

The Possible Worlds of Shakespearean Drama

Submitted by

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Abstract

This study addresses the role of the possible or virtual in Shakespearean drama. It argues that the possible component constitutes an integral part of Shakespearean drama, and that they are as important as the actual events or component. To underscore its paramount importance, the study stresses two aspects of the possible in Shakespearean drama: its potentiality and its cognitive function. Potentiality highlights the power of the virtual in opening up different meanings and interpretations, suggesting alternative possibilities and creating new storylines out of the original ones. The cognitive function of the virtual or possible underlines its role in rendering the actual events and happenings more intelligible, probable and comprehensible. The study builds on the theoretical framework of possible worlds theory as well as Classical and Renaissance rhetoric; it argues that Shakespeare's familiarity with and employment of these notions can be attributed to his rhetorical training, which formed an essential part of Elizabethan education.

The study deals with the drama both as a fictional story and as theatre. On the level of theatre, it demonstrates that, despite its materiality, theatre must stimulate an imaginary virtual reality if the physical events and happenings onstage are to be fully meaningful. On the level of the fictional story, it shows that virtual or possible events form the beliefs and intentions of characters. They help to set the conflict on track and help the audience to access the characters' inwardness. Although the possible is thought of as an ontological category, the study highlights its cognitive dimension, and argues that features of the possible even shape our image of the actual past. It addresses this question in relation to the representation of history in Shakespeare's history plays. Finally, it deals with counterfactual statements in Shakespeare and uses a multidisciplinary approach to study their significance.

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Note on the Texts

All quotations retain the spelling and punctuation of the cited editions, but only the *i/j* and *u/v* have been modernized throughout the text. All references to Shakespeare's plays are to *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997). Shorter and common titles of the plays have been used, especially with the 3 parts of *Henry VI* and *Henry VIII*.

Introduction

OPHELIA. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

(Hamlet; 4.5.42-3)

FORTINBRAS. Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally;

(Hamlet; 5.2.339-42)

These two speeches by Ophelia and Fortinbras point to one issue: possibility. Both are referring to a potentiality that sets apart what people are from what they may be or might have been. However, the two speeches portray two different images of the possible. Ophelia, on the one hand, is uncomfortably captivated by the idea of the possible. She is discomfited about her lack of access to her potential self. To be sure, Ophelia is not drawing a contrast between a known, present actuality and an unknown, future potentiality. Rather, the possible is already there alongside the actual. (The modal 'may' is inherently ambiguous, and can refer both to the present and the future.) The possible is an integral part of our identities that we need to know if we are to fully understand ourselves. Fortinbras, on the other hand, is contemplating the possible history of a Hamlet who was given the opportunity to rule. If Hamlet had been given that opportunity, he would have proved a royal king. In the final lines of the play, Fortinbras is adding a piece of characterization of Hamlet, based as it is, not on what he was, but on what he might have been. What matters in Fortinbras's account is not the actual history of Hamlet but his potential history, a history that never was, but has been latent there all along. A sense of potentiality, then, would open up our understanding of characters into new dimensions. It defines the possibility of change in the fictional world, directs the movement of these characters to realize their potentialities, and initiates conflicts among their colliding aspirations. So, from the perspectives of both Ophelia and Fortinbras, the possible is of the very essence of the actual. But

while for Ophelia the possible is shrouded with lack of knowledge, Fortinbras manages to find a way to access the possible, if only as a 'likely' probability.

That deep sense of possibility, which Ophelia and Fortinbras have tersely expressed, is what literature is all about. Other artistic forms, like sculpture and painting, can depict what things are, but are severely restricted in depicting how things may be. Literature, armed with human language, can depict all these possible states, thus enabling us to ponder their intersection and their relation to the actual one. As the above extracts show, Shakespeare has a fairly subtle sense of the possible in life, which has enabled him to express it in his art with such variety and grandeur. Yet, this aspect of Shakespearean drama has rarely received due attention or systematic critical appraisal. Shakespeare criticism has not directly engaged with pronouncements of the possible or virtual in the plays; even when they are discussed, they are not studied as part of a wider phenomenon that deserves attention as such. Consequently, this neglect of the possible in Shakespearean drama has deprived us of the profound insights into the plays' plots, characterization and even their author's worldview, which awareness of the possible would otherwise yield.

Therefore, this study aims to address this important dimension in Shakespearean drama. It sets out to demonstrate that the possible occupies a central position in Shakespeare's plays. This 'central position' is as crucial as the one occupied by the actual events or component of these plays. Two aspects of the possible chiefly underline its substantial role in Shakespearean drama: the first is the sense of potentiality that it implies. The potential is what is always there with the actual, lurking beneath it and directing it. It is a force, for it refers to what people can do and could have done. Three centuries after Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot writes in the first part of *Four Quartets*: "What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present" (9-10). Moreover, the potentiality of the possible renders it into a liberating force from the shackles of the actual. If we are left with the actual only, the world will disintegrate into an all-encompassing determinism which makes any hope of change unthinkable. Again, T. S. Eliot's words are particularly revealing: "If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable" (4-5). The second aspect of the possible is the cognitive function of the possible, which mainly consists in the idea of probability which defines the possible and is defined by it. The

possible is what gives sense to the actual world: things can be defined as much by what they might be as by what they are. The possible helps the reader or spectator to fill in the gaps of the text or performance and supplements the missing or withheld information that is necessary to make sense of that text or performance. Consequently, it serves to make intelligible strings of objects or events that would otherwise seem disparate and incoherent. Thus, although the possible is conceived as an ontological category, the study foregrounds its cognitive dimension. It aims to show that, in Shakespearean drama, the distinction between the actual and the possible is subject to representational strategies and cognitive processes.

The possible has attracted the attention of philosophers from the time of the ancient Greeks. However, it acquired a new momentum at the hands of the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716). Leibniz's notion of 'possible worlds' has been exceedingly popular in the twentieth century. Some literary theorists have been especially keen to apply the idea of possible worlds to the study of literature. This study looks into the possible worlds in Shakespeare's drama. It will be dealing with both aspects of drama: as a theatrical performance and as a fictional story. We shall look into the ways Shakespeare invested in the rich and fertile realm of the possible in his plays, as well as the ways they might help us better appreciate his artistic production. In this Introduction, we shall survey the development of 'possible worlds' theory in the fields of philosophy and literature. After that I shall show the relevance of the possible to early modern culture in general and to Shakespeare in particular, and shall end up with a general outline of the aims and structure of the present study.

Possible Worlds in Philosophy

Leibniz is considered the first philosopher who introduced and systematically employed the concept of 'possible worlds.' Leibniz considers the world we inhabit as only one among an infinitude of other possible worlds. These worlds are contingent in nature, and so they need the divine agent to interfere and render them actual. In order for God to select one world as the actual one, He must have access to all these worlds which exist in the divine Intelligence or

what Leibniz terms the 'Region of Verities'. In his *Theodicy* (written 1709), Leibniz writes: "the cause of the world must needs have had regard or reference to all these possible worlds in order to fix upon one of them" (1966, 35). Leibniz has evoked the notion of possible worlds in order to account for the existence of evil. The one actual world chosen by God is the one which has less evil than the other possible worlds. Leibniz observes that although this world contains evil, it is the best among all other possible worlds in this respect. In other words, the actual world contains less evil than any other possible world would have contained if it had been the case. Thus, the world chosen by God is the best of these possible worlds: "there is an infinitude of possible worlds among which God must needs have chosen the best, since he does nothing without acting in accordance with supreme reason" (ibid.).

To Leibniz, worlds are holistic entities, in the sense that they are to be taken in their entirety. Even one different detail in two worlds will render them different, for each such detail is connected with other details. Reality is attributed to only one world which is so comprehensive as to exclude the existence of other possible worlds. So he uses the concept 'world' synonymously with 'Universe' (ibid.). These possible worlds exist only in the divine intelligence. Possible worlds, moreover, are different in terms not only of their existents, but also of the laws governing them. In his 'Letter to Arnauld' (written 1686), Leibniz states: "For, since there is an infinity of possible worlds, there is also an infinity of possible laws, some proper to one world, others proper to another" (1989, 71). Yet, though Leibniz leaves the door wide open to think in terms of possibilities, his thinking is deterministic in nature for he observes that, as this world is the best, there is no way whatsoever that it can be bettered.

The Leibnizian concept of possible worlds does not seem to have had considerable influence on philosophy for the two centuries after his death. However, the 'possible worlds' concept was given a new momentum in the second half of the twentieth century when philosophers working in the fields of modal logic and the philosophy of language started to realize the viability of this concept of explaining such modal notions as possibility, necessity, and probability. One of the earliest treatments of possible worlds in modal logic is Saul A. Kripke's essay "Semantical Considerations on Modal Logic" (1963). In

this essay Kripke suggests a 'model structure' composed of the triple (**G**, **K**, **R**), where **K** stands for a set of objects, **G** is one member of that set, and **R** is a relation that holds between members of **K**. Defined in terms of possible worlds, **K** would stand for the set of all possible worlds, **G** for the actual world, while **R** stands for the accessibility (possibility) relation between **G** and any other member of **K** ([1963] 1974, 804). Kripke then assigns to each world a domain of individuals as members. The domains differ from one world to another. So, not all individuals existing in the real world would also exist in other possible worlds. Conversely, creatures like Pegasus which might exist in another possible world are not among the existents of this real world (ibid., 805). One breakthrough of Kripke's approach is the study of quantification in terms of possible worlds: according to Kripke's formulation, the existential quantifier 'some' can be interpreted as 'being true at least in one possible world,' while the universal quantifier 'all' can be interpreted as 'true in all possible worlds.'

In his later classic book, *Naming and Necessity* (1980), Kripke briefly surveys his views of 'possible worlds'. He does not agree with viewing them as remote planets, the way David Lewis does. Kripke blames the vagueness of the notion of 'possible worlds' on the confused terminology used to describe them. So, instead of the 'world' metaphor, he suggests understanding possible worlds as possible states, possible histories of the world, or counterfactual situations (1980, 15). He rejects the view of the concreteness of possible worlds or Lewis's extreme realism and thinks that the ontological cost it implies is too high to bear.¹ He defines them rather as "total 'ways the world might have been' or states or histories of the *entire* world" (ibid., 18; emphasis in original).

However, the most stringent adherent of the idea of possible worlds in the last century is David Lewis. Lewis puts his doctrine flatly: "It is uncontroversially true that things might be otherwise than they are. I believe, and so do you, that things could have been different in countless ways . . . I therefore believe in the existence of entities that might be called 'ways the world could have been'. I prefer to call them 'possible worlds'" (1973, 84). Lewis adopts what he calls 'modal realism', the belief that the other possible worlds are no less real than the one we inhabit, although they are isolated, in the sense that no spatiotemporal relation holds between any one world and another. Lewis believes that other possible worlds are concrete, not abstract or even linguistic

entities (1973, 85; 1986, 81). Like Leibniz, he also believes in the infinity of possible worlds, a principle which he calls 'plenitude' (1986, 86).

The belief in modal realism has led David Lewis to adopt a view regarding the actuality of worlds which he calls 'indexical' theory. According to this theory, the actuality of worlds is not an absolute trait, but is rather world-relative. 'Actual' is analogous to the indexical terms 'here' and 'now'.² The inhabitants of every possible world can call the world they inhabit 'actual' in so far as they can talk about it as being here and now, just the way we do about our world (ibid., 92-3). Lewis is conscious of the ontological price to be paid for believing in modal realism, but he considers the benefits of that belief to outweigh its cost. He considers the belief in *possibilia* as a paradise to the philosopher and he sketches many applications for this concept, such as modality, closeness or similarity between worlds (which he uses to account for counterfactual conditionals), as well as the content of belief and epistemic worlds. Lewis's theory has helped popularize the general idea of possible worlds in philosophy and broaden its applicability. Besides, his indexical theory has some bearing on our view of fictional worlds, as we shall show below.

Possible Worlds in Literature

The idea of a multiplicity of possible worlds has attracted the attention of scholars who have been quick to recognize its relevance to the fictional nature of literature. Interestingly, the philosophers who adopted the possible worlds approach also recognized its relevance to the study of literary fictionality and the relation between the idea of possible worlds and the fictional worlds. In fact, it was Leibniz who first recognized this relevance. In his essay 'On Freedom' (written in 1689), Leibniz regards the fictional worlds evoked by stories as examples of possible worlds:

Nor can we really deny that many stories, especially those called novels, are thought to be possible, though they might find no place in this universal series God selected—unless one imagined that in such an expanse of space and time there are certain poetical regions, where you can see King Arthur of Great Britain, Amadis of Gaul, and the illustrious Dietrich von Bern of the German stories, all wandering through the world.(1989, 94)

Saul Kripke, in his essay mentioned above and in which he inaugurated the use of possible worlds in logic, has recourse to a fictional creation (Sherlock

Holmes) to exemplify a possible object or state of affairs. David Lewis (1978) makes use of the possible world concept to account for the nature of fictionality and the question of truth in fiction. He bases that account on his views of the idea of the similarity of worlds which he developed in his 1973 study on counterfactuals. We shall examine Lewis's account in more detail in our analysis of counterfactuals in Chapter Four.

After the promising prevalence of the concept of possible worlds in philosophy and modal logic, literary theorists have realized the benefits that result from the application of possible worlds to literature. These benefits can be classed under two main domains: fictionality and narrativity. The fictionality of literary works has been studied in terms of the characteristics that are peculiar to fiction, be they ontological, semantic or pragmatic. With the flourishing of the possible worlds concept in philosophy and logic, theorists of literature have begun to explain fictionality in terms of possible worlds, and then moved to the analysis of the narrative structure of literary works in terms of modality³ and possible worlds. The earliest discussions of possible worlds in literature are inclined almost exclusively towards fictionality, and an awareness of its relevance to narrativity came fairly late in the works of Eco, Dolezel, and Ryan. These theorists, we shall later observe, have used the very notions used for the study of fictionality for the analysis of the narrative structure of literary works.

The first attempt to integrate of Leibniz's possible worlds philosophy into literary theory was made as early as the 1740s by the Swiss friends and co-authors Johann Bodmer and Johann Breitinger. These two theorists were quick to notice the potential application of possible worlds to the study of art. Among their contributions two stand out as relatively significant. First, they reinterpreted the Aristotelian notion of mimesis in accordance with the new notion of possible worlds. This helped to broaden the range of mimesis and give more freedom to the poet, for mimesis turned out to be not restricted to imitating the real world, but to cover the depiction of any of the infinitely varied possible worlds. According to Breitinger, the poet is free to depict marvellous images "whose originals are not to be looked for in the actual world of real things but in some other possible world-structure. Every well-invented poem is therefore to be seen as a history from another possible world" (quoted in Dolezel 1990, 42). And as Bodmer puts it, "Since the number of worlds that can be imitated in literature is

infinite, the poet becomes equipotent to nature” (quoted in *ibid.*, 41). Thus the poet is a maker or demigod, who selects things from the realm of the possible and renders them existent through his works. Second, they capitalized on Leibniz’s idea of the compossible, the idea that the elements of any possible world should be in accord with one another and show no contradictions among themselves. This led to a new concept of the poem as a heterocosm, a whole enclosed entity with its own laws. The probability of the poem is not to be sought in terms of its relation to the real world, but rather to its own internal coherence. In Breitinger’s words, poetic probability “consists in this, that the details accord with the intention, that they are grounded in one another, and that they show no contradiction among themselves” (quoted in Abrams 1953, 278). These ideas inspired and were inspired by relatively similar conceptions of the nature of art in England and Germany and were part of the paradigm shift from neo-Classicism to Romantic poetics (Abrams 1953; Dolezel 1990). In England, Joseph Addison and Richard Hurd had been making similar points, although they lacked the philosophical basis that Bodmer and Breitinger successfully built on.

No later attempts were made to ground a theory of art in possible worlds philosophy until two centuries later, starting after the middle of the twentieth century. These new adventures were not inspired by Leibniz directly but by the new development of this concept in logic and philosophy. One enthusiastic adherent to analysing the fictional nature of literature in terms of possible worlds is Thomas Pavel. Pavel adheres to an internal approach to fiction and finds out that the best way to treat fiction on its own terms is to base the theory of fiction on the concept of ‘possible worlds’. He borrows his frame from Kripke’s model structure mentioned above. In Pavel’s reformulation, **K** can stand for a fictional world evoked by a work of fiction which is accessible to **G** (i.e., possible from the point view of **G**) though not identical with it. One advantage of Kripke’s model is that it allows a variation of individuals from one world to another, and can thus admit the introduction of new individuals such as Sherlock Holmes to our ontological inventory; so this model of possible worlds is rooted in the “common aesthetic intuition that takes for granted that things found in novels are in some way compatible with real life” (1986, 46). To Pavel, this understanding of literary fiction is in line with Aristotle’s conviction that the poet

should show what happens according to the rules of possibility and necessity. 'Possibility' means that it happens in one possible world accessible from the actual world, and 'necessity' means that it actually happens in all alternative possible worlds (ibid.).⁴

Other serious attempts to study fictionality in terms of possible worlds have been carried out by Lubomir Dolezel and Marie-Laure Ryan. Dolezel takes fictionality to be mainly an ontological issue and so he regards fictional worlds as a subset of possible worlds. He identifies three areas where the fictional worlds of literature are similar to possible worlds: first, they are both ensembles of nonactualized states of affairs. Second, both fictional worlds and possible worlds are unlimited and maximally varied in the sense that there are no restrictions on the number of possible or fictional worlds to be generated. And third, they are both accessed through semiotic channels, such as language, still or moving pictures, and so on. A more elaborate account of using possible worlds to explain fictionality is given by Marie-Laure Ryan (1991). Ryan's approach to fictionality is both ontological and pragmatic. It is ontological, in the sense that fiction forces a recentering around a new system of reality other than the actual world, and pragmatic in that it introduces a new substitute speaker. In order to pinpoint the true nature of fictionality and fictional worlds, she contrasts the views of David Lewis and Nicholas Rescher on possible worlds. Lewis holds that possible worlds are real, just like the actual world, and that they have an existence of their own. From the point of view of their inhabitants, they can be referred to as 'here' and 'now.' Rescher, on the other hand, believes that possible worlds are mere mental constructs and that they are ontologically inferior to the actual world. If we assimilate this debate about fictional worlds, it yields informative insights into the nature of fiction. *Pro* Lewis and *contra* Rescher, we tend to treat fictional worlds as really existing, which explains the complex ways we interact with them. *Pro* Rescher and *contra* Lewis, we are still aware of the ontological difference between fictional worlds and the actual world (see Ryan 1991, 21). Ryan holds that these two views explain our emotional engagement with fiction and our full realization that it is fiction and not reality.

