day, John Hoskins, who under different titles produced versions of what Peter Mack calls "the English Style Manual", because their works on

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[6] Cf. Puttenham 194.
[7] Cf. Wilson, "Rhetorique" bk. 3, 15

style ultimately shared the same material and were evidently based on each other and, most importantly, on the classical Latin manuals (and their humanist adaptations) derived principally from the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.[8] Regardless of their numerous differences each of these works provided a coherent set of directions on how to use one's memory and imagination and the necessary technical apparatus for the production of a rhetorically effective speech or piece of writing. Wordplay in its different forms: *paronomasia*, *antanaclasis*, *syllepsis*, *polyptoton*, *agnomination*, *amphibology*, etc., had its place alongside other tropes like *metaphor*, *simile*, *allegory*, *hyperbole* and made part of what at the time was considered an instructive and delightful style.[9]

The saturation with masterfully selected and placed figures of expression imparted to Shakespeare's works a characteristic sense of semantic plasticity, which helped them transcend the inherent limits of signification, argue on both sides, reconcile opposites, be created constantly anew at each reading or performance.[10] This quality of Shakespeare's language was recognised by his contemporaries and commended by his fellow players John Heminge and Henry Condell to whom we owe the collection and publication in print of Shakespeare's plays after their author's death. "Read him, therefore;" write they in the Preface to the *First Folio*, "and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him".

Nevertheless, much changed in less than a hundred years: the revolution of knowledge, commenced by Descartes and Newton, sought to do away with all mysticism or dogmatic belief and establish an axiomatic philosophy based on systematic thinking and

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[8] Cf. Mack 76.
[9] Shakespeare's use of rhetorical figures is very thoroughly and systematically described in Sister Miriam Joseph's classic *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*.
[10] See Trousdale 628.

empirical proof. The Age of Reason, naturally, had different aesthetic and literary tastes: what many Elizabethans and Jacobeans had valued in Shakespeare was considered degenerate or profane by the Augustans. Even though scholars and poets like John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Samuel Johnson praised Shakespeare for being "the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and of life[11]" they were all irritated by his use of schemes and tropes that resulted in ambiguity: "his whole stile is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure" (Dryden, "Preface to Troilus and Cressida" vol. VI, 244), "He is not long soft and pathetick without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation" (Johnson §43) and particularly by his punning:

> A quibble is to *Shakespeare*, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal *Cleopatra* for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it. (Johnson §44)

It is not difficult to understand Dr. Johnson's indignation: to him, as well as to most of his contemporaries, the construction of a literary or dramatic work was first and foremost a rational process of narrowing down possibilities in order to arrive at the *right*

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[11] See Johnson §8.

sense, the *one* intended by the author. Ample proof for this is to be found in Johnson's *Notes to Shakespeare*: where although Johnson's lexicographer's instinct often senses subtle quibbles, he seldom mentions them, or if he does it is rather to dismiss them as not deserving of any consideration: "[*RJ*] II.iv.138 (62.8) No hare, Sir] Mercutio having roared out, *So ho*! the cry of the sportsmen when they start a hare; Romeo asks *what he has found*. And Mercutio answers, *No hare*, &c. The rest is a series of quibbles unworthy of explanation, which he who does not understand, needs not lament his ignorance."

Although one of the most profound readers of Shakespeare of all time, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, recognised the importance of wordplay for what he appreciated as Shakespeare's "never broken chain of imagery, always vivid, and because unbroken, often minute" but, the general attitude to Shakespeare's wordplay as being essentially wasteful and barren dominated the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It was not until the twentieth century, and William Empson's seminal book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, that the pervasive poetic effect of linguistic ambiguity was recognised. There Empson defines ambiguity as essentially: "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language" (1) and explores a range of its uses and effects: from the fundamental situation when "a word or a grammatical structure is effective in several ways at once" (an ambiguity of the first type) to "the most ambiguous that can be conceived… when the two meanings of the word, the two halves of the ambiguity, are the two opposite meanings defined by the context, so that the total effect is to show a fundamental division in the author's mind" (an ambiguity of the seventh type) (192).

In relation to Shakespeare's wordplay, Empson argues against Dr. Johnson's criticism of the Bard's quibbling propensity, stating that:

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Shakespeare's interest in sound relationships between words was in no degree detached from his interest in their total meaning; however he arrived at a word he apprehended it, and the grasp of his imagination was such that, having arrived at a term by a subsidiary quibble, while his attention was yet giving sufficient weight to the matter mainly in hand, he could work the elaboration due to the quibble into the total order. (Empson, "Ambiguity" 88)

To Empson, puns, including those that Shakespeare used, varied in type from such that say "what is expected in two ways which, though different, are seen at once to come to the same thing" to such that "name two very different things, two ways of judging a situation, for instance, which the reader has already been brought to see are relevant, has already been prepared to hold together in his mind" (Ibid. 104-105). He gives a lucid example of the latter in his essay on the ramifications of *'Honest' in Othello*, published in 1951 in *The Structure of Complex Words*, in which he shows how the meaning of a thing inseparate divides more wider than the sky and earth. The fifty-two uses of *honest* and *honesty* in the play, addressed to nearly all main characters, rehearse all possible senses of the word: from respectable, chaste, creditable, true, decent, moral, virtuous, law-abiding, genuine, common, stupid, etc. to their total opposition:

EMILIA.   My husband?

OTHELLO. Ay, 'twas he that told me first.

An *honest* man he is, and hates the slime

That sticks on filthy deeds… *honest*, *honest*[12] Iago. (*Oth* V.ii.148-151)

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[12] The dramatic irony in Othello's repeated insistence on Iago's honesty inevitably calls to mind Mark Anthony's subversive refrain in his speech to the Romans at Julius Caesar's death: "ANTONY. But Brutus says he was ambitious, / And Brutus is an *honorable* man. (*JC* III.ii.80-81)

Empson's revealing study, however, pays little attention to the capacity of pregnantly ambiguous words like *honest* in Othello to influence other, seemingly monosemous uses and elicit from them quite another ring:

OTHELLO. So please your Grace, my ancient;

A man he is of *honesty* and trust.

To his *conveyance* I assign my wife,

With what else needful your good Grace shall think

To be sent after me. (*Oth* I.iii.285-289)

Even though the context here provides for just one legitimate meaning of *conveyance*: escorting, conducting,[13] the coincidence with *honest*[14] points at a possible second sense: deception, treachery, theft[15] – an opportunity for wordplay seized by Shakespeare's Richard II in the eponymous play:

BOLINGBROKE. Go, some of you *convey* him to the Tower.

KING RICHARD. O, good! *Convey*! *Conveyers* are you all,

That rise thus nimbly by a true king's fall. (*R2* IV.i.316-318)

The clustering of *honest* and *conveyance* in Othello's cue, thus, not only expands the signification of the passage and increases the dramatic irony, but also calls attention to the

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[13] *OED* quotes *Othello* I.iii.287 to illustrate the meaning.
[14] The ironic subversion of *honest* starts with its first occurrence in the play: "IAGO. Whip me such *honest* knaves." (*Oth* I.i.47).
[15] Cf. William Somer seeing much adoe for accomptes making, and that the Kinges Maiestie of most worthie memorie Henrie the eight wanted money, such as was due vnto him: and please your grace (quoth he) you haue so many Frauditours, so many Conueighers, and so many Deceiuers to get vp your money, that they get all to themselues. Whether he sayd true or no, let God iudge that, it was vnhappely spoken of a foole, and I thinke he had some Schoolemaster: He should haue saide Auditours, Surueighours, and Receiuers. (Wilson, "Rhetorique" bk. 3, 34)

intricate interrelation between words and their possible meanings. The earliest comprehensive study that explores the complex interplay between the conceivable meanings of Shakespeare's words is M. M. Mahood's outstanding *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. It ingeniously traces the multiple possibilities contained in what she sees as deliberate or unconscious puns and shows how they interact with one another weaving out coherent parallel images that enhance the poetic effect both of drama and of poetry:[16]

> KING RICHARD. The breath of *worldly* men cannot depose
>
> The deputy elected by the Lord.
>
> For every man that Bolingbroke hath *press'd*
>
> To lift shrewd steel against our golden *crown*,
>
> God for his *Rich*ard hath in heavenly *pay*
>
> A glorious *angel*. Then, if *angels* fight,
>
> Weak *men* must fall; for heaven still guards the right. (*R2* III.ii.56-62)

The duplication of the image is best visible in the metaphor "heavenly pay". The activation of the economic semantic domain throws different light on "crown" and "angel" – quibbles that Shakespeare evidently found quite irresistible. It also draws out alternative meanings from "worldly": material, mercenary and "press": mint, coin.[17] And, finally, suggests a literal chime of *Rich*ard and a possible opposition between "men" and "angels" as coins, i.e. less valuable coins bearing the faces of men against more valuable ones with angels on them.

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[16] Wolfgang Clemen, in *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, observes that imagery, being a more complex form of statement than diction, lends itself more easily to ambiguity, especially in cases when dramatic irony is to be achieved. But a polysemous image is created by means of polysemous language. "Thus, a play on words… is no longer mere arabesque and unessential decoration, but rather a necessary, if tiny, link in the chain of the dramatic structure" (Clemen 52).
[17] Cf. Mahood 84.

This split in meaning produces two parallel images: i) on the surface, in the context of the action, the king uses the concept of the celestial nature of royal power to conjure up courage and allegiance in his supporters, creating a compelling antithetic image of himself as the lawful king rightfully defended by god and the hosts of heaven[18] against Bolingbroke an illegitimate impostor who forces common men to rise in unnatural opposition to the king's divine estate – likened to a treasonous counterfeiter who forges the king's coin usurping thus the king's unalienable right; ii) on the other hand, the king's words and imagery seem to defy him betraying the fiscal, "worldly" dimension of this war: despite their implicit comparison to angels, justly enforcing god's will, the king's followers, too, fight for money. The juxtaposition of the two images reinforces the meaningful bathos, which runs through the whole play and contrasts the exalted and compelling but totally unrealistic worldview of Richard to the down-to-earth, more pragmatic philosophy of Bolingbroke.

The work of critics like William Empson and M. M. Mahood has brought Shakespeare's puns back into the light and has expounded the importance of wordplay for the intricate fabric of Shakespeare's significations. They have analysed with remarkable perceptiveness the literary contexts of poems and plays, discovering hidden coherences and offering illuminating readings. The advent of cultural materialist and new historicist critical practices, during the latter half of the 20th century, however, proffered the view that human intellectual products cannot be successfully abstracted from their cultural, social and historical contexts, and are, therefore, best understood through the examination of the contemporary cultural material related to them. Enhanced by these developments, critical readings expanded their scope over the limits of strictly literary or literary theory contexts and opened itself to a multiplicity of other relevant sources.

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[18] The parallel with Matthew (26.53) forces itself upon the reader/viewer: "Thinkest thou that I can not now pray to my father, and he shall cause to stand by mee more than twelve legions of angels?".

A characteristic example of this approach is Patricia Parker's book *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* which offers an insightful exploration of the multiple discursive implications of Shakespeare's wordplay and the process of their activation by different aspects of early modern culture. For instance, it throws new light on Shakespeare's use of "join", "joiner" and "joinery" by taking a close look at the marginal "rude mechanicals", Quince, the carpenter, Snug, the joiner, Bottom, the weaver, Flute, the bellows-mender, Snout, the tinker, and Starveling, the tailor, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The study refers to contemporary technical texts and observes that the natures of all their crafts in one way or another come down to the art of *joinery*,[19] i.e. the cunning fitting together of pieces into a unified whole. Yet, there were other common contemporary uses of *joinery* that were circulated at the time: "from the joining of words into the construction of reason, logic, and 'Syntaxe' (understood as the 'part of Grammar, that teacheth the true joyning of words together') to the joining of bodies into the one flesh of marriage and the joining of the body politic into a harmonious whole" (Parker 89). Each of these separate sociolinguistic dimensions of *join* resonates meaningfully with the overall structure of the play: The mechanicals' parodical enactment of the history of Pyramus and Thisbe ironically *disjoins* one theatrical reality from another to reveal the *joints* and *fittings* of the play and to lay bare the mechanics of its production: "half his face must be seen through the lion's neck…" (*MND* III.i.36-37). Bottom's ham-fisted *misjoining* of words wins him affection to question the validity of reason: "the flowers of *odious* savours…" (*MND* III.i.81). The artificial *joining* and *disjoining* of lovers in the enchanted wood transfigures their true feelings to question the constancy of love: "I have found Demetrius like a jewel, Mine own, and not mine own" (*MND* IV.i.192-193). The nuptially *joining*

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[19] "Art Manual whereby several Pieces of Wood are so fitted and joyned together by straight lines, Squares, Mites or any Bevel, that they should seem one intire Piece" (in Parker 89).

rulers triumph in justice and wellbeing to question the necessity for wars: "Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword… But I will wed thee in another key…" (*MND* I. i. 16-18).

Parker's approach to Shakespeare's use of words opens up a whole new dimension of wordplay by showing that polysemy can be explored not only through analysing the strictly linguistic context of a work and its contemporary literature, but also by probing into the cultural atmosphere of the time of its creation and reconstructing a multiplicity of contexts grounded in material evidence. This, in hindsight, poses the question of whether there is such a thing as "strictly linguistic and literary context," or the critical practices that claim to reduce their readings to these domains nevertheless still rest on a vague sense of "background knowledge" – knowledge which may merely amount to an unproblematised acceptance of established historical conventions. On the other hand, this type of critical practice clearly displays a desire to body forth abstract epistemological and ethical speculations into the more solid flesh of historical social and cultural events.

According to Roman Ingarden's crucial observation, however, literature is not an *autonomous* but a *heteronomous* phenomenon, which exists only when being in contact with the human consciousness (qtd. in Stockwell 165). Therefore, the next logical stage of inquiry into the embodiment of wordplay is the examination of the place where the abstract and the material dimensions of language meet – the human mind. The development of cognitive science and the resultant theoretical constructs have, naturally, had an impact on literary criticism and, in particular, on the treatment of Shakespeare's puns. One of the central premises of the critical approaches grounded in cognitive science is the conceptual dependency of language, i.e. the notion that the meaning of the words in a text does not depend merely on their dictionary denotation or pragmatic connotation but on the complex

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networks of ideas and associations they suggest in the minds of the author and each reader.[20]

A study which subscribes to this recent trend in literary theory is Mary Thomas Crane's *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory*. It uses a reader's reconstruction of meanings, contexts and cognitive processes to gain insight into, among other things, the ways in which Shakespeare plays "on and with the mental links between words" (Crane 28). Chapter three, for instance, focuses on the multiple senses of the word "suit" in *The Twelfth Night* along two main lines of homonymy: i) pursuing one's desires and containing them into the limits of what is considered suitable: a) endeavour to obtain something through petitioning: "Because she will admit no kind of *suit*. / No, not the Duke's" (*TN* I.ii.45-46); b) wooing or courting of a woman, soliciting her hand: "But, would you undertake another *suit*, / I had rather hear you to solicit that / Than music from the spheres." (*TN* III.i.109-113); c) pursuit, prosecution, legal process: "Antonio, I arrest thee at the *suit* / Of Count Orsino" (*TN* III.iv.328); d) to be suitable for: "I will believe thou hast a mind that *suits* / With this thy fair and outward character" (*TN* I.ii.50-51); and ii) suit of clothing: a) dress, livery, uniform: "So went he *suited* to his watery tomb" (*TN* V.i.232) which may point at "body": "VIOLA. If spirits can assume both form and *suit*, / You come to fright us. / SEBASTIAN. A spirit I am indeed, / But am in that dimension grossly clad / Which from the womb I did participate" (*TN* V.i.233-237), and, of course, in the context of the play, also at identity. The examination of the early modern context of these senses of *suit* yields three more uses that have been common in the sixteenth century but are unfamiliar to modern ears: a) attendance and service owed by a subject to a lord under feudal law, as in a preserved medieval record: "Nicholas de Monte defaulted and denied suit of court; b) kind, sort, class – found in an anonymous 1573 poem: "Now gather vp

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[20] Cf. Stockwell 76.

fruite, of euerie suite;" and c) theatrical costume, found in Henslowe's diary and contemporary costume inventories: "Antik sutes," "Clownes Sewtes and Hermetes Sewtes", "Roben Hoodes sewtte".

Crane observes that this complex network of meanings, concentrated in one linguistic form, functions as a multifarious conceptual metaphor, which animates the abstract space among these meanings, ensuring constant transference of signification from one domain into another. Thus, Viola's change of *suit* ("attire" but also "class, rank"), gives her the opportunity to give *suit* to (serve) Duke Orsino, and makes her ironically *suit*able for her mission to undertake a *suit* to Olivia's affections (court her on the Duke's behalf), but, again ironically, quite un*suit*able for Olivia's converse *suit* to her (Olivia wooing her as Cesario). At the same time, an ill-advised Malvolio attempts to advance his *suit* (kind, rank) by making a *suit* to his mistress (making passes at her), and even changing his *suit* (clothes)[21] and disposition, with the un*suit*ability of which efforts he ends up confined and mocked at. Ironically, when Viola meets face to face with Sebastian, who she believes perished in the shipwreck, she refuses to believe it is him because she recognises the *suit* he is wearing, while he does not recognise her because of the *suit* she has on. Finally, the confusion is overcome, obscured identity becomes revealed identity, and all love *suits* are settled, just like Orsino's legal *suit* against Antonio. Shakespeare's skill in packing a variety of meanings (ranging from confusion to clarity, from suppression to discovery of identity, from legitimate to illegitimate desire, from possible to impossible love) into a single word unit only to let them go off in a quantum-like explosion of oppositions with each use of *suit* in the play may, on the one hand, as Feste observes and Jacques Derrida might agree,[22] point at the slippery play of linguistic signification, but on

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[21] "He will come to her in yellow stockings… and cross-garter'd" (*TN* II.v.199-200)
[22] Cf. Derrida 278-295.

the other, it may uncover the non-linear process of conceptualisation through which the human mind conceives and construes things.

Considering the sheer scale of the criticism produced constantly on the subject of Shakespeare's language, it would be, of course, difficult to present a comprehensive account of the theoretical treatment of Shakespeare's wordplay to date, but highlighting the milestones of its development makes it at least possible to catch a bird eye's view of its increasing significance since the beginning of the twentieth century. From what used to be considered an empty and frivolous display of wit, which had merely ornamental function, momentary effect, and rarely contributed to a work's ethical or epistemological value, wordplay has been recognised as a structural device sustaining poetic ambiguity, interlacing imagery, responsible for meaningful intratextual, intertextual or extratextual resonances, and even as a form of cognitive conceptualisation of complex phenomena. With respect to this, it is surprising that there is no consistent contemporary theory of wordplay (as there is, for instance, of metaphor[23]). A theory that could account for the ontology of each conceivable sense of a polyseme or compass its influence on other words, a theory that could examine parallel discursive coherences in their simultaneous existence and explore the comprehension that takes shape between them. As Norman Rabkin suggests in his illuminating essay *Rabbits, Ducks and Henry V*, Shakespeare's creations should no longer be seen as either rabbits or ducks but as the increasingly complex and multifaceted things they really are.

1.2 Theories of worlds and abstract spaces

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[23] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* and George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason.*

Be patient, for the world is broad and wide. (*RJ* III.iii.16)

In his 1892 paper *On Sense and Reference* Gottlob Frege suggests that to understand the meaning of a word, one has to be aware of its *reference*, or *referent*, i.e. the *thing* the word refers to, but more importantly, one needs to grasp its *sense*, i.e. the way in which the word relates to its cognitive environment in order to effect its reference function.[24] This emphasis on the context-dependence of the linguistic sign, naturally, hauls along the difficult question of what, in fact, is context. The first pattern of contextualisation that springs to mind is: word – sentence – text, but, as Paul Werth observes, both *sentence* and *text* are themselves segments that have been abstracted from their respective contexts for the purposes of analysis. Instead, he proposes a different model: word – utterance – discourse, where *utterance* is a sentence-context blend and *discourse* is a text-context blend (Werth 1-7). Still, how do we make sense of utterances and discourses? One of the basic premises of cognitive theory is that in order to process and understand a given utterance or discourse the human mind contextualises it by using a set of coherent mental structures. These mental structures typically evoke previously stored knowledge models of things, *frames*,[25] and of processes, *scripts*, arrange them in larger constructs, *schemata*[26] – general patterns, and *scenarios*[27] – patterns of specific situations (Cf. Chimombo and Roseberry 43-44), recombine them, and project them forth in integrated meaningful coherences in the anticipation of future contingencies. Each of these meaningful

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[24] A review of more recent developments and counterparts of Frege's theory can be found in Chalmers's *Two-Dimensional Semantics*.
[25] See Minsky.
[26] See Bartlett.
[27] See Sanford and Garrod.

coherences represents a possible *state of affairs*, i.e. an idea of the world as it might be if our expectations, derived from the interpretation of the linguistic input, are sustained. The more difficult and ambiguous the language is, the greater the number and the variety of these projected mental representations of the world.

The major advantage of this approach is that such mental representations of the world can be separated from one another, described, and compared. For instance, if the word whose meaning we explore is "lie," its possible *references* will normally stretch along the following lines: 1. all wilful acts of deception, 2. all untruths said with a view to deceive, 3. all acts of being in prostrate position, 4. all places where something is situated, etc. The *sense* of "lie" in "I know you lie," when used to someone, who has just told us something we believe not, picks out reference 1. with respect to the particular situation, i.e. this particular wilful act of deception. Contextualised in the following *sentence*: "When my love swears that she is made of truth / I do believe her, though I know she lies, / That she might think me some untutored youth, / Unlearned in the world's false subtleties," the meaning of "lie" fits into the *schema* activated by "I know you lie," and although we can do little to reconstruct the original pragmatic situation, we may employ other *mental structures* such as: "the experience of reading poetry", "the recognition of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 138*", "some background knowledge about the form, the period, or the author", etc. Further contextualisation will involve the complete *text* of the poem:

> When my love swears that she is made of truth
>
> I do believe her, though I know she lies,
>
> That she might think me some untutored youth,
>
> Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
>
> Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
>
> Although she knows my days are past the best,

Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:

On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.

But wherefore says she not she is unjust?

And wherefore say not I that I am old?

O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,

And age in love loves not to have years told:

Therefore I lie with her and she with me,

And in our faults by lies we flattered be. (*SS* 119)

As it unfolds, the conceit of the poem evokes a familiar *scenario*: the speaker seems to be describing a relationship with a younger woman characterised by the exchange of rather innocent lies: she is trying to make him feel less old than he really is, and he is vainly forcing himself to believe her, though he knows she is not being honest. The defects of either are known to the other, to her – his true age, and to him – her dishonesty, but both these faults are overwhelmed by the desire to remain together. Thus, the understanding of "lie" as "deception" drags along a mental representation of the world (W1) in which Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 is interpreted as a lyric about the petty trickery motivated, sustained, and excused by love, which deserves a less problematic ending like that of an earlier version of the poem published in the collection *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599: "Therefore I'le lye with Loue, and loue with me, / Since that our faultes in loue thus smother'd be".

A fissure in this interpretation lies latent in the use of the preposition "with" in line 13 in both versions of the poem. Under the pressure of W1 "lie with her and she with me" may be taken to stand for a mutual deception, the unusual use of the preposition emphasising the constant circulation of falsehood between the speaker and his mistress; and "I'le lye with Loue, and loue with me" in *PP* may be perceived as "I'll lie with

affection, while this affection is belying me". A yet further contextualisation of "lie" into early modern culture, however, may yield the idiomatic understanding of the phrase "to make love to her (or to my beloved) and she to me", which must have been quite familiar at the time, especially since it is to be found in the English translation of the most circulated then version of the Bible, the so called *Geneva Bible*. This meaning fits in W1: the lovers exchange innocent dishonesties and overcome their faults in bodily communion (especially in the earlier version of the poem). Yet, the pun on "lie" casts a grim light on this sweet-tempered interpretation. The possibility that "I know she lies" in line 3 points to "I know she lies with other men" or "I know she is unfaithful" [28] provides for the construction of a completely different mental representation of the world (W2) which elicits different clink from almost every linguistic unit in the poem. "Made of truth" (line 1) projects toward "maid of truth" – honourable woman, a virgin. The "world's false subtleties" (line 4) are given a different form. "Vainly" (line 5) and "simply" (line 7) acquire a considerable amount of self-deprecation, the adverb "simply" shifts from "just, naively, innocently" to "foolishly." "Her false-speaking tongue" (line 7) looses its sweetness. The "simple truth" (line 8) is already a different proposition. "Unjust" (line 9) has more of the meaning employed by Warwick in *Richard III*: "O passing traitor, perjured and unjust;" the lament of old age (lines 5-12) now expresses much direr bitterness. "Habit" and "seeming" (line 11) evoke a sullen masquerade. The newly emerged W2 seems difficult to reconcile with the gentle and courteous aura of W1. Nevertheless, their parallel existence and our ability to compare them enhances the experience of reading. We perceive a much more complex relationship between the poetic speaker of *Sonnet 138* and

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[28] Cf.　　OTHELLO. What? what?
　　　　　IAGO. Lie-
　　　　　OTHELLO. With her?
　　　　　IAGO. With her, on her, what you will.
　　　　　OTHELLO. Lie with her! lie on her! We say lie on her, when they
　　　　　belie her. Lie with her!
　　　　　(*Oth* IV.i.31-36)

his love: "And in our faults by lies we flattered be" – and despite our faults by lying, both "deceiving each other" and "making love to each other", we shall be flattered; the synthesis coming to full fruition in the introduction of the mutual pronouns "our" and "we" in the last line, after 13 lines of oscillation between I, me, my and she, her, and also in the verb "flatter", wresting out all its possible meanings: a) beguile and charm, b) praise and please, c) stroke and caress, d) flatten down and smoothen, etc.

In order to be able to look into the make-up of what is above provisionally referred to as "mental representations of the world" and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a critical approach employing such constructs, it will be necessary to look at several theories of worlds and world-like models. The following part of this chapter compares tersely the theory of Possible Worlds, the theory of Discourse Worlds and Text Worlds, and the theory of Mental Spaces and examines the links between them and their respective relevance to literary studies. This is done in an attempt to set up a novel critical perspective which recognises the non-linear nature of wordplay and relies on a many worlds framework for its interpretation.

1.2.1 Possible Worlds

The idea of possible worlds is usually traced back to the end of the seventeenth century and the works of Gottfried Leibniz.[29] Famously, he concludes his *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil* with a fascinating parable: Theodorus, a priest, sets out to the temple of Athena Pallas to inquire about fate. The goddess takes him to "the palace of fates" containing "representations not

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[29] Although it is difficult to imagine such ideas without the works of earlier scholars: See Aristorle, *De interpretatione*, Lucretius, *De rerum nature*, Averroes, *Commentarium magnum* of Aristotle's works, etc.

only of that which happens but also of all that which is possible. Jupiter, having surveyed them before the beginning of the existing world, classified the possibilities into worlds, and chose the best of all" (Leibniz, "Theodicy" §414). Fantastic as it may seem this tale is supported by a coherent and quite rational philosophical theory for dealing with counterfactuals: "One must certainly hold that not all possibilities attain existence," Leibniz writes in his essay *On Contingency*, "indeed, it does not seem possible for all possible things to exist, since they get in one another's way. There are, in fact, an infinite number of series of possible things. Moreover, one series certainly cannot be contained within another, since each and every one of them is complete" (Leibniz, "Essays" 29).

This theory appealed to a number of twentieth century philosophers because they found that Leibniz's explanation of the modalities of god's mind by means of possible worlds may be used to account for human modal concepts, such as possibility, impossibility, contingency, and necessity, in a remarkably non-modal way. In his celebrated 1970 series of lectures at Princeton University, published as *Naming and Necessity*, Saul Kripke advanced a new model of propositional logic, which consisted no longer of a single truth valuation representing actuality alone: e.g. in the actual world the proposition "Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*" is either true or false, but of indexed sets of truth valuations representing actuality and all possible combinations of actual possibilities: e.g. each of the propositions "Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet*", "Shakespeare didn't write *Hamlet*", "Shakespeare collaborated with other playwrights to write *Hamlet*", etc. is true in a different possible *state of the world*, i.e. "various ways in which things might have been, different from what has actually obtained" (Kripke 1980).

In the years to come Kripke's possible-world logical model was taken beyond the domain of modal logic into different branches of philosophical thought, even to the point of acquiring a dismaying sense of realism. For instance, David Kellogg Lewis claims in his

influential book *On the Plurality of Worlds* that "there are so many other worlds, in fact, that absolutely *every* way that a world could possibly be is a way that some world *is*" (Lewis 2) and that the difference from such a world and what we experience as the actual world is merely indexical. These "other worlds," he says, "are not remote. Neither are they nearby. They are not at any special distance whatever from here. They are not far in the past or future, nor for that matter, near; they are not at any temporal distance whatever from now" (Ibid.). What sustains the reality of Lewis's worlds, however, is their inaccessibility, i.e. possible worlds are composed of counterparts of people and things but no one and nothing can jump over from one possible world into another, as this would automatically destroy both worlds' completeness. This immediately reduces the potential of Lewis's theory to hardly more than a formal set of stipulated states of affairs, whose main asset is to provide a logically and mathematically elegant framework for the existence of counterfactual propositions.

Nevertheless, several influential literary theorists have found certain aspects of the framework of possible worlds illuminating and have adapted it to explain literary phenomena. Two common understandings usually underlie these approaches: first, that despite the limitations imposed by the considerations of traditional logical semantics, "non-actual possibilities make perfectly coherent systems which can be described and qualified, imagined and intended and to which one can refer" (Ronen 25); and second, that the possible worlds of logic are completely different from the possible worlds of literary studies, for instance, a fictional world may easily be impossible by logical standards, yet understandable and useful by critical ones. In *Fictional Worlds*, Thomas G. Pavel challenges the hackneyed premise that the literary worlds created by fictional texts are a pure imitation of the actual world and therefore fictional entities and events possess no actual ontology or truth-value. He advances a theory for the study of fictional narratives

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modelled on a possible-world frame which legitimizes the existence of non-actual possible states of affairs and extends the application of logical concepts to non-actual entities and events. In *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*, Lubomir Doležel develops Pavel's approach by proposing narratological models of fictional worlds based on possible worlds and fictional world transduction, as well as a comprehensive typology of the constituent motifs of fictional worlds. Both Pavel and Doležel see each imaginary domain projected by a work of fiction as an inherently incomplete possible world – a view also shared by Umberto Eco in *The Limits of Interpretation*: "possible worlds are always *small worlds*, that is, a relatively short course of local events in some nook or corner of the actual world" (67). To this Eco adds another three crucial features of fictional worlds. First, unlike the empty worlds of modal semantics, possible worlds in literature are furnished with dynamic content, i.e. they are states of affairs made up of individuals, properties and objects, which interact and change in compliance with the laws governing that particular world. Second, just like a significant part of the actual world, possible worlds are cultural constructs, in Kripke's words: "One stipulates possible worlds, one does not discover them by powerful microscopes" (qtd. Ibid.). Third, possible worlds are only useful when one needs to compare at least two alternative states of affairs. The latter observation leads directly to another key author – Marie-Laure Ryan – who in *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* describes the fictional domain as an entire textual system of narrative worlds encompassing the *textual actual world* and a whole host of *textual alternative possible worlds* containing the characters' beliefs, expectations, plans, moral commitments and prohibitions, wishes and desires, dreams and fantasies, etc. By means of this development Ryan provides a comprehensive typology of coexistent parallel worlds to be studied, compared and discussed by narratologists. She also adds yet another important rule to the consideration of textual worlds: the principle of minimum departure, which stipulates that each alternative world is congenitally modelled on the reader's idea of the

actual world and parts of it that are not described by the literary text as different are assumed by the reader to be identical with those in the actual world, i.e. in the possible world in which Shakespeare didn't write *Hamlet* gravitation still works, Shakespeare has two legs and the Norman Conquest of England took place in 1066, etc.

Generally, the possible-world-based approaches to literature discussed above, which also seem to be the best known ones, provide a stimulating framework for studying the relationships between the actual world and fictional worlds, as well as between different types of textual worlds within the plot structure of fiction itself. All of them, however, are exclusively oriented towards narrative fiction, excluding thus other non-narrative literary forms, such as lyrical poetry, under the pretext that they do not project fictional worlds but rather opinions and emotions and are therefore not amenable to possible-world analysis. This standpoint is challenged and convincingly dismissed by Elena Semino in *Language and World Creation in Poems and Other Texts* who not only successfully shows that Doležel and Ryan's typologies of fictional worlds may be applied even to modernist and postmodernist poetry, but also expands the scope of possible-world-based critical approaches to examine the worlds created in the interaction between a reader's mind and the linguistic patterns in an author's text. This development views possible worlds as cognitive constructs and considers their relationship with schemata and conceptual metaphors, developing a cognitive dimension in possible-world theory which links it up with other theories of worlds and abstract spaces – such as discourse worlds and text worlds, as well as conceptual space and mental spaces.

1.2.2 Discourse worlds and text worlds

In *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* Paul Werth argues that all cognitive processes of information handling, storage and retrieval are effected by

means of constant construction, modification and re-modification of *cognitive spaces*. This includes human understanding of both factual and fictional phenomena and events. According to Werth, all "uses of language presuppose occurrence in a context of situation, and… the existence of a conceptual domain of understanding, jointly constructed by the producer and recipient(s)" – the mental representation of the former he terms a *discourse world* and of the latter a *text world* (17). The difference between these two types of worlds is that the *discourse world* is based on momentary, actual, linguistic and extra-linguistic stimuli and is therefore conceived as grounded in actuality, while the *text world* is admittedly a total mental construct defined by its own deictic and referential elements, which activate relevant conceptual and experiential structures stored in the memory of the recipient. Thus, the cognitive perspective of the *text world* may modify the recipient's ideas of reference, truth and falsity, possibility and impossibility, since the elements of the text must be conceived not in relation to the recipient's understanding of actuality, but in relation to the reality of the constructed *cognitive space*.

The cognitive representation of a literary work, in Werth's terms, resembles a branching-universe structure comprising a number of different orders of worlds: it has two main *aspects*: an inner aspect concerning the *text world* that the work constructs, and an outer aspect concerning the *discourse world* in which the reception takes place; the *text world* itself consists of at least two *participant worlds*: the participant world intended by the author[30] and that perceived by the recipient; each of which, in turn, contains a multiplicity of character-centred discourse and text *sub-worlds*, the latter being further categorised into *deictic*, *attitudinal*, and *epistemic* ones. Yet, despite this overwhelming propagation of more and more worlds, the theory of discourse and text worlds falls short of offering a sufficiently sophisticated tool for the examination of human cognition at work.

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[30] To which the author's outer aspect should probably be added.

The main reason for this seems to be its focus on macro structures and its inability to propose a systematic account of the nature of the individual cognitive world and, in particular, of the ability of the human mind to entertain multiple world views in parallel. This, in turn, is attempted by another theory of the organisation and management of cognitive space.

1.2.3 Mental spaces

In *Mental Models: Toward a Cognitive Science of Language, Inference and Consciousness*, Philip Johnson-Laird observes that human beings make sense of their environment by constantly constructing, updating or discarding working cognitive representations of the world in their minds. He terms these cognitive constructs *mental models* and defines them as conceptual spaces used for the working out of probabilities and inferences. In *Spaces, Worlds and Grammar*, Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser develop Johnson-Laird's concept into a theory of *mental spaces*, i.e. short-term cognitive representations of states of affairs, constructed on the basis of linguistic input, on the one hand, and the recipient's background knowledge, on the other, which studies the dynamics of mental space construction and the transfer of information between mental spaces. According to it, at any given point in discourse, one or usually several mental spaces are set up and interlinked. The shifting between them starts from a selected *viewpoint* space and continues by changing *focus* and relating parallel spaces to each other. This movement ensures a constant circulation of information across spaces which, in turn, provides for the constant re-modelling of knowledge and experiential structures (Cf. Fauconnier and Sweetser 11-12).

The fundamental cognitive process effecting this constant re-negotiation of meaning between mental spaces is *conceptual blending* and is explored in close detail by

Fauconnier and Turner in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. This recent study traces the patterns by which counterparts from different mental spaces are partially mapped onto each other in order to be integrated into more complex conceptual networks. It also emphasises that conceptual blending is typical not only of metaphorical mapping but also of other cognitive processes such as the accommodation of ambiguities and counterfactuals.

The theory of mental spaces and the relevant notion of conceptual blending offer not only profound insights into the *modus operandi* of human cognition, but also a coherent theoretical framework for the exploration of cognitive processes. The deliberate attempt of the authors, however, to steer away from the term *world* seems somewhat unjustified. If a consciousness holds up a number of irreconcilably different *mental spaces*, no matter for how short a time, a closer look at any of them will inevitably show that it is embedded in a larger idea of the world. Moreover, it is unlikely that this idea of the world will be the same for all mental spaces, since according to the theory of sensitive dependence on initial condition, i.e. the butterfly effect, even the smallest difference holds the potential of transforming the whole system.

1.3 Shakespeare's wordplay and a particular kind of possible worlds

The theoretical overview set out above points at two important conclusions. First, the critical tradition focused on Shakespeare's wordplay has developed significantly since the beginning of the twentieth century, discovering more and more meanings by deeper and broader contextualisation of puns. This development moves from a close examination of the strictly linguistic context, to expand onto the historical and cultural contexts, and eventually to disperse into multiple interrelated scenarios engendered and held together by

the cognitive capacity of both author and readers. Second, the knowledge of how we think has also developed significantly over the same period, discarding the positivist single-worldview and embracing more and more the operation principles of the embodied mind that lean towards a multiple-worldview. The convergence of these two scholarly inquiries precisely in the domain of cognitive theory, which is by no means a coincidence, raises the logical question: Can the theories of worlds and abstract spaces, discussed in the second part of this chapter, inform the critical interpretation of wordplay? This dissertation suggests an affirmative answer to this question and proposes a possible-world critical perspective on the intricacies of Shakespeare's playful language. Since the author is not aware of this having been done before, neither with respect to Shakespeare, nor to wordplay in general, it is necessary to provide a preliminary outline of the approach.

As both Empson and Mahood show, punning in Shakespeare is often not an essentially isolated and local phenomenon: the alternative significations of complex words typically cohere with the alternative significations of other complex words and thus set up common cognitive domains which may take successively the shape of frames, scripts, schemata, scenarios or whole states of affairs, i.e. cognitive worlds. Now, from a receptionist point of view these constructs are by nature mental spaces because they are constructed in the interplay of linguistic input and the viewer/reader's background knowledge but may be recognised as different types of text worlds when integrated into the fictional context of the respective work, and also discourse worlds when they are allowed to interact with what the actual world is believed to be – by being talked and written about, for instance. Regardless of how far these constructs are contextualised and, respectively, what they are called, the best way to describe them is through a set of stable characteristics:

- They are cognitive constructs, i.e. linear rundowns of knowledge about a possible state of affairs.

- They are multiple sets, i.e. by definition a pun involves at least two discrete extensions and, respectively, intensions.

- They exist in parallel to each other, i.e. they project simultaneously and commensurately in an enwrapping multi-dimensional cognitive space.

- They are coherent, i.e. each of them is logically consistent and contains no internal contradictions.

- They are essentially incomplete, i.e. each of them contains merely a fraction of a complete state of affairs but opens the way to further contextualisation.

- Each of them creates a new possible world because when interacting with the viewer/reader's cognitive system it holds the potential of completely transforming both the fictional world that is being created with respect to the work and the viewer/reader's actual worldview.

- Finally, there is constant cognitive traffic between and among these possible worlds which results in cognitive blending and enhances the viewer/reader's comprehension of complex notions, complex moral issues, and complex personalities.

Since for the purposes of the dissertation this particular type of cognitive constructs will be referred to, tritely enough, as "possible worlds," rather than be characterised as yet another possible-world-based model, it is important to make here a few provisions concerning the term. The possible worlds considered hereafter are different from the possible worlds of modal logic in that they are not empty mathematical sets but furnished cognitive structures. They are also different from the possible worlds, fictional worlds, and text worlds used by critics like Pavel, Doležel, Eco, and Ryan in the interpretation of

literature, in that they are not grounded in the narrative composition of the work but in its semantic fabric. In the latter respect they are most similar to the possible worlds of two-dimensional semantics, which sees the meaning of each linguistic sign as a compound of two synchronic dimensions: *extension* and *intension* – the *extension* being the referent of the linguistic sign, while the *intension* mapping a possible world to that referent (Cf. Chalmers 1-5). The word *possible* in the term means "conceivable in non-contradictory terms by the mind" and emphasises the cognitive accessibility of the construct, while *world* means "coherent and epistemologically stable cognitive state of affairs that may be identified, reconstructed, abstracted, described, and analysed separately from other concurrent states of affairs."

It is also important to note that the implementation of such a possible-world approach in this dissertation is motivated by several significant advantages that make it more adequate and more promising than other structural approaches for the purpose of examining wordplay:

- It provides a cognitively plausible yet relatively uncomplicated tool for the structural analysis of puns and poetic ambiguity in general.
- It offers the possibility to examine in a linear way non-linear processes which characteristically transcend inherent logical and linguistic limitations.
- It provides virtually unlimited room for the investigation of each individual cognitive coherence that is perceived by the viewer/reader.
- By permitting a discrete inquiry into parallel cognitive coherences, it allows to map out the cognitive space between them and the speculation about the conceptual blending that takes place there.
- Finally, a possible-world approach to wordplay is perhaps the only essentially structuralist theoretical construct that not only possesses the stamina to survive

intact the demolishing critique of post-structuralism but is prepared to engage in a dialogue with such a critique and be enriched and empowered by it.

All in all, the critical perspective tested in this dissertation is still firmly grounded in the belief that our abstract thinking is based on structural, hence linear, models and is looking for a way to translate evidently non-linear phenomena and processes, such as wordplay and the intricacies of human cognition, into intelligible theoretical language, naturally, without loosing sensitivity to their complexity.

1.4 The possible worlds of Shakespeare's wordplay illustrated

The remaining part of this chapter applies the above approach to Shakespeare's *Sonnet 49*. This is done in order to practically illustrate the theoretical framework described in the previous section:

> *Against* that time (if ever that time come)
>
> When I shall see thee frown on my *defects*,
>
> Whenas thy *love* hath *cast* his utmost *sum*,
>
> Called to that *audit* by advised respects –
>
> *Against* that time when thou shalt *strangely* pass,
>
> And *scarcely* greet me with that sun, thine eye,
>
> When *love*, *converted* from the thing it was
>
> Shall reasons find of *settled* gravity –
>
> *Against* that time do I *ensconce* me here
>
> Within the knowledge of mine own *desert*,
>
> And this my hand, *against* my self *uprear*

To *guard* the *lawful reasons* on thy part –

To leave *poor* me, thou hast the strength of *laws*,

Since why to *love* I can *allege* no *cause*. (*SS* 44)

At first glance, it all looks quite lucid. The speaker envisions a hypothetical moment in the future when the love of his youthful friend will subside and give way to a more rational disposition which will make him feel aversion towards the speaker's evident defects and hardly look at him whenever they pass each other. So, in order to protect himself from the agony of that moment, the speaker tries to convince himself in advance that justice will then be on the side of the youth because love is an irrational state and there exist no justifiable obligations that can guarantee reciprocity.