However, these scholars are quick to warn against a full identification of possible worlds of logic with fictional worlds of literature. For Pavel, one difference between the two sets of worlds is that fictional worlds might contain

contradictions, which is unacceptable in logical possible worlds. Moreover, fictional worlds are far more rich, complex and varied than logical worlds, and so we cannot reduce “the theory of fiction to a Kripkean theory of modality” (1986, 49). Dolezel spots three areas where fictional worlds differ from possible worlds of logic: first, fictional worlds are incomplete, while logical possible worlds are complete, maximal sets. Second, fictional worlds might be heterogeneous, containing natural and supernatural creatures. Third, fictional worlds owe their existence to literary texts, prior to which they have no existence (1998, 21-4). However, despite their insistence on these differences, Ruth Ronen (1994) criticizes the adherents of possible worlds in literature for not going far enough in differentiating their use of fictional worlds from the original use and meaning of the concept of possible worlds in logic and philosophy. In addition to the differences mentioned so far, Ronen takes the main difference between possible worlds and fictional worlds to be their relative status with regard to the actual world. To her, fictional worlds are more independent than possible worlds relative to the actual world. While possible worlds are stipulations of certain unactualized possible states of affairs ramifying from the actual state of affairs, fictional worlds represent whole autonomous realms parallel to the actual world, each with its own complex modal structure: “fictional worlds, unlike possible worlds, manifest a world-model based on the notion of parallelism rather than ramification” (1994, 8). Ronen also points out that for philosophers fictionality is a property of propositions, while for literary theorists it is a property of texts (*ibid.*, 85).

The second area of the application of possible worlds concepts to literature is that of narrativity. Possible worlds theorists have addressed the question of narrative structure, and based their plot models on the same notions of possibility and necessity which they have used to tackle the problem of fictionality. Traditionally, the problems of fictionality and narrativity have been addressed by different approaches, each using different assumptions and methods. The possible worlds approach to literature, on the other hand, is unique in that it could tackle the problems of fictionality and narrativity using the same analytical notions and methods. In possible worlds approaches, “The narrativity of worlds is tackled through modal concepts of actuality and possibility, concepts which were primarily adopted by literary theory to account

for the fictionality of worlds” (Ronen 1994, 171n). Fictionality and narrativity are also related in terms of the effect of one feature on the other. This has mainly to do with the question of whether the narrative structure of a text results in its fictionality. This question has a great bearing on historical discourse, namely whether the narrative quality of historical discourse makes it a fictional discourse. These questions have been debated among proponents of postmodernism and possible worlds theory, and we shall touch on them and their implications for Shakespeare’s representation of history in Chapter Three.

Possible worlds theorists base their narratological views and the plot models resulting from them on notions of modality and worlds. Umberto Eco (1979; 1990), for example, uses possible worlds to work out a narrative analysis of the *fabula*. He divides the worlds created into the main world of the *fabula*, the subworlds of the characters’ attitudes (their wishes, beliefs, values), and the worlds constructed by the Model Reader.⁵ The point of interest to Eco is the divergence of these three classes of worlds, as when characters create mistaken beliefs about the world of the *fabula*, or when the reader is led to false conclusions about what will take place. However, except for the idea of divergence and the interesting results that ensue, Eco’s approach is too formalistic to be immediately applicable to complex literary works. His insights, though, have been essential to the development of the later models by Dolezel and Ryan.

Dolezel (1998) bases his model on four narrative modalities: alethic, deontic, axiological and epistemic modalities⁶, each with its parameters of possibility, necessity and impossibility. These modalities comprise almost everything in the fictional world, including the kind of existents, the laws governing that world, the characters’ knowledge and beliefs, as well as their desires and motivation. Conflict ensues from a clash between two or more parameters in one character or among different characters. Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) uses the metaphor of ‘world’ to designate the contents of the characters’ domains, thus talking about Knowledge World, Wish Worlds, Obligation Worlds, in addition to the Textual Actual World. In her model, conflict is also a result of the dissatisfaction of one of these private worlds, and it takes place among worlds belonging to the same character, among worlds belonging to different characters, or between the private world of a character and the textual actual

world. These approaches will be surveyed in more detail in Chapter Two, but here suffice it to observe that these models presuppose the autonomy of the fictional world; the fictional world is treated not as a merely possible world relative to the actual world, but rather as a whole world with its own modal structure: within these worlds there is a state of affairs which is actual and a galaxy of other states that are possible relative not to the actual world of the reader, but to that fictional world's actual state of affairs. Compared to the traditional formalist and structuralist plot models, these possible worlds plot models possess some advantages. Traditional models are static and backward looking: they take the end of the story as a given and then move backward to see how that end came about. Possible world narratological models, on the other hand, are dynamic and forward-looking, in the sense that they view the movement in the plot as a choice the fictional agents make at each step from the many possibilities available to them. Through actualizing one of these possibilities, the situation again unfolds with other choices to be made, and so forth. We will foreground some of these points in Chapter Four while discussing the viability of this model for the analysis of counterfactuals in Shakespeare's plays.

Possible worlds theory negotiates the founding assumptions of theoretical trends that dominated the critical paradigms over the last decades, namely poststructuralism and postmodernism. Poststructuralism and postmodernism developed partly as a reaction against the positivist views that denied the validity of any discourse about nonexistent objects. The reaction, however, went to the other extreme by denying the objective truth of even scientific discourse. Between these two extremes came the possible world framework to lend validity to both factual and fictional discourses: "In the same way that the logical positivists' declarations of the death of poetry appear confining, so do also the post-structuralists' claim of the death of reality. A possible-worlds semantics will preserve both"(Martin 2004, 62). Thomas Martin emphasizes two differences in the assumptions of poststructuralism and possible worlds theory: first, they are rooted in different views about language. Following Jaakko Hintikka, he characterizes poststructuralism as endorsing a view of language as a universal medium: the view that language encompasses all human behaviour and thinking and that there is nothing outside language. Possible worlds theory, on

the other hand, endorses a view of language as calculus: the view of language as an abstract symbolism which can be reinterpreted and reapplied to ever new domains of discourse. According to the view of language as calculus, language is not confined to talking about this world only, and conversely our ability to imagine and talk about new worlds is not hindered by the language we speak. The second difference is the capacity to present a modal structure. In so far as poststructuralism is rooted in sweeping textualism, within which the search for the actual reality is endlessly frustrated, it lacks the proper modal structure that comprises a multiplicity of possible worlds in the centre of which stands one actual world: "In post-structuralist theory the distinction between possible and actual is not a modal one at all, but rather a mere semiological one, representing just one more linguistic, epistemological binary" (ibid., 9). It is to be noted that positivism, by denying the existence of the possible and sticking to the actual, also lacks that modal structure which possible worlds theory is keen on preserving.

By assuming the existence of the one actual world, possible worlds theory has exasperated postmodernists, who see in it a kind of narrow-minded homogeneity that, by privileging the one actual world at the centre, denies validity of diverging opinions and the right of diversity, and imposes a hierarchical understanding of life and society. Trying to counter this negative attitude, Ryan (2001) refers to David Lewis's indexical theory mentioned above. According to that view, if actuality is based on the use of the indexical expressions 'here' and 'now,' then the actuality of the actual world is less an ontological privilege than a point of view. The inhabitants of other worlds also have the right to consider their own world as actual. Thus, the discourses of marginalized and under-represented groups also gain credence as long as, from their owners' point of view, they enjoy that kind of actuality. "With an indexical definition, the concept of actual world can easily tolerate historical, cultural, and even personal variations. Without sacrificing the idea of an absolutely existing, mind-independent reality, we can relativize the ontological system by placing at its center individual images of reality, rather than reality itself" (2001, 101).

These controversies between postmodernism and possible worlds theory become significant in the discussion of historiography. Postmodernism posed

real challenges to the quest for truth in historical writing. Some postmodernist accounts treat history as no more than discourse; and some have gone even further to claim that there are no real differences between fictional discourse and the discourse of history. These positions have called history's claim to objectivity and verifiable truth into question. The introduction of possible worlds would counterbalance the encompassing textualism of postmodernism: "The one clear advantage of the 'possible-worlds' approach as applied to issues in historiography is that it manages to avoid the poststructuralist or the wholesale 'textualist' conflation of historical with fictive modes of narrative discourse" (Norris 2007, 120-1). Dolezel (2010) has been especially keen to address the postmodern challenge to history represented by the writings of Roland Barthes and Hayden White, using the framework of possible worlds. According to Dolezel, history has more to it than mere discourse; consequently, even if fictional discourse and historical discourse are similar, history and fiction still differ on the level of worlds. The possible worlds of history and of fiction are markedly different. We will address these controversies over the nature of the actual world and historical truth in more detail in Chapter Three when dealing with the truth status of the representation of history in Shakespeare's history plays.

The application of possible worlds theory has not been even across different literary genres. Possible worlds theory has been mainly and primarily applied to narrative fiction, and only secondarily to drama and poetry. The theorists mentioned above (e.g. Dolezel, Pavel, Ryan) take works of narrative fiction as their default field of investigation. This tendency to neglect drama and poetry is due to the "belief that among literary genres, narrative fiction most clearly constructs those systematic sets and states of affairs to which the concept of *world* pertains" (Ronen 1994, 13; emphasis in original). Elina Semino (1997) complains that the theory was not applied to poetry due to the belief that it does not create possible/fictional worlds the way novels do. She challenges this belief by conducting a possible worlds analysis of Andrew Marvel's "To His Coy Mistress." With drama the case is even more complicated. As we have shown above, the theory has been used to investigate two main aspects of literary works, fictionality and narrativity. Literary theory has generally been sceptical about drama having either of these two features. As far as fictionality

is concerned, the main obstacle has been the material aspect of the theatre. For if drama is staged in live theatrical performances and displays 'real' personages and actions in the 'here' and 'now,' how can it be said to conjure up and refer to fictional or possible worlds that exist elsewhere? This is why most theories of fictionality, many of which we will survey in Chapter One, take narrative fiction as their point of departure and deal with theatre only marginally. As for narrativity, many narratologists (e.g. Genette 1980) have denied that drama is a narrative genre following the dichotomy between diegesis and mimesis established by Aristotle. To them drama is a mimetic, not a diegetic genre, and so is not qualified for the narrative analysis which narratological theories, including possible worlds theory, may offer.

Yet some critics and theorists particularly interested in the poetics of drama have attempted to apply the theory of possible worlds to the dramatic genre. In his *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* ([1980] 2002), Keir Elam devotes a chapter to 'Dramatic Logic', in which he mainly discusses the possible worlds of drama. According to Elam, the need to investigate the possible worlds of drama stems from the ability of the spectator to project an imaginary reality to which the performance is taken to refer, and the need for that spectator to fill in the gaps of the performance and to make hypotheses of what comes next, all of which necessitate the use of the imagination to fill in the gaps of the incomplete story given by the performance. This approach also gains support from ability to account for the creation of conflicts and resolution of plots in drama. Dan McIntyre, in his *Point of View in Plays* (2006), makes use of possible worlds theory, namely of Ryan's classification of private worlds (Knowledge, Intention, Wish and Obligation Worlds, Fantasy Universes) to account for the points of view of characters in drama. Every character domain thus turns out to be expressive of the viewpoints of that character. He combines these concepts from possible worlds with corresponding ideas from deictic fields theory. So the process of recentering, and then the movement from one possible world to another, are indicated by a deictic shift, and this in turn would inform us of the different perspectives at work during the course of the play. In this study we will attempt to address all these genre-specific issues, and try to stretch the applicability of the theory to account for both the theatrical performance and the dramatic plot.

Possible Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays and Early Modern England

So far we have traced the development of possible worlds theory in the philosophical tradition; then we surveyed the questions and issues it raised at the hands of literary theorists, especially in the domains of fictionality and narrativity. We have also shown the debates it has occasioned with dominant paradigms such as postmodernism and poststructuralism. Lastly, we demonstrated the relevance of this theory to the analysis of drama and theatre as well as to narrative fiction. This study is devoted to the application of possible worlds theory to Shakespearean drama. It investigates the fictional and narrative aspects of the possible as it features in Shakespeare's plays. However, Shakespeare did not write in a vacuum and undoubtedly he was influenced by the cultural and intellectual milieu in which he lived, learned and produced his art. I would like to demonstrate that the notions of the plurality of worlds and multiple existences were already prominently present in early modern culture. Although Shakespeare did not read Leibniz (Leibniz was born in 1646, thirty years after Shakespeare's death), the awareness in that period of the relativity of existence and the multiplicity of worlds was heightened by many factors, such as philosophy and theology, geography, science, and rhetoric. All these disciplines fostered that awareness and contributed to its reflection in the literature of the period. Before I turn to possible worlds in Shakespeare's drama, I shall briefly point to some of the important factors that enhanced possibilistic thinking in the early modern period.

The early modern period is fairly amenable to the notions of possibility and the plurality of worlds. Scholars observe that this period witnessed an unprecedented surge in modal thinking characterized by the widening of possibilities in many fields such as religion, cosmology, science, geography, and rhetoric. One manifestation of this belief in infinite possibilities is the Principle of Plenitude – the belief that all genuine possibilities will be actualized in time. In his exhaustive survey of the Principle of Plenitude from the late Middle Ages through the Renaissance, Arthur O. Lovejoy observes that “By the early sixteenth century the theories of the plurality of solar systems and of inhabited planets, of the infinity of the number of the stars and the infinite extent of the universe in space, were already common topics of discussion” (1936,

115). Lovejoy attributes this belief less to the scientific discoveries at that time and more to the philosophical and theological doctrines. On the one hand, the belief in a finite creation was thought to suggest a less than omnipotent Creator. According to the most enthusiastic adherent of this principle, Giordano Bruno, in his *De Immens* (1586), "We insult the infinite cause when we say that it may be the cause of a finite effect; to a finite effect it can have neither the name nor the relation of an efficient cause" (quoted in *ibid.*, 117). On the other hand, the infinity and unlimited vastness of the Universe were given a moral significance, by being seen as fostering the Christian virtue of humility. Man was to think how small he is in this world, and that he is in no sense the centre of the universe nor that the whole Universe was created for his use only.

Although this adherence to the concept of plenitude was not as pervasive as Lovejoy's account might seem to imply, there is no gainsaying that the Renaissance entertained such possibilities. Jaakko Hintikka qualifies some aspects of Lovejoy's account but he admits that "This widening of realm of possibilities is one of the most interesting overall features of the history of Western thought which is made clearer to us by a study of the Principle of Plenitude" (1981, 7). Although that line of thought might be attributed to Aristotle, and was revived in the medieval period, it is a characteristic feature of the Renaissance. The writings of Hobbes and Vico, as Nancy S. Strauver argues, are just examples of this tendency: "Their ambitions are modal to the core: an accomplishment of Hobbes and Vico is to renegotiate modalities . . . they proffer *more* civil possibilities" (2009, 10; emphasis in original). This ongoing tendency towards the proliferation of possibilities culminates with Leibniz. Leibniz makes the clearest unequivocal declaration of this mode of thinking with his notion of 'possible worlds'. However, we have to be careful in characterizing Leibniz's position, for, unlike the previous subscribers of this doctrine, Leibniz adds to it a hierarchical dimension, thus talking of the 'best' of possible worlds. So although he starts off by widening the realm of possibilities, he ends up with a deterministic view which holds that no improvement is possible on the actual world, because it is the best we can imagine. Like Bruno's, Leibniz's motivation for his notion of 'possible worlds' is theological in essence.

This proliferation of the notion of the possible in the early modern period was also fostered by and manifested in the rhetorical thought of that period

(Lanham 2004; Mack 2004). Rhetoric is a fertile realm for the virtual, the contingent and the probable, and is unsurprisingly amenable to modal thinking. We have already met with the idea of modal operators of possibility and necessity as quantifiers over possible worlds. Rhetorical argumentation is also rooted in the notion of quantification: as rhetoric is the art of the probable, the orator is concerned to show a given act as being more or less probable than another. He can do that by piling up evidence on one side to render it more and more probable to his audiences. In modal terminology, he is showing 'more' possible worlds in which the act could have taken place than the ones in which it did not. Rhetorical training fostered this agility of thought and calculation of probabilities on every side. Thus, rhetoric is a liberating strategy, replacing the qualitative system of philosophy – that of the absolute 'true' or 'false' – with a wider, more flexible domain of the 'more' and 'less' plausible, probable, or convincing.

Another important factor in opening the early modern mind to plurality was the new geographical discoveries of the New World and beyond. Since it was first discovered by the Spanish and then the following of the French and English in that project, the New World posed a challenge to the Renaissance mind through the introduction of many places, cultures, peoples, languages, wonders – all of them different, fascinating and challenging at once. It opened up the horizon of the actual to the many previously unthought-of possibilities of existence. The fascination of the Renaissance with these alternative modes of existence was unmistakable and "might suggest a mind grown alert to horizon of possibilities through the terse, fragmentary reports of sailors, missionaries, and explorers" (Wilson 1995, 146).

The effects of all these tendencies of possibilistic thinking are not far from literature. Not only did Renaissance literature show a fascination with depicting alien peoples and cultures, but it also was concerned with the effect that would have on the nature of the literary work itself and on the fictional world it conjures up. The idea of the fictional work as a heterocosm, as propagated by Sir Philip Sidney's dictum that the poet creates a golden world distinct from the brazen world of nature, was especially familiar at that time. Sidney writes about nature that "her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden" ([1595] 2004, 9). More relevant in this context is the effect this mode of thinking has had on the internal

structure of the literary work and the fictional world. In other words, the ontological plurality of the actual was reflected in the construction of fictional worlds. According to Rawdon Wilson, “one way in which literature reflects the perception of a dichotomous world is through the creation of texts that emphasize the plurality of worlds, the shifting frontiers that indicate possibilities lying hidden within actuality, the staggering alternativity of things” (1995, 145). This should not imply that before this period literature did not register that plurality of worlds, but rather that only now it was done more consciously. It is as if people’s understanding of the actual world threw light on the nature of fictional worlds and vice versa.

Thus we see how the philosophical, theological, geographical and rhetorical thinking of the period all enhanced an awareness of the possible and the implications this would have for literature. It is interesting to notice that studies of possible worlds in the literature of the period have concentrated almost exclusively on Shakespeare. This might be due to both the quantity and the quality of his artistic production. The range of genres of Shakespeare’s drama makes it an especially fertile ground for the explication of possible worlds and realities. Besides, Shakespeare seems to have been acutely conscious of the importance of the possible to which he allocates a large part of his interest, as this study is keen on showing in the next chapters. Below I shall consider three recent studies that have applied possible worlds to the study of Shakespeare: Cindy Chopoidaló (2009), Georgi Niagolov (2013) and Simon Palfrey (2014).