Manifestly, the poem revolves round an extended metaphor, which resides in the thematic relationship between the following individual metaphors: "hath cast his utmost sum" (line 3), "audit" (line 4), "my hand against my self uprear" (line 11), "lawful reasons" (line 12), "the strength of laws" (line 13), and "allege no cause" (line 14). The common source domain clearly is the court of law where "final judgments" are reached at the end of "hearings" after the "witnesses have given testimony," judgments that are based on "legitimate evidence" and "the provisions of legislation," and come in response to "certain claims based on appropriate legal grounds." When the resultant cognitive scheme is incorporated into the main text world of the poem, a possible world (PW1) is projected into a hypothetical cognitive space in which « the speaker is brought before the court in what resembles a divorce case[31] and not only accepts the judgment issued against him, which gives the right to his youthful friend to abandon him on grounds of his alleged

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[31] One is inevitably reminded of Hermione's trial in *The Winter's Tale* or that of Katherine of Aragon in *King Henry VIII*.

defects, but also testifies against himself in order to facilitate the judicial decision because he cannot advance any arguments to the contrary ».[32]

This possible world activates legal intensions in other, at first glance monosemous, words such as "defects" (line 2) – "imperfections, deficiencies" but also "failures to comply, defaults in performance" and "desert" (line 10): "the state of deserving reward but also punishment." Interestingly, the meanings of the verbs "defect" and "desert" converge in another cognitive domain – the military one – where they both mean "to abandon one's allegiance and perchance even join the opposing forces." This ties up with the alternative meaning of "convert" (line 7) – "to change loyalties and become a traitor," and points at another possible coherence of meanings sustained by "ensconce" (line 9), the repetition of "against" (lines 1-11), "my hand … uprear" (line 11), and "guard" (line 12). The emergent cognitive scheme involves "treason" and "desertion" followed by "an attempt to fortify oneself" by "taking a close guard" and "fending off coming blows." The emergent possible world (PW2) suggests « a history of betrayal between the youthful friend and the speaker, which results in the abandonment of the latter and his attempt to lock out in himself as a self-preservation mechanism against the admittedly legitimate reasons of the former ». Yet, PW2 leads to an important twist which resides in the pre-calculated ambiguity of "against" (lines 1-11) and "desert" (line 10). In the first two uses of "[a]gainst that time" (line 1 and line 5) the meaning of the preposition ranges from "by, before" to "in anticipation of, in preparation of," while in lines 9 and 11 its sounding becomes much more defensive and leans towards "in opposition to." Such an interpretation increases the possibility that under the cover of unconditional surrender the speaker may still be trying to defend himself. This throws slightly different light on "desert" (line 10) and allows the

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[32] Double Guillemets (« ») are used here and throughout this dissertation to mark out the description of possible worlds and mental constructs.

possibility that it refers to an "unrevealed merit" rather than to an "admitted punishment" or "the speaker's desertion." The latter prospect is reinforced by "*poor* me" (line 13), which links up retrospectively with "strangely" (line 5) – "coldly, unfriendly" but also "heartlessly, unnaturally," and "scarcely" (line 6) – "sparingly, niggardly." Correspondingly, "poor" (line 13) and "scarcely" (line 6) participate in another very prominent cognitive domain pervading the poem – the domain of financial relations. This dimension is based on the fiscal meanings of "defects" (line 2), "cast" and "sum" (line 3), "audit" (line 4), "convert" (line 7), and "settled" (line 8) which establish a cognitive scheme of debt collection, which entails "continuous failure to make certain payments" registered by "a total examination of income and expenditure" and a "compulsory *settlement* of the debt" by "*converting* property into currency." The possible world (PW3) projected by this coherence hints that « the speaker may be financially dependent on his youthful friend and that he fears that under the influence of others' sober advice and his own advance to mature thinking the youth may become more materialistic and that the speaker's accumulated debts may then jeopardise their friendship ».

Thus, the language of *Sonnet 49* sustains at least three discrete possible worlds which exist in non-linear relationship to each other – in fact, they are superimposed on top of one another in multi-dimensional space and linked together by means of wordplay. This effect is evidently not an end in itself but is rather a stylistic device for controlled conceptual blending aimed at enhancing the meaning of the poem along three obvious lines: i) the conveyance of complex notions, ii) the expounding of complex moral issues and iii) the construction of complex personalities.

First, the complex notion in question is doubtlessly love, both the love of the youthful friend to the speaker and by reversal the love of the speaker to the youthful friend. The word "love" appears three times in the sonnet: proportionally in the beginning (line 3),

in the middle (line 7) and in the end (line 14). Moreover, it always appears in the syntactic environment of polysemous words or phrases that partake of all three possible worlds simultaneously. "[C]ast his utmost sum" (line 3) can be interpreted as i) "reach a final judgment," ii) "perish," and iii) "reckon up the final sum." "[C]*onverted* from the thing it was" (line 7) can mean: i) "to exchange property, security or bond for something of equivalent value," ii) "to become a traitor, to collaborate with the enemy," and iii) "to liquidate property." "[C]ause" (line 14) signifies simultaneously: i) "legal ground or reason," ii) "ideals of a group or movement," and iii) "material interest in a transaction." This complex context guarantees a complex understanding of *love* in the poem and its entanglement with each of the projected possible worlds: love may not affect the scales of justice and cannot be claimed the court of law; it can push one to abscond from one's duty, but it can also urge one to fight against all odds; it may be converted into indifference by financial issues but it cannot repay a long-term debt.

Second, the complex moral issue in question, apparently, is the youthful friend's right to abandon the deficient speaker when his love for him grows cold. The sonnet seems to build a strong case in support of such an act: all three possible worlds seem to legitimise the actions of the youth – presenting him, first, as a plaintiff who lawfully pursues a meritorious claim, then, as a general who justly banishes a defector, and finally, as a creditor who rightfully enforces payment of a debt. At the same time, the reader cannot escape the worming feeling of bitter unfairness underlying an apparently legitimate decision.[33] This feeling seems to be achieved at two levels of comprehension. On the one hand, the language of the sonnet provides a continuous chain of empathy-provoking imagery that draws on all three possible worlds: the youthful friend "frowns" (line 2),

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[33] Here we are reminded of *King Henry IV Part 2*: "FALSTAFF. My king! my Jove! I speak to thee, my heart! / KING. I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers." (*2H4* V.v.46-47)

passes "strangely" (line 5), "scarcely" greets (line 6), his love is "converted" (line 7) and eventually he "leaves" the speaker (line 13); while the speaker is aware of his "defects" (line 2) yet loving (line 6), deserted (line 10) yet forgiving (lines 11-12), miserable (line 13) yet objective (lines 13-14). Thus, the accumulation of semantic factors evokes a familiar cognitive scenario: « the foolish and arrogant youthful friend forsakes the wise and gentle oldere speaker because of his age and failing looks », which assigns the roles of "the bad" and "the good" character correspondingly. On the other hand, each of the three possible worlds is morally incompatible with the conventional idea of love in the mind of a conventional reader, and in this way undermines the moral judgment of the youth – after all, in the cognitive world we seem to share – love should not be an issue that can be regulated by the law, nor should it justify hostility, and least of all should it be estimated in monetary terms.

Third, the complex personality in question is evidently that of the speaker. Clearly, the text world created by the first two quatrains of *Sonnet 49* is a modal projection of contingent events signalled explicitly by the conditioning of: "if ever that time come" (line 1), and supported by the locatives "when" (lines 2 and 5), "whenas" (line 3), and the modal verb forms "shall" and "shalt." Thus, it only exists in the mind of the speaker allowing him to project other hypothetical versions of himself in the possible worlds identified above. In PW1 he is a justly punished culprit, in PW2 he is a deserter looking for protection in spite of his wrongdoing, in PW3 he is a debtor who eventually has to pay for his borrowed prosperity. In all worlds he readily acknowledges his guilt and condemns himself in order to defend the right of his friend to abandon him. Expectantly, this saint-like humility imparts a heroic quality to the speaker and evokes the compassion of the reader, turning the poem into a complex appeal addressed discreetly to the friend – still loving, as he is at the

time of its composition – and intending to subtly prevent the hypothetical world projected by the first two quatrains from taking place.

Naturally, *Sonnet 49* is chosen for the above illustration because of its capacity to show all elements of the proposed approach concisely. A more profound examination of Shakespeare's wordplay through the critical perspective of possible worlds is offered in the three case studies set forth in the following three chapters. They focus both on Shakespeare's lyrical poetry and his poetic drama and examine separately each of the suggested cognitive effects of wordplay: Chapter two explores its significance in conveying complex notions; Chapter three inquires into its importance in presenting complex moral issues; and Chapter four researches its usefulness in constructing complex personalities.

Substance and *shadows*: Shakespeare's wordplay and the conveyance of complex notions

The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are

no worse, if imagination amend them. (*MND* V.i.211-212)

The first part of this case study surveys the cultural and philosophical dimensions of the early modern dichotomy between *substance* and *shadows*, as used in Shakespeare's *Sonnet 53*, to show that it presents a theoretical framework for the contemporaneous understanding of the conceptualisation process. The main argument of this part is that the essentialism expressed through the related notions of *substance* and *shadows* stimulates a multiple worldview and conceptual blending between cognitive domains. The remaining part of the study explores another of Shakespeare's uses of the dual concept in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second* where it relates to the conveyance of the complex notion of *grief* through a propagation of possible worlds sustained by wordplay.

What is your *substance*,[34] whereof are you made,

That millions of strange *shadows* on you tend?

Since every one, hath every one, one shade,

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[34] My italics: here and hereafter.

And you but one, can every *shadow* lend:

Describe Adonis and the counterfeit,

Is poorly imitated after you,

On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,

And you in Grecian tires are painted new:

Speak of the spring, and foison of the year,

The one doth *shadow* of your beauty show,

The other as your bounty doth appear,

And you in every blessed shape we know.

In all external grace you have some part,

But you like none, none you for constant heart. (*SS* 47-48)

The carefully wrought central conceit of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 53* is spun around the early modern distinction between *substance* and *shadows*. As Miriam Joseph observes, this is an idea that "seems to have singularly interested Shakespeare" (Joseph 110) since even a conservative count yields at least twenty key uses of the concept in Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic works. In his edition of the sonnets Stephen Booth glosses the meaning of *substance* and *shadows*, in lines 1 and 2 of *Sonnet 53*, as a conventional allusion to several popular, yet essentially inconsistent, even paradoxical, tenets of Renaissance Platonism, which he roughly summarises as follows: [35]

What we ordinarily take for reality is not reality; the particulars we perceive are only *shadows* (images, reflections) of the *substance* (ideas, forms) manifested in, and distorted by, the dross of physicality. Each particular thing, each shadow, has

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[35] Indeed, the idea in question was evidently commonplace in Shakespeare's times as many of his contemporaries, e.g. John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Lodge, George Peele, Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, used the distinction between *substance* and *shadow* to express a wide range of opinions and feelings. This only increases the notion's cultural significance and justifies a deeper analysis of the conceptual framework underlying it.

something of reality, i.e. something of the form it approximates, but the particulars we perceive are impermanent and always changing, while reality is unchanging, constant. (*SS* 224)

As Booth's summary suggests, Shakespeare's use of *substance* and *shadows* blends together a number of coeval philosophical concepts. At the same time, Shakespeare engages both the notion and its constituent elements in the sonnet's wordplay, producing multiple puns and expanding the possibilities for interpretation. In order to be able to trace the links of wordplay we need first to disentangle the complex conceptual dichotomy established between *substance* and *shadows*.

Above all, this diatic concept seems to be based on the long-standing Aristotelian theory of substances, which treats *substances* as imperceptible, yet intelligible, universal and complete epistemological concepts, as opposed to the perceptible, particular, and inherently incomplete manifestations of such substances in the material world, i.e. their *accidents*.[36] This fundamental division provides the groundwork for many early modern textbooks on logic and rhetoric:

> Substaunce, or beying… is a thing whiche standeth by it selfe, and needeth no helpe of an other , but hath his proper beying and substaunce naturally…
>
> The substaunce receiueth by alteration of itselfe, and at sundrie times, diuerse and contrarie accidents and yet the substauce is not contrarie to the owne nature…
>
> No substaunce can be seen with our yies, but onelie the outewarde Accidentes,whereby we iudge and knowe, euerie seuerall creature. (Wilson, "Reason" 9-10)

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[36] Cf. Aristotle's *Categories* and *Metaphysics*.

for euery thing, whatsoeuer it be, is either a substance, or accident: and if it be a substance, it is found in the Table of substance hereafter following: if it be an accident, it belongeth either to quantitie, qualitie, relation, action, passion time, place, to be scite, or to have: for these be the Tables of accidets, in one of the which euery accident is easie to be found. (Blundeville 15)

The pragmatic objective of such textbooks, however, reduces the complexity of Aristole's theory to a formal set of logico-grammatical differences: "Substance is the same that is spoken of manie, which differ in fourme and kynde, when the question is asked… as when we saie: What manner of thing is man? We must aunswere: hee is endoued with reason: If the question be asked what a man is: We muste aunswere by his Genus, or generall worde he is a liuyng creature" (Wilson, "Reason" 7). Shakespeare must have been forced to reason in the like manner during the long hours he spent in the classroom of King Edward VI's Grammar School at Stratford, as later, writing *Love's Labour's Lost*, he demonstrated the futility of such ratiocinations: "ARMADO Boy, I do love that country girl that I took in the park with the *rational hind* Costard"[37] (*LLL* I.ii.112-113). The facetious polysemy of *hind* here hinges on the logical pattern quoted above: Costard is a man, hence substantially a "living creature" (e.g. human being, deer, hind-fish), what distinguishes man from deer or fish, however, is the fact that the former is "endowed with reason", i.e. rationality, which is an accident since it can be removed and Costard will still be a man. By early modern scholastic standards Armado's logical definition is impeccable. What is more, in the context of the scene his cue, too, makes sense since "hind" *accidentally* has the meaning of "rustc, clown, farm servant, agricultural labourer" – a semantic domain which, for Armado, does not intuitively suggest rationality. Nevertheless,

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[37] My italics.

in the context of the play, the jibe spent on Costard bounces back at Armado and through him at the dubious advantages of pedantic reasoning.

Shakespeare, along with many others, must have recognised the limitations of the Aristotelian approach and turned to its then fashionable, howbeit mystical, prototype: the Platonic theory of forms (or ideas), which abstracts an aspatial and atemporal reality of absolute being, conceivable only through the intellect, from an illusionary and essentially mimetic material and temporal reality, perceived by the senses.

Is there or is there not an absolute justice… and an absolute beauty and absolute good? …   did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense? … Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs? or rather, is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of each thing which he considers? … And he attains to the purest knowledge of them who goes to each with the mind alone, not introducing or intruding in the act of thought sight or any other sense together with reason, but with the very light of the mind in her own clearness searches into the very truth of each; he who has got rid, as far as he can, of eyes and ears and, so to speak, of the whole body, these being in his opinion distracting elements which when they infect the soul hinder her from acquiring truth and knowledge—who, if not he, is likely to attain to the knowledge of true being? (Plato, "Phaedo" 66)

Shakespeare was undoubtedly aware of the above ideas as he toyed with the image of Plato's Academy and its imitations throughout Renaissance Europe. In *Love's Labour's Lost* he introduced the King of Navarre's plan to turn his court into a "little academe," in which he and his friends would spend three years renouncing all sensual delectations that

"be the stops that hinder study quite / And train our intellects to vain delight" and spend their days "living in philosophy" to know that which else they should not know (*LLL* I.i.12-71). A plan ingeniously criticised by Berowne – who subverts the argument by taking the Platonic metaphor of getting rid of one's eyes literally, suggesting the risk of actual blindness, which ironically is a possible effect of straining one's sight too much. He punningly equates Plato's intellectual light of the mind with the light that, according to early modern science, human eyes emitted and projected forth:[38]

> Why, all delights are vain; but that most vain
>
> Which, with pain purchas'd, doth inherit pain,
>
> As painfully to pore upon a book
>
> To seek the light of truth; while truth the while
>
> Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.
>
> Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile;
>
> So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,
>
> Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes. (*LLL* I.i.72-79)

The ideas of light and darkness are developed further in the most popular of Plato's dialogues in early modern times – *The Republic*. In Book VII, reflecting on education, Socrates considers the enlightedness and unenlightedness of human beings by means of a memorable parable, which shows people living in a deep cave since their childhood, sitting on its bottom, chained and immobilised, with their backs towards a blazing fire, watching their own and each other's *shadows* that are projected onto the wall before them. What would happen, Socrates speculates, if any of these prisoners were liberated and dragged upwards into the daylight? Would he be able to perceive the richer reality of the world?

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[38] See Eric Langly's *Anatomizing the early-modern eye: a literary case study*.

Would his eyes stand the light of the sun? And what if, after this man got accustomed to the world outside, he were taken back into the cave, would he still be able to understand and value the reality of shadows? Then Socrates explains the entire allegory: "the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun", "the journey upwards [is] the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world" where "the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort, and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual" and "that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed" (Plato, "The Republic" bk 7, 517).

Finally, the overall idea of a constant essence (*substance*) moving through fleeting shapes (*shadows*), which pervades *Sonnet 53*, although central to Plato and Aristotle's metaphysics, is traceable back to Heraclitus, Parmenides and Pythagoras and it was most probably through Ovid's illustrious narrativisation of the central tenet of the latter's philosophical teaching, in his *Metamorphoses*, that it was disseminated widely throughout the early modern world:[39]

> All things doo chaunge. But nothing sure dooth perrish. This same spright
>
> Dooth fleete, and fisking heere and there dooth swiftly take his flyght
>
> From one place to another place, and entreth every wyght,
>
> Removing out of man to beast, and out of beast to man.
>
> But yet it never perrisheth nor never perrish can.

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[39] Hath Ovid into one whole masse in this booke brought in frame. / Fowre kynd of things in this his worke the Poet dooth conteyne. / That nothing under heaven dooth ay in stedfast state remayne. / And next that nothing perisheth: but that eche *substance* takes / Another shape than that it had. (Ovid lines 8-12)

And even as supple wax with ease receyveth fygures straunge,

And keepes not ay one shape, ne hydes assured ay from chaunge,

And yit continueth alwayes wax in substaunce. (Ovid bk 15, lines 183-190)

Ovid was an obvious model for Shakespeare. The latter's works teem with Ovidian characters, stories, mentions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, even in parts that Shakespeare may have written to act himself, like Holophrenes in *Love's Labour's Lost* and Touchstone in *As You Like It*, Ovid's persona is directly evoked.[40] The link between the two poets was recognised, and expressed in remarkably Pythagorean terms, as early as 1598 by Francis Meres in his *Comparative Discourse of our English Poets and the Greeke, Latine and Italian Poets*: "As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagorus, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous & honey-tongued Shakespeare, witness his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugared sonnets among his private friends, &c." Therefore, it is no surprise that elements of Ovidian thought have influenced Shakespeare and participate in the conceptualisation patterns that transpire through his writing.

Thus, Shakespeare's notion of *substance and shadows* seems to be a curious blend of several philosophical concepts: « substances are the essences of things, substances are imperceptible through the senses but accessible through the intellect, accidents are perceptible through the senses, accidents reflect fractions of the profound reality of substances, accidents are similar to platonic shadows, shadows are ever changing and transient, substances are similar to platonic forms/ideas, substances are constant ». Although the influence of the resultant epistemological approach can be traced to various domains of Renaissance culture, it is its portentous impact on language that is of central import to this study. Under the pressure of the above "essentialism", the use of language

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[40] For a detailed account of Ovid's influence on Shakespeare and Shakespeare's creative use of Ovid see Jonathan Bate's *Shakespeare and Ovid*.

gravitates toward a reach out for substantial meaning beyond the fluctuating particulars of material form – an attitude observable at a number of linguistic levels including orthography.

On the very surface of early modern texts we observe the phenomenon of orthographic variation. For example, in Addition IIc, Hand D, to the anonymous *Elizabethan* play, *Sir Thomas More*,[41] within three lines (6-7) the word *country* is spelled in three different ways ("Countrie", "Country", and "Countrey") and, more interestingly, within four lines (41-44) the word *sheriff* is spelled in five different ways ("Shreiff", "shreef", "shreeve", "Shreiue", and "Shreue").[42] This extraordinary multiplicity in such a little space seems curiously deliberate. So much so that it may reveal a crucial idea about the use of language in Shakespeare's time, which we normally tend to ignore because of the fundamental cultural difference between us and the people of the early modern period.[43] Today's idea of language is inherently based on rationality and standardisation. Mostly arbitrary in nature, cognitively discrete meanings are ascribed to visually discrete written words. The correct pronunciation of words is prescribed. Exceptions and variations are transcribed and recorded. In early modern times, however, access to shared cognitive concepts, frames, scripts, schemata or scenarios was mediated by a flux of coexistent multiple oral and orthographic variants. It required a mode of thinking that understood the tangible outward shapes as incomplete and inconstant reflections of a unified and stable idea, a mode of thinking that went readily beyond the *shadow* and stretched out into

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[41] Addition IIc, Hand D, to the anonymous play *Sir Thomas More* survives in a single manuscript, MS. Harley 7368, in the collection of the British Museum and is possibly the only surviving example of Shakespeare's poetic writing penned in his own hand.

[42] It is important to note that the spelling in both instances obviously does not partake in any modulation of meaning, charcterisation, or stylisation.

[43] See Terence Hawkes's *Shakespeare's Talking Animals*.

cognitive space in search for the *substance*. Therefore, the exuberant procession of orthographic variants that we observe in Addition IIc may be interpreted as deliberate attempts to provide more ways of accessing the respective concept, rather than a careless, by our standards, almost irrational imperfection of a poorly educated man.

Importantly, a similar attitude to the use of language is observed at the level of style. Under the influence of Erasmus's *De Utraque Verborum ac Rerum Copia* (On Copia of Words and Ideas), written at the request of John Colet for the students of the newly established school of St Paul's and first published in 1512, copiousness, or semantic variation and the ability to paraphrase ideas, became one of the most important skills in both speaking and writing:

> if all things continually present themselves to the mind without variation, it will at once turn away in disgust. Thus the whole profit of a speech will be lost. This great fault will shun easily who is prepared to turn the same thought into many forms, as the famous Proteus is said to have changed his form …[44] (Erasmus 16)

On Copia went through many editions and the ideas it presented were confirmed and developed by the various English books on rhetoric and style manuals that were to come, expanding the Protean nature of language and nourishing the art of dividing what was believed to be one *substance* into many *shadows*:

> BEROWNE This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy
>
> This Signor Junior, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid,
>
> Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
>
> Th'anointed sovereign of sighs and groans,

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[44] To illustrate the concept of *copia*, Erasmus provides a hundred and forty-eight variants of the sentence: 'Your letter has delighted me very much.'

Liege of all loiterers and malcontents,

Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,

Sole imperator and great general

Of trotting paritors – O my little heart. (*LLL* III.i.174-181)

The poet evidently finds the word "heart" insufficient to express the *substance* he has in mind, so he resorts to a gallery of images, moving from abstract conventions like "Dan Cupid", to more immediate, material and, for that matter, more expressive figures like "Dread prince of plackets,"[45] "king of codpieces", and "Sole imperator and great general of trotting paritors."[46] In *The Garden of Eloquence* Henry Peacham explains that such heaping, or as he calls it *Partitio*, "serveth to minister plenity and variety of matter", and admits that "of many fountains or figures of eloqution, there is not one that may be found more frutefull then this, or more plentifull in the multitude of branches" (Peacham 125-126).

Thus, the overall attitude to language and knowledge, described by the concepts of *substance* and *shadows*, enabled early modern people to grasp without difficulty the unity behind sundry shapes and to blend the different forms of such shapes into complex ideas. This aptitude was craftfully manipulated by Shakespeare to evoke more subtle and more flexible amalgamations of meaning. As already noted, the use of *substance* and *shadows* in *Sonnet 53* works at two discernible levels: on the one hand, as a cultural concept; and on the other, as a pair of words connected with each other due to their conceptual relationship but at the same time containing diverse meanings that the poet may turn and *translace* as the tailor does his garment.

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[45] *OED* translates "plackets" as slits in petticoats or skirts, by extension the word may have been used for women's sexual organs.

[46] *OED* translates "paritors/apparitors" as summoning officers of an ecclesiastical court where sexual crimes such as adultery were tried.

On the macro level, *Sonnet 53* is a straightforward pursuit of the true substance of absolute beauty-and-good, of the Platonic kind, which holds together a multiplicity of *accidents*, or *shadows*.[47] Each *accident* reflects only a fraction of the complete perfection of the substance beyond. The fact that the *accidents* expounded in the poem form antitheses, i.e. are contrary in nature: Adonis is the most beautiful man in classical mythology, while Helen is the most beautiful woman, spring is the fresh and youthful birth of the year, while autumn the rich and mellow prelude to its expiration, only broadens the scope of the conceit including everything between the extremes they represent. Nevertheless, the logic of the poem moves beyond such transient external grace towards the hidden substance it set about from the very beginning – to resolve its search in the constant nature of the beloved's heart.

On the micro level, however, *Sonnet 53* presents a more complex picture. "Substance" (line 1) establishes the idea of "essential nature" only through the antagonistic notion of "material of which a body is formed" (Cf. *Sonnet 44* "If the dull substance of my flesh were thought, / Injurious distance should not stop my way"), sustained by "whereof are you made". It also resonates with "tend" (attend), "lend" and "bounty" projecting its meaning of "wealth, estate" (Cf. *CE* I.i.24-25 "DUKE Thy substance, valued at the highest rate, / Cannot amount unto a hundred marks"). "Strange" (line 2) suggests both a) "not pertaining to you" (Cf. *CE* II.ii.147-148 "ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE In Ephesus I am but two hours old, / As strange unto your town as to your talk") and b) "fantastical, outlandish" (Cf. *AC* V.ii.97-98 "CLEOPATRA Nature wants stuff / To vie strange forms

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[47] Cf. *AYL* III.ii.135-151 "Teaching all that read to know / The quintessence of every sprite / Heaven would in little show. / Therefore heaven Nature charg'd / That one body should be fill'd / With all graces wide-enlarg'd. / Nature presently distill'd / Helen's cheek, but not her heart, / Cleopatra's majesty, / Atalanta's better part, / Sad Lucretia's modesty. / Thus Rosalinde of many parts / By heavenly synod was devis'd, / Of many faces, eyes, and hearts, / To have the touches dearest priz'd. / Heaven would that she these gifts should have, / And I to live and die her slave.'

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with fancy"). The ambiguous context constructed by the fist two lines of the poem extracts from the first mention of "shadows" (line 2) its full array of meanings: a) "images cast by bodies intercepting the light", b) "reflected images" (Cf. *JC* I.ii.58-59 "CASSIUS Such mirrors… That you might see your shadow"), c) "unreal images, delusive appearances, imitations, counterfeits" (Cf. *Ham* II.ii.265-266 "HAMLET the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream"), d) "portraits, counterfeits" (Cf. *MV* III.ii.126-128 "BASSANIO look how far / The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow / In underprizing it, so far this shadow Doth limp behind the substance"), e) "supernatural spirits, phantoms" (Cf. *MND* III.ii.346 "PUCK Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook"), f) "theatrical players, actors" (Cf. *Mac* V.v.24 "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player", and g) "servants, followers" (Cf. *1H4* II.ii.150-151 "POINS I am your shadow, my lord; / I'll follow you").

This multiplicity of meaning unlocks the polysemous nature of nearly all words and images henceforth and provides a wide range of possibilities for "shade" (line 3), "shadow" (lines 4 and 10), and "shape" (line 12). Lines 3 and 4 allow for various interpretations: a) every person has just one shade / shadow / appearance / reflection / ghost / servant / follower, while you can lend one of your lot to each one of your servants / followers, but also imitations / reflections, b) every complete person has one shade / shadow, while you, though being complete, can cast all your shadows / appearances / reflections away, and c) although each creature has only one form / appearance / reflection, you can show in the likeness of and thus share the existence of each creature, etc. This multifacetedness splits the image of Adonis in line 5, apparently employed to convey the idea of perfect male beauty (Cf. *VA* II.8-10 "The field's chief flower, sweet above compare, / Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man, / More white and red than doves or roses are"), and evokes a shadow of distance and coldness (Cf. Ibid. "lifeless picture, cold and

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senseless stone, / Well-painted idol, image dun and dead, / Statue contenting but the eye alone"). Similarly, the reader is reminded that the image of Helen in line 7, employed to convey the idea of perfect female beauty, comes along with the blot of her betrayal and the woe she brought to both Trojans and Greeks (Cf. *TC* I.i.91-92 "Helen must needs be fair, / When with your blood you daily paint her thus"). *Counterfeit* in line 5, apparently used in the sense of "verbal picture, image" (Cf. *Sonnet 16* "And many maiden gardens yet unset, / With virtuous wish would bear you living flowers, / Much liker than your painted counterfeit") and reinforced by *poorly imitated* in line 6, retains its inherent notions of "pretence, deceit and disguise", and from there assumes another possible sense of "impersonation of a theatrical character" (Cf. *AYL* IV.iii.165-166 "ROSALIND I do so, I confess it. / Ah, sirrah, a body would think this was well counterfeited. / I pray you tell your brother how well I counterfeited"). The "art of beauty" that is to be set on Helen's cheek (line 7) points at the art of make-up and artificial beauty presented in Ovid's *Medicamina faciei femineae*[48] and so does "painted" (line 8) (Cf. *Ham* V.i.168-169 "HAMLET Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick"). "Tyres" (line 8) are basically clothes but also "disguises, theatrical costumes" (Cf. *TN* V.i.250 "VIOLA my masculine usurp'd attire"). "Show" and "appear" (lines 10 and 11 respectively) besides their obvious senses of "display" and "represent" also convey the histrionic ideas of "act, perform" and "impersonate". "Part" (line 13) contains the meaning of "dramatic role" and influences retrospectively the semantic aura of "shape," in the previous line, bringing to the front its early modern sense of "part, character impersonated; the make up and costume suited to a particular part" (Cf. Samuel Pepys's *Diary*, 7 Jan 1661: "Kinaston, the boy; had the good turn to appear in three shapes: first, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes, to please Morose; then in fine clothes, as a gallant, and in them

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[48] Later translated as "The Art of Beauty", and possibly known under this title in Shakespeare's time.

was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house, and lastly, as a man; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house" and also *MW* V.i.20-22 "FALSTAFF I will tell you – he beat me grievously in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, Master Brook, I fear not Goliath with a weaver's beam"). The linguistic ambiguity of *Sonnet 53* casts a final shadow on "like" (line 14) which is intuitively construed as a preposition sustaining the comparison between "you" and "none", but it may also be interpreted as a verb.[49] This possibility could give the last line an entirely different reading: "you like no one and no one likes you for your constant heart" implying that it is the "external grace" from line 13 that everyone likes "you" for.

A retrospective reconsideration of the poem from such a perspective would discover how easily each conceit yields to complete reversal: "In all external grace you have some part" is no longer "you partake of all outward perfection", but becomes "you are trying to act out, to resemble, each external grace". "And you in every blessed shape we know" is no longer "we recognise your perfection in each divine form", but rather "we have often seen how, actor-like, you impersonate every beautiful personage". Spring and autumn as well as Helen and Adonis in the poem are just artificial images, shadows, of the things they represent. This is clearly marked by "speak" (line 9), "painted" (line 8), "set" (line 7), "imitate" (line 6), and "describe" (line 5). Therefore, in strictly Platonic terms they are all "shadows of shadows", or as Rosencrantz puts it "a shadow's shadows", an interpretation that throws different light on *shadow* in line 4: "And you but one, can every shadow lend", suggesting that "for all your seeming beauty and grace, you are nothing but an artificial pretender, whose true substance is governed by fluctuation, change, falseness". Under the pressure of such an interpretation, the quest for the true substance of the

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[49] Such an interpretation is made possible by the fact that what may be the third person singular form of the verb like, i.e. "likes", is ellipted from the second part of the chiasmus: "none you".

addressee remains incomplete and the complexity of the concepts of *substance* and *shadows* collapses into one of its most conventional uses of the times: "shadows are deceitful imitations, substances are real assets" (Cf. Nashe 46: "Young men are not so much delighted with solid *substances* as with painted *shadows*").

The play on *substance* and *shadows* in *Sonnet 53* triggers off a pattern of ambiguity that spreads over the whole poem and evokes a multiplicity of unexpected possible meanings in almost all semantic units. Confronted with such a soup of possibilities the human mind instinctively organises them in logically coherent schemata or scenarios. For example, the sequence of alternative meanings pointing at the theatre is remarkably consistent: it starts with *shadow*'s possible meaning of "actor, player" in line 2 and unfolds in the possible interpretations of *describe* and *counterfeit* in line 5, *imitated* in line 6, the image of making up and dressing up in lines 7 and 8, once again *shadow* in line 10 and *show* in the same line, *appear* in line 11, *shape* in line 12, and *part* in line 13. The emergent schema sustains a possible extended metaphor, which portrays the addressee of the sonnet as a versatile Elizabethan actor who, just like Edward Kynaston, could play with extraordinary grace various parts ranging from that of the most beautiful man to that of the most beautiful woman. It employs the intellectual energies circulating between central Renaissance works like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *On the Dignity of Man* and Juan Vives's *The Theatre of Man*, which recognise man's gift of absolute freedom in his ability to choose, fashion and refashion his being (Cf. Ernst Casirer's *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*).

The histrionic link also leads to yet another cultural dimension of the Platonic concepts of *substance* and *shadows*, which is dramatised succinctly in the opening scene of the anonymous *The True Tragedy of King Richard the Third*, which Shakespeare must have known well:

POETRY: Truth well met.

TRUTH: Thanks, Poetry; what makes thou upon a stage?

POETRY: Shadows.

TRUTH: Then will I add bodies to the shadows. (lines 7-16)

The brief exchange between these two significantly named allegorical figures employs a curious use of Platonic thought: we are confronted with the *shadows* of poetry, which according to Books II and III of *The Republic* merely imitate the *shadows* of real things (30-89), and are thus "the third generation from nature", which are unexpectedly embodied and given *substance* by truth itself appearing on the stage. Despite the philosophical paradox, the excerpt dramatises the common early modern conception of theatre: the poetic language, the actors, and the action onstage can only present *shadows* – symbols, signs, ciphers – of the play's true *substance* – the actual people and events evoked. The gap of incongruity between the story and its representation, time in the play and the time of performance, place in the play and the place of performance,[50] should be bridged in the mental space of the viewer. This idea is disarmingly presented in the increasingly apologetic *Prologue* to Shakespeare's *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*:

CHORUS: … let us, ciphers to this great accompt,

On your imaginary forces work ...

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:

Into a thousand parts divide one man,

And make imaginary puissance;

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[50] For which the early modern English theatre suffers a good deal of contemporary criticism (See Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*).

The dramatic aspect of the early modern concepts of *substance* and *shadows*, which sees representations on the stage as *shadows* and looks for true *substance* in the appropriate intellectual piecing out of the play's action, informs the construction of Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic language. It establishes a significant resemblance between the different participants in a play and the set of possible meanings, schemata, and scenarios evoked by a piece of poetry, between the dynamic interaction of bodies on the stage and the mind's oscillation among possible interpretations, between the mental space where a play's conflicts, controversies, or incongruities are resolved and the mental space where poetic ambiguities are tried and tested to be either discarded or blended into complex notions. This pithy parallel encapsulated in the concepts of *substance* and *shadows* shows how Shakespeare's words and sentences often function as little theatres animating the perpetual mental flux among possible forms.

The cognitive schema, evoking the notion of an Elizabethan player acting various parts, which, as we saw, appears in the possible meanings of the words of *Sonnet 53*, possesses the necessary Protean flexibility to be accommodated with either one of the emergent overall interpretations: a) « the sonnet inquires into the essence of the addressee's perfect beauty by comparing the latter's outward gloss to conventional blazons only to confirm the opinion that they are merely dross and incomplete reflections of the ultimate Platonic form (or idea) rooted in the addressee's constant heart »; and b) « the sonnet inquires into the addressee's nature, by which the addressee can easily assume the shape of every external beauty, to discover, rather bitterly, that the utmost substance of the addressee is the fickle stuff of change itself ». These two greater interpretations, however, are manifestly difficult to reconcile: to the rational mind, they clearly cancel each other out. In today's rationalist culture we are intuitively trying to establish with certainty if someone's heart is constant or inconstant, if someone is honest or pretending, if someone is

in love with a man or with a woman, etc. Therefore, each time we make sense of *Sonnet 53* our understanding collapses into one of these contrary possibilities.

It is imaginable that this may not have been entirely the case with early modern people, at least with those imbued with the intellectual ferment of the times. As the above survey of the concepts of *substance* and *shadows* shows, the conceptualisation of early modern people must have been much less restrained by outward form than ours is today, they must have been more inclined to look for a deeper reality beyond the obvious, for a mystical complexity beyond oppositions, for a unifying absolute. It can be speculated that the cultural and intellectual models that determined this state of mind enabled Shakespeare's audience to hold simultaneously in their minds multiple, even contradictory, possible interpretations, evoked by the polysemy and ambiguity of texts, and experience the work through the dynamic oscillation of mental energy among such interpretations. A powerful argument in favour of this speculation is Shakespeare's use of language in his works, which shows a conscious, even meticulous, effort to produce multiple meanings, to control possible interpretations, and to use them structurally in the larger context of each respective work. It seems unlikely for any author to have taken such pains merely for his or her own personal gratification.

The modern philosophical construct that allows us to recreate and explore the conceptualisation pattern suggested by the early modern attitude to language manifest in the concepts of *substance* and *shadows* is the theory of possible worlds. As the previous chapter shows, it can be used to examine each possible schema or scenario in its broadest possible context, while at the same time keeping it discrete from other concurrent ones. It also allows the consideration of such possible schemata or scenarios in parallel, without necessarily assigning to them different degrees of probability or reality. And, finally, it gives us an opportunity to map these discrete and parallel possible interpretations onto a

greater, enwrapping, cognitive space, to trace the mental traffic among them, and to throw light on the complex conceptual blends contrived in this space.

The remaining part of this chapter applies the theoretical apparatus of possible worlds in relation to one of the recognisedly most premeditated uses of the concepts of *substance* and *shadows* in the Shakespeare canon: the representation of the complex notion of *grief* in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*. The fundamental contention of the following analysis is that throughout the play Shakespeare expounds the intricate *substance* of grief by showing different versions, or *shadows*, of it on the macro level: the grief of Mowbray, the grief of the Duchess of Gloucester, the grief of Bolingbroke, the grief of Gaunt, the grief of York, the grief of the Queen, and at the centre of them all the grief of Richard. On the micro level: each of these *shadows* of grief is carefully constructed by such language so as to contain a set of multiple, typically contrary, possible schemata and scenarios, which map out multiple, typically contrary, possible worlds. The structural pattern of these possible worlds parallels the one observed in relation to *Sonnet 53* above: it begins with wordplay, which consciously draws the attention of the viewer/reader to the multiple possibilities for interpretation. It spreads over the narrow context and evokes unexpected meanings in seemingly monosemous words, thus taking the form of a scheme or scenario, which then is contextualised further in the fictional texture of the work and/or the cultural texture of the period.

The notion of *grief* in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second* is manifestly important since the word appears 32 times in the text of the play, its derivatives "grieve" and "grievous" – 9, its synonym "sorrow" – 27, and the adjective "sad" – 10. Even if the viewer/reader has failed to notice the emphasis on the grief of the Duchess of Gloucester (Act I, Scene ii), Mowbray (Act I, Scene iii), Bolingbroke (Act I, Scene iii), Gaunt (Act I, Scene iii and Act II, Scene i), and York (Act II, Scene i), or link them together anyhow, the

exchange between the Queen and Bushy, in Act II, Scene ii, draws serious attention to the concept and suggests a connection between these and later representations of grief in the play:

> QUEEN. Why I should welcome such a guest as grief,
>
> Save bidding farewell to so sweet a guest
>
> As my sweet Richard. Yet again methinks
>
> Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
>
> Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
>
> With nothing trembles. At some thing it grieves
>
> More than with parting from my lord the King.
>
> BUSHY. Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
>
> Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;
>
> For Sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
>
> Divides one thing entire to many objects,
>
> Like perspectives which, rightly gaz'd upon,
>
> Show nothing but confusion, ey'd awry,
>
> Distinguish form. So your sweet Majesty,
>
> Looking awry upon your lord's departure,
>
> Find shapes of grief more than himself to wail;
>
> Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
>
> Of what it is not. Then, thrice-gracious Queen,
>
> More than your lord's departure weep not. More is not seen;
>
> Or if it be, 'tis with false Sorrow's eye,
>
> Which for things true weeps things imaginary. (*R2* II.ii.7-27)

Before this scene we learn that, after seizing the property of the dead Gaunt to finance a war in Ireland, Richard is sailing off with his newly raised army, while at the same time Bolingbroke, furnished with a French army and the support of an ever increasing number of English lords, is about to touch the northern shores of the Isles to claim back the title and estate of Lancaster. Neither the Queen nor Bushy know the latter yet, so the Queen's intuitive grief seems to be a classic example of dramatic irony, which foreshadows events that are merely brewing at this stage. Bushy, on the other hand, is apparently trying to allay her fears. Very much in the fashion of a sophisticated Elizabethan courtier he wields his rhetorical skill employing complex imagery with the intention to both delight and persuade. What he seems to say is: « what looks like a real reason for grief is not necessarily one because grieved minds tend to exaggerate and find coherence in meaningless happenstance ». A closer look at his speech, however, discovers a twist of ambiguity in the language he uses, which throws different light on his words and thus on the whole situation.

Bushy begins his cue with the image of *substance* and *shadows* apparently meaning that the shadows of grief responsible for the Queen's discomfort are not true substances, i.e. genuine reasons for sorrow (Cf. *TA* IV.i.79-80 "MARCUS. Alas, poor man! grief has so wrought on him, / He takes false shadows for true substances"). He develops this thought in the following image of the Queen's vision distorted by tears and dividing an entire thing into many objects, thus exaggerating the causes of pain (lines 16-17). In line 18, however, Bushy uses the image of *perspectives* which points at two possible meanings: a) glass cut to produce the optical illusion of multiple reflections of the thing observed through it – in this sense, cohering with the preceding image of Sorrow's eyes, glazed with tears that act as such perspectives (lines 16 and 17); and b) particular type of painting or drawing that, when looked at directly, appears as a disfigured mass of incomprehensible

shapes but, when viewed from an angle (i.e. "awry") shows a clear form[51] – in this sense, consistent with the notion expressed immediately after: "which, rightly gazed upon, / Show nothing but confusion; eyed awry, / Distinguish form" (lines 18-20). Even though the transition from one image to the other within this single word is motivated by a certain similarity – both types of perspectives seem to present a distorted vision of what they are showing – the second image develops the idea by offering a possibility for grasping the true shape beyond such apparent confusion, i.e. eyeing confusion awry. Bushy seizes this idea and relates it back to the Queen's grief: "So your sweet Majesty, / Looking awry upon your lord's departure, / Find shapes of grief more than himself to wail; / Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows / Of what it is not" (lines 20-24). The effect of the juxtaposition of these lines with the latter image of perspectives presents a logical paradox: while, in the case of the picture, an uninformed observation would merely result in pointless bafflement at meaningless shapes, but an informed viewing from a particular angle would give access to the true encrypted image – in the case of the Queen's distress, it is her "looking awry" upon the departure of the King that results in multiple unreal "shapes of grief", and it is her refusal to look at the situation directly that leads her to the shadows of what, according to Bushy, it is not.

The reversal in valorisation of these two types of viewing the perspectives creates a meaningful tension within the structure of Bushy's speech and calls into question the validity of its straightforward interpretation. Biased thus, we find that his decorative rhetoric readily yields to deconstruction: Bushy's insistence on "naught", "not", "not", "not" (lines 23-25) is undermined by his eventual surrendering to the possibility "or if it be" (line 26), which seems to lead to a straightforward thought: "'tis with false Sorrow's

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[51] This duplicity of the image of *perspectives* has been recognised by critics. For more information and for a relevant discussion of Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* see Charles R. Forker's Arden Shakespeare edition of the play.

eye", but is dissolved into the ambiguous syntax of line 27: "Which for things true weeps things imaginary", that can be interpreted as either: a) « deceiving Sorrow's eye, which erroneously bewails imaginary causes, seeing them as true, or in relation to lines 16-17 – b) Sorrow's eye, which is glazed with tears and therefore prone to dividing one entire thing into many objects, laments the imaginable reflections of a true cause ». The latter interpretation points to the early modern idea of *divisio*, or *amplification*, for the explanation of which John Hoskins's *Directions for Speech and Style* quotes Francis Bacon: "A way to amplify anything is to break it and make an anatomy of it into several parts, and to examine it accordingly to several circumstances" (Hoskins 22). As we can see from Bacon's words, the notion in question is twofold: on the one hand, it is a rhetorical device that can be used for intensification and exaggeration, but on the other, it works as an epistemological approach that offers better insight into the nature of things. This possibility, in turn, promptly increases the complexity of the seemingly unproblematic use of *substance* and *shadows* in lines 14-15 and expands its significance to the dimensions of the cognitive concept discussed in the first part of this case study. Thus, "Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows, Which shows like grief itself, but is not so" acquires another possible interpretation: « the *substance* of grief is a complex abstract phenomenon – what we can see, touch, feel are grief's accidents, or *shadows*, which we are used to taking for grief iself, but they are just fractions of what grief really is » (Cf. *Ham* I.ii.82 "all forms, moods, shapes of grief"); it also alludes to the idea that « all *shadows* of grief are interrelated and make part of a greater more complete perception of grief's *substance* » (Cf. *1H6* II.iii.50-53 "TALBOT. No, no, I am but shadow of myself. / You are deceiv'd, my substance is not here; / For what you see is but the smallest part / And least proportion of humanity").