In *Shakespeare’s Wordplay and Possible Worlds* (2013), Niagolov conducts an analysis of the effect of Shakespeare’s wordplay according to a possible worlds framework. Niagolov’s approach is cognitive in essence and it takes the possible worlds theory, as developed by Eco, Pavel, Dolezel and Ryan, as a starting point which he complements with insights from cognitive poetics, such as mental spaces, conceptual blending, and text worlds. His analysis builds on the significant corpus of work done on ambiguity and wordplay by such writers as William Empson, M. M. Mahood, and others. He assumes that a pun or wordplay depends in its effect on creating two domains or interpretations. The sets of these dual meanings or interpretations, which can both be legitimately attached to the pun, are best seen as cognitive worlds.

They are further characterized as coherent sets, since the two meanings are not contradictory; in order to have the desired effect they must exist in parallel to each other so that they can be recalled simultaneously. Moreover, they are accessible to each other and ‘traffic’ is taking place among them, so that the determination of one alternative meaning in one world or set would also influence the choice the reader/viewer would make regarding the alternative interpretations of the other sets. This is based on the critical opinion that these puns are not ‘isolated or local phenomena,’ but rather contribute to the meaning of the whole fictional world they appear in. Although Niagolov puts aside the ontological and narratological aspects of possible worlds theory, which will feature frequently in this thesis, his emphasis on the cognitive function of possible worlds shares an important aim with my study. I am also interested in the cognitive function of the notion of ‘possibility,’ but on a larger argumentative level rather than on the lexical levels which Niagolov meticulously examines. This is why I shall be leaning on rhetoric, rather than on theories of mental spaces and conceptual blending, to explore the cognitive function of the possible.

Chopoidaló (2009) has applied the theory of possible/fictional worlds to the study of Shakespeare’s adaptations. She takes as her point of departure Dolezel’s (1998) framework of postmodern re-writes (postmodern works that adapt classical literary works). Following Dolezel, Chopoidaló argues that the best approach to study adaptation is that of possible/fictional worlds since it can account for the global changes that take place in the fictional world as a result of adaptation. Her study, though, is quite justifiably restricted to adaptations of *Hamlet*, and it aims to “examine worlds created through the adaptation of the text of *Hamlet*, both Shakespeare’s creation of his fictional world from those of his sources, and other writers’ use of his text to create new and diverse fictional worlds of their own which nonetheless share common origins and elements” (2009, 6-7). She examines and expands upon taxonomies of adaptation developed by Dolezel and Douglas Lanier. Among these adaptational strategies are transposition (changing the settings and norms, time and place of the original world into a new reality), expansion (adding new events or new characters, or expanding on the roles of minor characters in the original text) and displacement (which includes many processes of transposition and

expansion, as well as some radical changes to the protoworld to ‘challenge its worldview’). All these changes, be it noted, take place on a global level of the fictional world, by deleting some elements, adding others and changing other elements. The study is revealing about the changes that fictional worlds undergo in the process of adaptation. Although adaptation works on the possible or virtual events, we are not dealing with it directly in this study. However, we shall touch on a phenomenon relevant to adaptation, namely counterfactuals, in our analysis of the literary dimension of counterfactuals in Chapter Four.

In *Shakespeare’s Possible Worlds* (2014), Simon Palfrey looks into the different manifestations of possibility in Shakespeare. Palfrey is not interested in the main possible worlds approaches of the twentieth century, be they in philosophy (with the exception of David Lewis) or literary theory, both of which he finds too restrictive to account for an active imagination like Shakespeare’s. He turns instead to Renaissance philosophy for inspiration, with Leibniz leading the way through to Shakespeare’s practice. Palfrey borrows Leibniz’s idea of the monad and identifies in Shakespeare monadic playworlds in every part of which – scenes, acts, actors, characters, cues – he can recognize a life of possibilities. These parts are not determined by the whole and do have a life of their own. He concentrates on these aspects and, guided by close readings, attempts to find out the possibilities latent in each configuration. He calls these instruments ‘formations’ because they are formative of possibilities and because formation in literature cannot be separated from action. Another idea which Palfrey identifies as essential to Shakespeare is that of the ‘potential’ which Shakespeare could have learned from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. In Shakespeare, as in Aristotle, potentiality is linked to actuality: the possible is that which will be actualized in the future. If it is not actualized, then it was not possible in the first place. Palfrey, like Niagolov, is interested in Shakespeare’s words and their ability to evoke multiple worlds at one moment, although he sees Shakespeare’s freedom with words as anti-rhetorical, for it goes against the recipes of traditional rhetorical treatises. Palfrey’s study is by far the first book-length study of possible worlds in Shakespeare, and it represents a real starting point for the subject in its breadth and erudition, which is both inspiring and thought-provoking. This study shares Palfrey’s interest in the potentiality of

the possible, though not in the full philosophical sense which Palfrey painstakingly explores. The potentiality we are concerned with here is more of a narratological nature than a philosophical one. Moreover, both studies share an interest in the possible in theatrical performance as well as the literary text.

This Study

In this study, we shall be dealing with the notion of possible worlds in Shakespearean drama. The study will employ an interdisciplinary approach, but will be rooted in the strand developed in literary theory in general and narratology in particular. As such, it will not be primarily concerned with the other discourses in which the notion of possible worlds featured prominently, such as the possible worlds of logic and philosophy, or the new worlds of geographical and scientific discoveries. The study will cover both areas of fictionality and narrativity. As far as fictionality is concerned, the study explores the role of the possible or virtual in the fictional nature of theatre despite the material presence of objects and persons onstage. Dramatic worlds are supposed to conjure up that absent reality or possible world. As for narrativity, the possible (or virtual) events are necessary to the plot-structure of Shakespeare's plays. The virtual events are evoked in order to determine what actually happened. In this study, we shall explore the ways in which they interact with the actual events, how they are withdrawn from the reader, or used to trigger counterfactual scenarios to contemplate the significance of the actual course of events. Thus, this study will be dealing with Shakespeare's plays as both text and theatre. While Chapter One will be devoted to the role of the virtual in theatrical performance, the next three Chapters will be chiefly concerned with the plays as text and the analysis of the narrative aspects of the possible or virtual events in Shakespeare's plays.

So far I have been employing the two terms, 'possible' and 'virtual,' almost interchangeably. While the former term is mostly used in possible worlds philosophy, the latter is preferred by literary theorists working also in the field of electronic literature and virtual reality. Following Marie-Laure Ryan (1991; 2001), I will be using the term 'virtual' throughout this thesis alongside the term 'possible'. I am employing the term 'virtual' the way Pierre Levy (1998) does. Levy uses the term 'virtual' mainly in the sense of the 'potential.' He draws two distinctions, one between the possible and the real and the other between the

virtual and the actual. According to Levy, “The virtual is by no means the opposite of the real. On the contrary, it is a fecund and powerful mode of being that expands the process of creation, opens up the future, injects a core of meaning beneath the platitude of immediate physical presence”(1998,16). While the possible/real distinction is static, the virtual/actual distinction is dynamic. The movement from virtuality to actuality is unpredictable, in the sense that the virtual’s potential is open to many different forms at once, and its actualization is not deterministic and pre-ordained. Moreover, the virtual is not exhausted with actualization, and so the potential is a never-depleted resource for change. Although I do recognize that the two terms are not synonymous in all contexts, I will use the terms ‘possible’ and ‘virtual’ interchangeably throughout this study.⁷For my purposes they both denote the senses of potentiality and cognitive functioning with which we are chiefly concerned in this study.

The study aims to show that the possible or virtual events in Shakespeare’s plays are no less important than the actual events. Access to and awareness of these events are necessary if the plays are to make sense for the reader/spectator. The critical importance of the possible or virtual in Shakespeare stems from its sense of potentiality and its cognitive function. Potentiality is inherent in the meaning of virtuality. The word ‘virtual’ is derived from the Latin *virtus* which means ‘strength, manliness, courage’ and also from the Latin *virtualis* which means ‘power, force’. This has implications for the virtual in literature as a source of energy that ceaselessly fuels the literary text. As Marie-Laure Ryan puts it, “the virtual is not that which is deprived of existence but that which possesses the potential, or force, of developing into actual existence” (2001, 27). The virtual in Shakespeare is not the passive, non-existent, the thing that is not there; it is rather the sense of possibility latent under the surface and which gives new meanings to the actual. It is there to remind us of the contingency of the actual and of the infinite ways in which things could have been. The potential both enriches the text, by foregrounding its infinite capabilities and openness to new meanings, and is liberating for us, for it opens new horizons of thinking and permits us to rid ourselves of the apparent determinism of the actual. From reading the plays we can notice that this sense of potentiality is essential to Shakespeare’s dramatic art. Joel B.

Altman identifies what he calls the 'language of theatrical potentiality' in Shakespeare:

It is *potential* insofar as it is incomplete in itself and must coalesce with labile thought- and feeling-structures in an auditor's mind to produce the powerful, temporary satisfactions we call meaning. In the theatrical experience of Shakespeare's audience, this tendentious, interactive process often gave shape to a dramatic action that might, if scanned analytically, actually resist intelligibility. (2010, 207; emphasis in original)

This exploitation of the potential stems from the awareness of the limitations of the actual and material reality. On the level of theatre, it is an awareness of the inherent limitations of the material aspects of the theatrical performance and that theatre has much more to it than just that material aspect. On the level of story, it is the awareness that the actual must have started essentially as a possibility, and that it can only emerge after a choice is made which excludes all the other possibilities that could simply have been actualized instead. The unactualized possibilities define the text's potential to be otherwise, to lead in a different direction out of which a new story will definitely emerge.

Altman's 'action that resists intelligibility' leads us to the second aspect of the virtual or possible: its cognitive function. The possible functions mainly as a sense-making strategy that contributes to the intelligibility and probability of the action. Regrettably, possible worlds theory barely investigates this area of the relation between the possible and the probable. M.-L.Ryan touches on this in passing while discussing the Knowledge Worlds of characters and the degree to which they correspond to the real status of the textual actual world. In one case, indeterminacy, a character is uncertain about the truth of a certain fact in the actual world, and so his/her knowledge is based on probability, which ranges from low to high probability (1991, 115). Yet the relation between the concepts of possibility and probability is deeper and wider than that. Probability is closely related to virtual or possible events. In the domain of fictionality, the possible or virtual is needed to help the spectator make sense of the material objects and happenings that take place onstage and which would otherwise seem incoherent and unintelligible. On the level of narrative structure, in order for characters to determine what might have happened in the past, they need to conduct probabilistic reasoning whereby they can measure the probability of each of the different paths which the action is to have taken. Only then can they determine how likely it is that an event might have taken place. Even in judging

the credibility of the virtual plans of other characters, a character will use probabilistic thinking to determine how honest the planner is.

It is to be noted that the idea of probability is absolutely central to talking about possibility in philosophical discourse. In fact, the very definition of possible worlds in philosophy as “ways the world might have been” is based on a basic sense of probability. ‘Probability’ is inherent in the meaning of the modal auxiliary ‘might.’ To determine the ways things ‘might have been’ and exclude the other ways things ‘might not have been’ is rooted in an informal induction of how likely things might be in given circumstances. Saul A. Kripke considers the very idea of probability to be based on the concept of possible worlds: “Indeed the general notion of ‘sample space’ that forms the basis of modern probability theory is just that of such a space of possible worlds” (1980, 19). Using the classical example of the probabilities resulting from throwing dice, Allwood, Anderson and Dahl also refer to the affinity between the theory of probability and modal logic, and consequently to the possible worlds framework: “Each such possible combination or outcome of the game is comparable to a possible world. Probabilities are usually graded from 1 (what is completely certain) to 0 (what cannot occur). In the terminology of modal logic, 1 is equal to ‘true in all possible worlds’ and 0 to ‘true in no possible world’” (1977, 109n). Others (e.g. Bigelow 1976) have used David Lewis’s (1973) theory of counterfactuals, which is based on the notion of similarity of possible worlds, to give a possible worlds account of probability defined in terms of similarity among possible worlds. All these formulations in philosophy prove that probability has been of the very essence of possible worlds accounts in philosophy and semantics. As Ruth Ronen puts it, the distinction between the possible and the necessary in philosophy is not an ontological distinction “between modes of existence, but only between probabilities of occurrence” (1994, 53).

However, this native affinity between possibility and probability in philosophy has been neglected by those theorists who introduced possible worlds theory to literary studies. Ruth Ronen complains that “literary theorists . . . detach the notion of possibility from any abstract idea of relative probability of occurrence as originally formulated in possible worlds’ semantics” (ibid., 50). Their emphasis, that is, has been mainly ontological and not cognitive.⁸ Thus, one aim of this study is to retain the interest in and

significance of the cognitive notion of probability to the accounts of possible worlds in literature. It aspires to show the various ways in which the two notions of possibility and probability are embedded in and presuppose each other in Shakespeare's drama. Although literary theories of possible worlds have contributed to our understanding of the virtual component of the drama, they have had little to say about probability.

To fill in this lacuna about probability in possible worlds theories, I shall turn to the art of judicial rhetoric, in its classical and Renaissance formulations, as it has been truly the art of the virtual and the probable. In its emergence in ancient Greece, rhetoric was the art of making plausible and convincing arguments in law courts (Olmsted 2006, 138). The success of the orator depended, not merely on the facts he claims, but more importantly on how probable he can make these 'facts' seem to his audiences, most importantly the judge and the jury. Since that time rhetoric has been known as the art of the possible or the probable, a discourse to which indeterminacy and ambiguity are indispensable, and it has been regarded as mainly concerned with the contingent, possible and probable (Gaonkar 2006, 5). Since the incidents being arbitrated are now over and no eyewitnesses are available, the orator has retrospectively to reconstruct the past event. So he engages with the virtual events that are most likely to have happened. In order to prove that his version of events is more likely than the opponent's version, the orator has to carry out probabilistic methods of reasoning in which the more convincing account will have the upper hand.

Thus, throughout this study I shall develop a reciprocal relationship between the possible and the probable. I shall argue that, on the one hand, the possible or virtual in Shakespeare's plays is cognitively functional in the sense that it is one of the sense-making strategies that forcefully and broadly affects the probability and intelligibility of the whole structure. On the other hand, it is through the work of probabilistic reasoning that characters in the plays can establish what might possibly have happened and even what must certainly have happened – the possible and the actual, respectively, in the fictional world. So it will be concerned with a two-way traffic between the ontologically possible and the cognitively probable. 'Probability' here will be used in its literary, common-sense meaning rather than its mathematical meaning. Although this

study preserves the ontological distinction between the actual and the possible, it foregrounds the cognitive dimension of the possible. In other words, our judgement of what is possible or actual will be subject to representational tools and cognitive processes. Likewise, even our knowledge and judgement of the actual world is subject to representation and cognition. In Chapter Three, we shall argue for a sense of 'potentialist' reality, adopted in Shakespeare's representation of the past, which shows how our image of even the actual world hovers over the senses of potentiality and cognitive functions which we have associated with the possible or virtual.

This study consists of an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. In Chapter One, we will be dealing with the plays as theatre, investigating the virtual as a potential to be actualized in the spectator's imagination, and the role played by the virtual or possible dimension in the general intelligibility of theatrical performance. It is mostly centred on the fictionality axis of possible worlds theory. I shall argue that, despite its materiality, theatre cannot dispense with the virtual domain which is created by the spectator's imagination through two main sources: theatrical signs and acts of narration in drama. We put forward a view of the fictionality of theatre that stresses its rhetorical and communicative dimension. In early modern England theorists and theatre practitioners also differed regarding the priority of either the actual or virtual components of theatre, although they all emphasized the rhetorical role through the concept of verisimilitude. In the practical part of Chapter One, I apply these observations to three examples from Shakespeare. The first concerns the Chorus in *Henry V*, whose invocations to the spectators to use their imagination show the inherent limitations of the theatrical medium and the indispensability of the virtual component in making sense of the theatrical performance. The second deals with *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the play-within-a-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It examines the effect, mostly humorous, generated when the actors play down the imaginative capacities of their audiences, which shows how essential such virtual imagining is to the understanding of the drama. In the last extended example, we will be dealing with the acts of narration in *Antony and Cleopatra* to see how the virtual reality which is invoked by narrative helps to supplement the actual material performance conditions of the stage. Through

the dramatization of the action in disparate locations, the play stresses the need for imagining the offstage events. Without the ability to imagine that other reality which the play summons up, we can hardly make full sense of the otherwise scattered and incoherent onstage happenings. These examples show the extent to which the virtual component of theatre is cognitively functional and thus forms a crucial element of any theatrical experience.

Chapter Two examines the role of the virtual events in Shakespearean drama. The virtual events comprise the scenarios which characters mentally construct to anticipate future events or conclude past ones. They interact with the actual events that have taken place or will definitely take place in the course of the action. It observes that the virtual events are no less important to the understanding of the plays than the actual events. It also argues that Shakespeare's familiarity with these concepts is due to his rhetorical training which dominated early modern education. The Chapter sketches the development of the concept of the virtual in narratology. To supplement the lack of theorizing of probability in possible worlds narratology, we shall look closely into the art of rhetoric to explore the role of the concepts of the virtual and the probable in Classical and Renaissance rhetoric. These observations will be applied to two plays from the Shakespeare canon: *Cymbeline* and *Richard II*. In the wager scene from *Cymbeline*, we see how rhetorical techniques are used to determine the probability, and consequently the possibility, of certain events having taken place in the past. The play, moreover, gives access to a rich, motley platform of virtual courses of events mentally and verbally constructed by characters, which the reader has the opportunity to compare to the actual one. *Richard II*, in contrast, allows the readers decidedly limited access to the virtual domain or the mental constructions of the main characters – namely, Bolingbroke and Richard – leaving them with only the actual events which they should use to retrospectively construct the virtual domain. This, in turn, affects the intelligibility and the interpretation of the play, for readers are exposed to a wider range of gaps which they should fill in to make sense of the whole fictional world. Both instances show how crucial an appreciation of the virtual events is to the understanding of the plays.

In Chapter Three, I set out to demonstrate that even our knowledge and representation of the actual world sustain the two features we associate with

virtuality: potentiality and probability. I explore these questions in the context of the debate between possible worlds theorists and postmodern scholars regarding the nature of the actual world and historical truth. In these debates I employ the notion of 'potentialist' realism proposed by J. Fisher Solomon which preserves the factuality of historical discourse while admitting the shaping effect of representation on historical truth. These debates are used to reflect on a similar controversy in Shakespeare's histories regarding the nature of historical truth, with the two positions of what I call 'naked' and 'apparelled' truths. Taking the three parts of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* as a case study, I argue that characters in Shakespeare's history plays always treat historical truth as 'apparelled' rather than 'naked' and that they are acutely aware of the effect of representation on historical facts. Accordingly, the potentialist and cognitive nature of historical representation is foregrounded in the characters' telling and retelling of historical events. These aspects are highlighted in three main areas: the use of emplotment, tropes and figures, and theatricality. I argue that characters seem to be so endlessly trapped in the process of representation that even when they strive to present their claims as naked truths, they can only do so within the representational frameworks of which they are part.