The covert tensions and ambiguities scattered in Bushy's speech come together in a possible cognitive scenario, which extends in parallel to the passage's straightforward interpretation, and can be roughly paraphrased as follows: « each substance of a grief has many shadows, or accidents, and looking dolefully at the king's departure (rightly, as one should look upon perspectives) you seem to discern more such shadows (which add up to the substance of your grief), i see them too, but nothing is certain yet, so please try to keep calm ». This possible coherence of meaning does not find its context in the exchange between Bushy and the Queen but, sustained by the dramatic irony of the scene, stretches out across to the viewer/reader, drawing his, or her, attention to the *shadows* of grief perceived by the Queen and through them to the *substance* of Richard's grief that becomes the central concern of the play from this point onwards.

The first image of grief that may represent a possible dimension of the Queen's nameless woe is the grievous predicament of Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk. After having been accused by Bolingbroke of being the contriver of all treasons in England, and more specifically, the complotter of the death of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester and both Richard and Bolingbroke's uncle, Mowbray accepts Bolingbroke's challenge to prove his innocence in the lists. However, just before the combat took place he is surprisingly banished by the King never to return under pain of death:

MOWBRAY. A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege,

And all unlook'd for from your Highness' mouth.

A dearer merit, not so deep a maim

As to be cast forth in the common air,

Have I deserved at your Highness' hands.

The language I have learnt these forty years,

My native English, now I must forgo;

And now my tongue's use is to me no more

Than an unstringed viol or a harp;

Or like a cunning instrument cas'd up

Or, being open, put into his hands

That knows no touch to tune the *harmony*.

Within my mouth you have engaol'd my tongue,

Doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips;

And dull unfeeling barren *Ignorance*

Is made my gaoler to attend on me.

I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,

Too far in years to be a pupil now.

What is thy sentence, then, but speechless death,

Which robs my tongue from *breathing* native *breath*? (*R2* I.iii.154-173)

Mowbray's speech employs a series of images which centre round the idea that once denied access to his native land – he will not be able to use his mother tongue any more and so be doomed to dumb existence and death, as he sees himself as too old to learn a new language. It has been noted by critics that this speech is entirely Shakespeare's invention as no evidence for such words is to be found in any of the recognised sources of the play and,[52] moreover, it is highly improbable that the historical Mowbray was ignorant of French and Latin since he was sent on embassies to France and Germany (Holinshed 3.494). This piece of extratextual information motivates a biased reconsideration of the meaning of Mowbray's complaint. The musical instrument imagery (lines 161-165) presents a gradation of utility: « my tongue shall be like an unstringed instrument, if stringed, then cased up, if taken out of the case, then placed in the hands of someone who

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[52] *Richard II*, ed. W.G. Clark and W.A. Wright, Oxford, 1876.

would not know how to tune it up » – i.e. a stringless instrument is completely useless (Cf. "NORTHUMBERLAND. His [Gaunt's] tongue is now a stringless instrument" *R2* II.i.149), an intact instrument that is cased up can be used but only if uncased, an uncased intact instrument can be used but only by those who know how to tune it up and extract a harmony of sound from it. Now the word *harmony* in line 165 clearly coheres with the musical imagery in the sense: "combining musical notes to produce an orderly and pleasing effect" (Cf. *MV* V.i.15-17 "LORENZO. Here will we sit and let the sounds of music / Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night / Become the touches of sweet harmony"), but it also coheres with the speech imagery in the sense: "congruity of thought, information, truth" (Cf. *R2* II.i.5-8"GAUNT. O, but they say the tongues of dying men / Enforce attention like deep harmony. / Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain; / For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain").[53] The latter meaning is readily related to the above gradation: « sending me for ever to a place where there will be no one who can make sense of my words is the same as throwing me in prison or permanently silencing my tongue ». The rest of the speech develops this idea. Mowbray's tongue will be engaoled in his mouth by "dull unfeeling barren *Ignorance*" (line 168), which apparently denotes his own ignorance of foreign languages, but can be also interpreted in reverse – as foreigners' ignorance of what he has to say. This will eventually lead to Mowbray's "speechless death", on the one hand, by denying him the ability to

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[53] For a more elaborate relation between the ability to play a musical instrument and the ability to extract information from someone see *Ham* III.ii.351-365 "HAMLET. It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumbs, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops. GUIL. But these cannot I command to any utt'rance of harmony. I have not the skill. HAMLET. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me."

breathe the air of his country; and on the other, since to early modern people words were made of *breath*, by denying understanding and recognition to his words (lines 172-173).

The above possible scenario suggests that Mowbray knows something that the king would like to put under the lock of banishment to foreign lands and the ignorance of foreign ears. What could the Duke of Norfolk's secret be? A clue is offered by the exposition of another image of grief – the grief of the Duchess of Glocester:

> DUCHESS [to GAUNT]. Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
>
> Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
>
> Or seven fair branches springing from one root.
>
> Some of those seven are dried by nature's course,
>
> Some of those branches by the Destinies cut;
>
> But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,
>
> One vial full of Edward's sacred blood,
>
> One flourishing branch of his most royal root,
>
> Is crack'd, and all the precious liquor spilt;
>
> Is hack'd down, and his summer leaves all faded,
>
> By Envy's hand and Murder's bloody axe.
>
> …
>
> GAUNT. God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute,
>
> His deputy anointed in His sight,
>
> Hath caus'd his death; the which if wrongfully,
>
> Let heaven revenge; for I may never lift
>
> An angry arm against His minister. (*R2* I.ii.11-41)

Even though the Duchess is reluctant to openly name the murderer of her husband (line 21: "By Envy's hand and Murder's bloody axe") – Gaunt does not seem to have any misgivings: "God's substitute, His deputy anointed in His sight, Hath caus'd his death" (lines 37-39). By this we learn that the death of the Duke of Glocester, of which Bolingbroke accused Mowbray in the previous scene, according to Gaunt and his sister-in-law, was ordered by King Richard himself[54]. Such a possibility provides context for the implicit exchanges between Mowbray and the King and throws different light on their words, e.g. "MOWBRAY. the fair reverence of your highness curbs me / From giving reins and spurs to my free speech" (*R2* I.i.54-55), "MOWBRAY. My life thou shalt command, but not my shame… Take but my shame, / And I resign my gage" (*R2* I.i.166-176), "KING RICHARD. Norfolk, for thee remains a heavier doom, / Which I with some unwillingness pronounce: / The sly slow hours shall not determinate / The dateless limits of thy dear exile" (*R2* I.iii.148-151). The awareness of such a context extends into a possible world, in which « the King engineers the death of the Duke of Gloucester; at his order Mowbray effects it[55] (which formally cannot be considered treason as he acts in allegiance to the King); Gaunt and Bolingbroke suspect this, and understand the potential danger for their own lives and estates, but would not rise against the Monarch; therefore, Bolingbroke challenges Mowbray to a duel, and places the King in the awkward position of not being able to protect his loyal accomplice, since this would show openly his complicity in the plot against Gloucester's life; Richard, however, decides to banish both Mowbray and Bolingbroke thus shielding the life of the former and gaining time to devise

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[54] These events were dramatised in an earlier play, entitled *Woodstock*, on the knowledge of which Shakespeare seems to build his *Richard II*.

[55] Most probably not personally (Cf. "MOWBRAY. For Gloucester's death, I slew him not" *R2* I.i.132-133). Interestingly, in Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Book 3, p 494), Shakespeare's major source for this scene, Mowbray answers to all other accusations except the one about the death of Gloucester.

a way of dealing with the latter ». This possible world emerges simultaneously and in opposition to a face-value interpretation of the words of the King and Mowbray, which project another possible world in which « Richard has no direct connection with Gloucester's death and is not a party to any secret agreement with mowbray, [56] but considers each of the two opponents' cases too dangerous to prevail, so he banishes them both ». What seems to stand out under close inspection of Shakespeare's text and its sources, however, is that the dramatist takes special care to provide equal degrees of credibility to these two possibilities for interpretation so that they could exist in parallel and evade resolution by what follows in the play.

The banishment of Bolingbroke paints another image of grief – the shared grief of a father and a son that must be separated never to be reunited again. After having sentenced Bolingbroke to ten years of exile, the King notes the shade of grief in Gaunt's visage and decides to shorten his son's punishment to six years:

> KING RICHARD. Uncle, even in the glasses of thine eyes
>
> I see thy grieved heart. Thy sad aspect
>
> Hath from the number of his banish'd years
>
> Pluck'd four away. [To BOLINGBROKE] Six frozen winters spent,
>
> Return with welcome home from banishment. (*R2* I.iii.208-212)

This act of royal benevolence gives the opportunity to both Boligbroke and Gaunt to reflect upon the power of the King's words and the use of language in general – a theme that starts with the banishment of Mowbray and his subsequent complaints and extends

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[56] An argument in favour of such an interpretation is presented by Holinshed's report that having banished Mowbray "the king would staie the profits of his lands, till he had levied therof such summes of monie as the duke had taken up of the kings treasurer for the wages of the garrison of Calis, which were still unpaid" (Holinshed, 3.495), which is significantly omitted by Shakespeare.

with incredible consistency through the second teratology all the way to the last scene of *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*:

> BOLINGBROKE. How long a time lies in one little *word*!
>
> Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
>
> End in a *word*: such is the *breath* of Kings. (*R2* I.iii.214-216)

Bolingbroke's comment can be given both an appreciative and an ironic reading. The latter is developed further by Gaunt's bitter observation that the reduction of the sentence, motivated by his grief as a father, will do little to alleviate that same grief, since his age and the condition of his health will scarcely allow him to await his son's return. While the former is completely deconstructed by Gaunt's response to Richard's protestation against his pessimism:

> KING RICHARD. Why uncle, thou hast many years to live.
>
> GAUNT. But not a minute, King, that thou canst give:
>
> Shorten my days thou canst with sullen sorrow
>
> And pluck nights from me, but not lend a morrow;
>
> Thou can'st help time to furrow me with age,
>
> But stop no wrinkle in his pilgrimage;
>
> Thy *word* is current with him for my death,
>
> But dead, thy kingdom cannot buy my *breath*. (*R2* I.iii.225-232)

Pivoting upon a strong argument Gaunt bends the meanings of "word" and "breath" from Bolingbroke's comment in a completely different direction. Whereas Bolingbroke's use projects forth a scenario which marvels at « the productive capacity of the royal word and sees the King's breath as a life and hope infusing power », Gaunt's rhetoric amounts to a concurrent opposite scenario in which « the royal word has only the power to destroy life

and cannot revive a man whose breath has already expired ». The resultant double vision of words as a source of creative energy and as empty delusions of no avail is elaborated further in Gaunt and Bolingbroke's farewell exchange, which focuses on the capacity of language and thought to create reality:

> GAUNT. Call it a *travel* that thou tak'st for pleasure.[57]
>
> BOLINGBROKE. My heart will sigh when I miscall it so,
>
> Which finds it an enforced *pilgrimage*.
>
> GAUNT. The sullen passage of thy weary steps
>
> Esteem as *foil* wherein thou art to set
>
> The precious jewel of thy home return.
>
> BOLINGBROKE. Nay, rather, every tedious stride I make
>
> Will but remember me what a deal of world
>
> I wander from the jewels that I love.
>
> Must I not serve a long *apprenticehood*
>
> To foreign passages, and in the end,
>
> Having my freedom, boast of nothing else
>
> But that I was a *journeyman* to Grief? (*R2* I.iii.268-274)

Immediately after having annihilated the self-assuredness of the King's words, Gaunt himself resorts to the twists and turns of rhetoric in his attempt to remedy his son's grief and paint his predicament in brighter colours. Bolingbroke, however, proves more cynical and explodes, in his own turn, every possible scenario that his father projects forth. Interestingly, in lines 268-274 the *poiesis* of possible scenarios and their deconstruction depend entirely on wordplay, which provides for the strong self-reflexive dimension of this

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[57] F1 has "trauell" and Q1 "trauaile": it is possible that there was little or no phonetic difference between the two words in early modern pronunciation.

particular language exchange and continues subtly the contemplation of the powers of language that pervades the whole play.

Gaunt begins by imploring his son to consider his banishment a *trauell/trauaile* for pleasure. Bolingbroke seizes upon the more obvious sense of "travel" and transforms it into an "enforced pilgrimage" (line 264). Gaunt takes up this idea and develops it through the polysemy of *foil* (line 266): a) what is trampled upon by the pilgrim, both physically – the muck under his feet, and metaphorically – his pride and the indulgence of his senses; and b) the leaf of metal that forms the bed of a precious stone in a jewel. Blending these two meanings into a complex metaphor he suggests that by enduring the hardships of his journey the pilgrim achieves its purpose and carries his reward with him home at his return. Bolingbroke cannot imagine any gain for his forced wandering: he is just grieved by the increasing distance from what he deems precious, so he needs to abandon the image of pilgrimage and goes back to *trauell/trauaile* – this time picking out the less obvious sense "travail", i.e. labour, and works it into the image of apprenticeship (line 271). In early modern times apprentices were bound to serve their masters for a period of seven years without being paid daily wages – the only recompense for their labour at the end of this period was that they gained their freedom as independent traders in their craft. The two images put forward by Bolingbroke merge in the word *journeyman* – a fully-fledged craftsman who has completed his apprenticeship – but also, etymologically, a travelling man. The rest of the conversation contains copious series of imagery and projects possible scenarios that easily fit in the already established pattern of opposition and subversion:

GAUNT. All places that the eye of heaven visits

Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.

Teach thy necessity to reason thus:

There is no virtue like necessity.

Think not the King did banish thee,

But thou the King. Woe doth the heavier sit

Where it perceives it is but faintly borne.

Go, say I sent thee forth to purchase honour,

And not the King exiled thee; or suppose

Devouring pestilence hangs in our air,

And thou art flying to a fresher clime.

Look what thy soul holds dear, imagine it

To lie that way thou goest, not whence thou com'st.

Suppose the singing birds musicians,

The grass whereon thou tread'st the presence strewed,

The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more

Than a delightful measure or a dance;

For gnarling sorrow hath less power to bite

The man that mocks at it and sets it light.

BOLINGBROKE. O, who can hold a fire in his hand

By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?

Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite

By bare imagination of a feast?

Or wallow naked in December snow

By thinking on fantastic summer's heat?

O, no! the apprehension of the good

Gives but the greater feeling to the worse.

Fell Sorrow's tooth doth never rankle more

Than when he bites, but lanceth not the sore. (*R2* I.iii.275-303)

Despite the great variety of its imagery, the above passage seems to evoke a straightforward interpretation: « Gaunt claims that his son's inner state depends entirely on himself and his thought – even though banished, he may force his mind and strain his imagination to beat down sorrow and embrace his physical and mental freedom to be whatever he likes. Bolingbroke dismisses this approach to the situation as a fruitless delusion that cannot remedy his inner pain ». Yet, the already established cognitive pattern of linguistic subversion and wordplay is activated by the phrase "Think not the King did banish thee, But thou the King" (lines 279-280), which subtly reverses the positions of Richard and Bolingbroke and indirectly suggests that Bolingbroke should imagine that he were the King – since a mere subject cannot banish the monarch[58]. This interpretation coheres with the rest of the imagery employed by Gaunt: kings as well as aristocrats travelled abroad and embarked on military campaigns to purchase honour (line 282); when the plague hit the capital the king as well as the aristocracy typically retreated to a fresher clime (lines 284-285); the musicians, ladies and dances of lines 288-291 are set in a carpet-strewed presence-chamber and seem to follow Bolingbroke through vales and hills, transforming his banishment into a stately royal progress through the land.

Gaunt's scenario is carefully projected into a harmless imaginary space. Its insubstantiality is clearly marked by "think" (line 279), "say" (line 282), "suppose" (line 283), "imagine" (line 286), and once again "suppose" (line 288). Bolingbroke's powerful response forces mighty opposites into violent collision: *fire* and *frost* (lines 294-295), *cloyedness* and *appetite* (lines 296-297), *December snow* and *summer's heat* (lines 298-299) attacking the validity of the same words: "thinking" (line 295), "imagination" (line 297), again "thinking" (line 299), and "apprehension" (line 300). His mighty rhetoric

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[58] This possible interpretation is reinforces by the ellipted verb in the second part of the chiasmus: "Think… though the King".

offers a possible glimpse at a deeper layer of his grief: "Fell Sorrow's tooth doth never rankle more Than when he bites, but lanceth not the sore" (lines 302-303) – i.e. « the actual abscess of my grief is under the skin of my predicament and imagining myself as the king's equal cannot alleviate my pain, it can only aggravate it because, actually, I feel superior to him, I feel in my veins the royal blood of my grandfather, Edward III, which cries against Richard's ineptitude and urges me to manly *lance* the sore of my grief (to pierce it to drain off the pus), but also to *lance* my way to the throne ». Such a construction of Gaunt and Bolingbroke's words adds another dimension to their shared grief and amounts to another cognitive scenario: « Gaunt insinuates covertly that his son is not less worthy to banish the king than the king is to banish him, and hence not less worthy to be the king than the king is – to which Bolingbroke promptly responds with readiness and conviction ». This coheres meaningfully with Gaunt's subsequent cue: "GAUNT. Come, come, my son, I'll bring thee on thy way. Had I thy youth and cause, I would not stay" (lines 304-305) and foreshadows the events that are to take place later on in the play.

Yet another powerful image of grief is presented in Act 2, Scene 1 when Richard calls on the dying Gaunt to seize his property and revenue:

> KING RICHARD. How is't with aged Gaunt?
>
> GAUNT. O, how that *name* befits my composition!
>
> Old Gaunt indeed; and *gaunt* in being old.
>
> Within me Grief hath kept a tedious *fast*,
>
> And who abstains from meat that is not gaunt?
>
> For sleeping *England* long time have I *watched*;
>
> *Watching* breeds *leanness*, *leanness* is all *gaunt*.
>
> The pleasure that some fathers *feed* upon
>
> Is my strict *fast* – I mean my children's looks;

And therein *fasting* hast thou made me *gaunt*.

Gaunt am I for the grave, *gaunt* as a grave,

Whose hollow womb inherits nought but bones.

KING RICHARD. Can sick men play so nicely with their *names*?

GAUNT. No, misery makes sport to mock itself:

Since thou dost seek to kill my *name* in me,

I mock my *name*, great king, to flatter thee. (*R2* II.i.72-87)

After having promised to breathe his last breath in "wholesome counsel" to the king's "unstaid youth"[59] and after having delivered the richly patriotic Sceptred Isle speech to York (and the viewers/readers) alone, immediately before the king's entrance, Gaunt now resorts to sullen punning on his own name: *gaunt* a) lean, starved, bony, b) desolate, and c) yawning, hollow. The resulting polysemous effect spreads on to the narrow linguistic context and sustains the possible dimensions of Gaunt's implicit meaning. First, Gaunt sees himself, gaunt in composition (both physical and mental condition), as an embodiment of grief: "Within me Grief hath kept a tedious fast" (line 75). His grief is twofold: a) the grief of a statesman "watching" (observing) the ruination of the "sleeping England"[60] he has been "watching" (guarding, protecting) all his life, which has given him his "leanness" (both "financial distress", ironically figuring the actual intention of Richard's visit (Cf. "YORK. Be York the next that must be bankrupt so!" II.i.151), and "psychological torment"); and b) the grief of a father: seizing upon the image of himself as the guardian of "sleeping England", which besides an impersonation of the nation can be interpreted as a direct reference to his nephew, the king, in his infancy, Gaunt moves on to the banishment of his own son by the king, once the latter has come to age, and his

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[59] As M. M. Mahood observes, both "giddy" and "unpropped" (Mahood 80).

[60] Cf. The Sceptred Isle speech: Act II.i.40-68.

resultant deprivation ("fast") of the pleasures of fatherhood. The blending of the two dimensions of Gaunt's grief implies a deeper reproach: « I sacrificed my comfort to guard your kingdom and you during your minority and what I received in return was the exile of my own child; moreover, I can see beyond Harry's banishment your intention to "kill my *name* in me", i.e. to destroy my identity: a) by murdering my brother Gloucester, a worthy branch of the Plantagenet line, blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh; b) by expatriating Harry, heir to my name, titles and property; c) and now by coming to seize the estate of Lancaster and denying it to my son ».

Gaunt's seemingly inappropriate wordplay (Cf. "KING RICHARD. Can sick men play so nicely with their names?") shows as a symptom of genuine pain (Cf. "GAUNT. For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain" II.i.8), and works as a useful tool for cramming as much meaning as possible in his last words. It evokes several possible scenarios in order to blend them in complex sentiments and significations (Cf. "GAUNT. O, but they say the tongues of dying men / Enforce attention like deep harmony. / Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain" II.i.5-7). This pattern continues in the following exchange between Gaunt and Richard:

KING RICHARD. Thou, now *a-dying*, sayest thou flatterest me.

GAUNT. O, no! thou *diest*, though I the sicker be.

KING RICHARD. I am in health, I breathe, and see thee *ill*.

GAUNT. Now He that made me knows I see thee *ill*;

Ill in myself to see, and in thee seeing *ill*.

Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land

Wherein thou liest in reputation *sick*;

And thou, too careless patient as thou art,

Commit'st thy anointed body to the cure

Of those physicians that first wounded thee:

A thousand flatterers sit within thy *crown*,

Whose compass is no bigger than thy head;

And yet, incaged in so small a verge,

The waste is no whit lesser than thy land. (*R2* II.i.91-103)

Gaunt's play on *die* (line 91), *ill* (lines 93-94), and *sick* (line 96) maps the state of his own physical health onto Richard's political condition. The two-dimensionality of the emergent extended metaphor delineates two crisscrossed domains of apprehension: a) the physical one in which Gaunt is sick and dying, while Richard is young and healthy; and b) the political one in which Gaunt is righteous and ultimately successful (the progenitor of a line of kings), while Richard wastefully commits his body politic[61] to pseudo-physicians, indeed: flatterers and parasites (Cf. the weeds and caterpillars of the gardeners' political allegory, III.iv.29-71), who sit within his *crown* (line 100) – both a) royal headdress: pertaining to the body politic and symbolising royal sovereignty and power; and b) head, mind – by extension Richard's favour – pertaining to the natural body personal and inflicting in so little space damage suffered by the whole kingdom.

O, had thy grandsire with a prophet's eye

Seen how his son's son should destroy his sons,

From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame,

Deposing thee before thou wert *possess'd*,

Which art *possess'd* now to depose thyself.

Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,

It were a shame to let this land by lease;

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[61] Royal gemination, or the legal fiction of the king's two bodies: the body politic and the body natural, in relation to Shakespeare's *Richard II*, in particular, is the subject of Chapter II, pp 24-42 of Ernst Kantorowicz's classic book *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*.

But for thy world enjoying but this land,

Is it not more than shame to shame it so?

Landlord of England art thou now, not King.

Thy state of law is bondslave to the law; (*R2* II.i.104-114)

The central pun in this passage is contained in the multifariousness of the word *possessed* (lines 107-108): a) possessed of the crown; b) being under someone's influence; c) inhabited and controlled by illness, by frenzy or by a demon; and d) held legally in possession. Like a prism it brings together and blends the key ideas expressed in Gaunts final speech: 1) « Richard's annointed body is ill, possessed by a political illness »: "Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land Wherein thou liest in reputation sick" (lines 95-96), 2) « Richard's illness issues from the evil influence of his favourites »: "A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown" (line 100), 3) « who are convincing him to surrender the possession of his land, i.e. to depose himself »: "Landlord of England art thou now, not King. Thy state of law is bondslave to the law" (lines 113-114)[62], but also 4) « contains a fiendish cruelty to his kin, as if possessed by a demon »: "That blood already, like the pelican, Hast thou tapp'd out, and drunkenly carous'd" (lines 126-127). Therefore, Gaunt seems to imply, « Richard should be dispossessed of the English throne, i.e. deposed, and put to eternal shame ».

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[62] This matter is sketchily mentioned in Shakespeare's play but fully explicated in *Thomas of Woodstok*: in order to free his wanton youth from the labour of statesmanship, Richard concedes to his favorites' suit to invest them with the power to govern the royal land and property under the condition that they should pay to him a monthly pension: "these gentlemen here, sir / henry Greene, sir Edward Bagot, sir william Bushy, and / sir Thomas Scroope, all jointly here stand bound to / pay your majesty, or your deputy, wherever you remain, / seven thousand pounds a month for this your Kingdom; for which / your grace, by these writings, surrenders to their / hands: all your crown lands, lordships, manors, rents, / taxes, subsidies, fifteens, imposts, foreign customs, / staples for wool, tin, lead, and cloth; all forfeitures / of goods or lands confiscate, and all other / duties that is, shall, or may appertain to the King or / crown's revenues, and for non-payment of the sum or / sums aforesaid, your majesty to seize the lands and / goods of the said gentlemen above named, and their / bodies to be imprisoned at your grace's pleasure."

Although Gaunt's words seem to have little of their intended effect on the king: "KING RICHARD. And let them die that age and sullens have, / For both hast thou, and both become the grave" (lines 139-140). They do find compassion in the heart of York, Gaunt's only surviving brother, who, along with the Queen and the king's attendants, witnesses passively the scene. When Gaunt is pronounced dead, York is moved to speak his mind:

YORK. How long shall I be patient? Ah, how long

Shall tender duty make me suffer wrong?

Not Gloucester's death, nor Hereford's banishment,

Nor Gaunt's rebukes, nor England's private wrongs,

Nor the prevention of poor Bolingbroke

About his marriage, nor my own disgrace,

Have ever made me sour my patient cheek

Or bend one wrinkle on my sovereign's face.

I am the last of noble Edward's sons,

Of whom thy father, Prince of Wales, was first.

In war was never lion rag'd more fierce,

In peace was never gentle lamb more mild,

Than was that young and princely gentleman.

His face thou hast, for even so look'd he,

Accomplish'd with the number of thy hours;

But when he frown'd, it was against the French

And not against his friends. His noble hand

Did win what he did spend, and spent not that

Which his triumphant father's hand had won.

His hands were guilty of no kindred blood,

But bloody with the enemies of his kin.

O Richard! York is too far gone with grief,

Or else he never would compare between (*R2* II.i.163-185)

York begins his speech emotionally by giving a complete list of all causes of grief so far described in the play:[63] Gloucester's death, Bolingbroke's banishment, Gaunt's rebukes, Richard's mistakes – of which his own disgrace (line 168) seems to be composed. However, unlike Gaunt, he refrains from openly reprimanding the king for them – instead, he slips into comparing Richard with his noble father, Edward the Black Prince. The structure of this comparison establishes a visual similarity: "His face thou hast, for even so look'd he, / Accomplish'd with the number of thy hours" (lines 176-177), yet draws sharp contrasts in every other respect. The dissimilarities between the king and his father mirror the previously mentioned reasons for grief: a) "But when he frown'd, it was against the French / And not against his friends" (lines 173-174) alludes to Richard's treatment of Bolingbroke, Gaunt and, as it seems, York himself; "His noble hand / Did win what he did spend, and spent not that / Which his triumphant father's hand had won" (lines 174-176) points to Gaunt's discontent with the way Richard disposes with his royal power and the kingdom's wealth; and "His hands were guilty of no kindred blood, / But bloody with the enemies of his kin" (lines 177-178) clearly relates to Gloucester's death. Although up to this point York's careful reproach is veiled and consciously kept in the domain of possible interpretations, when the king commits his first unconcealed crime by dispossessing Bolingbroke, he is the first to protest openly and warn Richard about the impending consequences of his act:

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[63] The reference to Richard's efforts to prevent Bolingbroke from marrying Marie, Charles VI's cousin, while being exiled in Paris is not mentioned anywhere else in the play, but is described in full detail in Holinshed 3.495.

YORK. Seek you to seize and gripe into your hands

The royalties and rights of banish'd Hereford?

Is not Gaunt dead? and doth not Hereford live?

Was not Gaunt just? and is not Harry true?

Did not the one deserve to have an heir?

Is not his heir a well-deserving son?

Take Hereford's rights away, and take from Time

His charters and his customary rights;

Let not to-morrow then ensue to-day;

Be not thyself-for how art thou a king

But by fair sequence and succession?

Now, afore God-God forbid I say true!-

If you do wrongfully seize Hereford's rights,

Call in the letters patents that he hath

By his attorneys-general to sue

His livery, and deny his off'red homage,

You pluck a thousand dangers on your head,

You lose a thousand well-disposed hearts,

And prick my tender patience to those thoughts

Which honour and allegiance cannot think. (*R2* II.i.189-208)

York's potent rhetoric persuades by virtue of the impeccable logic it employs: it uses the premises of current legal theory to point out that the temporal principles governing Bolingbroke's incontestable right to his father's estate and property are the same temporal principles of succession that have secured and sustain Richard's place on the throne – inferring hence that the king's violation of these principles with regard to Bolingbroke will

amount to political suicide, since its unnaturalness will certainly appal English aristocracy, and at the same time may create a precedent licensing Richard's own deposition. Even though the king remains aloof to all warnings – scornfully echoing York's last words: "RICHARD. *Think* what you will, we seize into our hands / His plate, his goods, his money and his lands" (lines 209-210), the speech is important to the onlookers, including the Queen and Bushy onstage, and the viewers/readers offstage, for exposing effectively Richard's heedlessness and presumption.

All the *shadows* of grief discussed so far, i.e. the grief of Mowbray, the Duchess of Gloucester, Bolingbroke, Gaunt, York, and the Queen, when looked upon awry, i.e. when linked together, as Bushy does in Act II, Scene ii, cohere and blend in a possible version of the play's world (PW1) in which « Richard, like a veritable Machiavellian prince, insidiously committed the wrongs that caused such griefs: he contrived and executed through Mowbray the murder of the Duke of Gloucester; he took advantage of Mowbray's loyalty to the crown to bury the truth by expelling him on a lifelong exile; he banished Bolingbroke with the intent to get him off his way, while he could wait and gain the power to destroy his aging father and the house of Lancaster altogether; he devastated the kingdom by letting his favourites enrich themselves by corruption and unrestrained taxation of the common folk; he wronged and disrespected York and his good counsel ». This version of the play's world is allegorically summarised in Act III, Scene iv, by the gardeners and seems to lead inevitably to the king's deposition: "1 MAN. What, think you then the King shall be deposed? / GARDENER. Depressed he is already, and deposed / 'Tis doubt he will be" (III.iv.67-69). Yet, there is another possible version of the play's world which exists in direct opposition to the idea of the king's displacement – the worldview entertained by the king himself.

Richard's own possible version of the play's world (PW2) is a mirror-like reflection of PW1 and is also centred round a unifying notion of grief – this time the grief of the king at his impending deposition. Like the Queen's grief in Act II, Scene ii, Richard's grief is a complex idea conveyed by means of the early modern concepts of *substance* and *shadows*: "KING RICHARD. 'Tis very true: my grief lies all within; / And these external manner of laments / Are merely *shadows* to the unseen grief / That swells with silence in the tortur'd soul. / There lies the *substance*" (*R2* IV.i.295-299). In order to catch a better glimpse of the substance of the king's grief, it is necessary to link up the "external manner of laments" represented in the play.

Although Richard never openly denies the accusations made against him, his confidence rests on his firm belief that the royal power came to him directly and unconditionally from God: "KING RICHARD. The breath of worldly men cannot depose / The deputy elected by the Lord" (*R2* III.ii.56-57), and regardless of his actions only God himself can hold him responsible for the way he uses it: "KING RICHARD. show us the hand of God / That had dismissed us from our stewardship" (*R2* III.iii.77-78). The king's confidence crumbles bit by bit in Act III, Scene ii – when he learns that his military forces are irreparably weakened and his favourites in England are captured and executed, while Bolingbroke is supported by most peers, the commoners, and the Duke of York, Lord Governor of the Kingdom in the king's absence. Pressed under the weight of reality Richard is pushed over the verge of despair: "KING RICHARD. Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs; / Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes / Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth" (*R2* III.ii.145-147) and opens up his heart to display his human needs, weaknesses, and fears that underlie the artificial flourish and magnificence of the royal person:

                    … within the hollow crown

That rounds the mortal temples of a king

Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits,

Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp;

Allowing him a breath, a little scene,

To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks;

Infusing him with self and vain conceit,

As if this flesh which walls about our life

Were brass impregnable; and, humour'd thus,

Comes at the last, and with a little pin

Bores through his castle wall, and farewell, king!

Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood

With solemn reverence; throw away respect,

Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty;

For you have but mistook me all this while.

I live with bread like you, feel want,

Taste grief, need friends. *Subjected* thus,

How can you say to me I am a king? (*R2* III.ii.-177)

Richard's speech resolves in a significant pun on *subject*, which coheres with several possible scenarios of interpretation: a) the overall context of the play – « after his deposition the king becomes a *subject* to the new king »; b) the context of the scene – « the king has lost nearly his whole support except for a handful of close retainers, in this sense his forces are *subjected* by the overwhelming military power of Bolingbroke »; c) the context of the whole speech – « death keeps his court in the hollow space within the crown, i.e. presides over the seemingly supreme state of the king and makes him *subject* to the natural rule of mortality »; d) the immediate context of the utterance – « exploding the absolute power of the sovereign body politic, Richard exposes the frailty of his natural

body personal »: "I live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief, need friends" (lines 175-176) « and its *subjection* to human needs and passions ». The fact that all these scenarios hinge on the same word facilitates their blending not only into a complex epistemological construct but also into a complex emotional state of projection and compassion in the viewer/reader. [64]

In the following scene, when Richard is about to face Bolingbroke before the walls of Flint Castle and surrender to his fate, another dimension of his grief is displayed:

> KING RICHARD. What must the King do now? Must he submit?
>
> The King shall do it. Must he be depos'd?
>
> The King shall be contented. Must he lose
>
> The name of King? I'God's name, let it go.
>
> I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,
>
> My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
>
> My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,
>
> My figur'd goblets for a dish of wood,
>
> My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff,
>
> My subjects for a pair of carved saints,
>
> And my large kingdom for a little grave,
>
> A little little grave, an obscure grave-
>
> Or I'll be buried in the king's high-way,
>
> Some way of common *trade*, where subjects' feet
>
> May hourly trample on their sovereign's head;
>
> For on my heart they *tread* now whilst I live,

---

[64] Cf. *MV* III.i.64-66 "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?".

And buried once, why not upon my head? (*R2* III.iii.143-175)

The speech opens with the idea of the king's subjection expressed in the repetition of "must" and Richard talking about himself in the third person singular. It slips into an apparent readiness to submit, undermined by a strong emphasis on possession in the repetition of "my". As soon as the transformation of the unkinged king into a poor, wandering, holy man seems complete – it is annihilated in lines 172-173 with the realisation that although the king may trade over his jewels, palace, apparel, goblets, sceptre, subjects and kingdom, i.e. everything that shows his regal status, but he may not do so with his royal essence or heart – at the end of the day he is still the "sovereign" and the people are still his "subjects". More complexity is added by the curious instance of subtle wordplay in lines 172-175, where the words *trade* and *tread* resemble anagrammatically each other so much that they seem to blend their meanings. In fact, the use of *trade* in "Some way of common *trade*, where subjects' feet / May hourly trample on their sovereign's head" (lines 172-173) is wrenched so close to the meaning of *tread*, in the obvious sense of "traffic, passage", that the use of *tread* in the following line inevitably acquires a smack of "trade" – provoking the following possible reading of lines 174-175: "For on my heart they *trade* now whilst I live, / And buried once, why not upon my head?" Retrospectively, this possible interpretation draws a meaningful contrast between the facility and freedom of the subjects to choose whether to support or betray their king and the impossibility of the king to change his predestination and choose to be something other than a king.

This idea is developed further in Act IV, Scene I, when Richard is forced to abdicate publicly and cede the crown to Bolingbroke. At the climax of his dejection he again resorts to wordplay to express his overwhelming grief:

BOLINGBROKE. Are *you* contented to resign the crown?

KING RICHARD. *Ay*, *no*; *no*, *ay*;[65] for *I* must *nothing* be;

Therefore *no no*, for *I* resign to thee.

Now mark me how I will undo myself:

I give this heavy weight from off my head,

And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand,

The pride of kingly sway from out my heart;

With mine own tears I wash away my balm,

With mine own hands I give away my crown,

With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,

With mine own breath release all duteous oaths;

All pomp and majesty I do forswear;

My manors, rents, revenues, I forgo;

My acts, decrees, and statutes, I deny.

God pardon all oaths that are broke to me!

God keep all vows unbroke are made to thee!

Make me, that *nothing* have, with *nothing* griev'd,

And thou with *all* pleas'd, that hast *all* achiev'd.

Long mayst thou live in Richard's seat to sit,

And soon lie Richard in an earthly pit. (*R2* IV.i.200-219)

Richard's complex meaning pivots on two elaborate puns in lines 201 and 202: 1) *Ay/I*: a) in the sense of "yes" and b) as the personal pronoun; and 2) *no/know*: a) the negative particle and b) the homonymous verb. The cognitive combination and recombination of these four elements against the narrower and broader context of the scene yield a mathematical progression of possibilities: a) « Yes, no. No, yes; for "yes" must

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[65] The First Folio has "I, no; no, I".

nothing be. Therefore, no, no! For "yes" is to resign to thee »; b) « I know no "I"; for I must nothing be. Therefore, no "no", for I resign to thee »; c) « I know no "yes" – for "yes" must nothing be. Therefore, know "no" – for I resign to thee »; d) « Yes – no, no – yes; for I must nothing be. Therefore know not, for "yes" is resigned to thee, etc ». Richard's baffling proposition and its dissemination into a mathematical progression of interpretative possibilities – a multiplicity greater than the living mind can possibly hold simultaneously – has a deliberately puzzling effect on the viewer/reader and marks the limit of the productive use of the cognitive concepts of *substance* and *shadows*. From this point on excessive multiplication results in the dispersion of meaning and empties the concepts involved of their significance. Such is, in fact, Richard's design – within the space of two lines he manages to explode the method of propositional logic and the values of *truth* ("yes") and *falsehood* ("no"), along with the epistemological capacity of *knowing*, itself, as well as his royal and moral *being* (contained in "I"). Thus, the vortex of possible shadows of interpretation, set loose by the wordplay on *Ay/I* and *no/know* in lines 201 and 202, leads through the impossibility of conceptualisation to a straightforward cognitive scenario: « *I* can no longer tell the difference between "*yes*" and "*no*", in fact, *I* no longer *know* anything, since *I* no longer have an identity, i.e. *I* am a non-enity, a "nothing", there exists no longer an "*I*" ».

This possible scenario coheres with the consistent idea of the dissipation of Richard's self: "KING RICHARD. I have no name, no title … And know not now what name to call myself!" (*R2* IV.i.255-259) and also "KING RICHARD. Was this face the face / That every day under his household roof / Did keep ten thousand men? Was this the face / That like the sun did make beholders wink? / Is this the face which fac'd so many follies / That was at last out-fac'd by Bolingbroke?" (*R2* IV.i.281-286) – a dissipation that eventually breaks through the linguistic medium and bursts into stage action when the

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deposed king shatters his looking glass and in it his image: "KING RICHARD. For there it is, cracked in an hundred shivers" (*R2* IV.i.288). Apparently "the moral of this sport" (*R2* IV.i.290) remains within the bounds of Richard's own possible version of the play's world (PW2) because Bolingbroke fails to see the *substance* behind the show: "BOLINGBROKE. The *shadow* of your sorrow hath destroyed / The *shadow* of your face" (*R2* IV.i.292-293).

The final shadow of the unkinged king's grief takes shape in Act V, Scene v, when Richard strains his mind to "hammer out" a pithy comparison between the lonely prison cell he inhabits and the world outside which is denied to him:

> KING RICHARD. My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
>
> My soul the father; and these two beget
>
> A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
>
> And these same thoughts people this little world,
>
> In humours like the people of this world,
>
> For no thought is contented. The better sort,
>
> As thoughts of things divine, are intermix'd
>
> With scruples, and do set the word itself
>
> Against the word,
>
> As thus: 'Come, little ones'; and then again,
>
> 'It is as hard to come as for a camel
>
> To thread the postern of a small needle's eye.'
>
> Thoughts tending to ambition, they do plot
>
> Unlikely wonders: how these vain weak nails
>
> May tear a passage through the flinty ribs
>
> Of this hard world, my ragged prison walls;

And, for they cannot, die in their own pride.

Thoughts tending to content flatter themselves

That they are not the first of fortune's slaves,

Nor shall not be the last; like silly beggars

Who, sitting in the stocks, refuge their shame,

That many have and others must sit there;

And in this thought they find a kind of ease,

Bearing their own misfortunes on the back

Of such as have before endur'd the like. (*R2* V.v.6-30)

Richard's soliloquy centres round a powerful simile which seems to provide a nut-shell explanation of the fundamental cognitive structure of the play: « the living human mind is like the world; thoughts are like people – never "contented", never one-dimensional, always complex, always multifarious, dynamically restructuring, combining and recombining, dividing and blending concepts, constantly changing their value and transforming their meaningful environment ». The mind in question here is that of Richard himself:

KING RICHARD. Thus play I in one person many people,

And none contented. Sometimes am I king;

Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,

And so I am. Then crushing penury

Persuades me I was better when a king;

Then am I king'd again; and by and by

Think that I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,

And straight am nothing" (*R2* V.v.31-38)

Just like Richard's fantasy the notion of unity in multiplicity, presented in this case study through the early modern concepts of *substance* and *shadows*, repeats in a fractal pattern throughout the play. A look through the prism of this design uncovers the synergetic effect of the functional wordplay at the linguistic level and the meaningful ambiguities at the higher levels of ideation, characterisation and development of plot. Everything in the composition of the play seems to work together to convey the ultimate complex notion – the ultimate representation of *grief*. It does not come in a rush but seeps gradually in the mind of the viewer/reader preparing him/her for Richard's final aphorism: "KING RICHARD. Nor I, nor any man that but man is, / With nothing shall be pleas'd till he be eas'd / With being nothing" (*R2* V.v.39-41). Here the deposed king has already absorbed the whole grief in the play to become himself the epitome of the tormented human condition and thus face the primordial consternation: Is life on earth a fruitless chase of shadows – and if it is, what does this make us humans?

The *state* of man: Shakespeare's wordplay and the presentation of complex moral issues

Therefore doth heaven divide

The state of man in divers functions,

Setting endeavour in continual motion. (*H5* I.ii.183-185)

Additions IIc and III to the anonymous early modern play *Sir Thomas More* have attracted a considerable amount of critical attention mainly due to the possibility that Addition IIc may be the only surviving example of Shakespeare's poetic writing penned in his own hand, while Addition III may be a direct transcript of Shakespeare's original. Although today the majority of Shakespeareans agree that the fragments are Shakespeare's,[66] there are still scholars who advance reasonable arguments against this claim.[67] What the very existence of this situation confirms, however, is that Additions IIc and III share a lot in style and imagery with undoubtedly Shakespearean works, i.e. they

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[66] The attribution of Addition IIc to Shakespeare gains more support due to palaeographic analyses.

[67] For more information on the question of Shakespeare's authorship see: Evans, G. Blakemore. Introduction to *Sir Thomas More. The Riverside Shakespeare*; Bald, R. C. "*The Booke of Sir Thomas More* and Its Problems." *Shakespeare Survey* II (1949), pp. 44-65; and Pollard, Alfred W., W. W. Greg, Edward Maunde Thompson, John Dover Wilson, and R. W. Chambers. *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More.* Cambridge, 1923.

are clearly Shakespeare-like. Therefore, the following analysis circumvents the issue of authorship and focuses on an evidently Shakespearean use of language in Addition III.

Sir Thomas More, or *The Book of Sir Thomas More* as it is also known, provides a collaboratively written,[68] fragmented account of the rise, achievement and fall of the legendary English statesman, based on several anecdotal episodes taken from his life. The central and most important of them is More's skilful intervention, as Sheriff of London, in the Ill May Day events of 1517, by which he manages to appease a threatening insurrection through delivering a series of moving speeches to the crowd – an episode presented in Addition IIc and most likely entrusted to Shakespeare for revision due to its censure sensitivity and dramatic importance. More's success in controlling the rebellion leads, in the play, to the quick advancement of his political career – to Knight, Privy Councillor, and subsequently Lord Chancellor of England. The soliloquy presented in Addition III follows directly the climax of More's rise and dramatically discloses his private thoughts at the moment of his highest achievement:

> MORE. it is in heaven that I am thus and thus;
>
> And that which we profanely term our fortunes
>
> Is the provision of the power above,
>
> Fitted and shaped just to that strength of nature
>
> Which we are borne withal. Good God, Good God,
>
> That I from such an humble bench of birth
>
> Should step as twere up to my Country's head,
>
> And give the law out there! I, in my father's life,

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[68] The prevailing opinion among scholars is that the play was originally written by Anthony Munday, but rejected when submitted to Edmund Tilney, Master of Revels from 1579 to 1610, which necessitated a number of changes and additions made probably by Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, and William Shakespeare (See Munday 1-32).

To take prerogative and tithe of knees

From elder kinsmen, and him bind by my place

To give the smooth and dexter way to me

That owe it him by nature! Sure, these things,

Not physicked by respect, might turn our blood

To much Corruption: but, More, the more thou hast,

Either of honor, office, wealth, and calling,

Which might accite thee to embrace and hug them,

The more doe thou in serpents' natures think them;

Fear their gay skins with thought of their sharp *state*;

And let this be thy maxim, to be greate

Is when the thread of hazard is once spun,

A bottom great wound up greatly undone. (*TM* Addition III)

The use of the word *state* in line 18 strikes the reader as a little awkward – in fact, it has apparently puzzled even the editors of *The Oxford Complete Shakespeare*, because in the 1987 edition, which includes Additions IIc and III, they have emended "state" to "stings" (*OCS* 788) – possibly due to the consonance with "skins" or Shakespeare's use of the collocation "sharp stings" in *AW* (III.iv.18). Nevertheless, *state* in line 18 is hardly an incidental mistake or bad spelling on part of the copyist because the last six lines of More's soliloquy (lines 16-21) form three rhyming couplets, of which lines 18 and 19 form the middle one and "state" at the end of line 18 bears the rhyme with "greate" at the end of line 19. This fact points at an incontestably premeditated use of *state* in line 18 which therefore demands more considerate justification.

The narrow context of the phrase apparently provides enough intratextual information to support the emendation through the closest possible meanings of *state*: A)

"property, possessions" (Cf. *1H4* IV.i.46-47 "HOTSPUR. Were it good to set the exact wealth of all our *states* / All at one cast?" *MV* III.ii.257-262 "BASSANIO. When I told you / My *state* was nothing, I should then have told you / That I was worse than nothing; for indeed / I have engag'd myself to a dear friend, / Engag'd my friend to his mere enemy, / To feed my means"). Hence, the serpents' stings, or venomous teeth and tongue, can indeed be seen as their sharp possessions, even as their "state", or "estate", i.e. their "inheritance" from their Biblical ancestor who incited man's first disobedience (Cf. *TA* II.ii.214-216 "TIMON. Ventidius lately / Buried his father, by whose death he's stepp'd / Into a great *estate*"); B) "condition, manner of existing" (Cf. *TM* IV.v.67-70 "MORE. Lets now suruaye our *state*: Heere sits my wife, / and deare esteemed issue, yonder stand / my loouing Seruants, now the difference / twixt those and these"; *Sonnet 29* "I all alone beweepe my out-cast *state*"; *R&J* IV.iii.2-4 "JULIET. I pray thee leave me to myself to-night; / For I have need of many orisons / To move the heavens to smile upon my *state*, / Which, well thou knowest, is cross and full of sin"), which could be "the condition of one's health" (Cf. *Sonnet 118* "And brought to medicine a healthful *state*"; *KL* II.iv.147-150 "REGAN. O, sir, you are old! / Nature in you stands on the very verge / Of her confine. You should be rul'd, and led / By some discretion that discerns your *state* / Better than you yourself"), or "a particular temper or mood" (Cf. *Sonnet 29* "Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising, / Haply I think of thee, and then my *state* (Like to the lark at break of day arising / From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate"). Thus, the "sharp stings" of the serpents in More's speech could point at both their "woeful *state*" (Cf. *Hamlet* III.iv.67-71 "KING. O wretched *state*! O bosom black as death! / O limed soul, that, struggling to be free, / Art more engag'd!") and their "serpent's nature" characterised by a quick and keen temper.

This chain of thought points at another dimension of *state* which relates to the "health of mind and body", which in the combination with "sharp" points at the idea of "acute physical or psychological *state*", i.e. "disease". A popular, at the time, acute disease hidden in "gay skin", or young human flesh, which had already become a much utilized metaphor for the providential retribution for moral and civil wrongdoings, was syphilis (Healy 123-188). This bit of extratextual information changes the perspective on the passage and evokes yet another coherent cognitive scenario. First, it throws different light on the hendiadys: "embrace and hug" in line 16. It cleaves the seemingly synonymous meaning of "embrace" and "hug": into a) "kiss" (Cf. *MA* IV.i.47 "CLAUDIO. You will say, she did embrace me as a husband") and b) "hold gently in one's arms" (Cf. *R3* I.iv.232-233 "CLARENCE. He bewept my Fortune, / And hugg'd me in his armes"), thus, suggesting a schema of concupiscence and erotic passion. Then, it bends the meaning of the word "accite" in line 16 from its standard meaning: "summon, call" (Cf. *TA* I.i.30 "MARCUS ANDRONICUS. He by the Senate is accited home") to "excite, arouse" (with which words it was commonly confounded in the early modern period) (Cf. *2H4* II.ii.66-67 "PRINCE. And what accites your most worshipful thought to thinke so"; Jonson, *Underwoods*, p. 69 "What was there to accite / So ravenous and vast an Appetite"). Finally, it elicits a double clink from the phrase: "Sure, these things, / Not physicked by respect, might turn our blood / To much Corruption" (lines 12-14), which is apparently used in concordance with the legal term *corruption of blood*, i.e. "the effect of an attainder upon a person attainted, by which his blood was held to have become tainted or 'corrupted' by his crime" or at least in the related moral sense: (Cf. *1H4* I.ii.91-92 "FALSTAFF. O, thou hast damnable iteration, and art indeed able to corrupt a saint") – but also carries the possible meaning "to infect, poison, contaminate" (Cf. *Ham* III.iv.147-149 "HAMLET. It will but skin and film the ulcerous place, / Whiles rank corruption, mining all within, / Infects unseen").

The wider context of the play, however, contains 13 key uses of the word *state* employing at least 3 discrete meanings, all of which relate to one of the main issues considered there – the issue of *state*ly power and More's relationship with it. Therefore, it is difficult to resist reading the awkward use of *state* in Addition III as a punning projection towards those other significations: A) "the body politic" (Cf. *TM* II.iii.234-235 "MORE. I now must sleep in court, sound sleeps forbear; / The chamberlain to *state* is public care"; *2H4* V.ii.135-137 "KING. And let us choose such limbs of noble counsel, / That the great body of our *state* may go / In equal rank with the best govern'd nation"); B) "the princely seat at the country's head and, by extension, its attribute of absolute authority and command" (Cf *TM* V.iii.89-91 "ROPER [to More]. The world, my lord, hath ever held you wise; / And 't shall be no distaste unto your wisdom, / To yield to the opinion of the *state*"; *2H4* V.ii.99-101 "CHIEF JUSTICE. And, as you are a King, speak in your *state* / What I have done that misbecame my place, / My person, or my liege's sovereignty"); C) "status, high rank, political power, and their relevant ceremoniousness and pomp" (Cf *TM* IV.i.68-70 "MORE. And brethren all, for once I was your brother, / And so I am still in heart: it is not *state* / That can our love from London separate. / True, upstart fools, by sudden fortune tried, / Regard their former mates with naught but pride. / But they that cast an eye still whence they came, / Know how they rose, and how to use the same"; *2H4* V.ii.142-143 "KING. Our coronation done, we will accite, / As I before rememb'red, all our *state*").

Thus, the convenient convergence of power, authority, and polity in *state* is inevitably juxtaposed to the image of the serpents' quick, keen, and deadly nature and possibly to the implicit warning for providential retribution for civil and moral corruption. The emergent blend casts a long shadow over "honor office wealth and calling" (line 15): all attributes of *state*ly rank at the "Country's head", but also stock-in-trade of royal

favour. A similar play on *state* in Act IV, Scene 3, blends the ideas of a) *state*ly rank, b) royal favour, and c) physical condition: "MORE. The King seems a physician to my fate; / His princely mind would train me back to *state*" (*TM* IV.iii.85-86). As the play progresses, however, the differences in opinion between King Henry VIII and More deepen and lead to the latter's trial for treason, his sending to the scaffold for execution: (Cf. *TM* V.iv.72-75 "MORE. my offence to his highness makes me of a *state* pleader a stage player … to act this last scene of my tragedy"), and eventually to his martyrdom: (Cf. *TM* V.iv.119-122 "SURREY. A very learned worthy gentleman / Seals error with his blood. Come, we'll to court. / Let's sadly hence to perfect unknown fates, / Whilst he tends prograce to the *state* of *states*").

Does the offbeat use of *state* in Addition III stretch the semantic nature of the word to prefigure More's "sharp state" later on in the play? It is hard to give a definite answer to this question. What is certain, though, is that the additions were composed after the first version of the play was completed, so their authors had the opportunity to study closely the subtle coherences of imagery and wordplay in the text and incorporate some of them in their own fragments. Moreover, in order to decide what to make of the ambiguous use of *state* in Addition III, the viewer or reader should be aware of yet another dimension of the word – alive to early modern ears and eyes but quite unfamiliar to us today: "A *state* therefore generally,"[69] writes Thomas Wilson in *The Art of Rhetoric*, "is the chiefe ground of a matter, and the principall point whereunto both he that speaketh should referre his whole wit, and they that heare should chiefly marke" (122). The implementation of the term in the early modern art of rhetoric derives from contemporary legal theory:

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[69] My italics.

in matters criminall, where iudgement is required: there are two persons at the least, which must through contrarietie stand and rest vpon some issue. As for example. A seruing man is apprehended by a Lawyer for Felonie, vpon suspition. The Lawyer saith to the seruing man: thou hast done this Robberie. Nay (saith he) I haue not done it. Vpon this conflict and matching together ariseth this *State*,[70] whether this seruing man hath done this Robberie, or no? (Ibid.)

Thus, this last facet of *state* offers an early modern theoretical perspective on a particular region of human conceptualisation – the mental space in which possible meanings, scenarios, and worlds are brought together, examined, and then selected, discarded or blended – the mental space in which the outlines of fundamental human notions such as rationality, reality, and truth are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated.[71] The fact that the early modern theory of rhetoric borrows the forensic concept of *state* draws a meaningful parallel between the cognitive schema of a trial at court and the analytical notion of the mechanics of discourse construction – the common point between them being the intuitive reliance on straightforward logical patterns in order to establish the most probable and therefore most truthful *state* of affairs.

The remaining part of this chapter examines the concept of *state*, in each of the dimensions discussed above, in a Shakespearean play centred round the ideas of truthfulness and equity in both judicial and moral decisions. At the time of its first productions the play in question was significantly called *All Is True*, but later was included in Shakespeare's *First Folio* as *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight*.

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[70] My italics.

[71] The spatial metaphor behind the term "mental space" goes back to Hobbes's observation that "no man … can conceive anything, but he must conceive it in some place" and seeks to delineate a set of abstract configurational parameters in the conceptual domain (Cf. Fauconnier, "Mental Spaces" 16-22; Werth 4-5; Stockwell 96).

Interestingly, it has a number of common characteristics with *Sir Thomas More*: a) both plays are set in the same period of English history (although without any apparent overlap of the portrayed characters and events); b) both plays are collaboratively written and different degrees of authorship of each play are attributed to William Shakespeare; and finally c) both plays have suffered a considerable amount of critical neglect mainly due to their unsettled authorship.

Another reason for critical displeasure was formulated as early as the mid-seventeenth century: "though I went with resolution to like it," writes Samuel Pepys in his *Diary* (1 January 1664) concerning the play, it "is so simple a thing made up of a great many patches, that, besides the shows and processions in it, there is nothing in the world good or well done." Ever since, critics have nagged at what they saw as the fragmentary structure and disjoined plot of *Henry VIII*. The following reading of the play, however, finds unity in its parts through the concept of *state*.

At the very opening of the play, the Prologue promises to the audience an experience of dramatic representations "That bear a weighty and a serious brow, / Sad, high, and working, full of *state* and woe" (*H8* P.2-3). Now, due to the fact that during one of the first performances of *Henry VIII*, on 29 June 1613, the Globe Theatre caught fire from a stage canon and burned down to the ground, we have today several contemporary reports concerning the play, the most detailed of which, delivered by Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to a friend, bears witness to the splendour of the show and pageantry that accompanied the action: "The King's players had a new play, called *All is true*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of Pomp and Majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the Knights of the Order, with their Georges and garters, the Guards with their embroidered coats, and the like" (qtd. in *AH8* 59). This report undoubtedly informs one

interpretation of the Prologue's use of *state* – "dignity, pomp and majesty". Yet, if Wilson's theoretical dimension of the word is also taken into consideration, a particular pattern of organisation can be discerned in the texture of the play. *Henry VIII*, as Wotton observes, is made up of "some principal pieces" of the reign of the King ("patches" in Pepys's critical view), i.e. the action centres round several episodes, which seem disparate in significance and set apart in time and place. The common point of all these episodes, however, is that each of them functions as a sort of *state*, or trial, of a central figure in the play. On the one hand, the characters of Buckingham, Katharine, Anne, Wolsey, and Cranmer are all in turn subjected to close judicial and/or moral scrutiny. On the other, the play, as a whole, focuses on the figure of the King, who appears as a major participant in each little trial and thus discloses important traits of his own character. The effect of this being that when all episodes are considered as a unified whole, their joint meaning amounts to an elaborate dramatic representation of the King's own complex *state*.

The essential characteristic feature of the early modern theoretical concept of *state*, as presented by Thomas Wilson, is that it accommodates a relationship of controversy and opposition ("contrarietie") – suspended in a *state* of equity and impartiality ("stand and rest vpon some issue"), i.e. before the weight of evidence and argumentation has tipped the balance of judgment towards a reasonable resolution. It seems that the authors of *Henry VIII* have taken special care to achieve this effect in each of the constituent episodes and with respect to the King himself. Expectably, this is chiefly accomplished by means of introducing measured amounts of poetic ambiguity and wordplay into the text. The remaining part of this case study explores the instances of ambiguity and wordplay situated in structurally sensitive places in the text of the play and their impact on both the respective episode and the overall construction of the work.

Henry VIII begins with the indirect expression of personal animosity between Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal of York. Buckingham speaks as a representative of the highest level of the English aristocracy, which at the time must have found it difficult to put up with the rise to unprecedented power of Wolsey – a butcher's son who, driven by great ambition and tireless diligence, obtained royal favour and took the place right next to the King in both wealth and judgment in matters of state. Buckingham rails against what he sees as Wolsey's devilish pride and his upstart insolence in interfering with the nobles' estates, but is advised by Norfolk to take heed of the Cardinal's spite and vindictiveness:

> NORFOLK. The *state* takes notice of the private difference
>
> Betwixt you and the Cardinal. I advise you –
>
> And take it from a heart that wishes towards you
>
> Honour and plenteous safety – that you read
>
> The Cardinal's malice and his potency
>
> Together; to consider further, that
>
> What his high hatred would effect wants not
>
> A minister in his power. (*H8* I.i.101-108)

In this context *state* apparently means "the government" and "the royal throne" (Cf. *1H4* II.iv.272 "FALSTAFF. This chair shall be my *state*") – hence, by extension, "the King himself". The significance of line 101 against the background of the whole speech, however, remains unclear: A) « the king observes your quarrel with Wolsey, B) the king is going to intervene and take Wolsey's side », or C) « you should rush and try to gain the king's favour before it is too late ». The resolution arrives shortly – Buckingham is arrested under royal warrant and the case of his treason is brought before the King by Wolsey. According to Buckingham's former Surveyor, testifying against him, the Duke said that "if

the King / Should without issue die, he'll carry it so / To make the sceptre his" (*H8* I.ii.133-135) and that if the King took action against him, he would "put his knife in him" (*H8* I.ii.199). Naturally, Henry VIII is deeply affected by these accusations and calls for swift trial and severe retribution. The Queen, however, remains suspicious of a manipulation of the case by Wolsey. Buckingham's own comment in relation to this is deliberately ambiguous: "BUCKINGHAM. My surveyor is *false*. The o'er-great Cardinal Hath show'd him gold" (*H8* I.i.222-223): either A) « the surveyor was bribed to give untrue testimony » (Cf. *2H4* P.8 "RUMOUR. Stuffing the ears of men with *false* reports"), or B) « the surveyor was bribed to betray me and disclose my secrets » (Cf. *KL* V.iii.160 "EDGAR. *False* to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father").

In his eloquent speech to the crowd before his execution Buckingham restates his loyalty to the King: "BUCKINGHAM. heaven bear witness, / And if I have a conscience, let it sink me / Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful!" (*H8* II.i.59-61) and plays on the meaning of the word *state* when Sir Nicholas Vaux arranges his departure with befitting ceremoniousness:

> BUCKINGHAM. Nay, Sir Nicholas,
>
> Let it alone. My *state* now will but *mock* me.
>
> When I came hither I was Lord High Constable
>
> And Duke of Buckingham; now, *poor* Edward Bohun.
>
> Yet I am *richer* than my *base* accusers
>
> That never knew what *truth* meant; I now seal it;
>
> And with that blood will make 'em one day groan for't. (*H8* II.i.100-106)

The use of *state* in line 101 above brings together a number of related meanings of the word: A) "status, high rank, political power", B) "property, possessions, estate", C)

"nobility and dignity of soul", and D) "condition situation". Each of these meanings establishes its own logical coherence in the context of the speech: A) "state" and "mock" – « Sir Nicholas, please keep it simple, reminding me of my former greatness will just grieve me more »; B) "state" and "poor" – « in this trial I have lost my titles and estates and am now poor »; C) "state", "richer" and "base" – « I have not lost, however, my dignity and nobility, which marks me apart from my accusers, who are *base*, i.e. ignoble, immoral, counterfeit, but also: plebeian, of low birth »; D) "state", "richer" and "truth" – « the very situation I find myself in mocks my noble soul, because I have the incontestable truth on my side ». The interplay of these cognitive scenarios juxtaposes two modes of existence: a) the material domain (lines 102-103) governed by the King's law, and b) the moral domain (lines 104-106) governed by universal truth. The blend of these two modes of existence allows Buckingham to express his firm belief that despite having lost in one of them he will certainly win in the other.

One of the most forceful images Buckingham uses at the close of his execution speech: "Go with me like good angels to my end, / And as the long *divorce* of steel falls on me, / Make of your prayers one sweet sacrifice, / And lift my soul to heaven" (*H8* II.i.75-78) prefigures another episode of *state* in the play – the attempted divorce trial of Katherine of Aragon, Henry's Queen. The polysemy latent in *divorce* is activated by the metaphoric use and draws together two distant domains of meaning: A) "the steel blade of the axe that will violently separate Buckingham's head from his body" and B) "the legal remedy that amounts to dissolving the matrimonial union between a husband and a wife". Under the pressure of context, this carefully designed juxtaposition results in a complex preconception in the viewer/reader in which « the image of the natural unity of head and body is mapped onto the notion of the unity between a husband and a wife » and also « the image of the sharp edge of the executioner's axe is mapped onto the notion of the judicial

decision to break the nuptial bond » (Cf. *H8* II.iii.13-16 "ANNE. [in relation to Queen Katherine] She never had pomp: thoug't be temporal, / Yet if that quarrel and Fortune do *divorce* / It from the bearer, 'tis a sufferance panging / As soul and body's severing").

Katherine's divorce trial is never brought to a close. When the Queen is summoned, she attends with dignity and delivers her case, pleading for the King's mercy and pointing out that she has been "a true and humble wife … at all times to [his] will conformable" "upward of twenty years" during which time she was "blest with many children by [him]" (*H8* II.iv.11-35). Then, Katherine accuses Cardinal Wolsey of conspiracy against her, and therefore refuses to recognise the legitimacy of a court presided by him. Finally, she appeals publicly to the Pope and leaves the court.

Katherine's brave and resolute actions move the King to deliver her *state* himself. On the one hand, there is no better wife, to him she is "alone in [her] rare qualities, sweet gentleness, [her] meekness saint-like, wife-like government, obeying and commanding, and [her] parts sovereign and pious else … speak [her] out – the Queen of earthly Queens" (*H8* II.iv.133-138). On the other, she needs must be abandoned for the sake of the commonweal:

> … mark th' inducement. Thus it came-give heed to't:
>
> My *conscience* first receiv'd a tenderness,
>
> Scruple, and prick, on certain speeches utter'd
>
> By th' Bishop of Bayonne, then French ambassador,
>
> Who had been hither sent on the debating
>
> A marriage 'twixt the Duke of Orleans and
>
> Our daughter Mary. I' th' progress of this business,
>
> Ere a determinate resolution, he –

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I mean the Bishop-did require a respite

Wherein he might the King his lord advertise

Whether our daughter were legitimate,

Respecting this our marriage with the dowager,

Sometimes our brother's wife. This respite shook

The bosom of my *conscience*, enter'd me,

Yea, with a splitting power, and made to tremble

The region of my breast, which forc'd such way

That many maz'd considerings did throng

And press'd in with this caution. First, methought

I stood not in the smile of heaven, who had

Commanded nature that my lady's womb,

If it conceiv'd a male child by me, should

Do no more offices of life to't than

The grave does to the dead; for her male issue

Or died where they were made, or shortly after

This world had air'd them. Hence I took a thought

This was a judgment on me, that my Kingdom,

Well worthy the best heir o' th' world, should not

Be gladded in't by me. Then follows that

I weigh'd the danger which my realms stood in

By this my issue's fail, and that gave to me

Many a groaning throe. Thus hulling in

The wild sea of my *conscience*, I did steer

Toward this remedy, whereupon we are

Now present here together; that's to say

I meant to rectify my *conscience*, which

I then did feel full sick, and yet not well,

By all the reverend fathers of the land

And doctors learn'd. (*H8* II.iv.166-203)

Although the King manages to set forth a straightforward and logically coherent argument in favour of his decision to divorce Katherine, his preoccupation with the word *conscience* seems to stand out and draw the viewer or reader's attention to itself. The immediate context of the above speech places the sense of the word *conscience* in the following possible world (PW1): « the king's *conscience*, i.e. the sensitive mental *state* where his moral and royal judgments reside, has been affected by disturbing doubts regarding the legitimacy of his marriage with his late brother's wife, and afflicted by the suspicion that their inability to produce a male heir to the English throne is related to the potentially illicit nature of their matrimony ». A retrospective consideration of the use of the word *conscience* in the preceding two scenes, however, offers more possibilities for interpretation.

When the prospect of divorce between the King and Queen Katherine is introduced in Act II, Scene ii, Henry seems to briefly regret his decision, placing the notion of *conscience* in a peculiar context: "KING. Would it not grieve an *able* man to leave / So sweet a bedfellow? But *conscience*, *conscience* – / O, 'tis a *tender* place, And I must leave her" (*H8* II.ii.140-142). The recollection of Katherine as "so sweet a bedfellow", or loving and skilful sexual partner, triggers in the King's mind two visions of himself: A) as an "*able* man" – the adjective *able* here comprising a collection of masculine features that stretch from "strong, vigorous, powerful," on the one hand – to "lusty, virile, potent" on the other; and B) as a man whose *conscience* is a "*tender* place" – the adjective *tender* here also presenting a variety of possibilities that stretch from "delicate, sensitive, amorous," on

the one hand – to "fragile, weak, impotent," on the other. A similar semantic effect is achieved by Suffolk's facetious play on *conscience* in the beginning of the same scene: "SUFFOLK. How is the King employ'd? / CHAMBERLAIN. I left him private, / Full of sad thoughts and troubles. / NORFOLK. What's the cause? / CHAMBERLAIN. It seems the marriage with his brother's wife / Has crept too near his *conscience*. / SUFFOLK. No, his *conscience* / Has crept too near another lady" (*H8* II.ii.13-17). Suffolk's punning subverts the intuitive sense of *conscience* evoked by Lord Chamberlain: "the moral notion of right and wrong that governs a person's thoughts and actions," and drives the meaning of the word towards a multiplicity of possible interpretations verging from "mind, thoughts, attention" to "sexual appetite, desire, will".

This carefully calculated and orchestrated shift in the meaning of *conscience* towards the conceptual domain of sex and physical longing puts forth a more problematic possible world (PW2) to accommodate Henry's reasoning: « the king is using the word *conscience* to mask the manhood crisis he is experiencing: on the one hand, his masculinity is afflicted by his inability to produce a male heir to the English throne to the point of revulsion (showing in the morbid comparison of his wife's womb to a grave for his sons, lines 185-190 above) and nausea (present in the image of becoming sick of rocking in the wild seas of his turbulent conscience, lines 196-201 above); on the other, he is affected to another woman ("My *conscience* first receiv'd a tenderness", line 167) and possibly attracted to the opportunity of reasserting his masculinity afresh, viz. the least *prick* (line 168) may allude to is "motivation" ».

The parallel existence of PW1 and PW2 above bears witness among other things to the stretchable nature of the concept of *conscience* – an issue which is developed further in the episode presenting the moral *state* of Anne Bullen. Act II, Scene iii, shows Anne

discussing the predicament of Katherine of Aragon and her own prospects of becoming the Queen of England with an old lady in waiting:

> ANNE. Verily,
>
> I swear 'tis better to be lowly born
>
> And range with humble livers in content
>
> Than to be perk'd up in a glist'ring grief
>
> And wear a golden sorrow.
>
> OLD LADY. Our content
>
> Is our best having.
>
> ANNE. By my troth and maidenhead,
>
> I would not be a queen.
>
> OLD LADY. Beshrew me, I would,
>
> And venture maidenhead for 't; and so would you,
>
> For all this spice of your hypocrisy.
>
> You that have so fair parts of woman on you
>
> Have too a woman's heart, which ever yet
>
> Affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty;
>
> Which, to say sooth, are blessings; and which gifts,
>
> Saving your mincing, the capacity
>
> Of your soft cheverel *conscience* would receive
>
> If you might please to stretch it. (*H8* II.iii.18-33)

Despite the richness of the employed imagery, the conversation so far follows a straightforward logical pattern and seems to convey simple ideas: (PW1) « Anne is eloquently trying to persuade herself and the old lady of the virtue of modesty and the perils of ambition. Her exhortations are scornfully dismissed as mere hypocrisy and

juvenile mincing by the old lady, who knowingly concludes that if Anne is as true a woman as her fair looks suggest, her woman's heart will desire distinction, riches, and power so badly that her flexible conscience will stretch far out to accommodate whatever is needed in order to achieve contentment ». The following lines, however, make it clear that the Old Lady's words work on multiple levels and seek to subvert and parody Anne's apparently genuine concern:

ANNE. Nay, good troth.

OLD LADY. Yes, troth and troth. You would not be a queen!

ANNE. No, not for all the riches under heaven.

OLD LADY. 'Tis strange: a *threepence bow'd* would hire me,

Old as I am, *to queen it*. But, I pray you

What think you of a duchess? Have you *limbs*

To *bear* that *load* of title?

ANNE. No, in truth.

OLD LADY. Then you are weakly made. Pluck off a little;

I would not be a young *count* in your *way*

For more than blushing comes to. If your *back*

Cannot vouchsafe this *burden*, 'tis too weak

Ever to get a boy.

ANNE. How you do talk!

I swear again I would not be a *queen*

For all the world.

OLD LADY. In faith, for little England

You'd venture an *emballing*. I myself

Would for Carnarvonshire, although there long'd

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No more to th' crown but that. (*H8* II.iii.33-49)

The heavy wordplay of the Old Lady becomes obvious in lines 36-37: a *threepence bowed* – "a bent coin of negligible value" would give enough reason to the Lady "to pretend she were the queen" – *to queen it*. Yet, another possibility for signification is drawn irresistibly close: « a threepence *bawd* would hire me, old as I am, to *quean* it, i.e. to play the whore » (Cf. *MW* IV.ii.172 "FORD. A witch, a *quean*, an old cozening *quean*"). This possibility develops into a cognitive scenario by what follows: A) "OLD LADY. Have you *limbs* / To *bear* that *load* of title?" (lines 38-39) – a) « have you got the moral and psychological strength to bear the title », but also b) « can your body bear the body of the owner of the title in an act of lovemaking », and c) « do you have the procreative power to bear a son to the owner of the title » – an idea which is made explicit in lines 40-42: "OLD LADY. If your *back* / Cannot vouchsafe this *burden*, 'tis too weak / Ever to *get* a boy." B) "OLD LADY. I would not be a young *count* in your *way* / For more than blushing comes to" (lines 42-43) – the similarity in pronunciation between *count* and "cunt" and the ambiguity of the phrase *in your way* here point at three diverse possible scenarios: a) « I wish a young, handsome nobleman came your way », b) « I would not hesitate about loosing my virginity like you do », and c) « luckily for you I would not be a young woman in your way ». C) "OLD LADY. In faith, for little England / You'd venture an *emballing*" – a) « investing with the ball as the emblem of royalty », b) « becoming pregnant », and again due to similar pronunciation c) « "embailing" – to enclose in a ring, i.e. wear a ring as a symbol of matrimony ».

Having been thus reinforced by the context, the bawdy scenario bounces back and affects the signification of the first part of the conversation activating unexpected shades of meaning in seemingly non-punning words: A) "OLD LADY. Our *content* is our best having" (lines 22-23) – the Old Lady seizes upon Anne's pious use: "ANNE. And range

with humble livers in *content*" (line 20), separating the meaning of "satisfaction, peace of mind" (Cf. *CE* I.ii.33-34 "ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE. He that commends me to mine own *content* / Commends me to the thing I cannot get") from the original signification of the word – "capacity, load, volume" (Cf. *Tem* II.ii.136-137 "STEPHANO. Come, swear to that; kiss the book. I will furnish it anon with new *contents*"); B) "OLD LADY. And venture *maidenhead* for 't" (line 25) – the Old Lady twists Anne's innocent-looking oath: "ANNE. By my troth and *maidenhead*, / I would not be a queen" (lines 22-23) to foreground its sexual connotation of "hymen, virginity" (Cf. *RJ* I.iii.2 "NURSE. Now, by my *maidenhead* at twelve year old"). C) "OLD LADY. You that have so *fair parts* of woman on you" (line 27) conveys the idea of physical beauty but only through offering an erotic close-up on particular physical parts (Cf. *A Lover's Complaint* 80-84, "Love lacked a dwelling and made him her place; / And when in his *fair parts* she did abide, / She was new lodged and newly deified"). The possible world (PW2) created by the Old Lady's wordplay is finally taking shape: « Our best possession as women is our body (by extension vagina and procreative power). Every woman's heart desires high rank and riches, so we should not hesitate to trade with our body (by extension womb and freedom) for the achievement of our desires. This may make us look like strumpets – but then again, how small is the difference between a *queen* and a *quean* ».

This possible world clearly runs into opposition with Anne's repeated affirmation that she would not become a *queen*/*quean*. The place of this conflict is also clearly identified as Anne's *conscience*: "OLD LADY. and which gifts … the capacity / Of your soft cheverel *conscience* would receive / If you might please to stretch it" (lines 30-33). Although the idea of a pliable conscience was proverbial (Cf. Dent C608), the bawdy context manipulates the meanings of *content* (lines 20-22), *capacity* (line 31), *soft*, *cheverel*, *receive* (line 32), and *stretch* (line 33) to undermine the moral signification of

conscience (line 32) and overlay it with a strained image of the female sexual organ.[72] The emergent conceptual blend between *conscience* and *sexuality* in Act II, Scene ii, not only offers a cynical perspective on Anne's relationship with the King, but also adds another dimension to the word *conscience* when used by or in relation to the King – informing ironic wordplay such as: "SECOND GENTLEMAN. [*Sees Anne.*] Heaven bless thee! / Thou hast the sweetest face I ever look'd on. / Sir, as I have a soul, she is an angel; / Our king has all the Indies in his arms, / And more and richer, when he *strains* that lady; / I cannot blame his *conscience*" (*H8* IV.i.42-47).

The impact of Anne Bullen on the King's *conscience* leads directly to another episode of *state* in the play – the fall from royal favour and power of Cardinal Wolsey, Lord Chancellor of England. In Act III, Scene ii, it becomes clear that Wolsey's fatal discreditation before Henry VIII is caused by his misfortunate misdirection of two of his private documents to the King. These documents show unequivocally, on the one hand, that the Cardinal has stealthily amassed an exorbitant amount of wealth, and on the other, that he has been secretly persuading the Pope to delay the King's divorce with Katherine (because he sees the King's infatuation with Anne as an impediment to his own plan to secure for the King a royal marriage to the Duchess of Alençon, the French King's sister). As Wolsey himself observes, it is the second piece of incriminating evidence that for ever barred him access to the King's heart and thrust him headlong to disgrace: "WOLSEY. There was the weight that pulled me down" (*H8* III.ii.406).

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[72] The leap of wit necessary to grasp this tortuous instance of wordplay seems to be metadramatically reflected in the polysemy of the word *cheveril* (line 32): on the one hand, *cheveril* is a type of kid leather, which was known for its considerable flexibility and elasticity, and was figuratively used in collocation with *conscience* (Cf. Drayton's *The Owl* "He had a tongue for every language fit, / A *cheverell Conscience*, and a searching wit"), on the other, Shakespeare's remaining two uses of the word relate it to the concept of *wit* (Cf. *RJ* II.iv.76-77 "MERCUTIO. O, here's a *wit* of *cheverel*, that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad" and *TN* III.i.11-13 "CLOWN. A sentence is but a *chev'ril* glove to a good *wit*. How quickly the wrong side may be turn'd outward." Both uses, especially the second one, emphasise the freedom of the mind to rearrange and play with language to achieve more complex meanings.

Earlier in the play, Wolsey is consistently portrayed as an undisputable villain: A) In Act I, Scene i, Buckingham exposes Wolsey's greed and malice: "BUCKINGHAM. No man's pie is freed / From his ambitious finger" (*H8* I.i.52-53); "BUCKINGHAM. This holy fox, / Or wolf, or both – for he is equal ravenous / As he is subtle, and as prone to mischief / As able to perform it" (*H8* I.i.158-161). B) In Act I, Scene ii, Queen Katherine pleads against an exorbitant tax on the commons, introduced without the knowledge of the King (presumably by Wolsey), while Wolsey not only manages to clear himself from any responsibility for its imposition but also takes credit for its revocation. C) In Act II, Scene iv, when the Queen is brought before the court she publicly accuses Wolsey of conspiring against her: "KATHERINE. You are mine enemy … / For it is you / Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me … Therefore, I say again, / I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul / Refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more / I hold my most malicious foe and think not / At all a friend to truth" (*H8* II.iv.75-82).

Following his fall from grace, however, Wolsey is given a chance to deliver a moving soliloquy to the audience in which he reflects poetically on his own life and deeds:

> WOLSEY. This is the *state* of man: to-day he puts forth
>
> The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms
>
> And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
>
> The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
>
> And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
>
> His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
>
> And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,
>
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
>
> This many summers in a sea of glory;
>
> But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride

At length broke under me, and now has left me,

Weary and old with service, to the mercy

Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye;

I feel my heart new open'd. O, how wretched

Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!

There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,

That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin

More pangs and fears than wars or women have;

And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,

Never to hope again. (*H8* III.ii.352-372)

In his carefully balanced and rhetorically effective speech Wolsey presents "the *state* of man", i.e. his own unhappy fate,[73] by means of several superimposed images: A) an allegory of vegetal life – « the tender leaves of a courtier's hopes give way to the red blossoms of his achievements, which, in turn, should be followed by the fruition of the monarch's respect and gratitude, unless the life cycle of the courtier is cut off by a sudden frost in the relationship between him and the king »; B) an extended simile between a potentially dangerous children's game: « floating on blown up cow bladders on the surface of the sea in summer, without heeding how deep the water below is », and the unenviable lot of a courtier, « who has been floating on his high-blown pride and ambition on the surface of the king's kindness for many years, but suddenly denied protection in a weary old age – is left to drown in a turbulence of enmity and aversion »; and finally C) an extended metaphor which links together « the utter dependence of the courtier on the monarch's favour and the martyr-like suspended stance of man between bliss and

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[73] Cf. *JC* II.i.68-70 "BRUTUS. … and the state of man, / Like to a little Kingdom, suffers then / The nature of an insurrection. (*Julius Caesar*)

perdition». The emotive charge of Wolsey's words works upon the consciousness of the viewer/reader evoking a possible world in which « Wolsey is not a villain – he is an ambitious man who simply served his king too fervently » (Cf. *H8* III.ii.455-457 "WOLSEY. Had I but served my God with half the zeal / I served my King, he would not in my age / Have left me naked to mine enemies"), « i.e. he sought to secure the popedom for himself to be able to help the English throne and tried to arrange the marriage between Henry and Marguerite of Angoulême to increase the political strength of the state. His intentions are, nevertheless, misunderstood by the king and twisted by his enemies – to lead to his bitter disrepute and subsequent unhappy death ».

The above possible world is developed later in the play, after the Cardinal has passed away, by the seemingly objective opinion of Griffith who in his conversation with the former Queen undertakes to remind her of the admirable qualities of her dead enemy and so do justice to his departed soul: "This Cardinal," he says, "Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly / Was fashion'd to much honour from his cradle. / He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one; / Exceeding wise, fair-spoken, and persuading; / Lofty and sour to them that lov'd him not, / But to those men that sought him sweet as summer. / And though he were unsatisfied in getting – / Which was a sin – yet in bestowing, madam, / He was most princely: ever witness for him / Those twins of learning that he rais'd in you, / Ipswich and Oxford" (*H8* IV.ii.48-59). The words of this "honest chronicler" move Katherine to such an extent that she manages to overcome her deep hatred and contempt for Wolsey (Cf. *H8* IV.ii.33-39 "KATHERINE. He was a man / Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking / Himself with princes; one that by suggestion / Tied all the kingdom. Simony was fair play. / His own opinion was his law. I'th' presence / He would say untruths, and be ever double / Both in his words and meaning") and teach herself the psychological comfort of forgiving him and honouring his memory.

This carefully balanced juxtaposition of two morally antagonistic Wolseys – a veritable villain, and an admirable, though sinful, man, each of them necessarily creating his own possible copy of the play's world – inevitably invites an ethical revision of the Cardinal's predicament. Now, justice is clearly a central concern of the play and the pivotal point of all trials represented in it. What is more, the way justice is done in *Henry VIII* follows a straightforward pattern: A) When the King is convinced of Buckingham's guilt he exclaims: "KING. If he may / Find mercy in the law, 'tis his; if none, / Let him not seek't of us" (*H8* I.ii.211-213). The King's words prove as good as condemnation because in the battlefield of political intrigues the evidence and testimony presented before the court of law may be ruthlessly manipulated: "BUCKINGHAM. The law I bear no malice for my death – / 'T has done upon the premises but justice – / But those that sought it I could wish more Christians" (*H8* II.i.62-64). B) When no legal ground can justify Henry's divorce with Katherine, yet the King's conscience dictates otherwise – the law is forced to obey his will. C) When Anne is trying to protect her moral integrity and chastity, yet the King's conscience presses in – her conscience is compelled to give way. D) No legal action can assail Wolsey's state of power until the King has removed his protection from him – as soon as this is done, however, the Cardinal is doomed to a headlong fall. The supremacy of the King's judgment over the points and procedures of law is manifest once again and more evidently than ever in the last episode of *state* in the play – the trial of Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Grievous charges of heresy are pressed against the protestant Cranmer by Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester, and the other members of the King's Privy Council. Despite the brewing storm the Archbishop is confident in his innocence and firmly believes that his true honesty and integrity will guarantee him safe passage through all the

trials and tribulations he is subjected to. Henry, however, is not so certain of the victory of truth over punctilious plotting and decides to intervene:

> KING. Know you not
>
> How your *state* stands I'th' world, with the whole world?
>
> Your enemies are many, and not small; their practices
>
> Must bear the same proportion; and not ever
>
> The justice and the truth o'th'question carries
>
> The due o'th'verdict with it; at what ease
>
> Might corrupt minds procure knaves as corrupt
>
> To swear against you? Such things have been done.
>
> You are potently oppos'd, and with a malice
>
> Of as great size. Ween you of better luck,
>
> I mean in perjur'd witness, than your Master,
>
> Whose minister you are, whiles here He liv'd
>
> Upon this naughty earth? Go to, go to;
>
> You take a precipice for no leap of danger,
>
> And woo your own destruction. (*H8* V.i.126-140)

The King here clearly relates Cranmer's *state* to one of the previously discussed possible scenarios in the play, in which Buckingham appears guiltless and wrongly accused: a) "not ever / The justice and the truth o'th'question carries / The due o'th'verdict with it" (lines 129-131); b) "at what ease / Might corrupt minds procure knaves as corrupt / To swear against you" (lines 131-133); c) "Such things have been done" (line 133). The King's words only restate something that has already become clear in every trial presented in the play: « the truth established and the justice done in the courts of law are merely functions of political influence and power struggle among the nobles ». Even Jesus,

observes the King, did not thrive against false testimony: "Ween you of better luck, / I mean in perjur'd witness, than your Master, / Whose minister you are, whiles here He liv'd / Upon this naughty earth" (lines 135-138). Therefore, Henry decides to follow the voice of his conscience and take the matter in his own hands.

Cranmer's *state* "I'th' world, with the whole world" has also another dimension – it presents in miniature the ideological and political clash between Catholicism and Protestantism during Henry's reign. The Council's accusations against Cranmer rest on religious grounds: "CHANCELLOR. you that best should teach us / Have misdemeaned yourself, and not a little, / Toward the King first, then his laws, in filling / The whole realm, by your teachings and your chaplains' – / For so we are informed – with new opinions, / *Diverse* and *dangerous*, which are *heresies* / And, not reformed, may prove *pernicious*" (*H8* V.ii.47-53). The logical sequence underlying the Chancellor's complaints is based on the following pattern: *diverse* therefore *heretical*, i.e. at variance with the generally accepted as authoritative opinions of the Catholic Church – therefore *dangerous* and *pernicious*. In his defence speech Cranmer seizes on the words *diverse*, *dangerous* and *pernicious* to subvert subtly the viewpoint on which the Council's indictment is founded (without, however, venturing into religious dispute that could only aggravate his situation): "CRANMER. My good lords, hitherto, in all the progress / Both of my life and office, I have laboured, / And with no little study, that my teaching / And the strong course of my authority / Might go *one way*, and *safely*; / and the end was ever to *do well*" (*H8* V.ii.66-71). Cranmer does not deny that he and his chaplains profess new religious views, yet he implies that « there is no *diversity* between Christian doctrines because there is simply only *one way*, i.e. the true way, and that this way is the way to *safety* and *goodness* ».[74]

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[74] Cranmer's rhetoric is characteristically Reformist and resonates with the teaching of the five *solas*, or "ones": *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*, and *soli Deo Gloria*.

The conceptual blending of Buckingham's trial, Cranmer's arraignment, and the preceptive conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism results in the analogical relation of several superimposed concepts. On the one hand, there are: a) Wolsey's possible manipulation of evidence, testimony, and the King's opinion in the case of Bukingham's condemnation, b) Gardiner's attempt to do the same with respect to Cranmer (Cf. *H8* V.ii.93-95 "CRANMER [to Gardiner]. If you will pass, / I shall both find your lordship judge and juror, / You are so merciful. I see your end: / 'Tis my undoing"), and c) the cunning manipulation of both scriptural revelation and Christian dogma for which the Protestant Reform Movement criticised the Roman Catholic Church. On the other, there are: a) Buckingham's loyalty to the King, b) Cranmer's innocence, and c) the one religious Christian truth.

A retrospective re-construction of *Henry VIII* as a play celebrating the success of the English Reformation may indeed find a broader context in the employed imagery and the development of character.[75] It may even expand into a possible world in which the figure of Cardinal Wolsey is used as a critical reformist allegory for the Roman Catholic Church. « A man of low birth – just like the apostles – he excels in his studies, advances the knowledge of mankind and promotes learning. As time moves on, he becomes entangled in political intrigues and shows great skill in bending the truth in order to enrich himself and gain more power. To achieve his goals, he steers the minds of kings and queens. Finally, when his appetite becomes insatiable and his ambition intolerable, he is thrust Lucifer-like into the abyss of damnation by his lord and master. In the end, repentant, he teaches his descendent – Thomas Cromwell, himself a reformed Christian[76] –

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[75] A number of Shakespeare critics read *Henry VIII* as a Protestant propaganda play: Cf. Frances Yates, 70; William Baillie, 248; Donna Hamilton, 164.

[76] Cf. *H8* V.ii.107-120 and also *Thomas, Lord Cromwell*, 1602.

to "fling away ambition", love his enemies, abandon corruption, profess peace, "be just, and fear not" (*H8* III.ii.440-446) ».