Chapter Four takes up the study of counterfactual statements in Shakespearean drama. The study of counterfactuals has grown into an interdisciplinary enterprise that ranges through the disciplines of philosophy, politics, sociology, psychology, literary theory and many others. The chapter argues that, through the use of counterfactuals, Shakespearean drama opens up the inherent potentiality of the virtual events by exploring what might have been alongside what has been. Through the use of counterfactuals, the plays employ purely possible scenarios in order to create a coherent and cognitively intelligible structure by the use of the sense-making strategy of causation. The Chapter shows how characters in these plays assess the significance of what really happened by contemplating what could have possibly happened. The final result of exploring these negative ontologies is for characters to make sense of their lives by attributing success and failure to contingent actions that could simply have turned out otherwise. The chapter examines four dimensions of the use of counterfactuals in Shakespeare's plays. The first is the psychological, which investigates the kind of responses, positive or negative,

characters make when contemplating counterfactual scenarios. The second dimension is the historical (political), which shows that counterfactuals are mainly used to ascribe blame to certain political figures for mishaps they could have avoided but did not. The third is the philosophical, which examines the anti-deterministic position implied by the use of counterfactuals, and gives more room for human agency. The last dimension is the literary, which surveys the implications of the use of counterfactuals for the theory of plot models as developed in the possible worlds tradition. I argue that the existence of counterfactuals proves the advantages of possible worlds models over the established traditional plot models.

This study can be seen as a contribution to the already massive body of contemporary Shakespeare criticism. Although some of its findings, especially in Chapter Three regarding history and with regard to political and historical determinism in Chapter Four, might have historical and political implications, the study does not directly engage in historicist readings of the plays. Rather, it can be seen in the light of some new critical trends that aim to supersede purely historicist approaches and bring back some formal and aesthetic concerns that have been long absent from critical debates in Shakespeare studies. I am here thinking mainly of Stephen Cohen's *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism* (2007) as a plea for joining the forces of formal and historicist tools in the analysis of the Shakespearean text. I also invoke the work on 'new aestheticism' as mainly exemplified by John J. Joughin's and Simon Malpas's (2003) collection, *The New Aestheticism*. The editors are abundantly clear about the openness of aesthetics to possibility: "Tied to actuality, in ways that cannot be reduced to the empirical, aesthetic experience allows for the creation of 'possible worlds' as well as for critical experimentation" (2003, 2). Particularly relevant in this collection is Thomas Docherty's essay in which he calls for education to "be more hospitable to the possibilities for culture and to culture as potentiality" (ibid., 33).

This study also makes a contribution to the discipline of rhetoric by incorporating the possible worlds concept of the possible or virtual into the study of rhetoric. By combining rhetorical analysis with notions derived from modality, virtuality and possible worlds, it provides a new view of how rhetorical

argumentation works in the early modern period. It also helps find new horizons for the study of rhetoric in early modern drama. The nature of my endeavour here has been essentially interdisciplinary, stemming from the conviction that no single discourse can account solely for such a complex phenomenon as that of possibility; hence the deployment of disciplines including philosophy, rhetoric, narratology, and literary theory. In Chapter Four, we will see how an investigation of the significance of counterfactuality in psychology, philosophy, political sciences, and other fields helps us understand the significance of counterfactual statements in Shakespeare. This study also contributes to the growing interest in the narrative elements of Shakespeare's plays and in theatre in general. In recent decades, many studies have been conducted in this area, such as Wilson (1995), Hardy (1997), Meek (2009) and Gruber (2010). In this study we shall consider some other aspects of narration in Shakespeare, such as its role in creating an imaginary reality, the relation between the onstage and offstage, its role in the representation of history and so on. Finally, we will refer in the Conclusion to some other areas where the possible worlds framework can be of use, such as genre theory, literary adaptation, and teaching literature.

Chapter One

The Possible Worlds of Performance: The Virtual in Shakespeare's Theatre

HIPPOLYTA. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

THESEUS. The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worse are no worse if imagination amend them.

HIPPOLYTA. It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.

THESEUS. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men.

(A Midsummer Night's Dream; 5.1.207-12)

In this extract, Hippolyta and Theseus are exchanging views about the very nature of the theatrical performance. Hippolyta complains about the awkward production of *Pyramus and Thisbe* by the Athenian mechanicals. In a characteristically metatheatrical remark, Theseus replies that any theatrical performance '*in this kind*' is inherently limited; and since what appears onstage is essentially not the thing itself, onstage happenings are but '*shadows*.' For these onstage happenings and objects to have any meaning, they have to be supplemented by their spectators' imagination to '*amend*' them and unleash their potential. Theseus shows that it is the spectators' imagination, not the players', which undertakes that amending. It is the 'imaginative forces,' as the Chorus in *Henry V* is going to call it, of the spectators that will turn the performers of this '*silliest stuff*' into '*excellent men*.' But how does imagination amend the theatrical performance? Obviously, it does that by helping the spectators project the absent, virtual or possible reality of which the performance is a representation, and supporting it by filling in the gaps and inferring the real things of which stage figures and events are mere signifiers. Employing terms that Theseus did not, we can say that in spite of its material

dimension, or perhaps because of it, theatrical performance is in need of the virtual or possible dimension if it is to seem meaningful to its spectators.

These questions will occupy us for the rest of this chapter. The chapter explores the role of the possible or virtual in Shakespeare's theatre. It examines how the special nature of the theatrical medium, with its basic dimension of actuality, where the setting and characters are materially present to the spectators, might seem to preclude any sense of virtuality. In this chapter I argue for two things: the first is that, notwithstanding its materiality, the space for the possible in the theatre is secured through its reference to a possible world or virtual space outside the material confines in the theatre. So in theatre we can discern two components through which spectators can make sense of the performance: the first is the actual component, which consists of everything that is shown onstage and can be accessed through spectators' seeing or hearing. It includes the actors and their actions, other staged happenings, sets and props, and the theatrical space. The second component is the virtual domain, which consists of everything that the spectator cannot access through the senses, but has to imagine and mentally elicit if the theatrical performance is to make some sense for him/her. It can be accessed through understanding the signification of theatrical signs by recognizing the referential status of the narrative passages scattered throughout the play, and imagining what virtually happens offstage. The virtual can also be understood as a possible world invoked by the theatrical performance. Or it can be seen as the theatre's category of the 'unperformed' and/or 'unperformable,' in parallel to Gerald Prince's similar categories in the domain of narrative fiction.¹ Or as Katharine Eisaman Maus would have it, the virtual stands for the 'undisplayed' or 'undisplayable' in the theatre (1995, 32). The binary of the actual and virtual is also variably expressed as a binary between 'real/possible,' 'onstage/offstage,' 'theatrical space time/dramatic space time,' and so on.

The second thing I argue for is that the virtual or possible domain in Shakespeare's theatre is by no means less important than the actual one, and it can even be said to play a far greater role than the actual one in understanding the theatrical performance as a whole. The virtual in Shakespeare's plays works as a potential content latent within the actual component that enriches it and supplements its inherent limitations. It is that which helps create content and

meaning out of the disparate physical movement and signs which constitute the theatrical performance. As such the virtual is cognitively functional in the sense that it is a sense-making strategy that forcefully and broadly affects the probability and intelligibility of the whole structure. So we will be concerned with the movement from the ontologically possible to the cognitively probable. It is through the interaction between the actual component and the virtual potential that spectators can make sense of the theatrical event. However, as the actual component is taken for granted, it is the virtual component that will occupy our attention in this chapter. Below I shall first delineate the theoretical basis of the virtual in theatre from the perspective of the theories of fictionality in theatre. Then I shall attempt to contextualize this view of the virtual in early modern theatrical theory and practice, and finally I will look into how Shakespeare employed the virtual or possible component in his theatrical practice, using three plays as case studies: *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Theories of fictionality and the virtual in Theatre

In this section I shall put forward a theoretical view of the virtual that stresses its rhetorical and communicative potential. However, any enquiry into the possible or virtual component of theatre is inextricably linked to, and studied in terms of, the question of the fictionality of theatre; so the best place to look into the function of the virtual in theatre is in theories of fictionality in theatre, since fictionality is usually, though not always, understood in spatial terms as a distant foreign possible and virtual reality. A work is regarded as fictional insofar as it posits a foreign reality, a possible world situated 'out there,' somewhere else than the present situation of the receiver of the text: "Fictional worlds' are easily thought of as corners of the universe" (Walton 1990, 41). This spatial concept is always understood in terms of the referential function of the texts: they refer to a reality 'outside' of themselves. And reference, in a sense, implies an element of 'distancing' or even 'absence.' Robert Weimann contends that "representation . . . is vitally connected with the imaginary product and effect of rendering absent meanings, ideas and images of artificial persons' thoughts and actions" (2000, 11). Literary scholars find it tempting sometimes to speak about this referential, absent reality in terms of 'worlds'. They speak, for example, about the 'world' of

Hamlet, the 'world' of the pastoral, the 'world' of Charles Dickens, and so forth. So, we will be mainly approaching the question of the possible and virtual in theatre through theories of the fictionality of theatre.²

Nevertheless, the study of theatre's fictionality is underdeveloped. This is because theories of fictionality are mainly and primarily designed to deal with the problem of fictionality in narrative fiction, and only secondarily and marginally, if ever, do they deal with the question of fictionality in theatre. Many reasons lurk behind this prejudice. One reason is that most of these theories are suggested by linguists or philosophers of language, which is why they account mainly for verbal narrative, and when they address non-verbal media, they rely on their initial account of verbal narrative. The second reason is the association of fiction with narrative genres. This has resulted from a certain historical development that settled on 'fiction' as a designation for these narrative genres in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Cohn 1990, 11). The third reason lies in the fact that, except perhaps for narratives (and films), all other media use some material objects to convey their message, as is the case with sculpture, painting, and theatre. According to Daphna Ben Chaim, in the case of narrative and film, "'fictionality' (nonreality) is inherent in the medium itself . . . Both the novel and the film have a built-in fictionality (neither use realities to represent nonrealities)" (quoted in Power 2008, 24). The case of theatre is even more complicated; thanks to the real presence of the stage sets and props as well as actors, the fictional aspect of theatre (its virtual reality) might be irrecoverably overridden by its material aspect. As Christian Metz points out, "The actor's bodily presence contradicts the temptation . . . to perceive him as a protagonist in a fictional universe . . . Because the theater is too real, theatrical fictions yield only a weak impression of reality" (1974, 9-10). This '*weak impression of reality*' resulting from the theatrical fiction makes it harder for the spectator to extract the imaginary and virtual reality from that material existence. As Rosencrantz shows regarding theatre actors, "their real presence gives them an objective reality and to transpose them into beings in an imaginary world the will of the spectator has to intervene actively, that is to say, to will to transform their physical reality into an abstraction" (quoted in Bazin 1967, 99).

This difficulty of transposing material presences in the theatre into '*beings in an imaginary world*' might seem to delimit the space occupied by possible worlds in the theatre. However, I shall argue that, on the contrary, the possible and the virtual do still occupy a pivotal role in the theatre in general and in Shakespeare in particular. Throughout this chapter, I shall show the extent to which Shakespearean theatre depends on the virtual and possible component in its effort to make sense to its spectators. Consequently, my view of fictionality is primarily rhetorical and it stresses the cognitive aspect of the virtual in Shakespeare's theatre. This view of fictionality is mainly inspired by Richard Walsh's (2007) approach to the rhetoric of fictionality. I contend that fictionality in general and the virtual in Shakespeare have a sense-making function, in that they facilitate the inferences that the spectator should make in order to lend meaning and coherence to the happenings onstage. However, this aspect of the virtual is not exhaustive and other approaches have highlighted other aspects that will prove highly relevant to the analysis of the possible or virtual in Shakespeare. Below I shall survey some of the prevalent theories of fictionality which attempt to address the question of the fictionality of theatre. First I shall look at theories for which theatre has not been the primary subject, such as the possible worlds approach (Ryan 1991; 2001) and make-believe approaches (Walton 1990). Then I shall turn to contrasting approaches taken by theatre theorists, such as theatre semiotics (Ubersfeld 1974; Elam 2002) and theatre phenomenology (States 1985) as well as approaches that tried to combine both views (Alter 1990). Lastly I shall conclude with some approaches that took fictionality as a cognitive category (Saltz 2006; Walsh 2007), which I think can better account for the role of the possible in theatre.³ Throughout these discussions I shall focus on the two concepts of the virtual and the actual, and observe how different theories have attempted (or failed) to integrate them both in accounting for our experience of the theatrical performance.

Let's start our survey with possible worlds theories of fictionality, which allocate privileged place to the possible and virtual. Marie-Laure Ryan (1991), for example, sees the virtual, and fictionality, as resulting from two prerequisites: recentering and embedded communicative acts. 'Recentering' consists in a movement from the actual to the virtual, and is the activity whereby the realm of actuality and possibility is shifted from the actual world to an

alternative possible world. Thus, the movement from one system of reality to another, say from the actual world to the world of the fictional text, necessitates an act of recentering: “For the duration of our immersion in a work of fiction, the realm of possibilities is thus recentered around the sphere which the narrator presents as the actual world. This recentering pushes the reader into a new system of actuality and possibility” (1991, 22). Accordingly, Ryan is drawing a distinction between three modal systems. The first is the Actual World, the world which we inhabit. The second is the sum of textual universes at the centre of which is the Textual Actual World. The Textual Actual World is supposed to be an exact image of another system of reality outside itself, which she calls the Textual Reference World. The fictional actions and happenings are assumed to take place in the Textual Reference World which, except in the case of the unreliable narrator, we assume to be identical with what the text establishes as the true thing, or the Textual Actual World. The possible reality invoked by the text or the performance is tantamount to the Textual Reference World. Ryan’s second prerequisite for virtuality and fiction-making is the embedded speech act, which serves to separate the virtual speaker in the text from the actual author of that text. The introduction of this new voice marks the division between the actual elements and their virtual counterparts: between author and narrator, respectively (in narrative fiction) and between actor and character, respectively (in dramatic performance). In her later work, M.-L. Ryan (2001) investigates in detail the nature of virtuality and stresses the potential aspect of the virtual on the level of text or performance: “The virtuality of texts and musical scores stems from the complexity of the mediation between what is there, physically, and what is made out of it.” This process of the transformation from the physically actual to the mentally virtual involves filling in the gaps as well as “simulating in imagination the depicted scenes, characters, and events, and spatializing the text by following the threads of various thematic webs” (2001, 45).

When we apply Ryan’s account to Shakespeare, it can prove particularly fruitful in that it raises awareness of the spatial dimension we are asked to stimulate by the likes of the Chorus in *Henry V* and Gower in *Pericles*. It is the creation of this possible ‘elsewhere’ reality, warranted by the act of recentering, which helps spectators mentally move to that realm. However, Ryan’s

conviction that the textual actual world is an exact image of the reference world is problematic in the case of the theatrical performance, for the physical performance is too limited to give an exact picture of the virtual reality to which it is referring. Yet, this inherent serious limitation of the first model can be counterbalanced if we stress the potentiality element of the virtual, which Ryan (2001) has strongly emphasized. The potential force of the virtual is greater than the material nature of the performance. In our analyses below we shall encounter this urge to move beyond the crippling reality of the performance and to unleash the potential forces of the imagination to supplement that reality.

Another fruitful approach to the interaction between the actual and virtual is advanced by Kendall Walton's theory of make-believe. Walton addresses the place of the virtual nature of fiction by assimilating it to children's games of make-believe. According to him, representational arts are advanced forms of such games. The most crucial element in these games is the prop. Props are objects that are used, according to the set agreement among the participants, to prescribe something to be imagined. Thus, the relation between the actual and the virtual is embedded in the relation between the prop and the imagined object it prescribes. For example, in a given game children may agree to regard any stump as a bear. So, when any of them sees a stump, they have to imagine that they have seen a bear, and act accordingly: seem horrified, escape, or call for help. The stump here is used as a prop that prescribes imaginings: "Props are generators of fictional truths, things which, by virtue of their nature or existence, make propositions fictional" (1990, 37). Representational works of art also generate fictional truths within their worlds. Thus, the difference between truth and fiction is that the former is to be believed while the latter is to be imagined (or make-believed). Elements in a theatrical performance are supposed to function as props in games of make-believe in the sense that they will prescribe imaginings and consequently generate fictional truths. However, performance props are distinctive in that, while verbal narrative depends on 'description,' theatre depends on 'depiction.' In other words, they use iconic signs that offer the likeness of the things imagined and so make more vivid imaginings. Thus the virtual reality imagined through theatrical signs is more detailed and vivid than that invoked by narrative fiction.

Walton's theory affords revealing insights about the role of the virtual in Shakespeare's theatre. It places a due balance between the virtual or the possible (the imaginings prescribed) and the actual (the real objects used as props). As it views fiction as a cooperative enterprise, or a game of two participating sides, it sets the role of audiences on more solid ground. The role it delegates to spectators is crucial for a theatre like the Elizabethan theatre. As we shall see below, Shakespeare's hints about the theatrical conventions, especially those voiced in the Chorus of *Henry V*, are more geared to performer-spectator cooperation than anything else. However, the excessive role he ascribes to iconicity by regarding theatre signs as mainly iconic is problematic, as we shall see later.

The primacy of the virtual or the actual components of theatre has been a matter of dissent between theatre semioticians and phenomenologists. Theatre semioticians address the question of the place of the virtual or possible in theatre through their discussions of theatre as a sign system. In most of these accounts they privilege the virtual, or what they consider to be the referential reality established by the signs, at the expense of the actual which is reduced to a mere vehicle to communicate the virtual. Keir Elam, for example, approaches fictionality in the theatre in terms of 'possible worlds'. To him, narrative worlds remain merely fictional, while dramatic worlds have the opportunity of being realized in a physical context during the performance. Whereas the imaginative reality invoked by narrative fictions is 'remote' and purely fictional,

dramatic worlds, on the other hand, are presented to the spectator as 'hypothetically actual' constructs, since they are 'seen' in progress 'here and now' without narratorial mediation. Dramatic performance metaphorically translates conceptual access to possible worlds into 'physical' access, since the constructed world is apparently shown to the audience—that is, ostended—rather than being stipulated or described. (Elam 2002, 98)

Elam speaks about this 'actualization' as just a 'hypothetical' one. He sets the relation between the real and the fictional on clearer ground, as he regards the physical objects and real actors as mere signs which enable the spectator "to translate what he sees and hears into something quite different: a fictional dramatic world characterized by a set of dramatic properties, a set of agents and a course of time-bound events" (ibid., 87). This fictional world, to be sure, is also located in a "spatiotemporal elsewhere" (ibid., 88). Semioticians thus believe that, although the actual, material components of the theatre exist, "they

are at the same time denied, marked with a minus sign” (Ubersfeld 1974, 24). This view is far from balanced, since it never seeks to integrate the virtual and the actual, and it does not show, if it is reduced to a mere sign system, how theatre is different from other sign systems. If we considered theatre objects as mere signifiers, we would render their existence rudimentary, for “might it not be preferable to read the plays with a view to imagining their realization in performance?” (Power 2008, 20).