Yet, *Henry VIII* is not a medieval Morality Play. It works on a number of cognitive levels simultaneously. Its very structure defies the viewer/reader's rationalist urge to fit everything into a single logically and ethically unified world. The identifiable pattern behind this structural organisation, as stated above, parallels the phenomenon described by the early modern forensic concept of *state* and its rhetorical counterpart. A final yet crucial point of resemblance between the latter two notions is their rapport with objective truth. Naturally, the most likely reason why in early modern jurisprudence an arbiter would seek to put two opposite claims on the scales before taking a decision is his or her desire to arrive at the best judgment, i.e. bring the truth of what actually happened out into the light: "whether this seruing man hath done this Robberie, or no" (Wilson, *Rhetorique*, 122). Similarly, the *states* of Buckingham, Katherine, Anne, Wolsey, and Cranmer seem to be painstakingly balanced and presented so as to provide an opportunity for the viewer/reader to decide for himself or herself what each respective truth is, and how these individual truths combine to form the *state* of King Henry himself (Cf. *H8* P,7-9 "PROLOGUE. Such as give / Their money out of hope they may believe / May here find *truth* too"). Or is it possible that the construct of *state* is evoked ironically to show the incompatibility between the rationalist concept of objective truth and the dynamic nature of complex systems such as text, man, or politics. In such a case literally all *is* true: Buckingham is both a traitor and a loyal subject, Katherine is both a perfect Queen and an unattractive wife, Anne is both a chaste maid and a calculating prostitute, Wolsey is both evil and kind, Cranmer is both learned and foolish, and the King is both gullible and cunning, noble and lascivious, cruel and compassionate. Be that as it may, the important conclusion for the purposes of this study is that the impartial representation of complex moral issues, so typical for

Shakespeare, which involves higher dramatic structures like ideas, characters and plot, owes a great deal of its cognitive possibility to the masterful use of wordplay at the lower textual level.

The fatal Cleopatra and a multiple Hamlet: Shakespeare's wordplay and the construction of complex fictional personalities

Methinks I see these things with parted eye,

When every thing seems double. (*MND* V.i.188-189)

The final touch of Dr. Johnson's austere reproof of Shakespeare's propensity to play with words, "[a] quibble was to him the fatal *Cleopatra* for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it" (§44), employs a familiar narrative to drive home its meaning. He uses the final scene of the calamitous life history of Mark Antony, which was most probably well known to him and his neoclassical peers in both Plutarch's original and Shakespeare's dramatisation. On the surface it all looks clear: Shakespeare is compared to Antony – the great orator and potential ruler of the whole world – in that the poet could have had all that was to be had in the world of poetry for he possesses the poetic power to show "the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination" (Johnson §17); yet just like Antony, Shakespeare falls short of achieving the ultimate accomplishment of his talents because of a foolish infatuation with what seems to be a feminine rhetorical figure, which Cleopatra-like lures him off the path of his destiny and leads him into the quicksands of overall ruin. Such an interpretation of Dr. Johnson's

words seems very much in line with Plutarch's moralistic intentions: "the arts [of] temperance, justice and wisdom, do not only consider honesty, uprightness, and profit: but examine withal, the nature and effects of lewdness, corruption and damage … [so] we shall be the forwarder in reading and following the good, if we know the lives, and see the deformity of the wicked" (Plutarch 5.372-373).

The implication of Shakespeare's version of the story and Dr. Johnson's treatment of Cleopatra, however, imports an unexpected, perhaps undesired, complexity into his aphorism. Whereas Plutarch centres his narrative around the personality of Antony and views Cleopatra merely as the cause of his undoing: "if any spark of goodness or hope of rising were left in him, Cleopatra quenched it straight, and made it worse than before" (Plutarch 5.273), Shakespeare models Cleopatra, in A. C. Bradley's estimation, as one of his four "most wonderful" characters (Bradley 208) and, by universal consent, as his most intricate and subtle woman. Thus, Shakespeare's choice of representation seems to countervail a straightforward and neatly logical interpretation of the play and this effect, in turn, seems to spread over to Dr. Johnson's extended metaphor.

The first part of this chapter is motivated by the above observation and subjects Shakespeare's Cleopatra and the mechanics of her portrayal to closer examination. It focuses on the use of wordplay and multiple worldviews in modelling her complex personality in order to relate the emerging notions back to Johnson's metaphor. The second part applies the resultant theoretical perspective to one of Shakespeare's most complex and enigmatic characters – Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

In the brief opening scene of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Philo, a Roman soldier, apparently insignificant to the plot, prologue-like lays out the central conundrum of the play:

PHILO. Nay, but this dotage of our general's

Overflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,

That o'er the files and musters of the war

Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,

The office and devotion of their view

Upon a tawny *front*. His captain's heart,

Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst

The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,

And is become the bellows and the fan

To cool a gipsy's lust.

Look where they come!

Take but good note, and you shall see in him

The triple pillar of the world transformed

Into a strumpet's fool. (*AC* I.i.1-13)

The viewer/reader is immediately confronted with a double vision of Antony: on the one hand, as warlike, mail-clad Mars leading his victorious hosts the way to eternal glory, and on the other, as a tantalised, manipulated Vulcan, who is used instrumentally for the indulgences of a compelling woman of easy virtue. The two visions ironically hinge on a typically Shakespearean pun on *front* (line 6),[77] and their essential incompatibility promises the tragic warp of the story henceforth. Antony is expected to be yet another of Shakespeare's complex tragic men drawn between conflicting loyalties, while Cleopatra is expected to perform the function of a disintegrating force, very much like the urge for vengeance of old Hamlet's ghost, the prophesies of the Weird Sisters, or Iago's slanderous

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[77] a) "The total area in which opposing armies face each other," and b) "The part or side that is forward, prominent, or most often seen or used, face, forehead."

insinuations. As the play unfolds, however, Cleopatra draws more and more attention to herself – she frowns and rails, while Antony protests and glooms. As E. A. J. Honigman points out: "Antony impresses us in scene after scene as a loser; Herculean, but still a loser; and in his defeats in conversation, added by Shakespeare, distinguish him equally from Plutarch's Antonius and from the other tragic heroes" (Honigman 153). The breakdown of Antony's heroic figure hits bottom with his failure to perform the decorous suicide "after the high Roman fashion" (IV.xv.91) that, in his opinion, befits his great defeat both in the battlefield and in his amorous liaison with the Queen of Egypt. Cleopatra, on the other hand, not only survives him by a whole act but is given the chance to consider, plan and execute her suicide in a dignified and thrillingly beautiful way – her death is "[a]s sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle" (*AC* V.ii.310).

The splendour of Cleopatra as a dramatic figure is achieved mainly through her exquisite descriptions by other characters, notably in Enobarbus' Cydnus speech (II.ii.200-250), and her gravitation towards the centre of the play – yet the true complexity of her character is accomplished mainly through the quality of her language in her speeches and her verbal exchanges with the other personages of the play. A closer look at Cleopatra's words just before her glorious death uncovers a telling pattern that permeates the texture of her theatrical being:

> CLEOPATRA. Hast thou the *pretty worm* of Nilus there
>
> That *kills* and *pains not*?
>
> CLOWN. Truly, I have him. But I would not be the party that should
>
> desire you to touch him, for his biting is *immortal*; those that
>
> do *die* of it do seldom or never recover.
>
> CLEOPATRA. Remember'st thou any that have *died* on't?
>
> CLOWN. Very many, men and women too. I heard of one of them no

longer than yesterday: a very honest woman, but something given

to *lie*, as a woman should not do but in the way of honesty; how

she *died* of the biting of it, what pain she felt- truly she makes

a very good report o' th' worm. But he that will believe all that

they say shall never be saved by half that they do. But this is

most *falliable*, the worm's an odd worm.

CLEOPATRA. Get thee hence; farewell.

CLOWN. I wish you all *joy* of the *worm*.

CLEOPATRA. Farewell.

CLOWN. You must think this, look you, that the *worm* will do his kind.

CLEOPATRA. Ay, ay; farewell.

CLOWN. Look you, the *worm* is not to be trusted but in the keeping

of wise people; for indeed there is no *goodness* in the *worm*.

CLEOPATRA. Take thou no care; it shall be heeded.

CLOWN. Very good. Give it *nothing*, I pray you, for it is not worth

the *feeding*.

CLEOPATRA. Will it *eat* me?

CLOWN. You must not think I am so simple but I know the devil

himself will not *eat* a woman. I know that a woman is a dish for

the gods, if the devil *dress* her not. But truly, these same

whoreson devils do the gods great harm in their women, for in

every ten that they make the devils *mar* five.

CLEOPATRA. Well, get thee gone; farewell.

CLOWN. Yes, forsooth. I wish you *joy* o' th' *worm*. (*AC* V.ii.243-278)

The bawdy wordplay of the above passage seems to be exactly the kind of typically

Shakespearean wordplay that is so rigorously disapproved of by Dr. Johnson. The twist in

the meaning of this brief exchange between Cleopatra and the Clown is realised by the double sense of the word *die* (lines 248-249): a) to cease to live, and b) to experience sexual orgasm (Cf. *MA* V.ii.95-96 "BENEDICK. I will live in thy heart, *die* in thy lap, and be buried thy eyes"). Cleopatra evidently intends to use the word with its first signification, while the Clown saucily bends it towards the second one, shoving thus the whole dialogue into the connotative mire of an alternative possible world: the *pretty worm* (line 243) becomes associated with its phallic shape; *kills and pains not* (line 244) points at the second meaning of *die*; the malapropism *immortal* (line 247) drives the reader's perception from "mortal" to "immortal" but not without the implication of the graphically related "immoral;" *lie* (line 252) points at the possible interpretation: "lie with other men" (Cf. *Sonnet 138*); another malapropism *falliable* (line 257) blends together "infallible" and "fallible," i.e. "liable to fall" (Cf. *MM* III.i.66-68 "DUKE. Do not satisfy your / Resolution with hopes that are *fallible*; to-morrow you must die; / go to your knees and make ready"); the repeated *joy* (lines 258 and 278) leans toward "jouissance;" *no goodness* (line 264) relates to "the lack of moral and ethical values;" *nothing* (line 271) activates a familiar Shakespearean pun on "no thing" or "an o-thing" meaning "vagina;" (Cf. Williams 219) through which the punning uses of *feed* (line 271) and *eat* (lines 272 and 274) are understood; the senses of *dress* (line 275) and *mar* (line 277) also relate in more than one possible world: A) to dress or prepare a dish and then to destroy it by adding intolerable ingredients, and B) to train or break in a horse by riding (Cf. *R2* V.v.80 "GROOM. That horse that I so carefully have *dressed*") and to spoil (Cf. *TA* IV.ii.41 "FLAVIUS. For bounty, that makes gods, does still *mar* men") – a domain from which the meaning bounces back into the sexual context in which women may be ridden by the devil and their virtue may be thus spoiled.

The above possible coherence clearly partakes of a possible world well grounded in the language of the whole play. It derives from a traditional interpretation of the story and in it Cleopatra is the whore of Egypt, who entangles the powerful Antony and drives him to his ruin. The parallel with the Whore of Babylon, a familiar image at the time, imposes itself as Pompey conjures Cleopatra to detain Antony and prevent him from fighting in the wars: "POMPEY. But all the charms of love, / Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip! / Let witchcraft join with / beauty, lust with both; / Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts, / Keep his brain fuming" (II.i.20-24). More often, however, the links between this possible world and other more immediate worlds of signification are realised by means of wordplay: "ENOBARBUS. Cleopatra, catching but / the least noise of this, *dies* instantly; I have seen her *die* / twenty times upon far poorer moment. I do think there is mettle / in death, which commits some loving act upon her, she hath such a / celerity in *dying*" (I.ii.140-144) – Enobarbus's pun here blending Cleopatra's characteristically dramatic demeanour and her sexual appetites: "CLEOPATRA. I take no *pleasure* / In aught an eunuch has" (I.v.9), "CLEOPATRA. O happy horse, to *bear the weight* of Antony" (I.v.21).

Significantly, the scope of this representation of the Queen of Egypt goes beyond the mere portraiture of a common harlot, it stretches out to include a gallery of what was thought at the time to be typically female imperfections. Besides lechery, Cleopatra also displays coyness and vanity: "CLEOPATRA. If it be love indeed, tell me how much" (I.i.14), jealousy: "CLEOPATRA. Excellent falsehood! / Why did he marry Fulvia and not love her" (I.i.41-42), desire to manipulate Antony: "CLEOPATRA. If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick" (I.iii.4-6), spiteful derisiveness: "CLEOPATRA. Cut my lace, Charmian come! / But let it be; I am quickly ill and well – / So Antony loves" (I.iii.72-74), erratic emotional outbursts: "CLEOPATRA.

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Courteous lord one word … Oh, my oblivion is a very Antony, / And I am all forgotten"
(I.iii.88-93), irrational and misplaced anger: "CLEOPATRA. [to the messenger bringing
her the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia] The most infectious pestilence upon thee!
Strikes him down … Hence, / Horrible villain, or I'll spurn thy eyes / Like balls before me!
I'll unhair thy head! *She hales him up and down* / Thou shalt be whipped with wire and
stewed in brine, / Smarting in lingering pickle!" (II.v.61-66), quarrelsomeness and
vindictiveness: "Sink Rome and their tongues rot / That speak against us! A charge we
bear i'th' war, / And, as the president of my kingdom, will / Appear there for a man"
(III.vii.15-19), instability and disloyalty: "SCARUS. Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt – /
Whom leprosy o'ertake! – i'th midst o'th'fight / When vantage like a pair of twins
appeared / Both as the same – or, rather, ours the elder – / The breeze upon her, like a cow
in June, / Hoists sails and flies" (III.x.10-15), once again deceitfulness and desire to
manipulate Antony: "CLEOPATRA. Madrian, go tell him I have slain myself. / Say that
the last I spoke was 'Antony', / And word it, prithee, piteously" (IV.xiii.7-9), and finally
the possibility for opportunism and treachery: "CLEOPATRA. [sending word to Ceaser
after Antony's death] Pray you tell him / I am his fortune's vassal and I send him / The
greatness he has got. I hourly learn / A doctrine of obedience, and would gladly / Look him
i'th' face" (V.ii.28-32).

The punning exchange between Cleopatra and the Clown, however, leads to a
carefully planned and imposingly majestic suicide scene in which the primary sense of *die*
asserts itself and directs the viewer/reader's perception towards another possible world:

CLEOPATRA. I have

Immortal longings in me. Now no more

The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.

Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear

Antony call. I see him rouse himself

To praise my noble act. I hear him mock

The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men

To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come.

Now to that name my courage prove my title!

I am fire and air; my other elements

I give to baser life. (V.ii.279-289)

Although some possible echoes of the hedonistic world linger in *immortal longings* (line 280) and the reference to wine-dipped lips (line 281), with the exit of the Clown the tone of the scene abruptly shifts from parody to high tragedy. The address to Antony (lines 280-285) invokes an earlier hyperbolic eulogy:

CLEOPATRA. I dreamt there was an Emperor Antony

O, such another sleep, that I might see

But such another man …

His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm

Crested the world. His voice was propertied

As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;

But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,

He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,

There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas

That grew the more by reaping. His delights

Were dolphin-like: they showed his back above

The element they lived in. In his livery

Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were

As plates dropped from his pocket" (V.ii.76-92).

Throughout the preceding four acts it was Antony who had to constantly look for graver and greater terms to communicate his love to a typically coy and provocatively doubtful Cleopatra, but after his death Cleopatra is given the chance and the magniloquence to express her affections and grief and to amplify them to colossal proportions. Furthermore, she claims the rights of a wife by virtue of her courage, constancy and perseverance in her "noble deed," i.e. suicide (lines 286-287) – which, in turn, is consistent with an earlier declaration: "CLEOPATRA. My resolution is placed, and I have nothing / Of woman in me. Now from head to foot / I am marble-constant. Now the fleeting moon / No planet is of mine" (V.ii.237-240). This fundamental metamorphosis of the Queen of Egypt apparently affects even the elemental composition of her corporal being – driven by the firmness of her purpose she forsakes the baser elements of earth and water and distils herself into the purer fire and air before she liberates her soul from the confines of her fleshly body and in order to muster the strength to do so (lines 288-289). The possibility that women can, when necessity arises, leave their feminine social roles and act in the world as men is, of course, utilised by Shakespeare over and over again. What is important to note here is that this is not always done to trigger off a series of comic situations but often functions as a useful characterisation tool by which the complexity of human character is portrayed: Cf. "YORK [to Queen Margaret]. O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide! … Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible: / Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless" (*3H6* I.iv.134-139); "LADY MACBETH. Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood, / Stop up the access and passage to remorse, / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between / The effect and it" (*Mac* I.v.38-45).

Thus, the pun on *die* in Cleopatra's suicide scene works beyond the self-consciously charismatic façade of the Queen and juxtaposes two peculiarly antagonistic contemporary cultural stereotypes:

A) The first one seems to follow closely what Cissie C. Fairchilds calls the medieval-to-early-modern *patriarchal paradigm* – its basic system of beliefs being that women were born inferior to men, both morally and intellectually weaker, possessing a variety of flaws such as "licentiousness, instability, disloyalty and gluttony, pride, vanity, avarice, greed, seditiousness, quarrelsomeness, vindictiveness, and evidently the most irritating of all, talkativeness" (Kelso, qtd. in Fairchilds 7), and therefore were destined to live under male guidance and control. This popular conception was supported with evidence ranging from selected readings from the Bible (*Genesis*, *Ephesians* 5:22-3, *1 Corinthians* 14:34-5, *1 Timothy* 2:12-14) and the writings of the Church fathers, like St Augustine, St John Chrysostom and Clement of Alexandria – to the teachings of Galen and Aristotle, still in used in early modern medicine and science, which were essentially grounded in the elemental composition of the material world and believed that the proportion and balance of the four basic elements (humours) in human beings determined their sex and personality. According to the latter, men had a preponderance of the higher warm and dry humours, which made them active and intelligent, while in women the lesser cold and moist humours prevailed, which attributed to them a variable and melancholic demeanour (Cf. Fairchilds 1-15).

B) In contrast, the second cultural stereotype is in line with a competing early modern view – a view motivated by the blending of Platonic humanism with Protestant spiritualism, which professes the essential equality between women and men. Baldesar Castiglione's *The Courtier* – a bestselling guidebook that enjoyed exceptional popularity throughout

early modern Europe[78] – uses contemporary scholastic arguments to defend the substantial sameness of the female and male human being against the proponents of the *patriarchal paradigm*:

> Of the unperfectnes of women me thinke you have alleaged a verye cold reason, wherunto (albeit may happ it were not now meete to entre into these subtil pointes) I answere accordinge to the opinion of him that is of skill, and accordinge to the truth, that Substance in what ever thinge it be, can not receive it more or less: for as no stone can be more perfectlye a stone, then an other: as touchinge the beeinge of a stone: nor one blocke more perfectlie a blocke, then an other: no more can one man be more perfectlye a man then an other, and consequentlye the male kinde shall not be more perfect, then the female, as touchinge his formall substance: for both the one and the other is conteined under the Species of *Homo,* and that wherein they differ is an accidentall matter and no essentiall. In case you will tell me that the man is more perfecte then the woman, thoughe not as touchinge the essentiall, yet in the Accidentes, I answere that these accidentes must consist eyther in the bodye or in the minde: yf in the bodye, bicause the man is more sturdier, nimbler, lighter, and more abler to endure travaile, I say that this is an argument of smalle perfection: for emonge men themselves such as abounde in these qualities above other, are not for them the more esteamed: and in warr, where the greatest part of peinfull labours are and of strength, the stoutest are not for all that the moste set bye. Yf in the mind, I say, what ever thinges men can understande, the self same can women understande also: and where it perceth the capacitie of the one, it may in likewise perce the others" (Castiglione, 154).

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[78] See Peter Burke. *The Fortunes of the Courtier: the European Reception of Castiglione's "Cortegiano".*

Naturally, this learned defence was produced and, respectively, reserved for women of the upper classes, yet the advanced arguments reflect the liberating influence of Platonic thought and show the cognitive structure behind the characteristically Renaissance practice of self-fashioning:[79] if essentially men and women, noble and vulgar, rich and poor, are the same, and the differences between them reside only in the accidents of tangible nature, then all one has to do in order to place oneself in a desired category is to adopt and personate successfully the accidents of the respective identity and the metamorphosis will follow.

Set in this intellectual context, Cleopatra's mention of sexual transmutation (V.ii.237-240) seems less out of place and less disturbing. What is more, the stereotypical distinction between women and men, implicated above, meaningfully parallels another stereotypical dichotomy underlying the structure of the play – the conflicting notions of instability and stability in the world. Early modern medicine and scholarship traditionally explained distinctly female bodily processes, such as menstruation and parturition, with the changing phases of the moon (Cf. Crawford 55-63). This relationship was also used to explain contemporary observations of female psychology and behaviour – thus establishing between women and the moon a close link characterised by instability and mutability, e.g. Lyly's *The Woman in the Moon*: "NATURE. Now rule, Pandora, in fayre Cynthias steede, / And make the moone inconstant like thy selfe; / Raigne thou at womens nuptials, and their birth; / Let them be mutable in all their loves, / Fantastical, childish, and foolish, in their desires, / Demaunding toyes: / And stark madde when they cannot have their will" (Lyly 133) and also *As You Like It*: "ROSALIND. He was to imagine me his / love, his mistress; and I set him every day to woo me; at which / time would I, being but a moonish youth, grieve, be effeminate, / changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, /

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[79] See Stephen Greenblatt. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*.

shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles … [I] would now like / him, now loathe him; then entertain him, then forswear him; now /weep for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor from his / mad humour of love to a living humour of madness" (III.ii.396-408).

Antony too is constantly confronted with Cleopatra's erratic behaviour in love, but he also has to deal with the instability of the world around him, which Cleopatra-like incessantly provides him with more and more challenges: first he learns that his wife, Fulvia, has started a war to draw his attention to Rome; then he learns about her death; and he is summoned to Rome by Octavius Caesar to help him and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, the other triumvir, defend the empire from Sextus Pompeius (Act I, Scene ii); once in Rome he is pressed to marry Octavia, Caesar's sister, in order to secure the strength of the triumvirate (Act II, Scene ii); later, after Pompey's death and the elimination of Lepidus, Antony is forced to fight Caesar in a civil war (Acts III and IV). All these violent twists and turns of fortune, which also involve and affect the fate of the other characters in the play, seem to emphasise the instability and mutability of a world in which, in Montaigne's words, "there is no constant existence, neither of our being, nor of the objects. And we and our judgement and all mortall things else do uncessantly rowle, turns and passe away. Thus can nothing be certainely established, nor of the one nor of the other; both the judgeing and the judged being in continuall alteration and motion" (Montaigne 545).

Expectably, however, all central characters in *Antony and Cleopatra* desire stability: Antony desires a peaceful life with Cleopatra and the pleasures of Egypt at his disposal, while his political position and fame in Rome remain intact; Cleopatra desires Antony's unconditional love unaffected by insecurity and doubt; Caesar, perceiving the impossibility of his friendship with Antony, desires to become the sole ruler of the empire. Yet, their conflicting efforts to realise these longings only stir up more turbulence and

strife in the play. Eventually, each of these characters manages to attain fulfilment in one way or another: Caesar earns his victory in the battlefield, while Antony and Cleopatra find stability in a world beyond mutability and change:

> ANTONY. The miserable *change* now at my end, Lament nor sorrow at; but please your thoughts
>
> In feeding them with those my former fortunes
>
> Wherein I lived the greatest prince o' th' world,
>
> The noblest; and do now not basely die,
>
> Not cowardly put off my helmet to
>
> My countryman – a Roman by a Roman
>
> Valiantly vanquished" (IV.xv.53-60);
>
> CLEOPATRA. O sun,
>
> Burn the great sphere thou movest in! Darkling stand
>
> The *varying* shore of the world. O Antony,
>
> Antony, Antony!" (IV.xv.10-13).

Thus, for the memorable pair of lovers, death remains the only dignified escape from an afflictingly wavering world. It proves the ultimate passage to the incorruptible integrity and the eternal communion in love and erotic passion they desire.

This new subtle signification of "death" in the play points back at the pun on *die* in Cleopatra's suicide scene. At once an orgasm, the highest form of sexual fulfilment, and a tragic, yet rational, termination of one's worldly existence, death is being remodelled by Shakespeare's poetic art into a unique conceptual blend – a conceptual blend that holds together the substantial complexity of Cleopatra's character and stretches out to grasp the complexity of being. The intricate representation of this complexity is what creates and

sustains Cleopatra's heroic stance in the play – what is more, it amplifies her image so much that it engulfs both characters and plot. To Antony, Cleopatra *is* death – yet not the kind of death that unsettles and bereaves – but the death that puts an end to a series of disasters and offers the possibility for unending ecstasy. To herself, Cleopatra too proves fatal – yet again it is not a lamentable death – but the death that promises remedy to a lifetime of discontent. Heroic death also reaches Antony and Cleopatra's entourage: Enobarbus dies regretting his defection, Eros manly kills himself by his master's side, and both Iras and Charmian loyally accompany their queen in her journey beyond. Even the earthly luck of Caesar, the conspicuous survivor, is mocked by the dead Antony, through the last words of the dying Cleopatra, as a deceitful gift of the gods, which in a world of constant change only promises more tribulations (V.ii.284-286), and when compared to the concept of death in the play, shows to be outright defeat rather than victory.

To round it up to the beginning, this closer look at Shakespeare's representation of the Egyptian Queen aims to throw new light on Dr. Johnson's much quoted comment on his quibbles. *Yes*, the playwright's wordplay *is* like Cleopatra – yet *not* because it mars the indulging reason of his straightforward meaning, but because it has the capacity of holding together a multiplicity of meaningful cognitive constructs and blending them into new unexpected significations; it is fatal to the neatly-coherent positivist single-world view – but its activation of the multiple-world view results in a deeper and more powerful representation of complexity in both concepts and characters. Finally, it leaves the viewer/reader content because it offers the possibility of cracking the cruces and transcending the impasses of an ever vacillating world and offers a nearly erotic glimpse at the sublime constancy of the poetic truth beyond.

The remaining part of this chapter focuses on Hamlet – generally recognised as the model product of Shakespeare's high-dimensional characterisation craftsmanship – and

considers the role of wordplay in what makes his representation "as real as our own thoughts" (Hazlitt 73). The underlying argument, to which the above discussion of Shakespeare's quibbles and Cleopatra's complexity should provide an introduction, is that in modelling the extraordinarily elaborate character of the Prince of Denmark, the dramatist utilizes the world-blending power of wordplay to stitch together multiple worldviews and multiple world-dependent identities into one life-like aggregate human figure and yet leave ironic gaps between them in order to bring this figure to life. The discovery of this technique displays quite clearly the substantial structural potential of wordplay in dramatic characterisation and its significance for understanding Shakespeare's exquisitely constructed personages.

With Hamlet's very first appearance on the stage it becomes clear that making sense of his play on words will be essential for understanding his character and inner thoughts:

> KING. But now, my Cosin Hamlet, and my sonne –
>
> HAMLET. A little more than *kin*, and lesse than *kind*!
>
> KING. How is it that the clowdes still hang on you?
>
> HAMLET. Not so, my lord. I am too much in the *sonne*.[80] (*Ham Q2* I.ii.64-67)

Claudius begins by referring to the complex relationship between himself and Hamlet: being the late king's brother he is Hamlet's uncle – hence "cousin" here meaning nephew, but having of late married Gertrude, his brother's wife, he has become Hamlet's stepfather – hence "son." – and the nature of this transition from uncle to father contains the main predicament in the play. Characteristically, Hamlet responds through an intricate

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[80] This excerpt is quoted from the Second Quarto (1604) because the use of *sonne* (line 67) lays bare Hamlet's quibbling on *sun/son* – the First Folio has *Sun*.

play on words which overturns the king's seemingly convivial address and problematises the relationship between them by distorting it into meaningful ambiguity. The pun on *kin* and *kind* works on several levels: 1) structurally, it parallels the king's "cousin" and "son" – "cousin" and *kin* meaning "a relative by marriage or blood more distant than father and son" (Brewer 629), while "son" and *kind* point at "the same sort of genus," (Ibid.) "the same stock, offspring, progeny," with a possible allusion to the Dutch or German word for "child"; 2) quantitatively, *kind* is more than *kin*, so the space between the two is cognitively imaginable; 3) syntactically, Hamlet's utterance is elliptic, so both Claudius and Hamlet may perform the function of subject; 4) lexically, *kind* has a number of possible significations sustainable by the context besides those mentioned above: a) as a noun – "birth, origin descent" (Cf. *TGV* II.iii.1-2 "LAUNCE. Nay, 'twill be this hour ere I have done weeping; all the / *kind* of the Launces have this very fault") as well as "the character or quality derived from birth, native constitution, class, or group, natural disposition, nature" (Cf. *H5* II.P.16-19 "PROLOGUE. O England! model to thy inward greatness, / Like little body with a mighty heart, / What mightst thou do that honour would thee do, / Were all thy children *kind* and natural"); b) as an adjective – "implanted by nature, innate, inherent" (Cf. *KL* III.iv.69-70 "LEAR. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature / To such a lowness but his un*kind* daughters"), as well as "well or favourably disposed, bearing good will, loving, grateful" (Cf. *MW* III.iv.100-101 "QUICKLY. A *kind* heart he hath; a woman would run through / fire and water for such a *kind* heart"). Hence, the possibilities for interpretation of Hamlet's answer are numerous, e.g. A) « Claudius is more than kin to Hamlet, i.e. his stepfather, but a lesser in kind, i.e. not the true heir to the throne of Denmark »; B) « Claudius is Hamlet's father, but in less than a natural relation, i.e. incestuously »; C) « Hamlet is more than kin to Claudius, i.e. his stepson, but not of his kind or type of person, i.e. unlike his uncle he grieves truly for the loss of his father »; D) « Hamlet does not approve of the marriage between Claudius and

his mother, and therefore cannot be well disposed, loving, and grateful towards his stepfather ». All these possibilities seem to cohere with the familiar Shakespearean pun on *sun*/*son* in line 67: A) « I must have got sunstroke – as opposed to being in the gloom (line 66) »; B) « I have enough of being called your son »; C) « I am tired of being in the presence of your royal-like radiance ».

When the queen intervenes, trying to appease the brewing fray, her words too are turned against herself by the prince:

> QUEEN. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
>
> And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
>
> Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
>
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
>
> Thou know'st 'tis common. All that lives must die,
>
> Passing through nature to eternity.
>
> HAMLET. Ay, madam, it is *common*.
>
> QUEEN. If it be,
>
> Why seems it so particular with thee?
>
> HAMLET. *Seems*, madam, Nay, it is. I know not '*seems*.'
>
> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
>
> Nor customary suits of solemn black,
>
> Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
>
> No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
>
> Nor the dejected havior of the visage,
>
> Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
>
> 'That can denote me truly. These indeed *seem*,
>
> For they are actions that a man might play;

But I have that within which passeth show-

These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I.ii.68-117)

First, Hamlet seizes upon the word *common* used by the queen in the sense: "familiar, well-known, common knowledge" and bends it towards: "of ordinary occurrence, hence mean, cheap" (Cf. *Sonnet 102* "Sweets grown common lose their dear delight") and also: "sexually promiscuous" (Cf. *TA* IV.iii.43 "TIMON. Thou common whore of mankind").[81] So far, the prince's biting innuendos seem to cohere into a single cognitive structure, cleaving thus the scene into two competing possible worlds: the more obvious PW1 in which « both the king and the queen appear kind and concerned in their attempt to calm down the overreacting and arrogant prince »; and PW2, to which all ambiguities activated by the prince's skilful punning seem to point, in which « there is indeed something morally wrong, something incestuous, in his mother's hasty marriage to his uncle so soon after his father's death – an aspect of the situation that may justify hamlet's railings and render the king and queen's apparent kindness and concern mere hypocrisy ». The modelling of PW2 begins by means of wordplay in the exchanges between the prince and his stepfather and mother, but is completed through express language in the soliloquy that Hamlet delivers as soon as he is left alone on the stage. His powerful speech reassures the audience of the prince's deep affliction: "HAMLET. How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world! / Fie on't, ah, fie, 'tis an unweeded garden / That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (I.ii.133-137), which is caused by his disapproval of his mother's actions: "HAMLET. A little month, or e'er those shoes were old / With which she followed my poor father's body … [she] married my uncle, / My father's brother (but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules)" (I.ii.147-153).

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[81] Cf. Wilson, "Reason" 8: "For Catholike beeyng a Greek woorde, signifieth nothing Englishe, but universal or commune. And we cal in Englishe a common woman, an evil woman of her bodie."

Hamlet's second pun in the above passage twists the casual sense of *seem* and enlarges upon its meaning: "appear to be, pretend to be" – building an extended image of the true essence of grief as opposed to its outward appearances, which parallels the concept of *substance and shadows* discussed in Chapter II above. What one can see as the habit and behaviour of a person, the prince claims, does not necessarily show what lies within because people can dissimulate their true feelings. This statement ironically foreshadows Hamlet's own deliberate transformation later in the play following the encounter with the ghost and listening to its bloodcurdling account of his uncle's Machiavellian fratricide:

> HAMLET [to Horatio]. Never – so help you mercy,
>
> How strange or odd some'er I bear myself
>
> (As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
>
> To put an antic disposition on) –
>
> That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
>
> With arms encumbered thus, or this headshake,
>
> Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
>
> As 'Well, well, we know,' or 'We could, an if we would,'
>
> Or 'If we list to speak,' or 'There be, an if they might,'
>
> Or such ambiguous giving out to note
>
> That you know aught of me. (I.v.167-177)

Naturally, Hamlet's "antic disposition" is extensively discussed by Shakespeare scholars (See Dover Wilson 87-199 and Clemen 106-115 among others). Its merits to the complexity of the play have been stressed and considered from various viewpoints. Yet one fundamental question still remains unanswered: Is this particular development logically consistent with the rest of the plot? Critics have recognised the two extant sources of the story: a) Saxo Grammaticus' account of Amlodi (Amleth, Amblett, Hamblet) printed

in the early 16th century in Paris as part of the collection *Danorum Regum heroumque Historiae*, and b) Livy's account of Lucius Junius Brutus in his *History of Rome*. Both stories centre round clever avenging youths who pretend to be stupid in order to outfox their enemies. In both cases the sham is strategically necessary because the enemies' crimes are public knowledge and the wrongdoers are on their guard, so the protagonists need to lull them into a false feeling of safety while they are preparing to bring justice upon them. However, this is not the case in *Hamlet* where no one knows about Claudius's complicity in Old Hamlet's death and Shakespeare introduces the figure of the ghost to make this known to the prince. What is then the real use of Hamlet's "antic disposition" in Shakespeare's version of the story? The following analysis of the prince's feigned madness attempts to provide an answer to this question.

Hamlet's first appearance on stage, in Act II, Scene ii, after he states his intention to put on an "antic disposition," demonstrates promptly the meaning of the phrase:

> POLONIUS. Do you know me, my lord?
>
> HAMLET. Excellent well. You are a *fishmonger*.
>
> POLONIUS. Not I, my lord.
>
> HAMLET. Then I would you were so *honest* a man.
>
> POLONIUS. *Honest*, my lord?
>
> HAMLET. Ay, sir. To be *honest*, as this world goes, is to be one man
>
> picked out of ten thousand.
>
> POLONIUS. That's very true, my lord.
>
> HAMLET. For if the *sun* breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god
>
> *kissing carrion* – Have you a daughter?
>
> POLONIUS. I have, my lord.
>
> HAMLET. Let her not walk i' th' *sun*: conception is a blessing, but not

as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to't.

POLONIUS. [aside] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter. Yet

he knew me not at first. He said I was a fishmonger. He is far

gone, far gone! And truly in my youth I suffered much extremity

for love – very near this. (II.ii.170-187)

Hamlet deliberately adopts the identity of a madman and produces apparent nonsense to baffle the "tedious old fool," who is laboriously trying to examine his mental state. Some of his words, however, seem to cohere with the events immediately preceding this scene, i.e. the scheme laid by Polonius, the king and the queen to discover what is the true cause of Hamlet's strange behaviour. This is how what otherwise would have been considered pure gibberish turns into wordplay: *Fishmonger* (line 171) bears relation to "fleshmonger" (Cf. *MM* V.i.331-332 "LUCIO. Do you so, sir? And was the Duke a *fleshmonger*, a fool, and / a coward, as you then reported him to be?") and also activates the early modern sexual connotation of *fish*: "a girl or a woman, viewed sexually; especially a prostitute" (Partridge, 135) (Cf. *RJ* II.iv.38-39 "MERCUTIO. O flesh, flesh, how art / thou *fish*ified!"), which relates to Polonius's intention to "loose" his daughter to the prince to test whether love is the reason for the latter's strange behaviour (II.ii.40-58). *Honest* (lines 173-175) points at Polonius's dissimulation of his true intentions. The complex simile between the early modern concept of the *sun*'s godlike power in effecting spontaneous generation of life, and the *son*, i.e. Hamlet's progenitive power to impregnate Ophelia hinges on the familiar pun on *sun/son*, the non-metaphorical meaning of *kiss*, and an apparently current second meaning of *carrion*: "sexually corrupt female flesh" (Cf. *TC* IV.i.70-74 "DIOMEDES. [talking about Helen] Hear me, Paris: / For every false drop in her bawdy veins / A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple / Of her contaminated *carrion* weight / A Troyan hath been slain). Thus, the apparently absurd exchange between Hamlet and Polonius sustains at least three coherent possible worlds of interpretation: PW1

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in which « Hamlet is unaware of Polonius's intention and shoots at random with the intention to confound the old man's wits, while the relationship between his gibberish and the previous scene is purely coincidental, hence meaningless; PW2 in which Hamlet manages to eavesdrop on Polonius's previous conversation with the king and the queen, so he is aware of the scheme involving Ophelia as bait and tries ambiguously to warn Polonius, who ironically misses the warning but manages to grasp Hamlet's less significant double meanings as signs of his insanity »: "POLONIUS. Though this be madness, yet there is a method in't … How pregnant sometimes / his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which / reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of" (II.ii.205-211); and PW3 « which stretches out from the subtle links between Hamlet's apparently incoherent ramblings in Act II, Scene ii, to a broader coherence relating Hamlet's disgust with his mother's incestuous behaviour and the frailty of womanhood in general (I.ii.129-159) to the prince's upbraiding conversations with Ophelia later on in the play: "HAMLET. For the power of Beauty will sooner transform Honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of Honesty can translate Beauty into its likeness … Get thee to a nunnery!" (III.i.89-148) ».

Another demonstration of Hamlet's "antic disposition" follows directly the above scene. This time his resourcefulness is matched by a far shrewder wit than that of Polonius – the king and queen have sent for Hamlet's friends and fellow students at Wittenberg, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in order to summon them to the court and have them examine the prince's mental state. The young scholars seem to have a rational explanation and a logically valid and rhetorically effective argument for everything, so this is why the jocularly absurd demeanour needs to be replaced by a more scholarly identity:

HAMLET. What have you, my good friends,

deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to *prison* hither?

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GUILDENSTERN. Prison, my lord?

HAMLET. *Denmark*'s a *prison*.

ROSENCRANTZ. Then is the *world* one.

HAMLET. A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards, and

dungeons, *Denmark* being one o' th' worst.

ROSENCRANTZ. We *think* not so, my lord.

HAMLET. Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good

or bad but *thinking* makes it so. To me it is a *prison*.

ROSENCRANTZ. Why, then your *ambition* makes it one: 'tis too narrow for your
mind.

HAMLET. O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a

king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad *dreams*.

GUILDENSTERN. Which *dreams* indeed are ambition; for the very *substance* of

the ambitious is merely the *shadow* of a *dream*.

HAMLET. A *dream* itself is but a *shadow*.

ROSENCRANTZ. Truly, and I hold *ambition* of so *airy* and *light* a quality that

it is but a *shadow*'s *shadow*.

HAMLET. Then are our beggars *bodies*, and our monarchs and outstretched

heroes the beggars' *shadows*. (II.ii.238-257)

Following the youthful quibbling on Fortune's private parts (II.ii.224-231), Hamlet

gives a particular direction to the conversation by stating quite surprisingly that Denmark

is a *prison* (line 239) – the pregnant significance of which he may intend to develop subtly

into the image of a single confinement place for people of very different sorts: murderers,

traitors, the insane, and even mentally sane young individuals who just happen to have

troubled the peace of their families.[82] This statement is quickly dismissed by Rosencrantz

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[82] Cf. John Howard's report quoted in Foucault's *History of Madness* (44-78).

and Guildenstern who say bluntly that they do not *think* so (line 245). Hamlet expands the meaning of the word *think* in order to retreat to a more moderate position according to which one's *thinking* is responsible for one's individual perception, i.e. one and the same object may be interpreted differently by different minds. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, nevertheless, take advantage of Hamlet's image of the prison to turn what is so far a vaguely philosophical battle of wits to a sharper philosophico-ethical discussion cunningly designed to test the hypothesis that Hamlet's strange mood may be driven by his fear of being disinherited by Claudius and his desire to take possession of the Danish throne. Thus, their use of *ambition* (line 248) drags along a version of the contemporary definition of the concept provided by Francis Bacon in his *Essays*: "AMBITION is like choler; which is an humor that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity, and stirring, if it be not stopped. But if it be stopped, and cannot have his way, it becometh adust, and thereby malign and venomous. So ambitious men, if they find the way open for their rising, and still get forward, they are rather busy than dangerous; but if they be checked in their desires, they become secretly discontent, and look upon men and matters with an evil eye" (Bacon, 138). This new dimension of the exchange provides a coherent context for several ambiguous terms: a) *prison* (lines 239-247) becomes "a frustrating obstruction to Hamlet's overpowering craving for the throne;" b) *Denmark* (lines 241 and 244) includes "the body politic and the body personal of the king;" c) *mind* (line 248) points at Hamlet's "plans and desires" and so does *dreams* (line 251); d) *substance* (line 251) is "nature, essence, driving force" and is seen as the "reflection" – *shadow* (line 252) of such "plans and desires;" e) *airy* and *light* present the idea of ambition "like a seeled dove, that mounts and mounts, because he cannot see about him" (Bacon, 138) and stress upon its barren, profitless, and even perilous nature. In the emergent possible world, PW1, « Rosencrantz and Guildenstern implicitly suggest that Hamlet's emotional state, which owes to something "[m]ore than his father's death" (II.ii.8), is in fact rooted in his ambitious desire for the

throne of Denmark and his animosity towards Claudius is motivated by his fear that he will be denied succession; they also allude that both Hamlet's ambition and fear are insubstantial and unreasonable ».

Hamlet's final argument: "[t]hen are our beggars *bodies*, and our monarchs and outstretched / heroes the beggars' *shadows*" (lines 256-257), on the one hand, shows that he understands the meaning conveyed through PW1, i.e. that the only difference between a beggar and a king, or a prominent hero, seems to be the fleeting shadow of the latter sort's driving ambition. He also designs it in such a way as to win the argument with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bending their reasoning to a seditious statement undermining the authority of the king. On the other hand, the conceptual dichotomy between *bodies* and *shadows* coheres with the preceding complex concepts of *prison*, *world*, *thinking* and *dream* to activate another parallel possible world, PW2, in which « Hamlet does indeed feel *imprisoned* in Denmark, and in the solid materiality of the actual *world* (Cf. I.ii.29-30 "HAMLET. O that this too too sallied flesh would melt, / Thaw and resolve itself into a dew" and also II.ii.264-265 "HAMLET. this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air … appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours"), because of the great injustice that gnaws his *thought* (Cf. II.ii.485 "HAMLET. O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I …") and pricks him either to act (Cf. III.i.56-59 "HAMLET. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing end them") or to free himself from his mortal coil (Cf. III.i.74-75 "HAMLET. When he himslef might his quietus make / With a bare *bodkin*[83]"). His resolve, however, is stayed by the suspicion that Claudius's guilt and the ghost, or *shadow*, of his father may all be the fruit of his grieving fancy, i.e. *dreams* and *shadows* (Cf. II.ii.533-538 "HAMLET.

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[83] Both "dagger" and "body."

The spirit that I have seen / May be a devil; and the devil hath power / T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps / Out of my weakness and my melancholy, / As he is very potent with such spirits, / Abuses me to damn me" and also III.ii.78-80 "HAMLET. It is a damned ghost that we have seen / And my imaginations are as foul / As Vulcan's stithy"), and is looking for a way of confirming their existence in the material, *bodily*, world ».

Following Hamlet's disillusionment at discovering that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are also sent for to examine and sift him, the young prince is genuinely delighted to welcome the arriving company of players to Ellsinore. Their coming provides him with a plan how to provoke Claudius's guilty conscience and test the truth of the ghost's accusations. He asks them to perform a revenge play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, the plot of which parallels the events the way they were told by the dead king's shadow. This development presents the prince in a completely new light – as a knowledgeable theatre man. Hamlet turns out to be an avid theatregoer: "HAMLET. I herd thee speak me a speech once …" (II.ii.372), a confident playwright: "HAMLET. You could for need study a speech of some dozen lines, or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?" (II.ii.476-478), and a competent stage director: "HAMLET. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you …" (III.ii.1-2). What is more, when the performance takes place, he almost joins the troupe and becomes one of the players.

The beginning of the prince's performance precedes the beginning of the players' performance and expectably continues the vein of his jocularly sarcastic "antic disposition:"

KING. How *fares* our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET. Excellent, i' faith; of the *chameleon*'s dish. I eat the *air*, promise-cramm'd. You cannot feed *capons* so. (III.ii.88-90)

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Hamlet's apparent nonsense again contains a hidden manifestation of his sharp wit. First, he twists the meaning of the word *fare*, used by the king in the sense: "get along," and seizes upon is other sense: "eat," to which he, then, promptly answers. Shakespeareans trace the mention of the chameleon's dining habits to a popular belief based on Pliny's *Natural History* and *Solinus' De mirabilibus mundi*, translated into English by Arthur Golding in 1587, and suggest a possible pun on *air*/*heir* (line 89), which would translate Hamlet's answer as: « I AM LIVING ON THE MERE PROMISE THAT YOU WILL RECOGNISE ME AS HEIR TO THE THRONE (Cf. *TGV* II.ii.172-174 "SPEED. Ay, but hearken, sir; though the chameleon Love can feed on the air, I am one that am nourish'd by my victuals, and would fain have meat") ». There is, however, another possible construction of the cue which involves a pun on two of the senses of the word *air*: A) "atmospheric air with reference to its unsubstantial or impalpable nature" (Cf. *2H4* I.iii.27-33 "LORD BARDOLPH. [Hotspur] who lin'd himself with hope, / *Eating the air* and promise of supply, / Flatt'ring himself in project of a power / Much smaller than the smallest of his thoughts; / And so, with great imagination / Proper to madmen, led his powers to death, / And, winking, leapt into destruction") and B) "manner, appearance" and also "affected disposition, pretence, show" (Cf. *WT* IV.iii.739 AUTOLYCUS. Whether it like me or no, I am a courtier. Seest thou not the *air* of the court in these enfoldings;" *AC* IV.xiv.2-7 "ANTONY. Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish; / A vapour sometime like a bear or lion, / A tower'd citadel, a pendent rock, / A forked mountain, or blue promontory / With trees upon't that nod unto the world / And mock our eyes with *air*"). These two different senses cohere with *capons* – both "castrated roosters" and "dullards" – in two possible worlds: PW1 in which « Hamlet insinuates that, just like Hotspur, he entertains hopes that are promising but insubstantial, i.e. bare promises cannot be used to fatten roosters »; and PW2 in which the other property of the *chameleon* – its mutability is activated by *air* meaning "appearance, pretence, show" to convey that « the prince is anxiously anticipating the outcome of his game of feigning

madness, but this is not something a fool like Claudius could understand (Cf. *CE* III.i.32 "DROMIO OF SYRACUSE. Mome, malt-horse, *capon*, coxcomb, idiot, patch") ». By disclosing one possible insult, PW2 provides the context for another – this time aimed at Polonius: when Hamlet asks him what part he played at the university theatre, Polonius answers that he played Julius Caesar and was killed in the Capitol by Brutus. Hamlet's comment: "It was a *brute* part of him to kill so *capital* a *calf* there." (III.ii.101) employs multiple wordplay on *Brutus*/*brute*, *Capitol*/*capital*, and *calf* – both a) "the sacrificial animal," which points back at the brutal murder of old Hamlet and at the same time foreshadows the misfortunate and unnecessary sacrifice of Polonius's life by bringing the two stories of assassination together, and b) "a stupid or dull person" (*WT* I.ii.125-126 "LEONTES. How now, you wanton *calf*, / Art thou my *calf*"), which builds up a possible meaning amounting to: « how silly of him to kill such a prominent fool there ».

The major part of Hamlet's offensive behaviour in this scene, however, is directed towards Ophelia:

> HAMLET. Lady, shall I *lie* in your lap?
>
> OPHELIA. No, my lord.
>
> HAMLET. I mean, my head upon your lap?
>
> OPHELIA. Ay, my lord.
>
> HAMLET. Do you think I meant *count*ry matters?
>
> OPHELIA. I think nothing, my lord.
>
> HAMLET. That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
>
> OPHELIA. What is, my lord?
>
> HAMLET. *Nothing*. (III.ii.106-114)

Although Lewis Theobald along with later Shakespeare critics are disgusted by the indecent grossness of Hamlet's attitude to the girl (Theobald 87), the prince's bawdy puns on *lie* (line 106) – both "rest" and "make love", *count*ry (line 110) – with and emphasis on the first syllable, i.e. "*cunt*ry", and *nothing* (lines 111 and 114) – "no thing," "an o-thing," seem to have a number of possible functions. On the one hand, they are clearly addressed at the biased ears of Polonius, the king and the queen, who seemingly still believe that Hamlet's madness is due to his infatuation with Ophelia. On the other, they add to the prince's cryptic behaviour and provide a distorted grotesque reflection of the dramatic performance that is about to take place. The first scene of the play-within-the-play, "tropically" re-named by Hamlet *The Mousetrap*, shows a conversation between the player king and the player queen, in which the latter elaborately and confidently vows that she will always remain faithful to her husband, even after his death. Ironically, both the fictional and the actual audience have already seen the dumb-show summary of the plot and know that this is not going to happen. So, Hamlet's vulgar emphasis on the purely physical dimension of human affections increases the effect of this irony and supplements a comic subplot to the play-within-the-play, in which the young prince himself undertakes the part of the clown – "your only jig-maker" (III.ii.118).

Having established himself in this meta-dramatic space, Hamlet easily gains possession of the overlapping focal points of the main play and the play-within-the-play and chorus-like takes up the task to "interpret" between the "puppets" and the audience (III.ii.239-240), i.e. to manipulate both the fictional and the actual audience's reception. He begins by linking up the plots of both dramas: "[L]ook how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours!" (III.ii.119-120) – an ambiguity that clearly works on a number of levels: a) [to the fictional audience] « the king, the allegory of my father, died in this play », b) [to the fictional audience] « my father, the former king, died not so

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long time ago », and c) [to the actual audience] « my father died within the two hours of the play that *you* are watching ». Then, after the dumb-show is presented, he ominously explains to Ophelia: "['Tis] *munching mallico*! It means mischief!" (III.ii.130-131). He increases the tension with his emphatic exclamation "That's wormwood!" (III.ii.175) when the implication of the queen in the king's murder is suggested by the players, which naturally leads to his sardonic inquiry: "Madam, how like you this play?" (III.ii.230). As *The Mousetrap* develops, the prince grows more and more agitated and this mood is transferred both to the fictional and to the actual audience. Claudius becomes suspicious and inquires whether there is offence in the play, to which Hamlet poignantly replies: No, no, they do but jest. Poison in jest. No offence i'th' world … You shall see anon 'tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your majesty and we that have free souls – it touches us not" (III.ii.228-235). Finally, the interlude reaches its climax and the accumulated tension in the main play bursts out into outright hysteria. When the scene is allayed and all but Hamlet and Horatio, the prince's only bosom friend, have left the stage, it becomes clear that Hamlet is not only content with the outcome of the experiment he carried out to test the king and queen's conscience, but also pleased with his own dramatic skills: "HAMLET. Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers- if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me-with two Provincial roses on my raz'd shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir" (III.ii.267-270).

Yet another significant manifestation of Hamlet's "antic disposition" is to be found in the prince's behaviour following Polonius's accidental murder. Interestingly, Hamlet suffers little remorse over his violent deed: "HAMLET. Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell: / I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune" (III.iv.29-30). When the king sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find and bring the old man's body to the chapel, Hamlet confronts them in a calm and even playful mood:

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ROSENCRANTZ. What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin. (IV.ii.3-4)

Hamlet's easy answer conveys a complete denial of any concern or guilt. What the prince seems to be saying is: « I just assisted the due course of nature – I have absolutely no regrets ». This instance brings to the foreground a notion that has been developing little by little in the play by now – the notion of Hamlet's almost inhuman cynicism (Cf. Knight 27-41): "HAMLET. O God, God, / How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (I.ii.132-134); "HAMLET [to Ophelia]. Get thee to a nunnery! Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" (III.i.120-121); "HAMLET [to his mother]. Nay but to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed / Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty" (III.iv.89-92). It even appears that by the time he commits his first murder, the prince's cynicism has developed into the nihilistic philosophy of a callous assassin.[84] Under the pressure of this different vision of Hamlet, the seeming nonsense that follows again arranges into a coherent possible world of interpretation:

ROSENCRANTZ. My lord, you must tell us where the body is and go with us to the King.

HAMLET. The *body* is with the *King*, but the *King* is not with the *body*.

The King is a *thing* –

GUILDENSTERN. A thing, my lord?

HAMLET. Of *nothing*. Bring me to him. (IV.ii.11-16)

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[84] This is once again demonstrated later when Hamlet tells to a dismayed Horatio how he sent Guildenstern and Rosencrantz to their death: "HAMLET. They are not near my conscience. They defeat / Does by their own insinuation grow. / 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes / Between the pass and fell incensed points / Of mighty opposites" (V.ii.57-61).

Hamlet's enigmatic reply which is clearly intended to confound Rosencrantz and Guildenstern may, on the one hand, jocularly point at the fact that « Polonius's body is *with* the king, i.e. it is *in* the Palace, yet the king does not know where exactly ». On the other, it seems to relate with the fellow students' previous conversation about *bodies* and *shadows* (Act II, Scene ii) in which Hamlet concluded that the difference between a *monarch* and a *beggar* is merely an insubstantial shadow. In this context, it is possible that the prince simply changes the subject and punningly alludes to the political doctrine of the king's two bodies to emphasise once again Claudius's illegitimacy: « Yes, Claudius claims to be the king, but he is not because he has usurped the Divine Right, which is a separate, insubstantial entity which one cannot just assume and vest upon himself ». Hamlet comes back to the theme of *kings* and *beggars* and elaborates on it in his ensuing conversation with Claudius:

> KING. Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?
>
> HAMLET. At supper.
>
> KING. At supper? Where?
>
> HAMLET. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain
> convocation of *politic worms* are e'en at him. Your *worm* is your
> only *emperor* for *diet*. We fat all creatures else to *fat* us, and
> we *fat* ourselves for *maggots*. Your *fat king* and your *lean beggar*
> is but variable service – two *dishes*, but to one table. That's the end.
>
> KING. Alas, alas!
>
> HAMLET. A man may *fish* with the *worm* that hath eat of a *king*, and eat
> of the *fish* that hath fed of that *worm*.
>
> KING. What dost thou mean by this?
>
> HAMLET. Nothing but to show you how a *king* may go a progress through

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the guts of a *beggar*. (IV.iii.16-31)

Whether intentionally or accidentally the above passage brings together several complex images already evoked in earlier instances of Hamlet's seemingly incoherent speech: a) the *worm*/*maggot* image – a clear and consistent sign of the prince's preoccupation with death, but also a forced link between death and pregnancy, hence life, in Act II, Scene ii, used in relation to Ophelia, who is advised by Hamlet to refrain from breeding sinners in Act III, Scene I – captures in itself the ever turning cycle of carnal life; b) the *fish* image – although the straightforward signification fits well enough in the above context, the only other use of *fish* in the play is in *fish*monger, which drags along the punning connotation of crude sexuality; c) *king* image – on the one hand, *king* is opposed to *beggar*, on the other, it may refer either to Claudius, the usurper king, or to old Hamlet, the rightful murdered king; d) *beggar* image – again, on the one hand, *beggar* is opposed to *king*, but on the other, Hamlet calls himself a *beggar* in Act II, Scene ii: "*Beggar* that I am, I am even poor in thanks," which significantly resonates with a familiar use of *fat* in Act III, Scene iv: "HAMLET [to his mother]. Forgive me this my virtue, / For in the *fatness* of these *pursy* times / Virtue itself of Vice must pardon *beg*;" and e) the *lean*ness of the *beggar* and the *fat*ness of the *king* images relate to Hamlet's declaration in Act III, Scene ii, that he "eats the air," i.e. he feeds on "the chameleon's *dish*," which at the same time is no food that can be used to *fat*ten *capons*.

Now, what sense can be made of all these coincidences? The grotesque joke about Polonius being invited to supper, at which he is not to eat but to be eaten, serves clearly as an indirect threat pointed at Claudius, the idea of death resonating phonetically in *diet*, which is quickly converted into an overall *memento mori* placing the fat king right next to the lean Hamlet before the jaws of an overpowering death. Both the equality between the *king* and the *beggar* and the implicit menace are reaffirmed by the second joke which

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cannibalistically employs an eerie king-worm-fish-beggar feeding sequence to show how a king may eventually find himself in the guts of a beggar. Under the pressure of the recurring imagery it is tempting to give Hamlet's fishing joke an allegorical reading which inevitably involves an interesting set of blended-figures: « The prince is the beggar-fisherman, fishing for truth, using the worm-rat, Polonius, kept and fed by Claudius, and catches the incestuous fish-king, who is in fact not a true king – but rather a worm-king since he murdered the true king and ate out his royal state, and whom the prince will have to devour in order to get to the throne ».

The focal point of all these possible interpretations, however, is the sense of threat to Claudius that each of them conveys (Cf. III.iii.89-95 "HAMLET. When he is drunk, asleep or in his rage, / Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed, / At game a-swearing, or about some act / That has no relish of salvation in't. / Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven / And that his soul may be as damned and black / As hell whereto it goes"). The role of a cold-blooded, nihilistic killer assumed by Hamlet provides the binding element to his seemingly incoherent utterances and arranges them into a logically coherent possible world, which seems to prepare ideologically the ground for Claudius's assassination. First, the prince fends off possible accusations of regicide by dismantling the theoretical compound of the king's two bodies: "HAMLET. The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing … of nothing" – so, the king's body politic *is* nothing, but even if it *were* something, there would definitely be "a certain convocation of *politic* worms," of the kind one can imagine in association with Polonius's political skills, that would be happy to consume it. Then, he strips off all earthly pomp and glory from the king's body personal by sending it to thread the way of all flesh in a debasingly impoverished *procession* "through the guts of a beggar." Thus, ultimately, the prince uncrowns and disparages Claudius by reducing him to the stuff of decomposing human fat,

a worm's colloidal flesh, a fish's malodorous entrails, and the content of the digestive tract of a vagrant.

All in all, the above consideration of Hamlet's "antic disposition" suggests that its main dramatic function is not to cover the prince's knowledge of his father's murder and to protect him while he is planning his revenge, but rather to enhance his dramatic behaviour within the world of the play and licence his use of multiple identities – such as the countenances of the madman, the scholar, the theatre man, and the assassin – in presenting the complexity of his character to the audience. All these different, often conflicting, dimensions of Hamlet's character are linked to the central identity of the melancholic, tortured prince, which is time and again figured in the soliloquies, producing thus a multifarious, life-like representation of a complex human personality. The philosophical realisation of the limitations of the common-sense, morally two-dimensional model of human nature, and the respective understanding of the human being as a compound of states and countenances can already be discerned in the intellectual context of Shakespeare's times:

> He who examines himself closely will seldom find himself twice in the same state. I give to my soul now one face, now another...All the contradictions are to be found in me, according as the wind turns, and changes. Bashful, insolent; chaste, lascivious; talkative, taciturn; clumsy, gentle; witty, dull; peevish, sweet-tempered; lying, truthful; knowing, ignorant; and liberal and avaricious and prodigal – all this I see in my self in some degree, according as I veer about; and whoever will study himself very attentively will find this discordance and unsteadiness. (Montaigne, qtd. in Rosenberg, ix-x)

Shakespeare, however, must be credited for finding an impressively effective technique for figuring this understanding on the page as well as on the stage. He uses wordplay to bind in organic unity multiple human states and identities, thus making them resonate into a high-dimensional representation of the unbounded complexity of the human soul.

Conclusion: A method in madness

"Every wink of an eye some new grace will be born." (*WT* V.ii.111-112)

The serious consideration of all concurrent interpretative possibilities activated by Shakespeare's wordplay – as the experience of reading the above case studies no doubt indicates – may lead to a cognitive state that alarmingly resembles madness. It will inevitably become clear that both the world and language are in fact twofold phenomena. On the one hand, the rational mind seeks to organise long-term knowledge of the surrounding world in the most economical and functional manner and the use of a coherent unified structure provides the possibility for this – hence the world modelled by the rational mind is for the most part non-contradictory, linear and hierarchical. On the other, it becomes increasingly evident that if "the rational" is taken out of the equation, actually, the world out there is a nexus of inextricably interwoven complex systems – everything from the way our body (including our brain) works to the way we relate to other people and our environment reaches our consciousness in high-dimensional whirls of interdependent contingent events that are temporally and spatially superposed in remarkably non-linear and non-hierarchical networks – networks which need collapse into rational structures only when we try to comprehend them. Similarly, on the one hand, the rational mind uses language as a system to organise, store and communicate knowledge. Yet on the other, as soon as language leaves the creative consciousness and enters the actual world (in the form of writing or otherwise) it is inevitably entangled with its ever wavering currents and becomes thus open to unlimited contextualization, interpretation and re-interpretation.

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If like Polonius, however, we apply a method to this madness and try to extract its signification – we discover that there is an organic link between the fashion in which Shakespeare uses wordplay and the overall air of meaningful ambiguity that many critics have found at the centre of his work. Often the multiple senses shattered by wordplay are taken up and developed further by tropes, imagery and plot into a life-like complexity, which with remarkable facility transcends cool reason. But then, how do we analyse this complexity without reducing it to non-contradictory, linear hierarchical dimensions? This dissertation suggests that the possible-world approach, set out in Chapter one, "Shakespeare's wordplay and possible worlds", and applied in the ensuing three case studies, provides a theoretical means to do that. It works towards reconciliation of the structural approach, the only way we can make sense of things, with the actual intricacy of complex non-linear systems. Moreover, by tracing and outlining sets of possible worlds, i.e. by structurally stratifying conscious experience, the approach in question sheds new light on a larger abstract space between and among them – if possible worlds are perceived to run in parallel, then they must run somewhere, i.e. they must be embedded in an enwrapping space. This mental space is important because it hosts the incessant oscillation of cognitive energy between possible states of affairs. It is in this space that a different mode of cognition takes place – an ambiguity-stimulated mode of cognition, much suppressed by the longstanding rules of linearity cohesion and hierarchy, yet a mode of cognition that still exists – a mode of cognition through which concepts blend into complex notions, value systems into complex moral issues, and representations into complex fictional personalities. The three case studies which form the body of this dissertation demonstrate the creative significance of Shakespeare's wordplay along these three lines.

The first of them, "Substance and shadows: Shakespeare's wordplay and the conveyance of complex notions," shows that an important aspect of early modern

conceptualisation may be grasped through the Platonic dichotomy between "substance" and "shadows." On the one hand, there is the belief in the existence of a pure essence (substance) at the core of each concept, which is imperceptible to the senses – thus empirically unassailable. On the other, there is the understanding of all material and social phenomena as accidents (shadows), each of them revealing merely a fragment of the underlying substance. This particular form of essentialism results in a particular taste for multiplicity: the more shadows one can perceive the greater portion of substance one knows. The uncovered epistemological mechanism throws new light on the structural potential of wordplay. If an important notion is presented through multiple scenarios created by controlled ambiguity, this may be seen as a legitimate, by early modern philosophical standards, attempt to convey a greater portion of its complex substance by figuring simultaneously more of its shadows. This speculation is tested through a possible-world analysis of the wordplay used in relation to the notion of "grief" in The Tragedy of King Richard the Second. The analysis shows that the structure of "substance and shadows" in relation to the notion of "grief" is repeated in a fractal pattern throughout the play. All central characters grieve at one time or another and each individual grief is represented by means of controversial multiple scenarios sustained by wordplay. Moreover, all these different forms of grief centre in one all-encompassing grief – that of Richard himself – and problematise it to such an extent that it transcends the limits of the story and reaches out into a quest for understanding a dimension of the human condition.

The second case study, "The state of man: Shakespeare's wordplay and the presentation of complex moral issues," claims that the early modern rhetorical notion of "state" may be informative about how wordplay is used in the treatment of sensitive moral issues in Shakespeare. The term is borrowed from early modern legal theory where it denotes the meticulously balanced consideration of both sides of a case before reaching an

objective and just decision. The argument is that wordplay may be integrated in a perfectly coherent text so as to activate two entirely opposite interpretative scenarios and that this strategy is used by Shakespeare in presenting complex moral issues to his audience. This claim is tested through a possible-world analysis of the wordplay used in relation to the series of trials that form the plot of The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight. The analysis discovers a straightforward organisational pattern in the play. Each main character in the play is judged in one way or another and although judgments are passed, each case is presented in such an ambiguous way that the decision of whether justice has been done or not is left to each viewer/reader to decide for himself or herself. Moreover, all judgments in the play are invariably made by the king, so by being provoked to consider whether they are right or wrong the viewer/reader is ultimately invited to judge Henry VIII.

The third case study, "The fatal Cleopatra and a multiple Hamlet: Shakespeare's wordplay and the construction of complex personalities," re-evaluates Dr. Johnson's extravagant metaphor to suggest that it offers an unexpected angle on the importance of wordplay for Shakespeare's characterisation technique. The queen of Egypt in Antony and Cleopatra is a complex character and her complexity derives from her multiplicity – she is at the same time comic and tragic, a common harlot and a majestic queen, a peevish woman and a constant lover – and wordplay has a crucial role in creating, sustaining and binding these multiple personalities together. Thus, the reader, just like Antony, is pushed to loose the single-worldview, in the neat hierarchies of which Cleopatra can only fall into a single category, and be content to replace it with a multiple-worldview, in which she can be all at once. This perspective is tested through a possible-world analysis of Hamlet's baffling "antic disposition." The analysis shows that Hamlet's character is constructed of multiple often contradictory stereotypical identities, such as the madman, the scholar, the

theatre man, the assassin, which are then linked to the central identity of the melancholic and tortured prince, which is time and again figured in the soliloquies. It also shows the crucial role of wordplay in the process of producing a multifarious, life-like fictional representation of a complex human personality.

On the whole, this dissertation attempts to approach methodologically the extraordinary semiotic potential of Shakespeare's polysemous language. The nature of the method is essentially structural and allows the reader to juggle unrestrainedly with various possibilities simultaneously and address theoretically the intellectual traffic between and among them. The analytical part strives to elucidate the organic link between the grass-root semantic level of Shakespeare's text and the higher, more complex ambiguities of ideas, characters, plot and context. It also tries to provide some explanation of the cognitive mechanism behind this intricate mode of signification through close examination of the early modern concepts of "substance and shadows" and "state", in Chapters II and III, and Dr. Johnson's metaphor of "the fatal Cleopatra" in Chapter IV. The three structural functions of wordplay, demonstrated in the case studies, are selected as the most obvious ones; however, there surely are many more that can be explored by further research in the same direction. For instance, wordplay seems closely related to the complex relationships between theatre and meta-theatre, subjectivity and objectivity, the male and the female.

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Георги Станимиров Няголов

SHAKESPEARE'S WORDPLAY AND POSSIBLE WORLDS

ШЕКСПИРОВИТЕ ИГРИ НА ДУМИ И ВЪЗМОЖНИТЕ СВЕТОВЕ

АВТОРЕФЕРАТ

на дисертация за присъждане на образователна и научна степен
"ДОКТОР"

Научна специалност: „Литература на народите от Европа, Америка, Африка, Азия и Австралия"

Шифър: **05.04.06**

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Проф. д-р Марта Гибинска

София, 2010 г.

Дисертационният труд съдържа 184 стандартни машинописни страници и се състои от увод, четири глави, заключение и библиография.

Дисертационната работа е обсъдена и насочена за защита от Катедрата по англицистика и американистика при Факултет по класически и нови филологии на Софийски университет „Свети Климент Охридски", на 15 януари 2010 г.

Докторантът е зачислен в редовна докторантура към Катедрата по англицистика и американистика при Факултет по класически и нови филологии на Софийски университет „Свети Климент Охридски".

Изследванията по дисертационната работа са извършвани в Катедрата по англицистика и американистика при Факултет по класически и нови филологии на Софийски университет „Свети Климент Охридски".

Защитата на дисертационната работа ще се състои на 09.06.2010 г. от 15 ч. в зала 102, бл. 17 на БАН, бул „Шипченски проход" № 52, на заседание на СНС по литературознание при ВАК.

Материалите по защитата са на разположение на интересуващите се в стая 714, на бл. 17 на БАН, София 1113, бул „Шипченски проход" № 52.

СЪДЪРЖАНИЕ

УВОД

Изследването е съсредоточено върху Шекспировите игри на думи – стилистичен ефект, който традиционно представлява сериозно предизвикателство за теоретизационните стремежи на критиката. Игрите на думи се срещат навсякъде в Шекспировия канон – те функционират по един и същ начин както в поезията, така и в поетическата драма, и затова изследването използва примери от двата жанра, без да прави разграничение между тях. Интересно е, обаче, че отношението на читателите/зрителите към Шекспировите игри на думи съществено се променя с течение на времето. В единия край на спектъра се намират онези, които смятат, че те са просто една фриволна странична атракция, самоцелна интелектуална игра, почти несвързана с творбата като цяло. В другия край са тези, които търсят пряка връзка между игрите на думи и останалите стилистични фигури и кохезии в творбите, за да покажат, че те имат съществен принос за цялостния художествен ефект на Шекспировия език. Настоящото изследване се основава върху работата на последната група критици и предлага нов методологичен модел за систематизиране на техните аналитични реакции.

„Игра на думи" е общ термин, който обхваща цял арсенал от отделни стилистични средства, които въпреки формалните си различия, функционират съобразно един и същ технически принцип: полисемична езикова единица, която може да бъде една дума или по-голяма синтактична структура, води до две или повече, на пръв поглед несвързани, смислови значения и обикновено цели краткотраен, изолиран, комичен ефект[1]. Макар много от Шекспировите игри на думи да попадат под тази дефиниция, има такива, които без съмнение се разпростират отвъд пределите й.

На първо място, Шекспировите игри на думи са не винаги комични, например: завладян от разтърсваща скръб при вида на

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[1] Simpson, Paul. *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge, 2004.

осакатената си дъщеря, Тит Андроник несъзнателно прибягва да каламбур: "TITUS. It was my *deer*, and he that wounded her / Hath hurt me more than had he kill'd me dead"[2] („*Толкова я обичах / Тя бе една от моите сърни*, / че онзи, който я рани / ме жегна по-жестоко, отколкото да беше ме убил"[3]). Също така, Шекспировите игри на думи не винаги действат само в локален мащаб, например: в *Структурата на сложните думи* (1951) Уилям Емпсън показва как полисемията на думата *fool* (глупак, шут, жертва, малоумен и т.н.) се използва многократно в текста на *Крал Лир*. Накрая, Шекспировите игри на думи не винаги са изолирани от останалите изразни средства – всъщност, както демонстрира Моли Махуд в *Шекспировата игра на думи* (1957), те много често са неразривно свързани с целия лингвистичен и художествен контекст.

Случаите, в които Шекспировите каламбури надскачат пределите на традиционното схващане за игра на думи, са важни, защото разкриват една не дотам изследвана когнитивна функция на полисемията. Когато алтернативните значения на многозначни думи се свързват смислово с други такива, тези кохеренции постепенно градят паралелни контексти, които от своя страна изтръгват неочаквани сигнификации дори от привидно еднозначни думи. В крайна сметка, тези контексти могат да прераснат в алтернативни сценарии, т.е. алтернативни версии на посланието/историята и да повлияят върху тълкуването на цялото произведение като културен продукт[4]. Добиваме

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[2] *TA* III.i.91-92.

[3] Поради естеството на изследването, всички цитати в настоящия автореферат са преведени от автора. Източникът на всички цитати от Шекспир е Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. Gwynne Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1997. Съкращенията, указващи името на пиесата, също следват системата, установена от *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

[4] Пример за това дава Норман Рабкин в своята статия: Rabkin, Norman. *Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry the V*. In *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*. Ed. Russ McDonald. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

представа за величината на проблема, когато вземем предвид добре познатата Шекспирова амбивалентност и допуснем, че почти всеки каламбур представлява проход към една безкрайно разклоняваща се вселена, изградена от множество паралелни възможности за интерпретация. За да съумее да надникне систематично в това безбрежно когнитивно пространство, настоящото изследване използва критически подход, моделиран върху няколко, свързани помежду си, теории на възможните светове. Този подход е необходим на първо място, за да можем да си представим множество паралелни версии на един когнитивен конструкт, които се различават една от друга повече или по-малко. Също така, подходът ни дава възможност аналитично да изолираме всяка една от тези версии от общия когнитивен динамизъм и да проследим влиянието й върху контекста на произведението, а и отвъд него – върху материалния контекст на културата, създала произведението или тази, която го приема. Накрая, посредством този подход получаваме достъп до когнитивното пространство между паралелните версии, където действа друг интересен мисловен механизъм – съчетаването на разнопосочни понятия[5], който се основава на непрекъсната осцилация на съзнанието между логически равнопоставени възможности. Настоящото изследване използва гореописания подход, за да разкрие структурната функция на игрите на думи и да покаже приноса им към цялостния сложен семиотичен ефект на произведенията на Шекспир. За да се постигне по-голяма чистота на детайлния анализ, изследването изолира три основни измерения на този всеобхватен ефект: участието на игрите на думи i) в предаването на сложни понятия, ii) в представянето на сложни нравствени проблеми, и iii) в създаването на сложни характери.

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[5] Вж. Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, Mark. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Изследването е организирано в четири глави. Първа глава, „Шекспировите игри на думи и възможните светове”, най-напред, проследява хронологично отношението на критиката към Шекспировата полисемия от ранната модерност до днес. Разбира се, поради огромния обем на критическата литература върху Шекспир, са подбрани само най-значимите гледни точки, които очертават основните тенденции в разглеждането на проблема. После се представя логико-философския контекст на свързаните теории на възможните светове, фикционалните светове, дискурсивните светове, текстуалните светове и менталните пространства, заедно с тяхното приложение в литературната теория. След това се очертава хибридния теоретичен модел, използван в изследването и се излагат мотивите за употребата му. Накрая подходът се илюстрира накратко чрез анализ на „Сонет 49”. Всяка от следващите три глави съдържа по едно изследване на конкретен проблем, което е съставено от две, преливащи една в друга, гледни точки: от една страна се търси теоретично обяснение на проблема в неговия културно-исторически контекст – от друга, направените заключения се прилагат в детайлен анализ на конкретни произведения на Шекспир. Втора глава, „Субстанция и сенки: Шекспировите игри на думи и предаването на сложни понятия”, разглежда Платоническата дихотомия между „субстанция” и „сенки”, често употребявана от Шекспир и неговите съвременници, за да преосмисли някои съвременни схващания за ранномодерната концептуализация. Критическата рамка на изследването се прилага върху „Сонет 53” и „Ричард II” като се показва, че стилистичната функция на игрите на думи в тези произведения следват когнитивния модел, наблюдаван в свързаните понятия за „субстанция” и „сенки”, и се разкрива художествен механизъм за предаване на сложни понятия. Трета глава, „Статусът на човека: Шекспировите игри на думи и представянето на сложни нравствени проблеми”, проблематизира ранномодерното теоретично значение на „state”, което преминава от тогавашната правна наука в реториката и засяга убеждението, че за да се оцени една ситуация, най-напред трябва внимателно да

се разгледат всички възможности. Критическата рамка на изследването се прилага върху Приложение III към анонимната пиеса „Сър Томас Мор" и „Хенри VIII", като се демонстрира ролята на игрите на думи при представянето на публиката на противостоящи политически и морално заредени сценарии в пълно идеологическо равновесие. Четвърта глава, „Фаталната Клеопатра и многоликият Хамлет: Шекспировите игри на думи и създаването на сложни характери" деконструира известната метафора на Самюел Джонсън, използваща образа на Клеопатра, за да разкритикува привързаността на Шекспир към каламбурите, като показва колко важна всъщност е играта на думи за конструирането на характера на Клеопатра в „Антоний и Клеопатра". Критическата рамка на изследването се прилага върху „чудатите роли", които Хамлет разиграва, за да извади наяве приноса на игрите на думи за създаването на традиционно считания за най-сложен Шекспиров драматичен характер.

ПЪРВА ГЛАВА: ШЕКСПИРОВИТЕ ИГРИ НА ДУМИ И ВЪЗМОЖНИТЕ СВЕТОВЕ

1.1. Шекспировите игри на думи

Запазените културно-материални сведения показват, че съвременниците на Шекспир обичали игрите на думи. По-малко образованите от тях с удоволствие подражавали и пародирали красноречивите политически речи, които чували на площадите, и пламенните църковни служби, които повече от половин век вече използвали английския език. По-образованите разчитали на солидните си познания по реторика, една от дисциплините, които били изключително сериозно застъпени в учебните планове на ранномодерните училища и университети. Цяло съзвездие от ранномодерни мислители, в това число: Хенри Пийчъм, Томас Уилсън, Джордж Пътнам, Еразъм Ротердамски, Ленърд Кокс, Ричард Шери, Уилям Фулуд, Дъдли Фенър, Ейнджъл Дей, Джон Хоскинс, под различни заглавия преиздават и допълват един труд, който в наши дни Питър Мак колективно нарича „Английското ръководство за стил", тъй като всички тези трудове се основават един на друг и водят началото си от анонимната „Rhetorica ad Herennium" и Квинтилиановата „Institutio oratoria"[6]. Независимо от дребните различия между отделните версии „Английското ръководство за стил" предоставя полезен набор от практически напътствия как да се произведе реторически въздействаща реч или текст. Игрите на думи, в разнообразните им форми (парономазия, антанакласис, силепсис, полиптотон, агноминация, амфибология), заемат достойно място до други тропи като метафора, сравнение, алегория, хипербола и заедно с тях допринасят за това, което ранномодерните хора са считали за приятен и ефективен стил.

Изобилието от майсторски подбрани и подредени стилистични фигури придават на Шекспировите творби

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[6] Mack, Peter. *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

характерната за тях семантична пластичност, която им помага да надскачат традиционната представа за сигнификация, да защитават едновременно противоречащи си тези, да сливат противопоставени идеи и да бъдат конструирани винаги наново, при всяко четене или представление. Това качество на Шекспировия език е забелязано от неговите съвременници и препоръчано от неговите приятели и колеги-актьори Джон Хеминг и Хенри Кондел, на които дължим съставянето и отпечатването на Първото фолио. „Затова, четете го,” пишат те в предисловието, „и отново, и отново: и ако дори тогава не го харесате, има опасност да не го разбирате”.

Много неща, обаче, се променят за по-малко от век – научната революция, започната от Декарт и Нютън, се стреми да пречисти човешкото съзнание от всички мистични или догматични вярвания и да установи една аксиоматична философия, почиваща върху систематично мислене и емпирични доказателства. Така Просвещението естествено развива собствени естетически и литературни вкусове – онова, което елизабетинците и якобинците ценят у Шекспир, се счита за дегенеративно и профанно от августинците. Въпреки че учени и поети като Джон Драйдън, Александър Поуп и Самюъл Джонсън възхваляват Шекспир като „поет с природен талант; поет, който поднася към читателя истинското огледало на човешкия живот”[7], те се дразнят от наличието в неговото творчество на фигури и тропи, които водят до неясната и многозначие. Една от основните им забележки е към каламбурите: „Каламбурът за Шекспир е като миража за пътника, той го следва на всяка цена, макар че го води встрани от пътя и накрая го запраща в блатото. Каламбурът властва зловещо над съзнанието му с неустоимия си чар ... Каламбурът е златната ябълка, заради която Шекспир винаги ще направи компромис със сериозните си намерения, ще се сниши от

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[7] Johnson, Samuel. *Preface and Notes to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays.* London: J. and R. Tonson and others, 1765.

висотата, до която е достигнал. Каламбурът, по природа – ялов и беден, му носи такава наслада, че е готов в името му да пожертва и разум, и благоприличие, и истина. Каламбурът за Шекспир е фаталната Клеопатра, заради която той губи света и е доволен да се откаже от него"[8].

Макар че един от най-проницателните читатели на Шекспир, Самюъл Тейлър Колридж, отчита важността на игрите на думи за високо ценения от него „непрекъснат низ от образи, винаги живи, и понеже винаги свързани един с друг, често изключително детайлни", всеобщото отношение към Шекспировото игрословие като ялово и самоцелно доминира през XVI и XIX век. Едва през XX век с написването на основополагащата книга на Уилям Емпсън „Седем вида двусмислие" се разпознава значителния поетичен ефект на литературното двусмислие. Емпсън дефинира този феномен като „всеки вербален нюанс, независимо от величината му, който дава възможност за различни реакции към един и същ текст" и изследва употребата му в литературата от ситуацията когато „една дума или граматическа структура действа по няколко начина едновременно" (двусмислие от първи вид) до „най-двусмислената ситуация, която човек може да си представи ... когато две значения на една дума, двете половинки на двусмислието, проектират две противоположни значения, подкрепени от контекста и крайният ефект показва фундаментално разцепление в съзнанието на автора" (двусмислие от седми вид)[9].

По отношение на Шекспировите игри на думи, Емпсън се противопоставя на критиките на Джонсън като твърди, че интересът на поета към звученето на думите е тясно свързано с интереса към тяхното значение. Нещо повече, съзнанието на Шекспир обхваща думите в цялата им многомерност и заедно с

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Empson, William. *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1949.

множеството връзки между тях, така че когато създава текстовете си, поетът използва игрите на думи, за да предаде това непрестанно прескачане от един съществен нюанс към друг. Според Емпсън, Шекспировите каламбури влияят в различна степен на рецепцията на читателя – от мотив, който „се развива в две посоки, но накрая се съчетава в една идея", до повратна точка, която „разцепва произведението на две напълно различни възможности за интерпретация, две гледни точки към една и съща тема се предлагат на читателя, и той е подтикнат да ги изследва равнопоставено"[10]. Емпсън дава ясен пример за последната ситуация в есето си, посветено на многозначността на думата „honest" в „Отело", публикувано в сборника „Структурата на сложните думи"[11]. Там той показва, че петдесетте и две употреби в пиесата използват всички познати лексикални значения на думата и нейните производни: уважаван, целомъдрен, похвален, достоен, верен, честен, добронамерен, нравствен, морален, добродетелен, достопочтен, автентичен, и едно по едно иронично ги деконструира до тяхната пълна противоположност.

Проникновеното изследване на Емпсън революционализира представата за поетическата полисемия, но отделя твърде малко внимание на свойството на многозначните думи да изтръгват алтернативни значения от на пръв поглед еднозначни части на речта. Първото задълбочено изследване, което разглежда тези връзки в творчеството на Шекспир е „Шекспировата игра на думи" от Моли Махуд[12]. В него авторката търпеливо проследява множеството възможности, активирани от търсеното или несъзнателното игрословие в сонетите и пиесите, и показва как кохеренциите между отделни значения творят сложни, паралелно разположени образи, които водят до характерно диалогичния ефект на Шекспировото творчество.

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Empson, William. *The Structure of Complex Words*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1951.

[12] Mahood, M. M. *Shakespeare's Wordplay*. London: Methuen, 1957.

Изследванията на критици като Емпсън и Махуд засилват интереса към игрите на думи и разкриват тяхната значимост за вездесъщия диалогичен ефект на произведенията на Шекспир. Те анализират проникновено текстуалния контекст на сонетите, поемите и пиесите, като показват безброй скрити връзки, и предлагат множество интересни четения. Появата през втората половина на XX век на критически течения като културния материализъм и новия историзъм, обаче, защитават тезата, че литературата на може да бъде успешно отделена от своя културен, социален и исторически контекст, и следва да бъде разглеждана като неразделна част от него. Под влиянието на това гледище, контекстът на Шекспировите каламбури започва да се търси не само в произведенията, но и в културно-историческия им контекст.

Характерен пример за този критически подход дава Патриша Паркър, която изследва паралелните дискурсивни значения на езика на Шекспир и процеса на активирането им от различни аспекти на ранномодерната култура[13]. Например, Паркър хвърля нова светлина върху употребата на „join", „joiner" и „joinery" в „Сън в лятна нощ", като разглежда отблизо професиите на маргиналните занаятчии: Куинс – дърводелеца, Снъг – строителя, Ботъм – тъкача, Флют – кърпач на духала, Снаут – медникаря, и Старвлинг – шивача. Съпоставяйки множество ранномодерни технически текстове, изследването най-напред показва, че всички тези занаяти по един или друг начин са свързани с изкуството на съчетаването (joinery), т.е. изкусното сглобяване на елементи, за да се постигне работещ механизъм. После съпоставя тази представа с други ранномодерни значения на „join": „от свързването на думи в рационални, логически конструкции и 'синтаксис' (онзи дял на граматиката, който съчетава думите в едно цяло) – до свързване на мъжкото и

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[13] Parker, Patricia. *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

женското тяло в плътта на брака, или пък хармоничното управление на политическото тяло на монарха". Всяко от тези социолингвистични измерения на думата „join" се отразява многозначително в драматичната структура на пиесата. Пародийното представление на историята на Пирам и Тизба, сковано от занаятчиите, преднамерено отделя една театрална реалност от друга, за да разкрие механизма на театъра. Нескопосаното сглобяване на думи на Ботъм е в унисон с гротескната му метаморфоза, и макар любовта на Титания да е под въздействието на магия, симпатията на зрителя към него е неподправена. Съчетаването и разделянето на влюбените в Атинския лес деконструира чувствата им, за да анализира истинската същност на любовта. Свързването на Тезей и Хиполита в кралски брачен съюз не само дава сполучлива рамка на сюжета на пиесата, но и изследва политическото значение на брака в противовес на войната.

Новоисторическият подход на Паркър към езика на Шекспир отваря ново измерение на тълкуването на игрите на думи като показва, че полисемията може да се изследва не само в абстрактния, стриктно литературен контекст, но и през призмата на съответната културна атмосфера и реконструирането на материално-исторически значения. Според Роман Ингарден, обаче, литературата не е автономно, а хетерономно явление, което съществува единствено при контакта си с човешкото съзнание[14]. Затова следващото логично ниво за изследване на Шекспировите игри на думи е именно локусът, където се пресичат абстрактното и материалното измерение на езика – човешкият ум. Развитието на когнитивните науки и появата на голям брой теоретични конструкти, обясняващи умствени

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[14] Ingarden, Roman (1973a) *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature* (trans. George Grabowics, from the third edition of *Das literarische Kunstwerk*, 1965; after a Polish revised translation, 1960; from the original German, 1931), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

процеси, през последните години, разбира се, засягат и изследването на Шекспировите игри на думи. Един от основните принципи на когнитивната литературна критика е, че езиковите употреби се определят от концептуализацията на свързаните с тях човешки същества, т.е. смисълът на думи и фрази в един текст зависи не само от речниковите им значения и прагматичния им контекст, но и от сложните системи от понятия и асоциации, които те извикват както в съзнанието на автора, така и в това на читателя[15].

Мери Томас Крейн практически онагледява това съвременно направление в литературната теория, като използва читателски реконструкции на значения, контекст и когнитивни процеси, за да надникне в „Шекспировата игра с концептуалните връзки между думите"[16]. Например, тя разглежда многобройните значения на думата „suit" в „Дванайстата нощ", които се разделят най-напред на две омонимни понятия. От една страна, „преследване на желанията си в рамките на закона и почтеността" – а) опит да се постигне нещо с молба; б) ухажване на жена с цел брак; в) съдебен иск; г) отговаряне на нечии изисквания. От друга, „дреха, облекло" и метафорично „тяло, външност". Освен това, изследването разкрива още три значения на думата, популярни в Англия през ранната модерност – а) служба, дълг; б) вид, пол, сан, класа, ранг; и в) театрален костюм.

Крейн разсъждава, че тази сложна мрежа от понятия, концентрирани в една единствена лингвистична форма, функционира като многостранна концептуална метафора и съживява абстрактното пространство между тези понятия, като по този начин предизвиква постоянен трафик на значения от едно

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[15] Виж. Stockwell, Peter. *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2002.