Against the semiotic view stands the phenomenological view, which stresses the actual, material aspect of theatre, even at the expense of the possible or virtual aspect. Phenomenologists capitalize on the material and corporeal dimension of theatre and its influence on shaping the perceptual experience of the spectators. They complain about the undue neglect of this aspect of theatre due to the prevalence of mimetic theories of art which begin with Aristotle and are manifested in the semiotic theories of the twentieth century. According to Bert O. States, “The longstanding problem of mimetic theory is that it is obliged to define art in terms of what it is not, to seek a source of artistic representation in the subject matter of art”(1985, 5). However, this is not to denounce the semiotic project; rather, as States happily points out, semiotics and phenomenology are complementary and they provide us with a binocular vision, whereby we can view the world both phenomenally and significantly (ibid., 8). As we have shown above, some scholars such as Christian Metz also view theatre as too materially real to allow for fictional construction. According to this account, “in order to engage imaginatively with a fictional world, it is necessary for the spectator to exclude all consideration of reality. To the extent that ‘reality’ is perceived, a fictional unreality loses its force” (Power 2008, 22).

A theory that attempts to bring the threads of the previous discussions together by striking a balance between the roles of the actual and virtual in theatre is put forward by Jean Alter (1990). In *A Socio-semiotic Theory of Theatre*, Alter stresses the fictional as well as the material aspects of the stage. According to her, any theatrical performance serves two functions: the referential and the performant. The referential function is semiotic and it consists in a communicative act whereby the theatrical performance conveys

information about a fictional story: "To the extent that it always tells an imaginary story, theatre thus always offers fiction" (ibid., 10).

The second function of a theatrical performance is the performant function which has nothing to do with telling a story. Rather, it is related to theatre as a spectacle or public event that refers solely to itself and whose pleasure stems from the performance of its agents. This dispensability of signs, or desemiotization (ibid., 92), does away with the doubleness essential to the referential function: here actors do not act out or refer to characters but to themselves. Instead of referring the spectator to the imaginary story-space, the performant function focuses his/her attention on the material stage space. Actors' actions become important in themselves as mere gestures. Of these two functions, Alter considers the referential function to be the basic one (ibid., 32). However, in some theatrical shows, especially comic ones, emphasis is laid on, and attention directed to, the performer's skills and abilities, which will overshadow any external story that might be told through that performance. In that case, the performant function will override the referential function (ibid., 43). Theatre shares the performant function with sports, circus, dancing and the other performing arts, and shares its referential function with narrative and most forms of verbal literature.

David Saltz (2006) puts forward another view of the fictionality of theatre that has affinities with the 'seeing as' notion or Walton's 'make-believe' approach. Saltz adheres to a cognitive view of fictionality in theatre: "Fiction functions as a cognitive template that informs an audience's perception of reality on stage, structuring and giving meaning to the actual events that transpire on stage" (ibid., 203). In performance spectators can interpret the material happening as referring to something else without losing touch with its materiality. This cognitive function of fictionality he calls 'infiction' which he differentiates from 'outfiction,' or the virtual referential reality which the theatrical event represents: "Let's call the fictional schema that structures the performance event the infiction, which we can distinguish from the narrative content that we extract from the performance event, which I shall call the outfiction"(ibid., 214). Thus, the spectator has the main input which the theatrical performance, to which he applies these fictional strategies or 'infiction.' Out of the performance and the infiction, the spectator is able to

extract the absent, referential reality which the material performance is supposed to stand for, or the 'outfiction.' And this way we end up with a "triadic relationship between the spectator, the performance and the fictional world" (ibid., 215).

In the light of the above discussions, I shall put forward a view of the possible and the virtual or of fictionality in general that stresses their rhetorical role in the theatre. By the virtual or possible I mean the imaginary reality established by the theatrical performance and which the spectator is invited to project as the referential, absent reality which the performance is supposed to represent. It is chiefly achieved via the use of theatrical signs and theatre narrative acts. They both help the spectator make inferences about what is happening offstage and so enable him/her to create a coherent whole out of the disparate onstage happenings. I shall briefly sketch the nature of theatre signs and dramatic narration and then show the role of the virtual in the theatrical performance.

Theatrical signs have been the chief concern of theatre semiotics. Semioticians since C. S. Peirce classify signs into icons, indices and symbols. Theatre signs are largely indexical, that is, they are "causally connected with their objects, often physically or through contiguity" (Elam 2002, 19). Cause-and-effect relationships form a remarkably wide category, and so does physical contiguity: stage sets and props are mostly indexical, such as crowns that indicate kingship, or swords that signify knighthood, soldiers and drums that indicate a war, or costumes that refer to social status and historical periods. One subcategory of metonymy is synecdoche, which is the substitution of part for whole. Thus, one or two soldiers can stand for an army, one or two attendants can stand for the king's train, or a tent can stand for the large battlefield or a cross for a Church, and so on. Symbols are signs that are not connected to their referent by virtue of similarity or physical contiguity, but according to certain conventions and laws. One central example of symbols is the linguistic sign, which is only arbitrarily connected to its referent. Even if we set aside the large role of dialogue in drama, it should be remembered "that theatrical performance as a whole is symbolic, since it is only through convention that the spectator takes stage events as standing for something other than themselves" (ibid., 24).

Iconic signs are those which are related to their referents in terms of similarity. The iconic sign might be misconceived and would thus lead the viewer to confuse theatre with reality. This confusion has resulted from the combination of two main factors: the materiality of the stage sign and its alleged similarity to its referent. The icon is sometimes mistaken for the thing it stands for. As Russell West observes, “The more insistently iconic the sign’s functioning, the more powerfully it tends to replace the thing itself, generating a ‘reality effect,’ such that we tend to forget the existence of the ‘real world’”(2002, 41). We will later see how the insistence on iconicity causes problems for theatrical performances, especially in our analysis of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

The second wellspring of the virtual in theatre is dramatic narration. Dramatic narrative requires the spectator to use his/her imagination to ‘see’ with the ‘mind’s eye’ pictures and actions as preconfigured through language. Theatre narrative, moreover, evokes a distant, absent reality outside of the ‘here’ and ‘now’ of the theatrical performance; it is an elsewhere ‘there’ and ‘then’, the only access to it being granted via the narrative language (see Wilson 1995, 28-9, 32-3). The power of language to create mental pictures that are so detailed as to compensate for the absence of the thing being described has long been recognized and appreciated with the use of such tropes as *ekphrasis* and *enargeia*. The latter term, *enargeia*, indicates the realization of the potentiality of the virtual. The term was originally used by Aristotle to stand for the ‘actual’ in his distinction between the virtual and the actual. To describe a descriptive passage with *enargeia* means that it is so powerful that it can render the subject of description (which is absent and not yet actualized) as if it present before the eye.⁴ This power of language to make present to the mind’s eye what is physically absent is supported by cognitive sciences. According to psychologist Daniel Gilbret, “the region of the brain that is normally activated when you see objects with your eyes – a sensory area called the visual cortex – is also activated when you inspect mental images with your mind’s eye” (quoted in Gruber 2010, 29). Playwrights have long traded on this imaginative faculty to generate images of actions happening offstage which they do not want to present onstage for one reason or another. So these are the main two sources

of the virtual or possible in theatre, and now we turn to a discussion of its functions.

Thus we have shown that the virtual in theatre is mainly evoked through theatre signs and acts of narration. Now it is time to put forward a view of the role of the virtual or possible in theatre which capitalizes on the virtual as a cognitive, sense-making category in the sense that it helps render the performance more intelligible to the spectators. This position is rooted in the view of the fictional world as an entity that enjoys both totality and coherence. The fictional world is, writes Doreen Maître, “seen as a totality, a coherent whole. It satisfies certain *coherence* criteria, as does the actual world, and in our attempt to understand it we employ certain plausibility criteria” (1983, 29; emphasis in original). In a theatrical performance, the spectator draws inferences from the actual happenings onstage to create a virtual reality. The spectator can also flexibly modify his/her inferences and imaginings so as to arrive at the most plausible and coherent image of that virtual or fictional world. The virtual, then, is essential to our understanding and appreciation of the theatrical performance. Without the spectator’s ability to create the imaginative, virtual world out of the actual presences onstage, the performance will fall short of making any probable, coherent sense to that spectator. Not only does the virtual serve as a referential world to which the theatrical signs are supposed to point, but it also helps to bring into a coherent whole the sum total of stage persons, things and happenings that would otherwise seem scattered, incoherent and irrelevant. This way the ontological category of the possible fosters the cognitive category of the probable. As the possible is inextricably related to the probable, it can best be approached through the field of rhetoric, which employs the probable for communicative and persuasive ends.

I shall base my account of the communicative or rhetorical function of fictionality on some aspects of relevance theory, advanced by Sperber and Wilson (1986) as well as Richard Walsh’s (2007) theory of the rhetoric of fictionality. Rejecting the traditional, coded model of communication, Sperber and Wilson put forward an ‘ostension-inference’ model, which presupposes a mutual cognitive environment for a successful communication process. According to that model, the audience depends on inference rather than coded information in making sense of the message, and thus even truth assumptions

are subordinated to relevance assumptions. The audience's interest is to 'maximize' the relevance of the information given to him/her. This view has deep implications for a theory of fictionality in general and the fictionality of theatre in particular. Richard Walsh builds on this theory to advance a rhetorical theory of fictionality, according to which "the problem of fictionality is not, after all, a problem of truthfulness, but a problem of relevance"(2007, 30). Thus fictionality ceases to be an ontological question and becomes a pragmatic, contextual assumption which obliges the recipient of fiction to treat all its references as such. Following Sperber and Wilson, Walsh talks of a 'poetic effect' of fiction, one in which the recipient accumulates and gathers scattered references and information to arrive at incrementally optimal relevance (ibid., 29). If fictionality is mainly communicative, quantitatively oriented cognitive category, then it is primarily a rhetorical category: "The important categorical distinction, then, is rhetorical rather than generic. It is the quality of fictionality rather than the genre of fiction that provides for the distinction's theoretical integrity"(ibid., 40).

We can approach theatre's fictionality through the relevance theory of communication and the rhetorical theory of fictionality. The theatrical event is, above all, a communicative event. The ostensive quality of theatrical information is evident since, more than any other literary form, theatre chiefly depends on showing or ostension. However, in so far as the spectator is concerned, his/her role depends mainly on inference due both to the metaphorical nature of the theatrical signs and also to the incapacity of theatre to present everything onstage. The spectator has to bring together all available, relevant information and accumulates all the relevant references in order to arrive at the pragmatically working inferences that can hold the whole presentation in a coherent and probable manner. In order to make sense of the actual things and events onstage, spectators have to use all these inferences (or the virtual reality being evoked out of them) and weave them into an intelligible whole. And it is this disparity between the input used to make these inferences and the resultant possible world forged by the imagination that marks the potential capacity of the virtual.

A communicative model presupposes the mutual agreement of and collaboration between the two sides of the communication. We can better appreciate the communicative and rhetorical aspects of fictionality if we align

them with its aspect as a game, which we have come across in our discussion of Kendall Walton's theory of fiction as a game of make-believe. In both cases it should be conceived as a cooperative enterprise. As players in the game cannot carry on if there is no mutual agreement on set rules, so the game of theatre's fictionality cannot be established if the spectator is not part of that theatrical event. And in order for them to take part, spectators have to rely not only on the actual presences onstage, but also, and even more importantly, have to put to use their imaginative resources in order to supply the paucity of factual information and enhance its relevance and hence probability. We will see that clearly in our discussion of *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The cooperative nature of the game means that it is voluntary, in the sense that the spectator can take many places: he/she can be completely in the game (belief of the reality of the game), completely out of the game (disbelief of the reality of the game), or can keep switching places along the duration of the theatrical event. In the first and second positions the game is over for the spectator. Make-believe is related to the irreducibly dual nature of fiction; according to Walton (1990, 191), our pre-theoretical attitude about fiction is recognizably schizophrenic, and it consists in the polarity of our being physically separate from but psychologically connected to the fictional worlds. Marie-Laure Ryan (1991, 21), we have shown, approaches this duality in terms of possible worlds, using theories of David Lewis and Nicholas Rescher on possible worlds. These two accounts help us, on the one hand, to privilege the autonomy of the fictional world and also, on the other hand, still remain aware of the ontological differences between the actual and the fictional.

Only in the third position, when they keep coming in and out of the game, can spectators be active participants of the game. This implies that the spectator is aware of the actual and the virtual worlds simultaneously: "this attempt to determine the coherence and the plausibility of the fictional world takes place by means of the *superimposition* both of the actual world on the fictional world and of the fictional world on the actual world" (Maître 1983, 73; emphasis in original). Robert Newsom (1989, 160-1) observes that such a spectator is neither a believer nor disbeliever in the game, but is rather a doubter. The doubter is one who never believes everything nor who withdraws from make believe for in both cases the game is over; rather, the doubter

believes in the game but not slavishly: he reserves the right to step back and contemplate, after all it is his own game; this way he is rewriting the text. And it is in this context that the concept of probability starts to emerge. The doubting spectator, who keeps switching positions between the actual and the fictional, will be able to assess the probability of the fictional work by constantly comparing it to the actual world. Thus probability is setting the two worlds in dialogue and creating communication. "It is probability that makes the communication possible (even if it remains logically impossible) and that mediates between the real and fictional worlds, without simply eradicating the distinction between them and therefore without entirely ignoring the impermissibility of that communication"(ibid., 159).

Up to now we have surveyed the prevalent theories of the fictionality of theatre and examined the place they give to the virtual dimension of the theatrical performance. We have seen how some theories lean toward one end of the virtual or the actual in the theatre, while others try to strike a difficult balance between the two poles. I have concluded that the importance of the virtual in theatre consists in the role it plays in the overall intelligibility and probability of the whole theatrical event. It is through stipulating the virtual or possible dimension that spectators can make sense of the theatrical event. The spectator is less concerned about the truthfulness of that fictional world than about its relevance, comprehensibility and ability to make sense. In order to construct that sense, the spectators use all the inferences they can elicit from the actual happenings and form a virtual reality out of it. This is central to the view of fictionality as a game or communicative category that enables the spectators to make sense out of the material happenings in the theatrical performance. However, the view I have advanced here does not exhaust of the function of fictionality and the virtual in theatre; rather I shall draw on all the views mentioned above by Ryan, Walton, Alter, theatre semioticians, and others in the analysis of the plays below. As the discussion in this section has been mainly theoretical, in the next section we need to contextualize our account of the virtual in theatre within the early modern theatrical theories and practices.

The Virtual in Renaissance Dramatic Theory

In the last section we sketched the main approaches to the problem of fictionality in theatre and concluded with a view that stresses the rhetorical or communicative role of the virtual in theatrical performance. But the main aim of this chapter is to enquire into the role of the virtual in Shakespearean theatre and how he manages to treat these two opposing poles and define his art accordingly. Crucial to this enquiry, and perhaps missing from the above theories, is the recognition that fictionality in the theatre is a historically specific category. It is shaped both by the literary (and theatrical) consciousness of any period or any writer and the material conditions at work in that period. Thus, in order to account satisfactorily for fictionality in Shakespeare's theatre we need to look closely into the theoretical views and theatrical conventions prevalent in the Renaissance. In this section I shall contend that Renaissance literary theory and practice are not uniform, but divided between highlighting the actual and highlighting the virtual components of theatre. However, all these positions are motivated by the requirements of probability or verisimilitude of the theatrical performance. Below I shall show this polarization in Italian and English Renaissance theory, and then will demonstrate how this is manifested in some dichotomies that dominated the English Renaissance theatre and finally relate that to the rhetorical concept of verisimilitude in the Renaissance.

Theatre critics and playwrights during the Renaissance were also aware of the inherent duality of the actual and virtual components of theatre and they explore the possible manipulations of the relation between the actual and virtual components of theatre. The focus on either the virtual imaginary and fictional or the actual, physical and material elements of the drama has led scholars to discern two modes of playing in the Renaissance stage: the presentational and representational modes. Robert Weimann proposes

a distinction between 'presentation' and 'representation.' Each of these theatrical practices draws upon a different register of imaginary appeal and 'puissance' and each serves a different purpose of playing. While the former derives its primary strength from the immediacy of the physical act of histrionic delivery, the latter is vitally connected with the imaginary product and effect of rendering absent meanings, ideas, and images of artificial persons' thoughts and actions. (2000, 11; see also Fass 1995, 54-63)⁵

To employ Alter's terms, in the presentational mode the performant function of playing is foregrounded, while in the representational mode, it is the referential function which is foregrounded. Theories of drama in the Renaissance polarized around the performant and referential positions – or the presentational and representational modes, respectively. These different positions were triggered mainly within the context of the controversy over the unities of place and time.

A good place to start is with Italian Renaissance literary criticism, where critics engaged in heated debates about questions raised by reading Aristotle's *Poetics*. One of these questions was about the extent to which the playwright can depend on the audience's imagination to understand the theatrical performance. The work of two critics, Ludovico Castelvetro and Francesco Buonamici, is particularly relevant in this regard.⁶

Ludovico Castelvetro highlights the role of the actual component of theatre. All other aspects of drama should be modelled according to how well they influence the audience. Castelvetro's expectations of the audience are very low. He assumes that, as drama is always performed in public, the audience must consist of ignorant crowds. These are characterized, according to Castelvetro, by an exclusive belief in their senses, and thus are notoriously lacking in imagination. In other words, they can understand only the actual component of theatre and have no access to its virtual component. They cannot differentiate the thing represented from its representation, and likewise cannot separate the actual time from the performance time. Castelvetro writes: "Nor is it possible to make them believe that several days and nights have passed when they know through their senses that only a few hours have passed, *since no deception can take place in them which the senses recognize as such*" (quoted in Weinberg 1961, 504; emphasis in original). While epic can narrate in a few hours what happened over many years, drama is incapable of doing this since it "spends as many hours in representing things as was taken by the actions themselves" (1964, 310). That is, drama has to stick to the unities of place and time since it lacks the narrative component that epic enjoys, and also because its material component imposes restrictions on what can be imagined. Thus, in this view of drama, the only reality that the audience can apprehend is the actual, material reality of the dramatic performance, and so it would be pointless to speak of a referential world or virtual domain outside this reality which the

audience has to conjure up. Castelvetro's poetics is thus essentially presentational in the sense mentioned above.

Francesco Buonamici, on the other hand, gives a larger space to the virtual aspect of the theatre. He disagrees with Castelvetro about the imaginative abilities of the audiences. According to Buonamici, spectators can differentiate between the representation and the thing represented:

By not distinguishing them Castelvetro generates confusion and he also confuses the nature of the thing represented with the nature of the thing representing . . . And he gives little credit to the intelligence of the auditor of the representation, if the latter cannot discern the time of the representation from that represented. Finally, he does not distinguish those people who are part of the action from the spectator. (quoted in Weinberg 1961, 695)

If Castelvetro's audiences cannot distinguish imitation from reality, for Buonamici, "The spectator is constantly aware that he is seeing a spectacle, not a real action. He knows that what he sees on the stage are 'signs' of an action, and that an operation of his own mind is necessary at every step to pass from the sign to the thing signified" (ibid.). Although Buonamici has higher expectations of the audience than Castelvetro does, he still thinks that the audience's imagination should not be stretched too far by being presented with places and times too far away. The closer the places, the easier the imagining process and the higher the pleasure: "It is true that the more the time of the representation conformed to the time of the action represented, the easier it would be to imagine it (quoted in ibid., 697). Buonamici's poetics, then, is mainly representational and he allows for the existence of a virtual, referential reality outside of, and removed from the actual, material reality of the dramatic performance.

In English Renaissance theory, we single out Sir Philip Sidney as voicing presentational poetics, by advocating the effect of the actual component of the theatre upon its virtual component. In his *Defence of Poetry* (published 1595), Sidney betrays similar concerns about violating the unities of place and time. Although he may not adopt Castelvetro's views about the audience, Sidney is uneasy about the practice of English dramatists who depicted more than one place or time in their plays. This is the main fault he spots in *Gorboduc* which, for all its grand style and moral lessons,

is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of both corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one

place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's percept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and many places inartificially imagined. ([1595] 2004, 45)

Sidney's attack is on the imposition of things 'inartificially imagined', i.e., on the burdening of the spectator's mind with imagining more than one place and more than one time. He goes on to complain about some examples where the stage is divided into two spatially distant places, such as Asia and Africa, or when the same stage place is to be imagined successively as a garden, then a rock and lastly as a cave. Sidney goes on to attack a fundamental theatrical convention, namely synecdoche: "While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?" (ibid.).

So Sidney's position is hostile to representational techniques of the sort that bears on the spectator's imagination; and he suggests sticking to the material aspect of the theatre and minimizing as much as possible the need to stretch the spectator's mind with the referential, imaginary side of the drama. However, Phyllis Rackin (1972) identifies a contradiction in Sidney's position for, on the one hand, he insists that the poet should depict a golden world and not be restrained by the cripplingly limiting real world and, on the other hand, he would have the poet adhere to the unities, which stem from a desire to adhere to the rules of the real, in Sidney's term 'brazen,' world. This survey of the three theorists shows how divided Renaissance theorists were about this issue, although more theorists were in favour of presentational than representational techniques.

Thus Renaissance literary and theatrical theory was not unified regarding the relation between the actual and the virtual in theatre. Real theatrical practice in the Renaissance was as varied as its literary theories regarding the place of the virtual relative to the actual in the theatre. Renaissance drama did not treat presentational and representational techniques as mutually exclusive, but rather employed both modes in varying degrees in different plays. In the Renaissance theatre, this tension between the actual and the possible has taken many forms and occasioned certain controversies. Although Renaissance drama strove to sustain a representational aesthetics, presentational elements were still to persist, due to many factors related to the material conditions of production in the theatre of the period. One of these factors is the nature of theatrical space.

Another factor is the popular and traditional modes of acting which the Renaissance theatre inherited from the medieval stage, and from which it was increasingly trying to dissociate itself. A third decisive factor is the unresolved relationship between text and performance and the authority which was negotiable between them. Consequently, these two dimensions of the fictional and the physical were inextricably from each other. They can be mainly investigated through their manifestation in three binaries: locus/platea, player/actor and text/performance.

The first dichotomy is that of *locus* and *platea*. In terms of theatrical space, the actual and the virtual are translated into what Robert Weimann calls the platea and the locus, respectively. The locus is an abstract and symbolic space that stands for "the localized site of self-contained representations (the purely imaginary images of the story)", while the platea is the concrete and immediate place that is "the space of the open stage, that is not isolated from the audience" (Weimann 2000, 12; see also Weimann 1978, 74). These two uses of space originated in the medieval theatre and continued well through the Renaissance. While the locus is localized, symbolic and detached from the audience, the platea is not localized, literal and attached to the audience space (see Dillon 2006, 4-5).

The senses of virtuality and actuality were also translated into the second dichotomy: between actor and player. As we have seen, the actor is someone who pretends to be somebody else, who acts out a character. In this sense he has a semiotic function whereby he refers to a fictional being other than himself (Aston and Savona 1991, 41). The player, on the other hand, acts as himself and does not impersonate any other person than himself. Acting can be said to satisfy Ryan's second prerequisite for fictionality: the embedded communicative transaction for the actor is speaking on behalf of an embedded fictional persona. Acting is related to the referential function or representational mode of theatre, while playing is related to its performant or presentational mode.⁷ But in Renaissance England, things were not so simply demarcated and there were no clear borderlines, especially in the early stages of English theatre. The two impulses were simultaneously present on the early modern stage. On the one hand, Elizabethan actors were striving to sustain a representational, illusionistic mode of acting. "Early modern actors certainly aspired to being lifelike"

(Astington 2010, 19). Joseph R. Roach (1993) observes that Elizabethan actors were keen to convey the passion of the character they were acting out. Their pursuit of persuasion led them to use the manuals of rhetoric which taught orators how to deliver their orations convincingly. B. L. Joseph (1964) goes to great lengths to prove that there was no substantial difference in the training of the Elizabethan actors and orators. All forms of acting were motivated by the requirement of probability and credibility. Such books as John Bulwer's *Chirologia: Or the Natural Language of the Hand* (1644) show how rhetorical instructions of delivery were being used even in theatrical acting. Even the doubling of roles, where one actor may be asked to play different characters, points in that direction. The ability of the audience to adapt to seeing the same actor playing different parts means that they can transcend his material presence and constantly assume the virtual referential character that he is assumed to be playing (see Bradley 1992, 18).

On the other hand, mere performing was not uncommon on the Renaissance stage. Even professional actors were sometimes performing on the stage, rather than acting.⁸ One reason for this was the spectacular origin of the English stage. Elizabethan actors descended from, and continued to have affinities with, popular performers such as singers, dancers, jugglers, and minstrels (Hattaway 1982, 19). One feature of these performances is that they were direct experiences, not based on a given script, but often improvised, and they never aspired to represent or refer to any outside reality (Weimann 2000, 60-1). An especially interesting case in point is the stage clowns, who shared features of both players and actors. Although the clowns were actors in scripted plays, their appeal depended partly on their performing skills. Some of these clowns and fools, such as William Kemp, Richard Tarlton and others, might step out of role and become directly engaged with the spectators by responding to their applause. Shakespeare makes a reference to this tradition in Hamlet's advice to the players: "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too" (3.2.34-7). This was more of a presentational than a representational performance, one in which the performant function overrides the referential one. This mode is also detrimental of the fictional status of the theatre for the players here, as Kendall Walton might

have it, have violated the rules of the fictional game. The effect of this kind of playing was to distract the spectator's attention away from the imaginary, remote fictional reality and to fix it on the immediate reality of the player's corporeal skills. Likewise, such playing abolishes the double chronology that is essential for fiction-making. For by sharing the same reality as the spectators, story time and performance time will be the same. So both modes of acting and playing feature in Renaissance stage.

The third, more encompassing dichotomy is that between text and performance. It is another site for the competing components of the virtual or imaginary (what the text stands for) and the actual material reality (what the performance stands for). This dichotomy between text and parallels the tension between the imaginary story and how that story is presented. For a long time, text and performance contested the status of authority in theatre. In Chapter 6 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle considers plot as the most important of the six elements of tragedy, and spectacle as the least important. The tension between the authority of the text and the authority of the performance has continued throughout the history of theatre. In the Shakespearean theatre, many factors might intervene to decide the authority of either the text or performance; chief among these are the material conditions of performance in the Renaissance public theatres as well as the symbolic value accorded to the Shakespearean text throughout the centuries. The authority with which the text has been endowed is motivated by an artistic impulse and is reflects a literary bias. The text is a representational medium and has a permanence that elevates it to the status of art in contrast to the ephemeral nature of theatrical performance.

However, this textual tendency was not as dominant in the Renaissance theatre as we might think. We have seen how the performant function was as strong and counterbalanced the textual or referential function in the Elizabethan theatre. Moreover, managers and other participants in the theatrical performance may have made suggestions and alterations to the text or promptbook. This dichotomy also has a bearing on the preferences of the political authority. Textually-based representation is generally preferred by authorities, for it regulates what is presented in contrast to sheer performance which is not controllable: "Written texts, like characters, are fixed, and therefore more susceptible to control than live improvisational performers" (Soule 2000,

116). This dichotomy between text and performance will feature in our analysis of the plays in this chapter and we will revisit it also in Chapter Four in relation to the question of determinism in text and performance.

Thus it appears that, just like Renaissance literary theory, theatrical practice in the period was in no sense unified. Both the actual and virtual components were in ebb and flow, and both presentational and representational modes of theatre coexisted on the stage at that time. But however diverse the scope and orientation of these theories, and the practices which they inspired, they were driven by the same impulse: the quest to lend credibility or probability to the theatrical event. The notion of probability, which originated with Aristotle, was turned into the Renaissance ideal of verisimilitude; verisimilitude then meant, if not the scientific sense of probability, the mere appearance of truth. All of the theorists mentioned so far were motivated by aspiring to create verisimilar performance, but they differed in terms of their expectation of the spectators' imaginative ability to make intelligible the otherwise scattered auditory and visual signs. While Sidney and Castelvetro had a very low opinion of the audiences and thus thought that verisimilitude consists in what can be accessible to the senses, Buonamici was more ambitious and argued that even signs which have no similarity to their referents can be expressive of dramatic verisimilitude. According to Baxter Hathaway, "Buonamici objected to Castelvetro's argument on the ground that stage verisimilitude rested on the expressive cohesion of the signs or devices used in the convention of the representation" (1968, 84). With this relatively more relaxed conception of theatrical representation and verisimilitude, we are getting closer to the rhetorical view of fictionality or the communicative function of the virtual in theatre that we adumbrated in the last section. The credibility of the theatrical representation does not depend on the literal truth of theatrical signs. Rather it is the function of the whole representational process and the sum total of all the components of theatre, actual or virtual, auditory and visual. One advance of the theory of Buonamici is the insistence on the fact that in literature "probability is a quality of the representation (as opposed to probability statement that may be represented within the representation)"(Newsom 1989, 67).

This desire for verisimilitude also informed the varied practices that we sketched in the above dichotomies. As we have seen, actors' training is likely to have been no different from other oratorical modes of training; and as probability was an end in rhetoric and oratory, so it was in theatre acting. However, the requirement of probability is more strongly present in representational than in presentational modes of acting. According to Lesley Wade Soule, "The popular theatre has always been a theatre of variety, disregarding of the consistency and probability demanded in aesthetic-textualist theatre"(2000, 10). This might be due to the fact that scripted textual performance is more controllable and predictable than improvisational performance, and consequently it is one in which consistency can be pre-planned and observed. The probabilistic impulse was also strongly present in Shakespeare's practice and in the next section we will see how Shakespeare manipulated the virtual aspect of theatre to create these realistic effects by stretching the limits of imaginative forces beyond what seemed possible at that time.

The Virtual in Shakespeare's Theatre

Shakespeare's practice is so wide and varied that we should be cautious before ascribing to him any one idea amongst the controversies raised above. Cases can be made for instances where he advances either a presentational or a representational view of theatre.⁹ However, some general guidelines about the role of the virtual component of theatre can be deduced from a variety of plays written in different periods of his theatrical career. In this section I shall demonstrate that the virtual occupies a central place in Shakespeare's dramaturgy and that Shakespeare viewed its function in theatre mainly as a potential that lurks within and supplements the actual component, and also in rhetorical terms as contributing to the intelligibility and probability of the whole theatrical performance.

We have observed that the virtual is articulated in theatre mainly through theatre signs and narrative acts of the dramatic text. This is even more so in Shakespeare's theatre. Given the paucity of theatre scenery, sets and props on the early modern stage, the onus on the spectator to use his/her imagination in

order to project the virtual or absent reality becomes even greater. Iconic signs are difficult to find in such theatre, and Shakespeare seems to make the point against sheer iconicity in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is to be discussed below. Indexical and metonymic signs, especially synecdoche, prove crucial in such performances. The ability of theatre to represent an army using just four or five players and to depict the action occurring in disparate locations is made possible essentially by its reliance on the audience's imagination to work out the referents which these signs stand for. In this regard, Shakespeare's practice is at odds with the prevalent ideas of drama that adhere to the unities of place and time, especially as advocated by Sir Philip Sidney. Shakespeare's view seems closer to Buonamici than the others. Nevertheless, in such plays as *Henry V* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare tends to stretch the imagination of his spectators too far, to an extent which Buonamici would think it is detrimental to intelligibility.

The other source of the virtual in the plays is narration. Narrative also prompts the spectators to imagine the referential reality constructed by the narrative acts. As Richard Meek succinctly puts it,

Dramatic works are always to some extent reliant upon the imagination of their audiences, and this is something that narrative passages in Shakespeare's plays – which explicitly ask their audiences and readers to visualize absent places, events and works of art – invite us to consider. To put it another way, all modes of aesthetic experience, including hearing, seeing and reading plays, require a certain amount of imaginary work on the part of the reader or viewer. (2009, 25)

Shakespeare makes extensive use of narration and he often crams his plays with narrative passages. Large portions of Shakespeare's plays are constituted by narrative passages of different forms, such as reports, descriptions, messengers' speeches, prologues and epilogues (Brennan 1989). Nevertheless, the narrative element in the plays has been underappreciated in favour of the assumption that Shakespeare is primarily a working playwright and a man of the theatre. This downplaying of the narrative component results from the belief that the dramatic and the narrative are mutually exclusive categories. Consequently, it has been claimed that the presence of narration within the dramatic mode is anomalous. According to Dr Johnson, narrative "in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action" (quoted in Wilson 1995, 20). However, this is hardly the opinion of the critical mainstream now. In the last two decades, there has been a growing

interest in the role of narrative in drama in general and Shakespeare in particular, and a good deal of admirable work has been done in this area.¹⁰

Shakespeare's extensive use of narration in his plays is rooted in the traditional rhetorical scheme of *enargeia* mentioned above. *Enargeia* occupied a prominent place in the accounts of narrative in classical and Renaissance rhetoric, and has been variously called 'evidentia,' 'vivid description,' 'illustration,' 'hypotyposis,' 'ekphrasis,' etc. Generally, *enargeia* refers to a description so vivid that it not only touches the ear but makes the absent thing being described seem present before the mind's eye. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, generally ascribed to Cicero during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, talks about 'occult demonstration', as "when an event is so described in words that the business seems to be enacted and the subject to pass vividly before our eyes"(4.55.68). In *De Oratore*, Cicero makes this ability to present to the mind's eye to be a distinct feature of narrative (2.66.264). In his *Institutio Oratoria*, Marcus Fabius Quintilian touches on it in many places, and he also foregrounds the glaringly visual aspect of this rhetorical scheme; according to Quintilian, *enargeia* seems "not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence"(6.2.32). Quintilian also refers to the term 'phantasia' used by the Greeks for the same sense as *enargeia* (6.2.29).¹¹ In the Renaissance, George Puttenham uses the word *enargeia* to mean the verbal ornaments which are used to "satisfy and delight the ear only by a goodly outward show set upon the matter with words, and speeches smoothly and tuneably running" and the word *energeia* to signify "certain intendments or sense of such words & speeches inwardly working a stir to the mind" (2004, 135).

The effects of the use of these vivid narrative descriptions are lastingly important. One such effect is creating a sense of presence, as when the description makes the audience feel as if they were an eyewitness present in the past when it makes the event present to the spectator's mind. This is especially relevant to the narration of off-stage events in theatrical performance. Thanks to these acts of narration, the off-stage events will be felt to be as powerfully present as the on-stage ones, thereby creating an exquisite continuity between what happens on- and off-stage (see Hutson 2007, 126). This effect will be specially foregrounded in our discussion of *Antony and*

Cleopatra. The fictionalizing aspect of these narratives is also clear, since they work on the 'as if' principle which we have identified as necessary for creating fictional worlds. Ruth Webb (2009, 103) remarks that in Quintilian *enargeia* is a matter of 'illusion' and it always characterizes the tension between absence and presence. This sense of presence also features in Roland Barthes's (1989) discussion of these schemes (he mainly mentions '*hypotyposis*') which create what he terms 'the reality effect'. According to Barthes, this effect is achieved by the vivid description of details, and although it does not contribute to the plot of the stories, it helps create the sense of reality and verisimilitude which rhetoric was very keen to preserve. For Barthes, then, *hypotyposis* or *enargeia* contributes to the intelligibility of the whole story.

As shown above, enhancing credibility and intelligibility has always been the aim behind using these additional devices such as *enargeia* or *hypotyposis*. According to Lorna Huston, "Enargeia or evidentia understood thus . . . defines the intelligibility of narrative, and is particularly related to making what is fictive seem plainly true" (2007, 126). In Shakespeare this virtual imaginative reality, conjured up through theatrical signs and acts of narration, serves a rhetorical function. It also serves to enhance the probability and intelligibility of the whole theatrical performance by giving the spectator the actual action onstage and then supplementing it with narrative passages and other means of reporting events offstage. Shakespeare relies on the spectator's imaginative ability to weave together all these disparate data into an intelligible, probable whole Joel Altman makes this point clearly:

Shakespeare is often a dramatist of shreds and patches, providing for his audience disparate strands of verbal and visual material that they must then weave into an intelligible fabric. This process is not only internal to his dramaturgy but is often the object of his dramatic representation. It actualizes an epistemology and an ontology that can only be described as theatrical: what you see and what you hear are nothing but images and words. Their meaning is to be found in the soul of the auditor: there lies the substance. He seems to have known, objectively and intuitively, that fragmentary, promissory, and even contradictory utterances are the raw materials of collaborating minds, which shape them into intelligible and coherent accounts of observed actions that are not always in agreement with one another. (2010, 211-2)

In terms of the relevance and rhetorical model sketched above, the process of sense-making is based on the inferences made by the spectator. Altman's 'collaborating minds' element is necessary if the spectator is to make treat the performance meaningfully To view it as collaboration or a game is to conceive

it in terms of the collaborative nature of fictionality. This game-like aspect has a decisive role in creating the unique effect of these plays.