[16] Crane, Mary Thomas. *Shakespeare's Brain: Reading with Cognitive Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

поле на знанието към друго. Така, преобличането в мъжки одежди на Виола (change of suit) сочи към промяната на дрехите й, но също и на пола и ранга й. Това й дава възможност да служи на граф Орсино (give suit), но понеже всъщност е жена, я прави изключително подходяща (suitable) да ухажва от негово име Оливия (sue Olivia's love). Едновременно с това тя е неподходяща (unsuitable) за любовните аспирации на Оливия към нея като Цезарио (Olivia's converse suit to her as Cesario). От друга страна, Малволио опитва да надскочи ранга си (his suit), като ухажва господарката си (making suit to his mistress), и дори променя начина си на обличане и държание (changing his suit). Иронично, когато Виола се изправя лице в лице с брат си, Себастиан, когото смята за загинал в корабокрушението, тя го разпознава благодарение на дрехите му (his suit), докато той не я разпознава именно заради промяната в облеклото й (her suit). Накрая, всички недоразумения по отношение на променените идентичности (suits) се изясняват, любовните влечения (suits) се уреждат с бракове, и съдебният иск (suit) на Орсино срещу Антонио е забравен. Умението на Шекспир да събере така разнообразни и противопоставени понятия (от хаос до яснота, от скриване до разкриване на самоличността, от законна до незаконна любов, от възможно до невъзможно влечение) в една единствена дума, и след това да я постави в такъв контекст, че при всяка употреба да избухва в квантов взрив от сигнификации, несъмнено показва истинските комуникативни възможности на езика, но също така изважда наяве нелинеарното естество на концептуализационния процес, чрез който човешкото съзнание мисли, тълкува и твори.

Като се има предвид обема на критическата литература върху езика на Шекспир, която е публикувана до момента, не би било възможно, а и разумно, да се прави изчерпателен обзор на изследванията на Шекспировите игри на думи. Затова настоящото изследване се стреми по-скоро да покаже важните нововъведения и да очертае основните тенденции в тази област. През XVIII и XIX век Шекспировото игрословие е считано за празна и

фриволна проява на остроумие, имаща единствено орнаментна стойност, моментен ефект, и по-скоро не допринася за нравственото или интелектуално послание на произведението. От самото начало на XX век, обаче, критиците разпознават игрите на думи като източник на поетично многозначие, спойка между използваните образи, механизъм за значими интратекстуални, интертекстуални и екстратекстуални резонанси, и дори като когнитивен модел за концептуализация на сложни идеи. В този ред на мисли е изненадващо, че засега не съществува цялостна съвременна теория на игрите на думи[17] – теория, която да бъде в състояние да онтологизира всяко възможно значение на една полисемична семантична единица и да отчита влиянието й върху околните семантични единици във всеки един момент; теория, която да бъде в състояние да разглежда възможни дискурсивни кохеренции при тяхното паралелно съществуване и да изследва когнитивните процеси, които протичат между тях. При наличието на такава теория, по думите на Норман Рабкин, творбите на Шекспир няма вече да се тълкуват като едно или друго нещо, а като изключително сложните и многостранни неща, които всъщност представляват[18].

1.2. Теории за световете и менталните пространства

Още през 1892 година Готлоб Фреге твърди, че за да се схване напълно една дума, човек, разбира се, трябва да бъде наясно със значението й, т.е. нейния референт, но още по-важно е да разбира смисъла й, т.е. как въпросната дума се отнася към

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[17] Като например теорията за концептуалната метафора на Лейков и Джонсън: Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

[18] Rabkin, Norman. *Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V*. In *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1945-2000*. Ed. Russ McDonald. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

когнитивния си контекст, за да реализира съответното значение[19]. Това наблягане върху контекста влече след себе си трудния въпрос – какво всъщност представлява той. Първият метод на контекстуализация, който можем да си представим е: дума – изречение – текст, но както заключава Пол Уърт, както изречението, така и текстът са сегменти, извадени от контекста, за да бъдат анализирани. Вместо това той предлага друг модел: дума – израз – дискурс, където „израз” е съчетанието от изречение и неговия контекст, а „дискурс” е съчетанието от текст и неговия контекст[20]. И все пак, как схващаме смисъла на изрази и дискурси? Една от основните тези на когнитивната наука е, че, за да разбере който и да е израз или дискурс, човешкият ум го контекстуализира посредством предварително подготвени ментални структури. Тези ментални структури съдържат готови епистемологични модели за неща – рамки (frames) и процеси – протоколи (scripts), които се подреждат в по-големи системи като универсални модели за ситуации – схеми (schemata) и модели на конкретни ситуации – сценарии (scenarios). Думи, изрази и текстове се интегрират в тези динамични контекстуализиращи структури като постоянно различни комбинации от тях се проектират напред във времето под формата на очаквания[21]. Всяка от тези конкретни комбинации представлява ментална проекция на света, т.е. възможно състояние на нещата при условие, че е реализирано съответно предположение за това какво значи дадената дума, израз или текст. Колкото по-труден и по-неясен е езикът, използван в произведението, толкова повече и по-разнообразни ментални проекции на света произвежда съзнанието на реципиента.

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[19] Frege, Gottlob. *On Sense and Reference*. in *Meaning and Reference*. (ed. A. W. Moore). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

[20] Werth, Paul. *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. London: Longman, 1999.

[21] Chimombo, Moira and Roseberry, Robert L. *The Power of Discourse: An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*. London: Mahwah, 1998.

За да надникнем по-информирано във феномена, условно наричан по-горе „ментална проекция на света", както и за да могат да се преценят предимствата и недостатъците на критически подход, който използва подобни конструкти, е нужно най-напред да се разгледат няколко свързани теории, използващи проекции на светове и ментални пространства.

1.2.1. Възможни светове

Понятието „възможни светове" води началото си от Готфрид Лайбниц и неговата „Теодицея", в която се разказва за „двореца на съдбите", където били поместени „не само нещата, които се случват, но и онези, които е възможно да се случат. Юпитер прегледал всички тези възможни събития преди да създаде света за човеците, класирал ги във възможни светове и избрал най-добрия от тях"[22]. Колкото и фантастично да звучи тази история, тя почива върху кохерентна философска теория на контрафактическите възможности: „Трябва да се съгласим, че не всички възможности се реализират", пише Лайбниц в есето си „За евентуалността", „наистина, изглежда невъзможно всички възможности да съществуват едновременно в реалността, защото биха си пречили. Все пак, има безброй серии от възможни неща, но нито една от тях не съдържа друга такава, защото всяка е сама по себе си завършена"[23].

През XX век, тази теория се развива от поредица философи, които смятат, че могат да използват идеите на Лайбниц за модалностите на божествения разум, за да обяснят човешки модални понятия като възможност, невъзможност, евентуалност, и необходимост. Сол Крипке предлага нова

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[22] Leibniz, Gottfried. *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom on Man and the Origin of Evil*. Tr. E.M. Huggard from C.J. Gerhardt. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. 1966.

[23] Leibniz, Gottfried. *Philosophical Essays*. (tr. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber). Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.

пропозиционална логика, която вече не разчита на един-единствен критерий за истинност – действителността, т.е. в действителния свят пропозицията „Шекспир е написал *Хамлет*" е или истинна, или неистинна, а въвежда индексирани системи от критерии за истинност, които обхващат действителността и всички вътрешно непротиворечиви възможности, т.е. всяка от пропозициите „Шекспир е написал *Хамлет*", „Шекспир не е написал *Хамлет*" и „Шекспир е написал *Хамлет* в съавторство с други драматурзи" е истинна в различен възможен свят. Крипке определя възможните светове като „разнообразни стечения на обстоятелствата, различни от това, което се е реализирало в действителност"[24].

Теорията на възможните светове на Крипке се възприема възторжено и от други философи. Дейвид Келог Люис, например, твърди, че „има толкова много паралелни светове, че всяко възможно стечение на обстоятелствата наистина съществува някъде". Той също смята, че всички тези светове са реални и равнопоставени, тъй като разликата между всеки от тях и онова, което възприемаме като действителен свят, е просто индексационна. Възможните светове, които описва Люис, обаче, са недостъпни, т.е. съществуват паралелно един на друг и са съставени от двойници на хора и неща, но никой и нищо не е в състояние да прескочи от един свят в друг. Това, от една страна, осигурява емпиричната недосегаемост на твърденията на Люис, но от друга, не позволява на така определената теория да бъде повече от един елегантен формален метод за разглеждане на контрафактически възможности[25].

Независимо от това, доста влиятелни литературоведи използват определени аспекти на представата за възможните

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[24] Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

[25] Lewis, David Kellogg. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

световете, за да изследват различни литературни феномени. Като цяло, критическите им подходи стъпват върху две основни схващания: а) независимо от ограниченията, наложени от традиционната логика и семантика, „недействителните възможности градят напълно кохерентни системи, които могат да бъдат описвани, квалифицирани, интерпретирани, конструирани, и към които може да се реферира"[26]; б) възможните светове, които използва логиката, са напълно различни от възможните светове, които използва литературната теория, например един фикционален свят може да бъде невъзможен от логическа гледна точка, но разбираем и полезен за читателя на художественото произведение.

Томас Г. Павел е сред първите критици, които преразглеждат традиционното виждане, че фикционалните светове са просто имитация на действителния свят и затова фикционалните характери и събития не съществуват в действителността, и съответно нямат отношение към логическата категория „истинност". Той предлага теория на фикционалните наративи, която следва модела на теорията на възможните светове като допуска съществуването на недействителни, възможни състояния на нещата и прибягва до понятия от модалната логика, за да изследва отношенията между тях[27]. Любомир Доležел развива теорията на Павел като разработва наратологични модели на фикционалните светове и взаимодействията между тях, както и пълна типология на фикционалните светове[28]. Павел и Доležел разглеждат света на художественото произведение като един по условие непълен възможен свят – виждане, което споделя и Умберто Еко: „възможните светове са винаги малки светове, т.е.

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[26] Ronen, Ruth. *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[27] Pavel, Thomas G. *Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, MS and London: Harvard University Press, 1986.

[28] Doležel, Lubomir. *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997.

сравнително кратък низ от локални събития в някое кътче или ъгълче на действителния свят". Според Еко, за разлика от празните светове на модалната семантика, възможните светове на литературата са пълни с динамично съдържание, т.е. те са състояния на нещата, съставени от хора и предмети, които си взаимодействат и се променят съобразно правилата на съответния свят. Също, като голяма част от онова, което сме свикнали да наричаме „действителен свят", възможните светове са културни конструкти, т.е. не ги откриваме, а ги създаваме. Накрая, представата за възможни светове е полезна само когато е необходимо да се съпоставят две или повече алтернативни състояния на нещата. Последното разсъждение сочи към друг ключов автор – Мари-Лор Райън – според която фикционалността е сложна система от наративни светове, в това число фикционалния действителен свят, и множество алтернативни възможни светове, съдържащи вярванията, очакванията, плановете, моралните убеждения и скрупули, желанията, въжделенията и фантазиите на литературните герои. По този начин Райън предлага пълна типология от паралелни текстуални светове, които могат да бъдат сравнявани и изследвани от наратолозите. Райън също прибавя още един основен принцип на литературните възможни светове – принципа на минималното отклонение – според който всеки такъв свят е моделиран върху представата на читателя за действителния свят и се отклонява от нея само когато това се изисква от текста, т.е. във възможния свят, в който Шекспир не е написал *Хамлет*, има гравитация, Шекспир има два крака, норманското нашествие започва през 1066 година, и т.н.

Като цяло, всяка от гореописаните употреби на теорията на възможните светове за нуждите на литературознанието предлага полезен модел за изследване на отношенията между фикционалните светове и действителния свят на читателя, и също между различните видове текстуални светове, втъкани в сюжета на художественото произведение. Всички те, обаче, са изцяло

ориентирани към наративната фикция и пренебрегват ненаративните художествени форми, като лирическата поезия например. Основната причина за това е становището, че тези форми не творят фикционални светове, а по-скоро предават индивидуални съждения и емоции. Стъпвайки върху критическата рамка на когнитивната поетика, Елена Семино оспорва това твърдение и убедително показва как типологиите на Долежел и Райън могат да бъдат използвани за изследване дори на модернистка и постмодернистка поезия[29]. Тя също така разширява приложението на теориите за възможните литературни светове, като анализира световете, непрекъснато създавани при взаимодействието между съзнанието на читателя и езиковите структури на авторовия текст. Семино разглежда възможните литературни светове като когнитивни конструкти и очертава връзките между тях и схемите, сценариите и концептуалните метафори. По този начин тя отваря ново измерение на употребата на понятието „възможни светове" в литературната теория, което черпи силата от някои свързани теории на светове и абстрактни пространства – като теорията за дискурсивните светове и текстуалните светове на Пол Уърт, и теорията на менталните пространства и концептуалното съчетаване на Жил Фоконие и Ив Суийтстър.

1.2.2. Дискурсивни светове и текстуални светове

Според Пол Уърт, всички когнитивни процеси, свързани с обработването, съхраняването и употребата на информация, са свързани с постоянно създаване и актуализиране на абстрактни когнитивни пространства[30]. Това се отнася и за тълкуването на действителни и фикционални явления. Уърт твърди, че всяка

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[29] Semino, Elena. *Language and World Creation in Poems and Other Texts*. London: Longman, 1997.

[30] Werth, Paul. *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. London: Longman, 1999.

употреба на езика предполага определен контекст, било то ситуационен или концептуален. Теоретичната реконструкция на първото представлява дискурсивен свят, а на второто – текстуален свят. Разликата между тях е, че дискурсивния свят се основава на действителни лингвистични и нелингвистични стимули, докато текстуалният свят е напълно ментален конструкт, основаващ се на собствените си деиктични и референтни елементи, които активират когнитивни структури, съхранени в съзнанието на читателя. Текстуалният свят предлага на читателя модел на реалността, със собствени референтни системи, правила за истинност и неистинност, възможност и невъзможност, които приличат на действителността, но не винаги съвпадат с нея.

Според Уърт, когнитивното възприемане на текстуалността представлява своеобразна разклоняваща се вселена. Понятието за текстуален свят винаги съдържа два аспекта: вътрешен – свързан с текстуалния свят на даденото произведение, и външен – свързан с дискурсивните светове, в който се осъществява сътворяването и рецепцията на произведението. Текстуалният свят, от своя страна, съдържа поне две отделни представи за света на произведението – тази на автора и тази на читателя. Всяка от тези представи за света на произведението на свой ред съдържа множество дискурсивни и текстуални подсветове, фокусирани върху съзнанието на всеки от героите. Тези подсветове могат да се категоризират като деиктични, епистемни, доксатични, и т.н.[31] Въпреки концептуалната си иновативност, теорията на Уърт не успява да предложи достатъчно убедителен инструмент за изследване на действащото човешко съзнание. Това вероятно се дължи на стремежа да се очертаят макроструктурите, вместо да се предложи систематично описание на индивидуалния когнитивен свят, а също така и на липсата на обяснение за това как

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[31] Ibid.

човешкото съзнание работи едновременно с няколко паралелни представи за света.

1.2.3. Ментални пространства и концептуално съчетаване

Според Филип Джонсън-Леърд, всички човешки същества осмислят заобикалящата ги среда като постоянно създават, актуализират или отхвърлят междинни представи за света в умовете си[32]. Той нарича тези когнитивни структури „ментални модели” и ги определя като концептуални пространства, пригодени за проверяване на вероятности и съждения. Жил Фоконие и Ив Суийтсър развиват понятието на Джонсън-Леърд и полагат основите на теорията на менталните пространства – краткосрочни когнитивни проекции на света, които се създават при обработка на нова лингвистична информация на базата на знания, съхранявани в дългосрочната памет[33]. Тази теория изучава динамиката на създаването на ментални пространства и обмена на информация между тях. Според нея, във всеки един момент на дискурса човешкият ум използва няколко свързани помежду си ментални пространства. Прескачането на съзнанието между тях започва от едно, индексирано като главно, и динамично съпоставя възможностите на всяко едно от тях, съобразно постъпването на нова информация и така гарантира постоянната гъвкавост и многомерност на знанието и преживяванията[34].

Фундаменталният когнитивен процес, благодарение на който се осъществява това постоянно преструктуриране на

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[32] Johnson-Laird, Philip. *Mental Models: Toward a Cognitive Science of Language, Inference and Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

[33] Fauconnier, Gilles. *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

[34] Ibid.

знанието, е концептуалното съчетаване (conceptual blending)[35]. Фоконие и Суийтсър проследяват механизма на наслагване на паралелни версии на елементи от паралелни ментални пространства и моделирането на още по-сложни концептуални конструкти. Те също подчертават, че концептуалното съчетаване не е характерно само за когнитивната структура, използвана от концептуалната метафора, но стои в основата и на други когнитивни процеси като тълкуване на многозначие и логическо противоречие[36].

Теорията на менталните пространства и концептуалното съчетаване предоставят не само обяснение за това как действа човешкото съзнание, но и ясна теоретическа платформа за изследване на сложни когнитивни процеси. Нарочният стремеж на авторите да се въздържат от употребата на термина „свят" изглежда неоправдан. След като съзнанието работи едновременно с няколко различни ментални пространства, т.е. състояния на нещата, всеки по-детайлен анализ на което и да било от тях би показал, че то съществува в контекста на една цялостна представа за света. Също така, щом тези ментални пространства се различават едно от друго, като се вземе предвид чувствителността на всяка структура към началните условия, може да се очаква, че цялостните представи за света често могат да се различават една от друга.

1.3. Шекспировите игри на думи и един особен вид възможни светове

Теоретическият преглед, изложен до тук, води до две важни заключения. Първо, критическият поглед върху Шекспировите игри на думи се е развил изключително от началото на XX век до настоящия момент, откривайки все повече и повече скрити значения чрез все по-задълбочено и по-широко

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[35] Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, Mark. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.
[36] Ibid.

контекстуализиране на каламбурите. Наблюдаваните тенденции се движат от детайлно изследване на непосредствения текстови контекст, към разпростиране на анализа върху историческия и културния контекст, като достигат дори до реконструиране на сложни когнитивни сценарии, сътворени в съзнанието на автора. Второ, науката за това как работи човешкият ум също се е развила, загърбвайки все повече и повече позитивисткия едносветски мироглед (single-worldview) за сметка на принципите на живия ум и свързания с тях многосветски мироглед (multiple-worldview). Неслучайното пресичане на тези две напълно отделни теоретични направления именно в сферата на когнитивистиката дава надежда, че теориите на възможните светове и абстрактните пространства могат да послужат като критическа рамка за изследване на Шекспировото игрословие, а и за игрите на думи изобщо. За тази цел, обаче, множеството теоретични линии, разгледани във втората част на тази глава, трябва да се преработят като се очертае един кохерентен и фокусиран подход.

Както показват Емпсън и Махуд, Шекспировите игри на думи често не са изолирано локално явление. Алтернативните значения на многозначните думи и изрази често са смислово свързани с други подобни алтернативни значения, и така създават общи когнитивни структури, които могат да бъдат рамки (frames), протоколи (scripts), схеми (schemata), сценарии (scenarios), или цели състояния на нещата, т.е. когнитивни светове. От гледна точка на рецепцията, всички тези структури са ментални пространства, тъй като се конструират на базата на нова лингвистична информация и знания, съхранявани в дългосрочната памет на читателя/зрителя. Също така, във фикционалния контекст на съответното произведение, те могат да бъдат дефинирани и като текстуални светове, или дори като дискурсивни светове, ако им се даде възможност да въздействат на онова, което считаме за действителен свят – като се говори или пише за тях, например. Независимо с какви термини ги описваме и в какъв контекст ги разглеждаме, най-добрият начин да

определим тези структури е да формулираме стабилните им характеристики:

- Те са когнитивни структури, т.е. линеарни, непротиворечиви системи от знания за определени състояния на нещата.

- Те са комплекти от няколко подобни структури, т.е. дори най-простият каламбур води до поне две отделни значения.

- Те съществуват едновременно и се проектират паралелно във многомерно ментално пространство.

- Те са кохерентни, т.е. всяка от тях е логически последователна и не съдържа вътрешни противоречия.

- Те са непълни по условие, т.е. всяка от тях съдържа само фрагмент от цялостното състояние на нещата, но и възможността за по-нататъшна контекстуализация.

- Всяка една от тях твори нов възможен свят, тъй като има потенциала да промени напълно представата на читателя/зрителя за фикционалния свят на произведението, а също и неговия мироглед в действителния свят.

- Накрая, между тези структури постоянно има непрекъснат когнитивен трафик, който води до непрекъснато концептуално съчетаване, и по този начин улеснява схващането от страна на читателя/зрителя на сложни понятия, сложни нравствени проблеми и сложни характери.

В дисертацията този определен вид когнитивни структури биват наричани „възможни светове” и тъй като този термин е използван вече от различни теории и в различен контекст, се налага да се направят няколко уточнения. Възможните светове, за които става дума по-нататък, се различават от възможните

световете на модалната логика по това, че не са празни математически множества, а изпълнени със съдържание когнитивни модели. Те също се различават от възможните световете, фикционалните световете и текстуалните световете, които използват критици като Павел, Долежел, Еко и Райън в литературните си анализи, по това, че не са свързани с наратива на произведението, а със семантичната му тъкан. По отношение на последното те приличат най-вече на възможните световете на двуизмерната семантика. Тя разглежда значението на всеки лингвистичен знак като съчетание на две синхронни измерения: екстензия – референта на лингвистичния знак; и интензия – възможния свят, в който съществува въпросният референт[37]. За нуждите на дисертацията, думата „възможни" означава „въобразими по логически непротиворечив начин" и акцентира върху когнитивната достъпност на въпросните конструкти, а думата „световете" означава „кохерентни и епистемологически стабилни състояния на нещата, които могат да бъдат идентифицирани, реконструирани, описвани и анализирани отделно от други паралелни състояния на нещата".

Важно е също да се отбележи, че употребата в дисертацията на гореописаната критическа рамка е мотивирана от няколко съществени предимства, които я правят по-адекватна и по-обещаваща от други структурни подходи за изследването на игрите на думи:

· Тя предлага научно приемливо и същевременно сравнително не твърде усложнено средство за структурен анализ на литературната полисемия.

· Тя улеснява изучаването по линеарен начин на нелинеарни процеси, които очевидно излизат извън обхвата на традиционните схващания на логиката и лингвистиката.

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[37] Chalmers, David. *Two-Dimensional Semantics*. In *Two-Dimensional Semantics: Foundations and Applications*. Ed. M. Garcia-Carpintero and J. Macia. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Тя отваря практически неограничено пространство за изследване на всяка отделна когнитивна структура, активирана в съзнанието на читателя/зрителя.

- Тя разглежда съпоставително паралелни когнитивни структури, като очертава абстрактното пространство между тях и хвърля светлина върху сложните когнитивни процеси, които се развиват там.

- Накрая, критическата рамка, основаваща се на представата за паралелни „възможни светове", е може би единственият структуралистки теоретически конструкт, който притежава силата да влезе в открит диалог с унищожителната критика на постструктурализма и не само да оцелее, но да спечели от това.

ВТОРА ГЛАВА: СУБСТАНЦИЯ И СЕНКИ: ШЕКСПИРОВИТЕ ИГРИ НА ДУМИ И ПРЕДАВАНЕТО НА СЛОЖНИ ПОНЯТИЯ

Първата част на тази глава изследва културните измерения на ранномодерната дихотомия между „същност" (substance) и „сенки" (shadows), използвана в Шекспировия „Сонет 53". Тя се стреми да покаже, че връзката между тези две понятия може да послужи за теоретично моделиране на принципа на действие на концептуализационния процес по времето на Шекспир. Основният аргумент тук е, че есенциализмът, изразен чрез представата за „субстанция и сенки", възпитава у ранномодерния човек многосветски мироглед и склонност към концептуално съчетаване. Втората част на тази глава анализира друга важна употреба на същата дихотомия в пиесата „Ричард II", където тя привлича вниманието на читателя/зрителя към пресъздаването на ключовото понятие „мъка" (grief), което представлява своеобразен център на произведението. То се моделира чрез сравняване на страданията на всички основни герои, всяко от които е проблематизирано посредством противоречиви възможни светове, основаващи се на игри на думи.

What is your substance, whereof are you made,	Каква е твоята същност, от какво си сътворен,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?	че всички тези чужди сенки ти слугуват?
Since every one, hath every one, one shade,	един щом всеки е, едничка сянка има,
And you but one, can every shadow lend:	а ти на всеки можеш сянка да дадеш:
Describe Adonis and the counterfeit,	описваме Адонис – и полученият образ
Is poorly imitated after you,	е лоша имитация на твоя лик,
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,	с най-дивни краски да рисуваме Елена,
And you in Grecian tyres are	твой портрет излиза, с гръцки

painted new:
Speak of the spring, and foison of the year,
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you for constant heart.

дрехи този път:
сравнявам те с пролет и със златна есен,
само част от красотата ти показва пролетта,
а щедростта ти есента наподобява.
откриваме те във всяка най-чудесна форма.
участваш ти във всяка външна красота,
но никой няма твоето неизменно сърце.

„Сонет 53" очевидно е изграден около добре познатата за автора и публиката му дихотомия между „субстанция" и „сянка", която действа на две разграничими нива. От една страна, тя формира концептуалната база, на която стъпва сонетът; от друга, участва в множеството игри на думи, от които той е изтъкан.

Философската опозиция между „същност" и „сенки" вероятно достига до Шекспир и неговите съвременници като съчетание от няколко свързани понятия. Най-ранната представа за константна същност, която преминава през преходни форми, известна на елизабетинците, се съдържа във философските учения на Хераклит, Парменид и Питагор. Това виждане за света е доста широко разпространено през ранномодерния период благодарение на популярността на Овидиевите „Метаморфози"[38]. Друг съществен аспект на разглежданата дихотомия се корени в Платоновата теория на идеите, която бива преоткрита и преосмислена през ренесансовия период. Тя описва една неподчинена на времето и пространството реалност, достижима

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[38] Вж. Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

единствено от човешкия интелект[39]. В мита за пещерата тази абсолютна реалност е сравнена с преходния материален свят, за да бъде показано, че всичко това, което възприемаме със сетивата си, са само „сенките" на истинските неща[40]. Накрая, разглежданата дихотомия е също неразривно свързана с теорията на Аристотел за субстанциите и акциденциите, която се преподава в европейските училища и университети от средновековието до Просвещението, и заема основно място в учебната програма, по която е учил Шекспир. Тя разбира субстанциите като неуловими от сетивата, но разбираеми, универсални концептуални единици, а акциденциите като сетивно достъпните им, конкретни, но непълни, моментни изражения в материалния свят. Една субстанция може да има безброй акциденции, които разкриват само отделни аспекти от сложната й същност, но никога не са в състояние да я предадат напълно[41].

На пръв поглед „Сонет 53" представлява недвусмислен комплимент към изключителната „същност" на адресата. Поетът си поставя непосилната задача да опише този сюблимен обект посредством тленните му „сенки": Адонис, Елена Троянска, пролетта, есента. Всяка от тези сенки, разбира се, отразява само фрагмент от душата на адресата. Поетът ги организира като антитези – най-красивия мъж и най-красивата жена, живителното начало на годината и триумфалната прелюдия към нейния завършек – с надеждата да успее да обеме колкото се може повече възможности. Финалният дистих, обаче, показва, че независимо какви усилия полага, той никога няма да може да пресъздаде пълното съвършенство, таящо се в сърцето на адресата.

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[39] Plato. *Phaedo*. In *The Dialogues of Plato in Five Volumes*. Tr. and ed. Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892.

[40] Plato. *The Republic*. In *The Dialogues of Plato in Five Volumes*. tr. and ed. Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: : Oxford University Press, 1892.

[41] Вж. Wilson, Thomas. *The Rule of Reason, conteinynge the Arte of Logique set forth in Englishe*. London: John Kingston, 1563.

Интелектуалното недоверие към очевидното и изкушението за откриване на по-дълбок, скрит замисъл, заложено във философията на дихотомията „същност" – „сенки", мотивира читателя да обърне по-голямо внимание на игрословието в „Сонет 53". Едновременно с това думите „substance" и „shadow/s" се оказват в центъра на главозамайващо многозначие. Така например: думата „substance" (стих 1) активира представата за „есенция/същност", но и до нейната опозиция „материал/състав", подкрепена от фразата „whereof are you made" (от какво си сътворен). Тя също резонира с „tend" (слугувам/грижа се за), „lend" (заемам) и „bounty" (щедрост/изобилие), което активира значението „богатство/имущество". Думата „strange" (стих 2) води до значението „не твои/чужди", но също и „фантастичен/чуждоземски". Полисемията на първите два стиха извличат още от първата употреба на „shadows" (стих 2) всичките му възможни значения: а) „сенки", б) „отражения", в) „призраци/фантоми", г) „портрети", д) „имитации/фалшификации", е) „театрални актьори", и ж) „слуги". Това изключително струпване на възможни значения отключва многозначността на почти всички думи оттук насетне. Стихове 3 и 4 могат да се тълкуват по редица начини: i) всеки човек има само една сянка / външност / отражение / призрак / слуга, а ти можеш да дадеш по една/един от своите на всеки от слугите си / имитациите си / отраженията си; ii) въпреки че всяко същество има само една форма / външност / отражение / лице, ти можеш да се превъплъщаваш в когото си поискаш, и т.н. От тази гледна точка образът на Адонис (стих 5), очевидно използван за да предаде идеята за най-красивия мъж, се раздвоява и напомня за една ситуация в поемата „Венера и Адонис", където ядосана богинята възкликва: „бездушен портрет, студен и безчувствен камък, добре нарисуван идол, но отвътре безжизнен, статуя, която радва само окото". По подобен начин образът на Елена Троянска (стих 7), който също е използван, за да предаде идеята за най-красивата жена, в този контекст напомня за една сцена в „Троил и Кресида", където троянският принц възкликва: „Елена трябва да е

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наистина красива, щом с кръвта си я рисувате наново всеки ден". Думата „counterfeit" (стих 5) която на пръв поглед значи „вербална картина / образ", в контекста на фразата „е лоша имитация" (стих 6) сочи към други свои значения: „престореност, измама, дегизиране" и оттам към: „театрална игра". Словосъчетанието „all art of beauty" (стих 7) напомня за Овидиевия трактат за изкуството на гримирането (Medicamina faciei femineae) – преведен на английски като „Art of Beauty". „Painted" (стих 8) също може да значи „изкуствено разкрасен". „ tires" (стих 8) означава просто „дрехи", но също и „театрални костюми". „Show" и „appear" (стихове 10 и 11) освен „показвам" и „изглеждам" имат и театралните значения „играя (на сцена) / представям (пиеса)" и „ играя (роля) / представям (герой)". „Part" (стих 13) има допълнителното значение „театрална роля", което напомня за ранномодерното значение на „shape" (стих 12) – също „персонаж, герой, представен на сцената". Накрая, полисемията на сонета засяга и думата „like" (стих 14), която интуитивно се тълкува като предлог, свързващ „you" и „none", но същевременно може да бъде схваната и като глагол, което би променило напълно смисъла на цялата фраза: „ти не харесваш никого и никой – теб заради неизменното ти сърце", т.е. всеки те харесва заради „външната красота" (стих 13).

Семантичното разгъване на „Сонет 53" разкрива на първо място двусмислеността на повечето елементи, например: „In all external grace you have some part" (Участваш ти във всяка външна красота) също може да означава: „Можеш да изиграеш всяка външна красота". „And you in every blessed shape we know" (Откриваме те във всяка най-чудесна форма) може да се изтълкува като: „Виждали сме те как се въплъщаваш в най-красивите персонажи". Пролетта и есента, както и Адонис и Елена, са само изкуствени образи, сенки на нещата, които представляват. Това е ясно маркирано в семантиката на думите: „describe" (описвам), „speak" (разказвам), „painted" (нарисуван), „set" (нагласявам), и "imitate" (подражавам). В платоническия

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смисъл те са дори сенки на сенки – което хвърля друга светлина върху значението на „shadow" (стих 4): „Въпреки външната си красота, на всяка сянка можеш да дадеш само една от своите сенки".

Когато читателят е изправен пред всички тези възможности за тълкуване, съзнанието му механично се старае да ги организира в кохерентни схеми и сценарии. Например, прави впечатление, че препратките към театъра са изключително много. Те започват с възможното значение на „shadow" – актьор (стих 2) и продължава с „describe" – описвам / пресъздавам и „counterfeit" – преструвам се / играя (стих 5), „imitate" – имитирам (стих 6), образа на носене на грим и костюми (стихове 7 и 8), отново „shadow" и „show" – представление / игра (стих 10), „appear" – изглеждам / играя персонаж на сцената (стих 11), „shape" – персонаж (стих 12), и „part" – роля (стих 13). Резултатът от това е изграждането на схема в ума на читателя, която представя адресата като версатилен ранномодерен актьор, който може да изиграе еднакво убедително ролята на най-красивия мъж и най-красивата жена.

Следвайки игрите на думи, съзнанието на читателя може да достигне до алтернативна цялостна интерпретация на „Сонет 53". Според нея произведението изследва природата на адресата, благодарение на която той може като актьор да се въплъти във всяка външна красота. Парадоксално, обаче, накрая се оказва, че всъщност тази субстанция не е нещо неизменно, а именно илюзорното вещество на промяната, на което не може да се разчита. Това тълкуване влиза в конфликт с по-очевидната, първоначална интерпретация, според която произведението изследва съвършената красота на адресата, сравнявайки го с традиционни символи, за да заключи, че те са неадекватни и непълни отражения на същинското му съвършенство, коренящо се в неизменното му сърце. За повечето представители на рационалисткото ни общество тези две интерпретации са очевидно несъвместими. Спрямо нашия обичаен мироглед, човек

е откровен или не, сърцето му е вярно или невярно, влюбен е или не е. Когато се изправим пред нещо многозначно, като Шекспировия „Сонет 53”, ни се иска да разберем коя от възможните интерпретации е именно вярната. Ранномодерната дихотомията между „същност” и „сенки” ни дава основание да предположим, че концептуализацията на образованите елизабетинци може да не е била толкова тясно свързана с очевидното, може би те са допускали повече от една възможна представа за света с надеждата това да ги отведе до една по-дълбока, по-сложна реалност отвъд сетивността.

Втората част на настоящата глава изследва друга важна Шекспирова употреба на дихотомията „същност” – „сенки” в пиесата „Ричард II”. Там тя проблематизира понятието „мъка”, което несъмнено стои в основата на творбата. Дори читателят/зрителят да е пропуснал да забележи акцента върху мъката на Херцогинята на Глостър (Първо действие, Сцена 2), Моубри (Първо действие, Сцена 3), Болингброук (Първо действие, Сцена 3), Гонт (Първо действие, Сцена 3 и Второ действие, Сцена 1) и Йорк (Второ действие, Сцена 1), или да не е успял да свърже неволите на всички тези персонажи по какъвто и да било начин, диалогът между Кралицата и Буши (Второ действие, Сцена 1) обръща сериозно внимание върху понятието „мъка” и изгражда смислова свързаност между тези и следващите му описания в пиесата.

QUEEN. Why I should welcome such a guest as grief, / Save bidding farewell to so sweet a guest / As my sweet Richard. Yet again methinks / Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb, / Is coming towards me, and my inward soul / With nothing trembles. At some thing it grieves / More	КРАЛИЦАТА. Защо ме навестява тази мрачна гостенка – мъката, / Може би защото неотдавна изпроводих най-скъпия си гост – / Моя Ричард. Но, все пак, ме гложди, / Че още неродена тъга назрява в съдбовната утроба, / Приближава се към мен, а душата ми / Без повод се тресе. За нещо тя тъгува, Нещо повече от

than with parting from my lord the King. BUSHY. Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows, / Which shows like grief itself, but is not so; / For Sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears, / Divides one thing entire to many objects, / Like perspectives which, rightly gaz'd upon, / Show nothing but confusion, ey'd awry, / Distinguish form. So your sweet Majesty, / Looking awry upon your lord's departure, / Find shapes of grief more than himself to wail; / Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows / Of what it is not. Then, thrice-gracious Queen, / More than your lord's departure weep not. More is not seen; / Or if it be, 'tis with false Sorrow's eye, / Which for things true weeps things imaginary.

раздялата с Краля. БУШИ. Същността на всяка мъка има двадесет сенки, / Всяка от които изглежда като мъка, но не е. Окото на Тъгата, заслепено от сълзи, / Разделя нещо цяло на множество обекти, / Като призма / анаморфична рисунка, която гледана направо, / Изглежда хаотична, но ако се гледа косо, отстрани, / Разкрива форми. Затова, Ваше Величество, / Понеже косо гледате на отпътуването на вашия съпруг, / Виждате образи на мъката, освен раздялата ви с него. / Но ако ги погледнете направо, това са само сенки / Без реална същност. Затова, благородна Кралице, / Не тъгувайте за нещо повече от отпътуването на своя съпруг. Нищо друго не се вижда. / А и да има нещо друго, то е сътворено от окото на Тъгата, което заради реалните несгоди оплаква измислени неща[42].

Преди тази сцена научаваме, че след като изземва имуществото на мъртвия Гонт, за да финансира кампанията си в Ирландия, Ричард отпътува с армията си натам, докато в същото време Болингброук, подкрепен от френските аристократи, както и от множество английски благородници, е на път да акостира на северния бряг на Англия, за да си върне титлата и имането,

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[42] *R2* II.ii.7-27.

заграбено от краля. Нито кралицата, нито Буши все още за научили тази новина, затова интуитивната мъка на кралицата изглежда като класически пример за драматична ирония, която предсказва събития, които още не са известни на героите. Буши, от друга страна, се опитва да успокои кралицата като използва завидните реторически умения на един добре образован елизабетински царедворец. На пръв поглед, той се опитва да й внуши, че страховете, които изпитва, нямат реално основание, тъй като замъглен от мъка, разумът често намира скрит смисъл в напълно случайни събития и явления. Детайлният анализ на неговата реплика, обаче, разкрива, че думите ми са двусмислени и могат да се изтълкуват и по друг начин.

Буши използва различието между „същност" и „сенки", за да обясни на кралицата, че мъката й се основава само на сенки, а не на истинска същност, т.е. реално основание за тревога. Той развива тази идея чрез образа на разплаканите очи на кралицата, в които сълзите играят ролята на призми и размножават причините за тъга (стихове 16-17). В следващия стих (18), обаче, Буши използва думата „perspectives", която води до поне две значения, приложими в настоящия контекст: а) многостенно стъкло, което създава оптическата илюзия за мултипликация на наблюдавания обект – в съзвучие с ролята на сълзите (стихове 16-17), и б) анаморфична рисунка, която на пръв поглед прилича на хаос от неразбираеми форми, но ако се погледне от определен ъгъл, изобразява ясни форми – в съзвучие със стихове 18-20. Преминаването от един образ към друг в рамките на една единствена полисемантична дума е мотивирано от приликата между референтите – и призмата и рисунката представят деформирана представа за реалността, но води до известно развитие – за разлика от призмата, рисунката предоставя възможност да се преодолеят аберациите и да се достигне до ясна и разбираема картина. След това Буши съпоставя образа на рисунката с мъката на кралицата, като твърди, че тя съзира нереални основания за тъга, понеже гледа косо на ситуацията,

вместо фронтално. За да се разкодира анаморфичната рисунка, обаче, тя трябва да се гледа именно косо, а не фронтално.

Този логически парадокс създава смислово напрежение в аргументацията на Буши и поставя под съмнение очевидността на значението й. Настойчивото отрицание на Буши (стихове 23-25) се деконструира в модалността на стих 26 и се размива в неясния синтаксис на стих 27 като проектира две възможни интерпретации: а) измамните очи на Тъгата, които по погрешка оплакват измислени неща; или б) просълзените очи на Тъгата, които като призми разделят нещо цяло на множество обекти, и оплакват различни изражения на една по-дълбока реална болка. Второто тълкуване сочи към ранномодерното теоретично понятие „amplification” (увеличаване, уголемяване), което Франсис Бейкън формулира като детайлен анализ на някакъв обект, посредством разделянето му на части и изследване на всяка от тези части поотделно[43]. Това понятие, от своя страна, хвърля нова светлина върху значението на дихотомията „същност” – „сенки” (стихове 14-15), и го доближава до това, разгледано в контекста на „Сонет 53”. Може би същността на мъката е сложно, абстрактно понятие, т.е. онова, което можем да видим, пипнем, усетим – онова, което сме свикнали да наричаме „мъка” са само нейните „сенки” – материални проявления, които, обаче, са свързани помежду си и заедно предават по-добре абстрактната представа за същността на понятието.

Наслагването на тези теоретични разсъждения предоставят нова отправна точка за изследване на „Ричард II”. Сякаш всеки от основните герои на драмата един след друг стават жертва на мъката: най-напред Херцогинята на Глостър, после Моубри, Болингбрук, Гонт, Йорк, Кралицата. Всяка от тези неволи е представена по сходен начин – две несъвместими версии на света се проектират посредством игри на думи и се поставят в

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[43] Вж. Hoskins, John. *Directions for speech & style*. Ed. Hoyt H. Hudson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935.

конфликт. Неизменно става ясно, че по един или друг начин кралят е отговорен за страданията на всеки от останалите герои. За да се усложни ситуацията още повече, отговорността на Ричард II се противопоставя на неговата гигантска мъка, която постепенно заема центъра на творбата и кара мъката на останалите да изглежда като нейни сенки. Тази мъка именно определя характера на краля и му вдъхва завладяващата сложност, типична за Шекспировия протагонист.

В заключение, внимателния анализ на концептуалната дихотомия между „същност" и „сенки" показва, че е възможно Шекспир и съвременниците му да са притежавали различен вид мислене от това на съвременния човек. Те сякаш са били по-склонни да приемат нерационалността и логическите противоречия на повърхността с надеждата да достигнат до някаква трансцедентална същност отвъд. Също така, дихотомията предоставя абстрактен структурен модел на това как работи човешкото съзнание, изправено пред конфликтни, но логически равностойни, паралелни възможности за интерпретация като тези, активирани от игрословието на Шекспир. Накрая, тя показва как поетическата многозначност умишлено заключва значението в неразрешими парадокси и задава въпроса: дали този модел не пресъздава по-достоверно действителното състояние на нещата, които ни заобикалят?

ТРЕТА ГЛАВА: СТАТУСЪТ НА ЧОВЕКА: ШЕКСПИРОВИТЕ ИГРИ НА ДУМИ И ПРЕДСТАВЯНЕТО НА СЛОЖНИ НРАВСТВЕНИ ПРОБЛЕМИ

Първата част на тази глава изследва културните измерения на ранномодерното теоретическо понятие „state" (статус или балансирано диалектическо разглеждане) в контекста на Допълнение III към анонимната английска ренесансова пиеса „Сър Томас Мор", за което се смята, че е написано от Шекспир. Тя се стреми да покаже, че това понятие може да послужи за теоретично моделиране на Шекспировия похват за представяне на сложни политически и нравствени проблеми посредством игри на думи. Втората част на тази глава анализира употребата на същото понятие в пиесата „Хенри VIII" като открива, че то представлява рамката, по която са изработени всички епизоди на произведението. Във всеки от тях личността на един от основните герои е проблематизирана посредством противоречиви възможни светове, основаващи се на игри на думи.

Допълнения IIc и III към анонимната ранномодерна пиеса „Сър Томас Мор" привличат вниманието на литературоведите още в края на XIX век. Разкрива се възможността Допълнение IIc да е единственият останал до наши дни поетичен текст, написан собственоръчно от Уилям Шекспир, а Допълнение III да е също автентичен Шекспиров фрагмент, но преписан веднага след създаването му от професионален писар. Пиесата достига до наши дни под формата на ръкопис (Харли 7368), който понастоящем се съхранява в Британската библиотека. Тя представя 26 различни истории за издигането, величието и падението на легендарния английски политик. Един от най-важните епизоди показва умелата интервенция на Мор, в качеството му на Лондонски шериф, по време на майските бунтове през 1517 година, когато той успява да укроти надигналата се тълпа с великолепната си реч. Този епизод се разказва от Допълнение IIc и вероятно е бил поверен на Шекспир

заради заплахата от цензуриране и драматичната му важност. В пиесата, успеха на Мор като шериф довежда до бързо развитие на политическата му кариера – той става рицар, личен съветник на краля, и върховен съдия на Англия. Допълнение III представлява монолога на Мор, който той произнася веднага щом достига един от най-високите постове в държавата:

MORE. ... the more thou hast, / Either of honor, office, wealth, and calling, / Which might accite thee to embrace and hug them, / The more doe thou in serpents' natures think them; / Fear their gay skins with thought of their sharp state; / And let this be thy maxim, to be greate / Is when the thread of hazard is once spun, / A bottom great wound up greatly undone.

МОР. ... колкото повече имаш / чест, власт, богатство или титли, / и щом да ги прегръщаш ти се иска / дваж повече внимавай и ги считай за змии: / от кожите им шарени страни заради мрачния им хал / и нека твоето кредо бъде туй: / за да си велик помни – щом изтъче се нишката съдбовна, / конецът най-много пъти намотан най-трудно се разкъсва[44].

Редакторът-осъвременител на „The Complete Oxford Shakespeare" изглежда е бил озадачен от думата „state" (стих 18) и затова я е поправил на „stings" (от кожите им шарени страни заради острите им зъби). Употребата на „state" в оригиналната версия, обаче, едва ли е случайна. Видно е, че последните шест стиха се римуват два по два и „state" заедно с „great" изнасят римата на третия и четвъртия от тях. Нещо повече, изглежда авторът използва многозначието на „state", за да моделира по-сложен образ, изграден от няколко възможни интерпретации едновременно. Първо, „state" значи „собственост, притежание" (оттук и „острата собственост" на змиите, смъртоносният им атрибут – отровните зъби). Друго непосредствено значение на „state" е „физическо или душевно състояние", оттук „мрачния хал на змиите". Същевременно, е трудно да се пренебрегнат

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[44] *TM* Addition III.

политическите конотации на думата „state”, особено в монолог, който се занимава изключително с проблемите на държавността (*state*ly power). Така в полисемията на една единствена дума са свързани разнопосочни понятия като отровните зъби и опасния нрав на змиите, от една страна, и държавното управление, кралската власт, дори личността на монарха, от друга. Ако проследим тази интерпретация нататък, ще установим, че тя поставя в изцяло нова светлина понятия като „honor”, „office”, „wealth” и „calling” (чест, власт, богатство и титли) – всички атрибути на властта „at the Countries head” (начело на държавата), които са пряко свързани с „the Countries head” (държавния глава, т.е. монарха). Дори може да прочетем полугласна алюзия към незавидното положение (sharp state) и насилствената смърт на протагониста и неговото историческо съответствие в действителния свят.

Не можем да докажем неоспоримо, че употребата на думата „state” в Допълнение III крие завоалирана препратка към интригите на царския двор и/или личността на Хенри VIII, но такава възможност очевидно съществува. За да може, обаче, всеки читател/зрител да прецени за себе си, трябва да знае, че „state” е също рanномодерен реторически термин. Томас Уилсън обяснява значението му като основната теза на всяко съждение, и разковничето, на което всеки оратор трябва да наблегне, и към което всеки слушател трябва да отправи цялото си внимание[45]. Това теоретично значение на „state” произлиза от рanномодерната правна теория, според която двете страни на всеки правен казус взети заедно представляват неговия „state” и гарантират балансираното му диалектическо разглеждане[46].

Последното измерение на „state” разкрива неочакваната му аналогия със структурата на полисемията: за да може

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[45] Wilson, Thomas. *The Arte of Rhetorique*. Ed. Peter E. Medine. University Park: Penn State University, 1994, 125.

[46] Ibid.

читателят/зрителят да реши дали предпочита една или друга интерпретация, той или тя трябва да има достъп до две или повече балансирани възможности. Нещо повече, съпоставяйки когнитивната схема на съдебния процес с аналитичната теория на една реторическа структура, „state" очертава интересна ранномодерна представа за менталното пространство, в което основни житейски понятия, като реалност, истина и справедливост непрекъснато се договарят и предоговарят.

Втората част на настоящата глава анализира отношението на понятието „state" към пиесата „Хенри VIII" – творба, която при първите си представления носи името „Всичко е вярно" и несъмнено изучава именно понятията за „истина" и „справедливост". Интересно е, че „Сър Томас Мор" и „Хенри VIII" имат доста общи черти: а) действието на двете пиеси се развива в един и същ исторически период, като някои от героите са моделирани върху едни и същи исторически личности; б) двете пиеси са написани в сътрудничество на няколко автора, като участието на Шекспир във всяка от тях е установено с различна степен на сигурност; в) двете пиеси са изследвани доста малко от критиката, вероятно поради неустановеното авторство; г) „Хенри VIII" е единствената пиеса в канона, в която думата „state" се повтаря толкова често и разгръща пълния спектър на своите значения.

Още първите зрители отбелязват, че „Хенри VIII" е доста фрагментарна пиеса – според Сър Хенри Уотън, тя е „направена от няколко парчета"[47], а според Самюъл Пийпс – е скалъпена от „кръпки"[48]. На пръв поглед, „Хенри VIII" наистина се състои от поредица епизоди, които пресъздават различни моменти от

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[47] Вж. Shakespeare, William. *King Henry VIII*. Ed. Gordon McMullen. Arden Shakespeare, Third Series. London: A&C Black, 2000.

[48] Вж. Pepys, Samuel. Ed. Robert Latham, William Matthews, William A. Armstrong. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2000, 1 януари 1664 г.

царуването на краля и връзката между тях далеч не е очевидна. Погледната през призмата на теоретичното значение на „state", обаче, фрагментарността на пиесата изглежда неслучайна. Всяка от тези сцени функционира като съдебен процес, в който един от основните герои: Херцога на Бъкингам, Катерина Арагонска, Ан Болейн, Кардинала Уолси и Томас Кранмър, се изправя пред съзнанието на читателя/зрителя. „Статусът" на всеки от тях е представен като две или повече възможни версии на съответната личност, скрепени посредством игри на думи. Интересно е, че една от тези възможни версии винаги е свързана с Хенри VIII, който в пиесата неизменно играе ролята на съдника. Извън пиесата, обаче, читателят/зрителят е провокиран да разсъждава относно мотивите, морала и справедливостта му. Така кралят на свой ред също се превръща в „подсъдим", като в този случай неговите противоречиви проявления в отделните процеси проектират възможните измерения на личността му.

Още в самото начало на пиесата читателят/зрителят научава за враждата между Едуард Стафърд, Херцога на Бъкингам и Томас Уолси, Кардинала на Йорк. Това е вражда между потомствен аристократ (a man of state), братовчед на краля, който презира месарския син, Уолси, издигнал се до висок държавен пост (state), подобно на Мор в едноименната пиеса. Дукът бива арестуван по обвинение в държавна измяна, осъден от владетеля (the state), и екзекутиран. Ситуацията е изключително внимателно пресъздадена посредством двусмислен език. Целта е да се загатне, че Уолси има пръст в цялата интрига, но така и не става ясно дали Бъкингам наистина е планирал да завземе престола или не.

Единствената личност, която открито изразява недоверието си в Уолси, е кралицата, Катерина Арагонска, която скоро след това става обвиняем в процес за развод. Тя се защитава достойно, обвинява Кардинала в заговор срещу нея и напуска залата, като заявява, че ще признае единствено отсъждането на Папата по въпроса. Смелостта на кралицата прави

впечатление на краля и той сам представя нейния статус (state). От една страна, тя е великолепна съпруга с изключителни качества: благородство, изисканост, смиреност, милосърдие. От друга, кралят е принуден да я изостави в името на кралството, защото тя не е успяла да го дари с момче, което да наследи престола. В тази част на речта си кралят твърде често споменава думата съвест (conscience), което неизменно привлича вниманието на читателя/зрителя към нея. Това пък, от своя страна, припомня две по-ранни комични употреби на „съвест”, където значението на думата е насочено към сексуалните апетити на монарха. Така чрез игра на думи към политически и логически издържаната реч на Хенри VIII е прикачена възможна интерпретация, според която разводът му с Катерина не е мотивиран от държавнически съображения (matters of state), а от любовна страст.

Темата за съвестта се развива в следващия епизод, в който Ан Болейн разговаря с една възрастна придворна дама за развода на краля. Тази сцена е изключително интересна по две причини. Първо, формално тя не е свързана със съдебен процес, но на практика следва същата структура като останалите: възрастната дама инсинуативно обвинява бъдещата кралица в липса на морал, докато Ан се брани, като цяло, не особено убедително. Второ, диалогът е изтъкан от сложни игри на думи и без съмнение представлява най-характерната за Шекспир част от пиесата. Според възрастната дама, най-ценните придобивки на всяка жена са нейната сексуалност и плодовитост, така че ако иска да се издигне в обществото и да получи власт (state), тя не би трябвало да се свени да ги използва. Женската съвест, твърди тя, е разтеглива и разликата между кралицата и уличницата (омонимните „queen” и „quean”) не е толкова голяма, колкото изглежда.

Уолси, обаче, изглежда подценява въздействието на Ан Болейн върху съвестта на краля. Когато опитът му да отложи развода на Хенри, с цел да предотврати сватбата му с Ан и да

уреди брак със сестрата на френския крал, е разкрит, самият той бива съден за държавна измяна. До този момент в пиесата Уолси създава впечатление на изпечен интригант, амбициозен злодей и безкомпромисен сребролюбец, но след изпадането му в немилост, получава възможността да произнесе един от най-вълнуващите монолози. В него той оплаква битието на човека (the state of man), подвластно на постоянна промяна и завършващо с падение. Това, заедно с образа на мъдрия и извисен учен, обрисуван от Грифит след смъртта му, представят Уолси в коренно различна светлина.

Последният съдебен процес е насочен срещу протестантския архиепископ на Кентърбъри Томас Кранмер. Стивън Гардинер и други членове на личния съвет на краля го обвиняват в ерес. Кранмер обаче е уверен в собствената си честност и вярва, че справедливостта ще възтържествува. „Не знаеш ли какво е положението ти (your state) – какво мислят хората за теб?” пита кралят, преди да се намеси решително и да се погрижи архиепископът на Кентърбъри да бъде оправдан.

Всеки от тези епизоди разкрива „подсъдимия” като сложна и разнопосочна личност, която не подлежи на лесна преценка: Бъкингам е едновременно лоялен царедворец и потенциален предател; Катерина е съвършена кралица, но и непривлекателна съпруга; Ан е принципна дама, която не желае да бъде просто любовница на краля, но и уличница, която продава плътта си за власт; Уолси е политик-злодей, но и достоен за възхищение мислител; Кранмер е учен теолог, но и наивна жертва. Нещо повече, става ясно, че има сериозно несъответствие между сложната човешка природа и едностранчивите категории на правото и морала. Затова, във всеки един от случаите казусът е решен според съвестта на краля. Това на свой ред разкрива множеството измерения на личността на Хенри VIII – едновременно доверчив и коварен, благороден и похотлив, безжалостен и състрадателен – и поставя читателя/зрителя в трудната позицията на Томас Мор, пазителя на кралската съвест.

ЧЕТВЪРТА ГЛАВА: ФАТАЛНАТА КЛЕОПАТРА И МНОГОЛИКИЯТ ХАМЛЕТ: ШЕКСПИРОВИТЕ ИГРИ НА ДУМИ И СЪЗДАВАНЕТО НА СЛОЖНИ ХАРАКТЕРИ

Първата част на тази глава изследва известната метафора на Самюел Джонсън, която използва образа на Клеопатра, за да разкритикува привързаността на Шекспир към каламбурите. Тя показва приноса на игрословието за конструирането на сложни характери като този на Клеопатра в „Антоний и Клеопатра". Втората част анализира игрите на думи, в основата на традиционно считания за най-сложен Шекспиров характер - Хамлет.

Споменатите в Първа глава възражения на Самюъл Джонсън относно Шекспировите игри на думи завършват със следната въздействащата метафора: „каламбурът за него [Шекспир] е фаталната Клеопатра, заради която той загуби света и беше доволен да го загуби"[49]. За да обясни становището си, Джонсън използва последния епизод от живота на Марк Антоний – наратив, добре познат на неокласическите му съвременници както в оригинала на Плутарх, така и от Шекспировата пиеса.

Смисълът е ясен: Шекспир е сравнен с Марк Антоний (на Плутарх), великия оратор и потенциален владетел на целия свят. Също като държавника, поетът е могъл да постигне всичко в света на поезията и драмата. Също като държавника обаче поетът не успява в това си начинание заради глупаво увлечение по една очевидно женствена реторическа фигура, която като Клеопатра го отклонява от пътя на славата и го довежда до собственото му разрушение.

Резонансът с Шекспировата версия на историята, обаче, води до неочаквани, вероятно нежелани, усложнения. Докато

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[49] Johnson, Samuel. *Preface and Notes to the Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*. London: J. and R. Tonson and others, 1765, §44.

Плутарх набляга на историята на Марк Антоний, а Клеопатра е просто представена като причината за неговото падение, Шекспир моделира Клеопатра като един от най-сложните си женски характери[50] и постепенно я поставя в центъра на творбата.

От началото на пиесата очакваме Антоний да се развие като поредния сложен Шекспиров трагически герой, разкъсван между противоречиви сили, а Клеопатра да изпълни ролята си на унищожителна сила, по почина на духа на стария Хамлет, трите вещици в „Макбет" или интриганта Яго. С развитието на сюжета обаче, египетската кралица започва да привлича все повече и повече вниманието на читателя/зрителя върху себе си – тя се цупи и се словоизлиява, докато Антоний се оправдава и се вглъбява в себе си. Героическата фигура на Антоний в пиесата се срива напълно в четвърто действие, когато той не успява да сложи достойно край на живота си както подобава на един загубил всичко римски генерал и владетел от неговия ранг. Клеопатра, за сметка на това, не само го надживява с цяло действие, но и има възможност да премисли, планира и извърши своето самоубийство по възможно най-възвишения и драматично-ефектен начин.

В една от последните сцени на пиесата цялата сложност на характера на египетската кралица, нейната нравствена, полова и жанрова амбивалентност, се пречупва през многозначността на една единствена дума – думата е „die", а моментът предшества ритуалното самоубийство на Клеопатра. Красивият трагизъм на сцената се нарушава от появата на един комичен селяк, чиято задача е да донесе отровните змии, поръчани от Кралицата:

CLEOPATRA. Hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there / That kills and pains not?

CLOWN. Truly, I have him. But

КЛЕОПАТРА. Носиш ли красивият Нилски змийчок, който убива без болка?

СЕЛЯК. Наистина го нося, но

[50] Bradley, A. C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*. London: Macmillan and Co, 1919, 208.

I would not be the party that should desire you to touch him, for his biting is immortal; those that do die of it do seldom or never recover.

CLEOPATRA. Remember'st thou any that have died on't?

CLOWN. Very many, men and women too. I heard of one of them no longer than yesterday: a very honest woman, but something given to lie, as a woman should not do but in the way of honesty; how she died of the biting of it, what pain she felt- truly she makes a very good report o' th' worm. But he that will believe all that they say shall never be saved by half that they do. But this is most falliable, the worm's an odd worm.

CLEOPATRA. Get thee hence; farewell.

CLOWN. I wish you all joy of the worm.

CLEOPATRA. Farewell.

CLOWN. You must think this, look you, that the worm will do his kind.

CLEOPATRA. Ay, ay; farewell.

CLOWN. Look you, the worm is not to be trusted but in the keeping of wise people; for indeed there is no goodness in the worm.

не ви съветвам да го пипате, защото ухапването му е безсмъртоносно; онези, които осмърти рядко или никога не се оправят.

КЛЕОПАТРА. Помниш ли хора намерили така смъртта си?

СЕЛЯК. Много мъже, и жени също. Чух за една вчера даже – много вярна жена. Е, малко си послъгваше, де, нищо, че е вярна. Но как само навири краката, като я ухапа, как я болеше, голяма хвалба му удари на червея после. Но човек трябва да внимава, да не вярва на всяка дума, която чуе. Защото това нещо е погрешно, червеят е необикновен червей.

КЛЕОПАТРА. Отивай си, сбогом.

СЕЛЯК. Желая ви да останете удовлетворена от червея.

КЛЕОПАТРА. Сбогом.

СЕЛЯК. Трябва да сте сигурна, че червея ще си свърши работата.

КЛЕОПАТРА. Да, да. Сбогом.

СЕЛЯК. Внимавайте обаче, понеже на червея не може да се разчита, освен ако не го наглеждат добри хора, в червея няма и капчица доброта.

КЛЕОПАТРА. Не се тревожи, ще се погрижим.

CLEOPATRA. Take thou no care; it shall be heeded.
CLOWN. Very good. Give it nothing, I pray you, for it is not worth the feeding.
CLEOPATRA. Will it eat me?
CLOWN. You must not think I am so simple but I know the devil himself will not eat a woman. I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the devil dress her not. But truly, these same whoreson devils do the gods great harm in their women, for in every ten that they make the devils mar five.
CLEOPATRA. Well, get thee gone; farewell.
CLOWN. Yes, forsooth. I wish you joy o' th' worm.

СЕЛЯК. Добре. Не му давайте нищо понеже не си заслужава храненето.
КЛЕОПАТРА. Дали ще хапне мен?
СЕЛЯК. Не трябва да ме смятате за такъв глупак – та дори аз зная, че самият дявол не би изял жена. Зная, че жената е блюдо за боговете, освен ако дяволът не я пресоли. Истина е обаче, че тези копелдаци дяволите, за да дразнят боговете, развалят пет на всеки десет жени, които те са създали.
КЛЕОПАТРА. Добре. Отивай си. Сбогом.
СЕЛЯК. Да, сбогом. Желая ви да останете удовлетворена от червея⁵¹.

Играта на думи в тази кратка размяна на реплики между Клеопатра и Селяка се основава на полисемията на думата „die” в ранномодерния английски език (стихове 248-249): а) умирам, и б) изживявам сексуален оргазъм. Клеопатра очевидно използва думата с първото й значение, но Селякът цинично я изкривява към другото, запращайки диалога в алтернативна когнитивна схема. „Красивият змийчок” (стих 243) се свързва с фалическата му форма; „смърт без болка” (стих 244) води до второто значение на „die”. Малапропизмът „immortal” (стих 247) свързва антонимите „mortal” (смъртен) и „immortal” (безсмъртен), но някъде между тях се прокрадва звученето на фонетически подобната дума „immoral” (неморален). „Lie” (стих 252) – „лъжа”,

⁵¹ *A&C* V.ii.243-278.

но също и „лежа" – носи значението използвано в Сонет 138 „lie with other men" (спи с други мъже). Другият малапропизъм „falliable" (стих 257) слива в една дума „infallible" (безпогрешен) и „fallible" (водещ до падение). Настойчивото повторение на думата „joy" (удовлетворение, радост) (стихове 258 и 278) сочи към „jouissance" (оргазъм). „Няма и капчица доброта" (стих 264) може да означава и „липса на морал". „Nothing" (стих 271) активира традиционния Шекспиров каламбур с ранномодерната жаргонна дума за „вагина", който осмисля по друг начин употребите на „feed" (храня) (стих 271) и „eat" (ям) (стихове 272 и 274). Значенията на „dress" (обличам, гарнирам, дресирам кон) (стих 275) и „mar" (развалям, разглезвам) (277) също се преплитат в повече от един контекст: а) да се приготви и гарнира блюдо, а после да се развали, като се прибавят несъвместими съставки, и б) да се обучи и дресира кон и след това да се разглези – от този контекст интерпретацията лесно прескача в сексуалната рамка, където жена, която се е оставила да бъде яздена от дявола, е жена с развалени добродетели и целомъдрие.

Тази почти абсурдна когнитивна схема не е самоцелно и изолирано явление, тя се вписва успешно в един по-голям сегмент от образа на Клеопатра, внимателно изграден чрез текста на цялата пиеса. Този сегмент развива традиционното схващане за Клеопатра като египетската блудница, която пленява иначе силния Антоний и го довежда до неговата гибел. Често тази страна на Клеопатра се разкрива именно чрез игра на думи, например когато Енобарб коментира, че е виждал Клеопатра да „умира" двадесет пъти подред (I.ii.140-144), или когато самата Клеопатра вметва, че нищо в един евнух не може да я задоволи (I.v.9)

Важно е да се отбележи, че обхватът на този сегмент от образа на египетската кралица се разпростира отвъд понятието за една обикновена развратница и обхваща цяла галерия от типични женски недостатъци, съгласно разбиранията на ранномодерното общество. Освен сладострастие Клеопатра демонстрира суетност,

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ревнивост, манипулативност, ехидност, непредсказуема емоционалност, неконтролируем гняв, отмъстителност, нестабилност и невярност, и накрая – опортюнизъм и предателство.

Независимо от комичния си привкус анализираната сцена, все пак, се намира в контекста на едно внимателно планирано и величествено самоубийство, така че непосредственото значение на „die” се налага и води вниманието на зрителя/читателя към трагичната когнитивна схема, в която Клеопатра героично отнема живота си. Нещо повече, в предходните четири действия Антоний е принуден да търси все по-внушителни и по-грамадни слова, за да изразява любовта си към вечно провокативната и невярваща Клеопатра, но след смъртта му именно на Кралицата е дадена реторическата мощ да изкаже чувствата си и да ги хиперболизира до гигантски размери.

Така полисемията на „die” надниква зад показното великолепие на Клеопатра и показва изключителната дълбочина и сложност в нейния образ. Тя също постига една деликатна хибридизация между трагичното и комичното в нейния образ. Недостатъците на жената Клеопатра й придават повече реализъм и печелят симпатията и любовта на читателя/зрителя, за да може трагичният й край да го/я разтърси още повече. Тук става дума за една изключителна жена – едновременно кралица и развратница, любовница, майка, боец, политик, предател, герой – една жена, която съществува само в многомерното когнитивно пространство, така характерно за творчеството на Шекспир.

Детайлният анализ на структурата на образа на египетската кралица хвърля различна светлина върху широко известната критика на Самюъл Джонсън към каламбурите. Шекспировите игри на думи наистина приличат на Клеопатра, но не защото разрушават смисъла на неговите текстове, а защото им помагат да предават едновременно множество когнитивни структури и да ги съчетават в нови, неочаквани значения. Шекспировите игри на думи наистина са фатални за

позитивисткия стремеж към ясни непротиворечиви тълкувания, но правят възможно пресъздаването на безпрецедентната сложност на човешкото същество. Шекспировите игри на думи наистина водят до загубата на света, по-точно на едносветския мироглед, но за сметка на това печелят множество възможни светове.

Втората част на настоящата глава изучава ролята на игрословието в изграждането на характера на Хамлет – широко признат за еталон на Шекспировото умение да създава сложни и вътрешно противоречиви фикционални личности. Основният аргумент тук е, че за да постигне прословутата „жизнена реалистичност" на героя, Шекспир използва светотворческата сила на игрите на думи, особено в „чудатите роли", които Хамлет решава да играе, след като се среща с призрака на баща си. Именно чрез тях той съчетава в един персонаж множество идентичности, всяка от които се контекстуализира във възможна версия на света на произведението.

Още с появяването на Хамлет на сцената става ясно, че за да следваме енигматичния му изказ, ще трябва да сме наясно с характера и мисленето му. Когато Клавдий го нарича: „племеннико, Хамлет, сине мой"[52] (my Cosin Hamlet, and my sonne), принцът отговаря горчиво: „Така сроден и толкова несроден!" Клавдий настоява: „Защо под тъмен облак все се криеш?" Принцът му отвръща: „Напротив, господарю, аз слънчасвам" (I am too much in the sonne)[53]. Игрословието на Хамлет, в тази лаконична престрелка, предоставя на читателя/зрителя задълбочена представа за чувствата на двамата мъже един към друг. Клавдий е чичо на Хамлет, но след като се е оженил за Гертруда, му е вече и втори баща. Хамлет няма избор дали да бъде сроден за него или не, но държи да е ясно, че не се

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[52] „Хамлет" е четен и цитиран на български език от: Шекспир, Уилям. „Хамлет", Преводач: Александър Шурбанов, Просвета – София, 2006 г.
[53] *Ham Q2* I.ii.64-67.

определя като негов син, нито смята, че има нещо общо с него. В това, разбира се, се изразява и основният проблем на този етап от развитието на пиесата. Клавдий очевидно тълкува отговора на Хамлет като неучтив (less than kind), но го отдава на все още нестихналата му скръб. Принцът му отговаря с нов каламбур (sonne), който работи на няколко нива: а) автоматически влиза в опозиция с образ за тъмния облак, използван от Клавдий, изразявайки, че Хамлет не е готов на какъвто и било компромис в отношенията си с него; б) омонимно и правописно сочи към Клавдиевото обръщение „сине мой", показвайки неприязънта на Хамлет към ситуацията и покровителското му отношение; в) предсказва престорената лудост на принца, след срещата с призрака на баща му.

Именно престорената лудост на Хамлет легитимира пред зрителите склонността му да проектира различни паралелни аспекти на личността си посредством игри на думи. В края на първо действие Хамлет заклева Хорацио и Марцел, дори да се явява в най-„чудати роли", да не дават знак, че знаят нещо за казаното от призрака или намерението на принца да открие истината за смъртта на баща си[54].

Първата сцена с Хамлет след това изявление ясно демонстрира значението на фразата „най-чудати роли". При срещата си с Полоний той изиграва образа на душевно болен, като засипва досадния, стар глупец с на пръв поглед несвързани безсмислици. По-прецизен анализ на думите на принца разкриват игрословие. Дори Полоний отбелязва, че в тях има някакъв смисъл, но успява да открие само онова, което му се иска да открие. Привилегията за извличане на по-дълбокия замисъл е запазена за читателя/зрителя. Очевидно, сцената работи на няколко нива: а) Хамлет се преструва на луд, за да прикрие яростта си от казаното от призрака; б) той се присмива на Полоний, защото е разкрил неговия план да използва дъщеря си,

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[54] *Ham* I.v.167-177.

за да го шпионира; и също така в) думите му се вписват в това измерение на характера му, което изследва отношението му към жените в пиесата, представлявайки директна връзка между роптанията срещу безсрамието на майка му, слабостта на женската природа изобщо и укорите към Офелия по-късно.

„Чудатостта" на Хамлет отново се проявява, когато в Елсинор пристигат Розенкранц и Гилденстерн – негови състуденти, привикани от Клавдий, за да го следят. Тук „ролята" не е на душевно болен, а на типичен меланхоличен младеж-идеалист, който се взема напълно насериозно и има склонност да философства и да съди другите. В лицето на Розенкранц и Гилденстерн принцът намира по-интелигентни опоненти, така че разговорът с тях се превръща в остроумна битка с думи. Сложната игра на думи, с която тази битка се характеризира, проектира два основни възможни свята. От една страна, Хамлет настоява, че Дания е затвор, т.е. а) кралското семейство на Дания е семейство на бивши, настоящи и бъдещи престъпници: Клавдий е отровил крал Хамлет, който както научаваме, също е отговорен за смъртта поне на стария Фортинбрас; Гертруда е станала съучастник в престъплението или поне е извършила прелюбодейство спрямо мъртвия си съпруг; Хамлет знае, че трябва да отмъсти за убийството на баща си, което неминуемо ще го направи убиец, и б) кралят и кралицата подозират нещо и затова се страхуват от принца, като не само не му разрешават да напусне двореца, но и наемат хора да го следят. От друга страна, Розенкранц и Гилденстерн се опитват да наложат представата, че поведението на Хамлет се дължи единствено на неговата амбиция, т.е. на страха му, че Клавдий ще го обезнаследи, и на желанието му да измести чичо си от престола и сам да се възкачи на него. Това вероятно е хипотезата, която витенбергските студенти са изпратени да проверят, но Хамлет не успява нито да я потвърди, нито да я отрече.

След разочароващия разговор с Розенкранц и Гилденстерн, принцът с нескрита радост научава, че в Елсинор е пристигнала

театрална трупа. Това му помага да направи план как да постави на изпитание Клавдий и да се сдобие с неоспоримо доказателство за истинността на обвиненията на призрака на баща си. Той решава да избере пиеса, която актьорите да изиграят, и да добави към нея уличаващи детайли, за да я превърне в истински капан за съвестта на краля. В контекста на тези събития, Хамлет демонстрира забележителни познания по отношение на това как работи театъра и каква трябва да бъде драматичната игра. Когато пиесата в пиесата започва, той влиза в поредната си „роля” – този път на „клоуна” (your only jig-maker). Посредством циничните си шеги, насочени към Клавдий, Полоний и Офелия, които по завоалиран начин отразяват действието, принцът се настанява в специфичното метатеатрално пространство на подсюжета, характерно за елизабетинската драма. Оказва се, че когато това позициониране се комбинира с добре премерена игра на думи, Хамлет може да въздейства еднакво успешно както на фикционалните зрители на „Мишеловката”, така и на действителните зрители на основната драма.

За последен път Хамлет надява престорено „чудата” роля веднага след случайното убийство на Полоний. Тук той се представя като хладнокръвен убиец и циник. Когато кралят го разпитва, за да установи къде е тялото на царедвореца, принцът като че ли не изпитва никакви угризения. Нещо повече, той започва мрачно да се шегува и резултатът от това е сложна игра на думи. На пръв поглед несвързаните му приказки се завъртат около няколко образа, които е използвал по-рано в пиесата. Червеите ясно показват осезаемото присъствие на смъртта и предвещава сцената с гробарите, но същевременно сочат и към идеята за зараждащия се живот в мъртвата кучка и бременността[55], затваряйки цикъла на телесното битие. Рибата напомня за „сводника от рибния пазар” (fishmonger)[56], където е

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[55] *Ham* II.ii.179-183.

[56] *Ham* II.ii.171.

установена аналогичната връзката между думите „риба” и „плът” (fish/flesh). Кралят е един от най-централните образи в пиесата и поражда редица важни въпроси. Какво прави от един човек крал, а от друг узурпатор? Има ли наистина кралят две тела – физическо и политическо? Не е ли политическото тяло само плод на човешката амбиция, т.е. сянка на сянка? Просякът също се появява във втори действие, когато Хамлет сам се обявява за бедняк, а идеята за телесна слабост в трето действие, когато твърди, че се храни само с обещания – храна, с която не могат да се угоят петли. На повърхността тези образи се комбинират в сюрреалистичен сценарий: принцът е просякът-рибар, който използва червея-плъх, Полоний, за да хване краля-риба, който всъщност не е истински крал, а обикновен червей, убил истинския крал, изконсумирал царската му титла и дори брака му с кралицата, и който принцът ще трябва да изяде за да може сам да се добере до трона. Под повърхността, обаче, те представляват добре премерена идеологическа подготовка за убийството на Клавдий. От една страна, политическото тяло на краля не представлява нищо (the king is a thing … of nothing), но дори и да представляваше нещо, със сигурност щеше да има специален вид политически червеи, подобни на тези, вечерящи с Полоний, които да го изконсумират с наслада. От друга, физическото тяло е като всяко друго и може да се озове дори в червата на просяк и така да стане част и от неговото тяло. Така чрез игрите на думи принцът превръща издигнатата мистифицираност на монарха в парче разлагаща се плът, слузесто тяло на червей, вонящите вътрешности на риба и съдържанието на храносмилателния тракт на скитник.

В крайна сметка, „чудатите роли” представляват изключително интересен феномен от гледна точка на изграждане на характера на Хамлет. В света на пиесата, те са очевидно изфабрикувани образи, т.е. читателят/зрителят е напълно наясно, че принцът се преструва. Същевременно, игрите на думи, хитро вплетени във всеки от тях, създават пролука между фалшивия

образ от играещия го принц и по този начин фино моделират характера на последния. Нещо повече, те винаги отразяват централната идентичност на Хамлет, която се разкрива в монолозите и основните теми и дилеми на произведението. Именно така се създава една пословично сложна театрална личност, която съдържа в себе си меланхоличния, измъчен принц, но също и душевно болния, разбунтувалия се студент, вдъхновения театрал, и хладнокръвния убиец – една фикционална личност, която е в състояние да предаде безкрайната сложност на човешката душа.

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ: ПОСЛЕДОВАТЕЛНОСТ В ЛУДОСТТА

Както анализите по-горе навярно показват, ако вземем насериозно всички паралелни възможности за интерпретация, активирани от Шекспировите игри на думи, можем да достигнем когнитивно състояние, което доста да наподобява лудост. Несъмнено ще стигнем до извода, че светът и езикът са двойствени феномени. От една страна, рационалният ум се стреми да организира знанието си за околния свят по най-икономичния и функционален начин. Единната мисловна структура дава тази възможност и затова светът, който рационалният ум си представя, е като цяло логически непротиворечив, линеарен и йерархически подреден. От друга страна, става все по-ясно, че ако думата „рационален” се извади от уравнението, действителният свят е плетеница от взаимносвързани сложни системи. Всичко – от това как работи човешкото тяло (включително човешкият мозък), до това как се отнасяме към заобикалящата ни среда – достига съзнанието ни под формата на многомерни каскади от взаимно свързани контингентни събития, които се намират във времева и пространствена суперпозиция и формират нелинеарни и нейерархични структури. Тези структури се трансформират в рационални структури единствено, когато се опитваме да ги проумеем. По подобен начин, от една страна, рационалният ум използва езика като система, за да организира, съхранява и предава знанието. От друга, щом езикът напусне пределите на индивидуалното съзнание и стане част от действителния свят (под формата на текст или дискурс), той веднага придобива многомерност и се отваря за неограничена контекстуализация, интерпретация и реинтерпретация.

Ако обаче последваме примера на Полоний и се опитаме да потърсим последователност в тази лудост, ще открием органическата връзка между начина, по който Шекспир използва игрите на думи и цялостната диалогичност и многозначност, така характерни за творчеството му. Често алтернативните значения,

активирани от полисемията на думите, се развиват в многомерни тропи, образи, герои и сюжети. Изследването на тези сложни структури, без те да се сведат до непротиворечиви, линеарни измерения, представлява сериозно предизвикателство за литературната критика.

Теоретичната рамка, поместена в Първа глава от настоящата дисертация, предлага модел за изследване на поетическата полисемия, основаващ се на теориите на възможните светове. Рамката се стреми да пригоди структурния подход – единственият начин да осмислим нещата – към действителната заплетеност на нелинеарните системи. Също така, като отграничава и съпоставя паралелни възможни интерпретации, т.е. като сортира интелектуалните преживявания на читателя/зрителя, рамката хвърля светлина върху абстрактното ментално пространство между тях – ако си представим, че възможни интерпретации съществуват паралелно една на друга, това трябва да бъде в някакво общо пространство. Това пространство е важно, защото именно там човешкото съзнание постоянно прескача между множество възможни състояния на нещата, именно там се случва онзи вид възприятие, който преминава отвъд линеарните структури и йерархиите – онзи вид възприятие, чрез който противоречиви идеи се съчетават в сложни понятия, от разнородни гледни точки се формират сложни нравствени проблеми и от различни измерения на човешката личност се създават сложни фикционални персонажи. Трите изследвания на конкретни случаи, от които се състои аналитичната част на дисертацията, демонстрират ролята на Шекспировите игри на думи според тези три направления.

Първото изследване, „Същност и сенки: Шекспировите игри на думи и предаването на сложни понятия", показва, че важен аспект от ранномодерния концептуализационен процес се съдържа в платоническата дихотомия между „същност" и „сенки". От една страна, имаме вярата в съществуването на чиста есенция (същност) в основата на всяко понятие, която е

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непознаваема чрез сетивата, т.е. емпирично недоказуема. От друга, имаме представата за всички материални и социални феномени като акциденции (сенки), като всяка от тях разкрива малък фрагмент от скритата същност. Този именно ренесансов вид есенциализъм води до предпочитание към многообразието – колкото повече сенки видим, толкова по-голяма част от същността ще обхванем. Така описания епистемологичен механизъм разкрива нова страна на структурния потенциал на игрословието. Ако важно понятие бъде представено чрез многозначен език, който твори множество паралелни когнитивни сценарии, това може да бъде изтълкувано като стремеж да се покажат едновременно повече от акциденциите на въпросната сложна същност. Тази теза е подкрепена от анализ на сложното понятие „мъка" в пиесата „Ричард II", който открива, че то се повтаря фрактално в цялото произведение. Всички основни герои по едно или друго време изпитват мъка като това винаги е представено посредством множество паралелни сценарии, скрепени с игри на думи. Също така, всички тези изражения на мъката се отнасят към една централна многопластова тегоба – тази на самия Ричард II, проблематизирайки я до такава степен, че тя излиза от пределите на историята и се превръща в проучване на човешката природа.

Второто изследване, „Статусът на човека: Шекспировите игри на думи и представянето на сложни нравствени проблеми", показва, че ранномодерното понятие „статус" (state) може да хвърли светлина върху употребата на игрословие при изразяването на сложни морални въпроси при Шекспир. Терминът е попаднал в елизабетинската реторическа теория от тогавашната правна наука, където означава напълно балансираното изследване на всички „за" и „против" при съдебния спор, преди да се вземе справедливо решение. Основният аргумент тук е, че игрите на думи могат да бъдат внимателно заложени в един текст по такъв начин, че да активират противоположни интерпретативни сценарии и че тази

стратегия се използва от Шекспир при представяне на сложни нравствени проблеми. Тази теза е подкрепена от изследване на пиесата „Хенри VIII", което показва, че тя е подчинена на изключително последователен структурен принцип – всеки един от основните герои по едно или друго време бива съден. Въпреки че в пиесата всички получават някакви присъди, аргументацията „за" и „против" вината им е представена чрез противопоставени паралелни тези, коренящи се в игри на думи. По този начин читателят/зрителят се стимулира да прецени за себе си дали е възтържествувала справедливостта. Нещо повече, тъй като съдията във всички случаи е самият крал и присъдите, които налага са диаметрално различни, на читателя/зрителя се налага, на свой ред, да бъде негов съдник.

Третото изследване, „Фаталната Клеопатра и многоликият Хамлет: Шекспировите игри на думи и създаването на сложни характери", преразглежда екстравагантната метафора на Самюел Джонсън с цел да покаже, че тя предлага интересна гледна точка към употребата на игрословие при конструирането на сложни характери от Шекспир. Комплексността на египетската кралица безспорно се дължи на многоликостта на характера й: в един момент тя се държи комично, в друг – трагично, веднъж се проявява като обикновена уличница, друг път като царствена особа, като заядлива жена, или като вечно любяща съпруга. Функцията на игрите на думи е да съшие всички тези разнородни стереотипи в една драматична личност. Така, за да възприеме Клеопатра, читателят е принуден, подобно на Антоний, да се откаже от едносветския мироглед и да го замени с многосветски. Тази гледна точка е подкрепена с анализ на игрословието, свързано с „чудатите роли" на Хамлет в едноименната пиеса. Датският принц последователно играе образите на душевно болен, разбунтуван студент, запален театрал, хладнокръвен убиец. Игрите на думи, заложени в изпълнението на тези роли, ги правят разнообразни отражения на меланхоличния, подтиснат принц, когото наблюдаваме в монолозите и останалите сцени.

В заключение, настоящата дисертация предлага нов методологически подход към изключителния семиотичен потенциал на Шекспировите игри на думи. В основата си, този подход е структурен. Той предлага на читателя/зрителя възможност да борави с паралелни интерпретации и да изследва когнитивния трафик, протичащ между тях. Аналитичната част се стреми да проследи тясната връзка между семантиката на езиковото ниво на текста и цялостния художествен ефект на произведението. Също така, тя анализира ранномодерни теоретични понятия, за да се опита да вникне в определени аспекти от начина на мислене на елизабетнците и якобинците. Трите структурни функции на Шекспировите игри на думи, представени в дисертацията, са подбрани като най-очевидните – несъмнено, по-нататъшно изучаване в същата посока би открило много други. Например, игрословието играе важна роля във връзката между театър и метатеатър, субективност и обективност в пиесите, мъжкия и женския пол на характерите.

ПРИНОСНИ МОМЕНТИ

1. Дисертацията продължава традиционната дискусия на поетическата полисемия (Уилям Емпсън и Моли Махуд) и диалогичната двойственост на идеите и характерите (Патриша Паркър и Мери Крейн) в произведенията на Уилям Шекспир, като допринася с нов доказателствен материал към всяко от тези критически направления.

2. Дисертацията предлага нова теоретично-методологическа рамка за изследване на принципа на действие на поетическата полисемия, моделирана върху различни теории на възможните светове и менталните пространства. Подходът е структурен, но използва многосветски мироглед на мястото на по-традиционния едносветски такъв, и така превръща критиките на постструктурализма в свое предимство.

3. Изследването демонстрира пряката връзка между семантиката на поетическия език и изграждането на сложни понятия, морални позиции и характери както в поезията, така и в драмите на Шекспир.

4. Всеки от конкретните анализи, поместени в глави втора, трета и четвърта, представлява нов прочит на съответното произведение. Примери за това са деконструкцията на „Сонет 53" (страници 58-65), преразглеждането на „Ричард II" през призмата на понятието „мъка" (страници 66-99), защитата на оригиналния текст на Приложение III към анонимната пиеса „Сър Томас Мор" (страници 100-107), посочването на схемата на съдебния процес като обединяващ мотив за иначе фрагментарната творба „Хенри VIII" (страници 107-130), локализирането на сложността на образа на Клеопатра именно в изобразяването на нейния пол в „Антоний и Клеопатра" (страници 132-146).

5. Анализите в глави втора и трета обръщат внимание върху излезли от употреба теоретични ранномодерни измерения на дихотомията между „substance" и „shadows", и понятието „state".

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РЕЗЮМЕ НА АНГЛИЙСКИ ЕЗИК (ABSTRACT)

The dissertation proposes a possible-world approach to Shakespeare's wordplay to investigate its structural role in the make-up of more complex structures like important concepts, moral issues, and characters. The study is organised into four chapters. Chapter one, "Shakespeare's wordplay and possible worlds," opens with a chronological overview of the critical consideration of Shakespeare's playful use of language. Taking into account the formidable amount of Shakespeare criticism that has been produced to date, it would be both impractical and impracticable to discuss all the theoretical work that bears relation to the topic – therefore only the major developments are examined in closer detail. The chapter goes on to present the logico-philosophical context of the related concepts of possible worlds, fictional worlds, discourse worlds, text worlds, and mental spaces and their implementation in literary theory. Then, it outlines the special kind of possible-world approach that is adopted in the dissertation and explains what motivates its use. Finally, it illustrates concisely the approach by applying it to the imagery of Shakespeare's Sonnet 49. The remaining three chapters contain three case studies dealing with the role of wordplay in conveying complex notions, presenting complex moral issues, and constructing complex fictional personalities, respectively. Each of them is twofold in structure: on the one hand, it addresses the particular effect created by wordplay through a related contemporary concept in order to pin it down in its own intellectual context; on the other, it probes deeper in it by means of close analysis of its realization in a Shakespeare play. Chapter two, "Substance and shadows: Shakespeare's wordplay and the conveyance of complex notions," works over the Platonic dichotomy between "substance" and "shadows," popular with Shakespeare and his contemporaries, to throw new light on early modern conceptualisation. It applies the possible-world approach to Sonnet 53 and The Tragedy of King Richard the Second, showing that the stylistic function of wordplay in them parallels the cognitive pattern observed in the dyadic concept and provides a mechanism of conveying complex notions.

Chapter three, "The state of man: Shakespeare's wordplay and the presentation of complex moral issues," takes up the early modern rhetorical sense of "state," borrowed from the contemporary legal theory, which makes the attainment of any valid judgment conditional to a meticulously balanced consideration of both sides of a case. It applies the possible-world approach to Addition III to the anonymous play Sir Thomas More and The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight to demonstrate how wordplay helps to present opposing politically and morally charged scenarios in complete ideological equilibrium, so that the complex moral issues at hand are passed on to the audience problematic and unresolved. Chapter four, "The fatal Cleopatra and a multiple Hamlet: Shakespeare's wordplay and the construction of complex personalities," reconsiders Samuel Johnson's use of the image of Cleopatra in criticising Shakespeare's tendency to play with words by showing the crucial importance of wordplay for the development of Cleopatra's character. Then it applies the possible-world approach to Hamlet's puzzling "antic disposition" to illustrate the instrumental function of wordplay in the construction of Shakespeare's complex fictional personalities.

GEORGI NIAGOLOV obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Since 2006 he has been teaching courses in Medieval and Renaissance English literature, Shakespeare through performance, English for specific purposes, and translation at the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University. He has published in the field of Shakespeare's language, Shakespeare in performance, and teaching Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's Wordplay and Possible Worlds proposes a novel possible-world approach to the complex interpretative potential of Shakespeare's wordplay. The approach is based on the observation that in Shakespeare multiple significations of ambiguous words or syntactic structures often cohere with other apparently unambiguous words or syntactic structures and thus project parallel cognitive scenarios. Therefore, the use of possible worlds as cognitive tools allows the exploration of such scenarios in their broadest context and, at the same time, provides insight into the conceptual blending that occurs between and among them. The book demonstrates the utility of the proposed theoretical construct for textual and cultural analysis in three illustrative case studies.