Below I carry out an analysis of the role played by the virtual component of theatre in Shakespeare's plays. I single out three plays for analysis: *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In *Henry V*, I shall mainly focus on the role of the Chorus, capitalizing on the extended pleas it makes of the audience to evoke the virtual reality (or Ryan's textual reference world) of what is supposed to be happening offstage. I shall demonstrate that this rather unusual example in Shakespeare (to be repeated only in *Pericles*) stems from a recognition of the limitations of the material component of theatre and its incapacity to present the actual reality onstage. I shall focus on the play-within-a-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and show the comic effect which ensues when the actors underestimate the imaginative capacities of their audiences and present an 'art' completely based on the actual, and devoid of any virtual element. In my extended analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra*, my main emphasis will be on the role of narration in creating the virtual sphere of the play and the way this sphere interacts, and sometimes even conflicts with, the actual component. The play is peculiar in the large role it assigns to narratives to bridge the distances covered by the action of the play.

The Chorus in *Henry V*

Nowhere does Shakespeare more explicitly expose the inadequacy of the actual component of theatre and the essential role of the virtual component in making the action intelligible than he does in *Henry V*. My contention is that in this play Shakespeare addresses the inherent inadequacy of the theatrical medium to present onstage all the components of the story it aims to represent. The play makes extensive use of *enargeia* or *phantasia* in order to vividly describe the off-stage events of the past. More significantly, the play also metatheatrically draws the attention of the spectators to these facts in order, paradoxically, both to establish the presence of that absent reality and at the same time to direct the attention to its irrecoverable absence. This limitation of the theatrical medium, in turn, places more demands on the spectators to use their 'imaginary forces' to supplement that lack.

The prologues spoken by the Chorus establish this unique tendency unequivocally. The physical ingredients of the performance are so severely limited that they fall short of presenting events in their entirety:

But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraised spirits that hath dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object. Can this cock-pit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt? (1, Prologue, 8-14)

The tone is blatantly apologetic; apologetic, perhaps, for almost everything theatrical. The actors playing this historically decisive event are 'flat unraised spirits;' the stage is an 'unworthy scaffold' or a mere 'cockpit.' Even in terms of numbers, the actors presenting the action are 'crooked figures,' a zero or nothing, a 'cipher,' compared to the actual number of soldiers present in the real historical event. Graphically analogous to the numeral zero, the stage is portrayed as that 'wooden O,' the small enclosed area within whose 'girdle' that huge gigantic presence should now be represented. This down-to-earth humility staves off any attempt at iconic representation, for the disparity between the thing represented and the thing representing is too huge to be abridged by the use of these material presences. This awareness is sustained through the speeches the Chorus makes during the play. In Act II, the Chorus asks the audience to be patient for it will "digest / Th'abuse of distance . . ." (Prologue 31-2). The Chorus here admits that this gap abuses the actual past reality being represented here. Later in Act IV, it alludes to the non-seriousness of the representation, so much so that the actual material objects onstage, far from being emblems of the absent represented referential nature, are just mockeries of that nature: "yet sit and see, / Minding true things by what their mock'ries be" (Prologue 52-3). Theatrical representation, thus, turns out to be a kind of original sin for which the best thing a playwright can do is to confess its existence and inevitability. With this enormous disparity between the representation and the represented reality, we can point to a limitation of applying to theatre Ryan's notion of the identity between the Textual Actual World and the Textual Reference World. Accordingly, the former is far from being an exact image of the latter. However, to think of the theatrical performance in terms of virtual potentiality would better help us to bridge the gap between the representation and the reality being represented.

Another stunningly explicit admission of this abuse is given in the prologue to Act V:

I humbly pray them to admit th'excuse
Of time, of numbers, and due course of things,
Which cannot in their huge and proper life
Be here presented. (3-6)

The real thing being represented, or 'the due course of things,' is irretrievably lost because it 'cannot . . . be here presented' using the material, actual theatrical apparatus. Like the first speech at the beginning of the play, this one is also apologetic, seeking the audience's 'excuse'. This is an inherent paradox of theatre: that the material reality presented onstage cannot retrieve the original material reality. Reliance on that theatrical actual component only or the '*mockeries*' would justify the antitheatrical rhetoric which views theatre mainly as a distortion of reality.

It is here also, with the awareness of that discrepancy, that the virtual as potential is foregrounded. For the greater the discrepancy between the thing represented and the representation, the greater the potential capacity of the virtual to bridge that gap. Hence, the centrality of the virtual world. Unless supplemented by the virtual absent reality, the actual corporeal presence onstage would cease to make sense. The main point the play is making through the speeches of the Chorus is that the absent, virtual or possible component of theatre is indispensable for the credibility and comprehensibility of the theatrical performance, so much so that we come to think that "our minds and the performance are becoming one" (Leggatt 1988, 125).

The virtual, referential reality is to be generated by the spectators' imagination based on what it sees onstage. According to Peter Mudford (2000, 6-7), performance means completion and filling in the gaps and completion is impossible without the audience. Performance, then, is inconceivable without the existence of the virtual meaning that waits to be actualized through the performance. It is a process of double actualization: on the one hand, moving the work from a script to a performance implies actualizing the meaning latent in the text. On the other hand, to understand the performance, the spectator needs to actualize its latent meaning as well. However, this process of completion is never finished or fixed: every actualization will result in a new reality and the potentialities of the virtual never run dry. In the Prologue to Act I,

the Chorus entreats the spectators to use their imaginary forces, to suppose, to think, and to 'piece out' the imperfections of the theatrical performance (17-27). Thus, in order to supply the lack of the actual, material part of the theatrical representation, the Chorus is unavoidably having recourse to the imaginary, the virtual or the possible. And the reliance on the 'imaginary forces' of the spectators continues through the choric speeches. In Act III, it asks the audience to 'think' that they are standing on the 'rivage' and see a city (13-4). We are also entreated to "Grapple your mind" (18) and to "Work, work, your thoughts and therein see a siege" (25). Lastly, it asks us to "Still be kind, / And eke out our performance with your mind" (34-5). In Act V, the Chorus entreats us to "Heave him away upon your winged thoughts / Athwart the sea. Behold, the English beach / Pales in the flood with men, maids, wives and boys" (8-10). With the proliferation of this visual imagery, we can observe the use of *enargeia* to make present to the 'mind's eye' the irremediably absent past reality. The rhetorical figure of *phantasia* seems particularly relevant here as well. According to Quintilian, "There are certain experiences which . . . the Romans [call] visions, whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes" (6.2.29).

So the spectator is granted a central role in the process of meaning-making which renders the theatrical performance intelligible. This cooperative process results in what Weimann calls bifold authority: "Authority in this theatre, as we shall see, needed to be validated by the audience and was unlikely to result without the cooperative effort of the audience's "imaginary forces" (1988, 412). This bifold authority, which is responsible for the generation of meaning and the establishment of credibility for the representation, can be approached in terms of Kendall Walton's games of make-believe. It is with the entrance of the spectator as a player in the theatrical game that the true nature of the theatrical representation as pretence and a game of make-believe is foregrounded. In other words, in order for the performance to succeed and the spectator to enjoy the representation, the spectator needs to agree on the rules: s/he needs to pretend that 'within this girdle' two monarchies are now confronting each other, and that the one actor stands for thousands of real soldiers. Not only are theatrical existents turned into signs, but even mere narration should be taken as such: it would have that descriptive 'enargeia', to the extent that when the

spectators hear the word 'horses' they have to imagine that they are really seeing horses in the battlefield. The 'imperfections' of the actual component are to be pieced out by imagination, or pretence.

The play attempts to present a complementary perspective on the actual and virtual, in order to establish the credibility of the theatrical representation. It has to strike an uneasy balance between the representing (actual, material present reality onstage) and the represented (possible, virtual absent reality offstage). Uneasy, that is, because it stems from the irreducibly dual nature of theatrical representation in particular and fiction in general. So in theatre Marie-Laure Ryan's notion of 'recentering' into a separate possible world or new virtual reality does not completely hold, due to the material presence onstage of actors and stage sets. The Chorus is careful to stress the spatial and temporal presence of the actual component of theatre: spatially speaking, it makes extensive use of the demonstrative 'this,' as in 'this cockpit,' 'this wooden O,' 'these walls,' etc. Temporally, it stresses the presentness of the moment as in 'now you see,' 'Now we bear,' etc. Even the wide use of imperatives implies the temporal continuity between actors and audiences (Walsh 2009, 182). In fact, the rhetorical schemes of *enargeia* and *hypotyposis*, which have been in use throughout the Chorus's speeches, imply that single chronology, for they try to bridge the past with the present. As Quintilian puts it, "But this transference of time . . . was more modestly used in vivid description by the old orators. For they would preface it by words such as 'Imagine that you see'" (9.2.41). However, even this corporeal presence of the actual cannot prevail and bring about the presence of the virtual once and for all; on the one hand, presence in theatre was illustrated in temporal terms and can be brought about by, employing Edmund Jones' words, reconciling the 'Now' of the drama with the 'Now' of the theatre. Theatre, according to Thornton Wilder, brings about the experience of the 'now there' (quoted in Power 2008, 43). On the other hand, given the historical nature of the represented story, even the temporal presence which the Chorus is trying to bring forth is now disrupted. Brian Walsh observes that "At first glance, the Prologue traces a movement from a fantasy of presence to the realization of absence, a turn that occurs at the caesura of line 8, as 'But pardon all'" (2009, 182). However, I think that it is less of a movement than a co-presence of both perspectives of presence and absence at one and

the same time that gives the theatrical experience its special appeal. According to Frederick Burwick, "The real pleasure derived from knowing the scene represented was unreal and merely an imitation" (quoted in Power 2008, 26).

The play is making a general case about theatrical representation, because what the Chorus is entreating the audience to do is a conventional rule which the playgoer knows by default. Therefore, it was hardly necessary to mention it at all for the play's effect to be understood. The play was preceded by nine histories in none of which does Shakespeare make these detailed comments. Accordingly, *contra* Walsh (2009), I think that the play is making a case about theatrical representation in general and not merely about the representation of history. History, nevertheless, has one more complication, which is the irretrievability of the past reality. We shall touch on the relation between historical and theatrical representations in Chapters Three and Four. Anne Righter (1962, 174) takes the chorus's speeches to express Shakespeare's disgust for the status of his art. However, despite the apologetic nature of the Prologues, I do not understand it as disgust, but rather as an observation about the complexity of the theatrical phenomenon and what is required to make sense of the performance.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated how the play establishes the inherent limitations of the theatrical performance and thus stakes the need to supplement it with the virtual reality. It heavily uses visual imagery as well as the rhetorical devices of *enargeia* and *phantasia* in order to present that absent reality to the mind's eye. Although it does not establish the ultimate authority for the virtual either, it has situated it in a pivotal position within the process of the reception of the theatrical performance. And with it the play also establishes the centrality of the spectators in the sense-making activity, whether that is interpreted as a game of make-believe or otherwise. Finally it shows the real extent of the cooperative nature of the fictional enterprise in the theatre.

The play-within-a-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare demonstrates how integral the virtual component is to the intelligibility of the theatrical performance by showing how awkward the performance would be when it does not take that component into account. In the play-within-a-play *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the mechanicals

start up with a highly presentational view which stresses the actual component of their performance. Then, afraid of the illusionistic power their performance might unleash, they switch to a ridiculously representational strategy. In both cases, however, they underestimate the imaginative powers of their audiences and their ability to generate the virtual referential reality which the performance is supposed to summon up. I shall deal with the representational strategies of the players and then show that their theatrical doctrine is at odds with Shakespeare's practice in the larger play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

At the beginning of their preparation the mechanicals think that the audiences will take their performance at face value, taking the action onstage to present the real thing, which would result in a supremely illusionistic form of acting. For example, told that he is going to play Pyramus, the lover who kills himself for love, Bottom exclaims: "That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes: I will move storms" (1.2.19-20). When Bottom suggests that he play the role of lion to make excellent roaring, Quince warns against the response this will evoke in their female spectators:

QUINCE: An you should do it too terribly you would fright the Duchess and the ladies that they would shriek, and that were enough to hang us all.

ALL THE REST. That would hang us, every mother's son. (61-4)

Even though they may not be able to present the real thing itself, their aspiration for extreme life-likeness pushes them to use the most iconic signs at their disposal. When told that he should play Thisbe, a woman, Flute protests: "Nay, faith, let not me play a woman. I have a beard coming" (39-40). So, they are aiming for a degree of verisimilitude whereby the actor bears such a close resemblance to the character he is acting that they would be hardly distinguishable. "Good acting would destroy acting, by turning a resemblance into the thing which it resembles" (Blits 2003, 47).

So far, the mechanicals' view of their spectators is Castelvetro-like, in the sense that they believe that their audience are incapable of differentiating the thing represented from the representation. According to Ekbert Fass, "Even Bottom, perhaps mindful of Quince's warning, exchanges a Castelvetro-type approach to one reminiscent of Buonamici" (1986, 67). However, their approach is hardly that of the Buonamici-like representationalism. While Buonamici thinks that the audience is capable of relating stage signs to their fictional referents,

the mechanicals take up the job themselves; they declare to the spectators the referents of the theatrical signs they are employing, and explain that they are just signs and not the real things themselves. For example, when the players are worried about another prop they are to use, that Pyramus will use a sword to kill himself, Bottom tries to avoid these unwelcome consequences by suggesting:

Not a whit. I have a device to make it all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear. (3.1.15-20)

In the same token, the actors have to write a prologue to explain the reality of the roaring lion and so forth. The illusion depends on the actor behaving as if the audiences do not exist. So, the complete illusion they first sought is now shattered as they intend to speak directly to the audience. "Afraid of creating too much dramatic illusion, the artisans destroy what little they might have had" (Blits 2003, 176). This fear extends even to the use of the iconic signs which they first preferred. Perhaps aware of the dangers of iconicity, and the possibility that the icon may be mistaken for the thing itself (Elam 2002, 19; West 2002, 40-1), they even refrain from using the available iconic signs that may create theatrical illusion. When Quince expresses concern about the presentation of moonshine to the chambers where the lovers meet, Snout suggests using natural moonshine in their performance. Although they are informed that the moon, according to the calendar, will shine that night, they nevertheless revert to the other option of having an actor to play moonshine:

BOTTOM. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window where we play open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

QUINCE. Ay, or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. (3.1.48-53)

And they use the same strategy by presenting an actor to play the role of Wall. However, though it may have been impossible for them to present a real Wall, they were able to do that with the Moonshine. Their aversion to using real moonlight indicates their reluctance to create even the least illusion in their performance. Switching from one extreme to the other, from bland realism to sheer symbolism, is exposed to derision by Shakespeare. In their actual performance, they stick closely to their disillusionist aesthetics. Playing Wall,

Snout says: "In this same interlude it doth befall / That I, one Snout by name, present a wall" (5.1.154-5). When Snug comes forward as the Lion, he says addressing the ladies: "Then know that I as Snug the joiner am / A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam" (218-9). And Starveling presents Moonshine: "This lantern doth the horned moon present. / Myself the man i' th' moon do seem to be" (235-6). The artisans violate the second prerequisite which Marie-Laure Ryan sets for fictionality, namely the embedded communicative transaction; for with these declarations, the transaction from actor to character is no longer embedded any more. Even recentering seems impossible with the actors' declarations about who they really are and what they are representing. With these two prerequisites abrogated, it is not surprising to see how little illusion the artisans' performance has produced.

This mode of disillusionist acting is subjected to harsh derision and ridicule by the audience for whose amusement it was originally acted. This is indicated by the audience's incessant interruptions to the players, not to mention their direct negative comments such as Hippolyta's "This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard" (5.1.207). The exasperation on the part of the audience with this mode of acting may stem from their feeling that their intelligence has been underestimated by having explained things that they should conventionally be familiar with. Nevertheless, Shakespeare is indicating, via Theseus, that a one-sided participation, no matter how meticulous and detailed it might be, is hardly enough to create the typical theatrical experience. To Hippolyta's above complaint Theseus replies:

THESEUS. The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worse are no worse if imagination amend them.

HIPPOLYTA. It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.

THESEUS. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. (208-12)

So, the theatrical experience is still lacking unless the actors' efforts are coupled with the spectators' participation, through the imaginative involvement that the Chorus of *Henry V* has begged for. The cooperation of the spectators is thus conceived by Hippolyta as requiring '*your imagination, then, and not theirs*'. The mistake of the players is that they have left very little room, if any, for the imaginative participation of their spectators, the result being the ridicule of the very spectators they have striven to please. In terms of the communicative model suggested in this chapter, the artisans are breaching the communicative

protocols that are necessary for the fictionality of theatre to be operative. They underestimate the inferential abilities of the audience, which leads them to give too much information. According to Michael Quinn, the problem lies in the absence of a well-defined theatrical convention, which is itself based on precedents: the mistake they make is that "they communicate so much more earnestly than the situation requires. Conventions are not usually arranged situations of understanding; they are assumed understandings, and the amateur players assume too little in the context"(2006, 304). Seen from the perspective of fictionality as a game of make-believe, if one side does not take part in the game, then the game of make-believe is over, as Kendall Walton would have it. Their onstage spectators no longer consider themselves to be taking part in the fictional game of make-believe.

A piquant irony becomes clear when we compare the playlet with the main play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The main play is one in which all sorts of unrealistic actions have been presented onstage, such as the kingdom of fairies, the magic juice, and the improbabilities of the lovers' behaviour. The main plot is so unbelievable that even Theseus, himself part of that world of wonders, has rejected these stories as "More Strange than true. I never may believe / These antique fables, nor these fairy toys" (5.1.2-3). Yet even in such a world, Shakespeare never feels the need to apologize or diegetically explain what is going on in his play, nor would the audience feel the need to have these things explained to them. *Pyramus and Thisbe*, undoubtedly, does not go so far in stretching the audience's imagination as does the main play. As J. L. Styan wryly observes, "If only Quince had been able to slip into Shakespeare's audience and see the opening scenes!" (1988, 17). So, the mechanicals should not have shied away from what the whole play, of which they are part, has been doing. It is this difference of views about theatrical conventionality that triggers these different styles of performing. The richness of the virtual reality in the main play and the lack thereof in the playlet might have been an incongruity that Shakespeare skilfully crafted. Kiernan Ryan observes that "The buffoonery of Bottom and his stage-struck fellow craftsmen is first and foremost an affectionate study in theatrical naivety and ineptitude, which serves as a foil for the astonishing sophistication of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself" (2009, 98).

This stark difference is also highlighted by Theseus's paradoxical views about imagination. While Theseus is openly dismissive of imagination in the larger play, he seems supportive of imagination in the play-within-a-play. In his speech at the start of act 5, scene 1, Theseus presents a very derogatory view of the imagination, with which he associates three classes of people: the poet, the lover and the madman. Interestingly, what worries Theseus about imagination is the potential power of the virtual. Theseus insists that the madman can see "more devils than vast hell can hold" (5.1.9), perhaps echoing Christopher Marlowe's 'infinite riches in a little room'. This is, moreover, a problem with the transformative power of the imagination, the power that enables the lover to see "Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt" (11) and gives form and shape to 'things unknown' and gives a local habitation to 'airy nothing'. It is the potential quality of the virtual that lurks within and gives the possibility of forever creating new things and new creatures out of nothing. Theseus is not at ease with this power of 'seeing as', which Walton and Saltz consider to be the essence of acts of fictionalizing. He detests this game-like aspect of imagination. When he slams at this aspect with which "How easy is a bush supposed a bear!" (22), Theseus is unwittingly anticipating Kendall Walton's example of children's games of make-believe. Surprisingly, Theseus, who is intolerant about the wondrous stories of the lovers in the main play, is strongly supportive of imagination in the playlet. The 'amending' to the awkwardness of the artisans' playing consists in the same processes which he has just uncompromisingly rejected. In his latter suggestion Theseus seems to be more theatrically minded and expresses what the offstage audiences of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have been doing all along.

Thus, the play shows the unfortunate results when the players downplay the imaginative forces of the spectator and underestimate their capacity to project the possible worlds or virtual reality represented by the play. Had they done as their creator did in the main play, by relying on theatrical conventions and the spectators' cooperation, they would not have been so derided. If *Henry V* lays bare a convention that is otherwise silently accepted by theatregoers, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows what happens when that convention is transgressed. In the next section, we will turn to an analysis of the role of the virtual in *Antony and Cleopatra*. But whereas in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

we have been dealing with the use and abuse of theatrical signs, in *Antony and Cleopatra* we will be chiefly concerned with the role of narration in the construction of the absent virtual reality.

Narration in *Antony and Cleopatra*

The place of the possible or virtual in Shakespeare's theatre is further highlighted through the use of narrative in his plays. As we have shown, the use of narration invites the audience to conjure up the virtual reality which the narrative constructs. Theatrical practice shares this quality with narrative fiction which is the default case for fictionality. So the tension between the actual and the virtual which we have been tracing in Shakespeare's theatre can be translated into the tension between the two modes of showing and telling in theatrical representation. The effect of narrative acts in theatre can be so pervasive that the actual action in the play is overwhelmed by, and framed within, the narrated actions which are supposed to take place offstage.

This narrative effect is glaringly apparent in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which Shakespeare draws a subtle picture of the interaction between showing and telling. Through its division of its two main locations, Egypt and Rome, the play utilizes the necessity, and even the desirability, of narration for the transmission of information. Critics have frequently observed that narration is the main representational technique in the play and that spectators see less action onstage and more narrative acts about actions that take place offstage.¹² These acts of narration that pervade every part of the play would also demand, though not as directly as in *Henry V*, that the audience use their 'imaginary forces' to bring to life that absent reality which the narration is supposed to invoke. David Bevington observes that *Antony and Cleopatra* "relies to an unusual degree on the audience's imagination, even more so than at Agincourt in *Henry V*" (2004, 96). Moreover, as narration is always reliant on a point of view from which the events are narrated, Shakespeare's craftsmanship is such that the setting, time and action are inextricably related to and manifested by the characters' perception of these elements.

In this section, I shall argue that the virtual occupies a large space in this play, and as a consequence its interaction with the actual component of theatre

is further complicated. The narrated events that are not actualized onstage will be actualized in the spectators' imagination, which generates their potential for a variety (perhaps infinity) of ways in which the spectator will actualize them. This opens the door for more and more possibilities to be realized in so far as they can make sense if coupled with the actual action onstage. The play uses narrative as a central technique to help the audience connect the onstage happenings which would otherwise seem only loosely connected and barely comprehensible. It also self-consciously and metatheatrically addresses such issues as the relation between telling and showing, and the tension between text and performance, as well as the tension between actor and character. Moreover, between showing and telling also features as a technique of characterization in the play. Finally, I shall show how Shakespeare builds on these themes to contrast the chief two locations in the play, Rome and Egypt.

Narratives in the play fall into three main categories. Narrated events have either happened before the beginning of the play's action or during it; in the latter case, the narration is either prior to or simultaneous with the action. In the first case, although the events being narrated have happened before the launch of the play's action, they are crucial for readers or spectators to know as the background against which the present action is set. One example is the narration of Fulvia's and Caesar's actions in Rome. While frolicking in Egypt, Antony receives a messenger telling him about his wife Fulvia's fight with Antony's brother and then against Caesar. Another messenger then comes in to report that Fulvia is now dead (1.2.108). These events, all taking place prior to the play's action, are necessary as the foundation upon which certain characters are going to build certain positions throughout the play. They cannot be enacted onstage, for this is counter to the principle of dramatic economy. More importantly, Shakespeare chooses to have these events narrated in front of Antony in order to show us his reaction to them. In this play events are not so significant as how these characters perceive them. In no other way could Shakespeare have portrayed Antony's character so splendidly than by showing how torn he is between his duties in Rome and his wish to stay in Egypt: "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage" (1.2.105-6). His reaction after hearing of Fulvia's death also serves to show his feelings towards her: "There's a great spirit gone! Thus did I desire it"(111). As this example

shows, the dramatic significance of narrative may be superior to that of direct action: these responses would be lost if we were only shown Fulvia dying onstage.

This significance of reporting also applies to the events happening during the time-span of the play. Here also the characters' responses are as important as the events themselves. The largest portion of these events consists of battles that could not be enacted onstage. Instead of seeing the battles enacted onstage, Shakespeare gives us a picture of how characters anticipate the result of these battles and how they respond when the battles are over. Shakespeare is only interested in registering "the reactions to the ebb and flow of battle in the eyes of those onstage to events that are entirely offstage" (Brennan 1989, 133). In the first battle, after Antony's soldiers realize that they are defeated due to the escape of their general, Camidius enters with this succinct comment:

Our fortune on the sea is out of breath,
And sinks most lamentably. Had our general
Been what he knew himself, it had gone well.
Oh, he has given example for our flight
Most grossly by his own. (3.10.24-8)

In these wars we do not see Antony vanquished, but rather hear how his generals perceive his deterioration (Ornstein 1966, 40). Having realized the unfortunate result of the battle, Camidius contemplates the reason behind this, namely the character of Antony and his actions – his escape after the withdrawal of Cleopatra. It is intriguing that Camidius goes even further, ruminating on how this result could have been avoided, by using a counterfactual statement to construct a virtual situation: "*Had our general / Been what he knew himself, it had gone well.*" As we shall see in Chapter Four, counterfactuals are a crucial technique for ascribing causality; so Camidius attributes this failure to both Antony's actions and, primarily and more importantly, to his character. This is a deeper level of causal thinking: it is because of his personality defects that Antony escapes, not the other way around. Nor does the play need to present the reaction of Caesar and his followers to these results showing Octavius' skills in these battles, for "it is not so much that Octavius wins them as that Antony loses them" (Brennan 1989, 134). Similar observations can be made about other examples of the narration of the events that take place within the time of the play, such as the narration of

the second battle (4.7), the third battle (4.12), Enobarbus' account of the downfall of Antony's allies, and so on.

Sometimes, the event being narrated is coeval with the act of narration, when a character onstage narrates what is going on offstage at that very moment. This technique, used since the ancient Greeks, is called 'teichoscopy.' One example is when Agrippa and Enobarbus are chatting about how the three triumviri are settling things that very moment:

AGRIPPA: What, are the brothers parted?
ENOBARBUS: They have dispatched with Pompey; he is gone.
The other three are sealing. Octavia weeps
To part from Rome. Caesar is sad, and Lepidus
Since Pompey's feast, as Menus says, is troubled
With the green-sickness. (3.2.1-6)

The dispatching with Pompey took place prior to the conversation (*have dispatched*), but the brothers' sealing is going on at the very moment of the exchange, hence the use of the continuous present (*are sealing*); such is also the case with Octavia's weeping and Caesar's sadness. Another example of teichoscopy is in 2.7.1-15, when the servants narrate what is going on offstage at the feast of Pompey, especially the carousing and drunkenness of the three triumvirs. Here also Shakespeare is interested to convey how their common followers perceive the behaviour and actions of these leaders and how they anticipate the events to come. Nowhere is this better expressed than in the speech of the first servant: "Here they'll be, man. Some o'their plants are illrooted already; the least wind i'th'world will blow them down" (2.7.1-2). The servant is using this apt metaphorical language to describe, more than to narrate, the present state of their friendship and how they will turn against each other. The play actualizes what this servant has anticipated, that their friendship is so (*illrooted*) that the (*least wind*) will put it to an end, only to predict Caesar's break with Pompey, then Lepidus and lastly with Antony. Moreover, this kind of narration creates the impression of being a play-within-a-play, as if the leaders are performing in the internal play and the underlings are performing in the external frame, commenting on the performance of their social superiors. Later in this chapter we shall embark on the metatheatrical aspect of the play in more detail.

The use of narration in the play, accompanied by vivid *enargeia*, also has a bearing on the relation between the onstage and the offstage action. As it

conjures up the imaginative presence of the offstage, it helps to create continuity between the two spaces. As Lorna Hutson observes about this tendency in Renaissance drama:

We are inclined to forget how much is not actually staged in a Renaissance play, because the enargeia, or vividness and presence, of various characters' narrations of events that take place elsewhere gives us the impression, especially as readers, of a reality as immediate as that which we imagine to take place on-stage. (2007, 126)

As it reorients the relation between the onstage and the offstage realms, narration also serves to complicate the idea of theatrical presence. Whereas the use of narration in theatre usually serves to stimulate an absent reality in the minds of the spectators, the use of narrative in *Antony and Cleopatra* is so pervasive that it makes the actual and the virtual seem co-present on the stage, and neither of them seem more real than the other. As the action is divided between two main locations, Rome and Egypt, each of these locations serves as the backdrop or offstage for the other; the off-stage is only accessible through and made present by the act of narration. When we watch events taking place in one of these two locations, the other location is by no means absent. In the first two scenes, which take place in Egypt, Rome is no less powerfully present, through the many messengers and the letters they convey and the narratives they deliver about how things turned out in Rome. In 1.2 and in 2.2 when Antony is in Rome, Egypt is no less present through reports. According to Bert O. States, "When something is narrated in the fictional world somewhere else, qualities established in this perceptual synthesis will infect that offstage space" (1985, 52).

One way the onstage and offstage worlds are infected by each other is via the use of messengers. Ray L. Heffner points out that "the messenger is treated as an extension of the personality of the sender of the message" (1976, 156). The messenger coming to Antony from Rome is acutely aware of that: "The nature of bad news infects the teller" (2.1.84). However, the characters' perception of the messengers' mission is not uniform. In this regard, Cleopatra stands apart from the other characters as she identifies the messenger with the news he brings. When the messenger tells her of Antony's marriage to Octavia, she says: "The most infectious pestilence upon thee!" and strikes him down (2.5.61). The overall effect of this excessive use of messengers is to create the impression of fluidity and continuity between the onstage and the offstage

realms and also to make the different location simultaneously present for the spectator. Or as Alexander Leggatt points out:

For all the vast distances its action covers, this is a play in which one land impinges on another quickly and easily *Antony and Cleopatra* is full of messengers, who always tell the truth. The flow of information is clear and constant, and annihilates distance. But the crucial factor is the mind itself, which can call up instantly an absent character or an absent world. (1988, 176-7)

Moreover, the play not only uses narration and the co-presence of the actual and virtual as a technique to ‘annihilate distance,’ but it also metatheatrically thematizes these concepts, inviting its spectator to contemplate them more deeply.¹³ As far as the concept of theatrical presence is concerned, the play raises the issue of whether the virtual is as strongly present as the actual material presence onstage. Consequently, presence in the play is not restricted to the physical presence of characters onstage, but to the effect they can exert on the onstage world even when they are physically absent. Thus, two modes of presence can be discerned in the play: virtual presence and actual presence.

Virtual presence (or the presence effect) means that, even when a character is not physically present, his/her presence is felt onstage. Among the characters it is Antony whose presence is a common concern to other characters; as the link between the play’s major two locations, Antony is torn between them, and he seems at one and the same time everywhere and nowhere. It is his presence that most characters are concerned about.¹⁴ This is also generally true of the leaders who want to perpetuate a sense of fluid presence, of being present everywhere. Ventidius tells Silius that “Caesar and Antony have even won / More in their officer than person” (3.1.16-7). Even in Antony’s absence, what his soldiers achieve is “in his name, / That magical word of war” (30-1). Their names, then, have the potential of power and can exercise the same effect as if they were present. But what these underlings achieve is thanks to the effect of their propaganda of presence. These leaders seem quite aware of their presence effect; for example, chiding Octavia for coming unattended to Rome, Caesar supposes that her presence should be felt before she is actually present, that she should have “The neighs of horse to tell of her approach / Long ere she did appear” (3.6.45-6). Interestingly, Caesar and Antony both endorse and deny the effects of each other’s presence:

ANTONY: My being in Egypt, Caesar, What was't to you?

CAESAR: No more than my residing here at Rome

Might be to you in Egypt. Yet if you there

Did practise on my state, your being in Egypt

Might be my question.

(2.2.40-4)

Actual presence is no less of an obsession in this play, which can clearly be seen in the characters' perceptions of the onstage/offstage dichotomy. This is particularly apparent in the relationship of Cleopatra and Antony. Cleopatra is obsessed with her need to occupy the same physical and psychological domain as Antony so that they are both actually co-present, which is manifested by her impatience with his absence. Cleopatra's words early in the play are: "Saw you my lord?" and "Was he not here?" (1.2.69). In the next scene, the first thing she utters is: "Where is he?" (1.3.1). Admitting that he cannot be physically with her, Antony assures her that they will remain psychologically together:

Let us go.

Come. Our separation so abides and flies

That thou residing here goes yet with me,

And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee. (1.3.103-6)

Other characters are no less aware of this mutual interdependence of Antony and Cleopatra. Mocking Antony's lethargy, Pompey assures his soldiers that Antony cannot take part in any war against them since he is tied to Egypt: "Mark Antony / In Egypt sits at dinner, and will make / No wars without doors" (2.1.11-3). Told by Maecenas that Antony is going to leave Cleopatra forever, Enobarbus exclaims: "Never. He will not" (2.2.239). Even in his death, Antony dies in order to attend Cleopatra. And, knowing that she is still alive, he asks to die by her side. Once Antony is dead, it is her turn to attend him. Her dream and preparations for death are devoted to this purpose. When at last both are dead, Caesar orders that "She shall be buried by her Antony. / No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous" (5.2.348-50).

An opposite relationship takes place between Antony and Caesar; they cannot be actually co-present and occupy the same domain at the same time; if one is onstage, the other must be offstage. Even the whole world, the largest stage, cannot hold them together. Early in the play, the soothsayer advises Antony to be away from Caesar: "O Antony, stay not by his side / . . . Make space enough between you" (2.3.16, 21). In fact, Antony's residence in Egypt was partly motivated by his wish to stay away from Caesar. After Antony's

death, Caesar holds his sword and exclaims: "We could not stall together / In the whole world" (5.1. 39-40).

Another central theme that the play metatheatrically addresses is the tension between text and performance (or between the virtual domain created by telling and the actual one of showing onstage) as well as the question of which is to claim the higher authority in theatre. Here the relation between the actual and the virtual is even more problematized, as the virtual is no longer the cognitive means by which to make sense of actual happenings. Instead, the play invests them with contradictory claims about the truth of what is happening or has happened. In other words, what the audience hear is falsified by what they actually see and vice versa. Such a discrepancy between telling and showing happens when the audience watches an event and then hears it retold in terms which depart from the actual action. This is the same tension between hearing and seeing Bert O. States refers to in Shakespeare (1985, 56). It is also a conflict between the semiotic and phenomenological perspectives in Shakespeare's theatre.

This discrepancy between showing and telling is reflected in the discrepancy in chronology in both modes. For example, at the beginning of the play we see that Antony has received messengers from Rome and that he makes his mind up to go to Rome and leave the sensual delights of Egypt behind him. Making his excuses to Cleopatra, he tells her that "The strong necessity of time commands / Our services a while" (1.3.42-3). In the next scene, however, we see Caesar entering and reading a letter which tells him of the unmanly demeanour of Antony who now "fishes, drinks and wastes / The lamps of night in revel" in the company of Cleopatra (1.4.4-5). So what Caesar takes to be the case now is outdated news. "But we, the audience, know that this is 'yesterday's news'. We have 'been' in Alexandria as eye witnesses to the events Caesar's spy has described" (Kiernan 1998, 163). The Antony portrayed in this letter is hardly the Antony we have just left in the last scene. The virtual events narrated to us are not in line with the same events which we have seen taking place before our eyes. Caesar seems unaware of one crucial characteristic of narrative reports, namely that they distort temporality since they can only relate things in the past. When he receives Octavia, Caesar tells her: "I have eyes upon him, / And his affairs come to me on the wind. / Where is he

now?"(3.6.63-5). He treats these narratives as if they were theatrical performances. We have pointed out that theatre presents things 'now there' in the sense that it presents a spatially absent but temporarily present reality. Narrative, on the other hand, distances the reality it represents both spatially and temporally. So the 'now' that Caesar boasts about can be simply over by the time he utters it, for it is over by the time it has been sent to him. In another instance, Pompey asserts to his companions that Antony will not interrupt his sojourn in Egypt: "That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honour / Even till a Lethe'd dullness" (2.1.26-7). However, Pompey's speech is immediately falsified by another messenger, Varrius, who tells them that "Mark Antony is every hour in Rome / Expected" (29-30).¹⁵

This tension between telling and showing is also used as a feature of characterization in the play. W. B. Worthen observes that "this contest between narrative and drama, text and performance, animates the characterization of the play's major roles" (1986, 297). What we hear about characters is contradicted by what we see of these characters' actions onstage. One example is Antony's suicide. After he hears of Cleopatra's feigned death, Antony commits suicide by falling ineptly on his sword:

To do this
I learned from thee.
[He stabs himself]
How? Not dead? Not dead?" (4.15.102-3).

Thus he has even failed to learn from his servant Eros who has just committed a properly Roman, brave suicide. Then two narratives are offered for Antony's suicide, one by Antony himself, when he tells the distracted Queen: "Peace. Not Caesar's valour /Hath o'erthrown Antony, but Antony's / Hath triumphed on itself" (4.16.14-6). The second narrative is delivered by Dercetas to Octavius Caesar:

He is dead, Caesar,
Not by a public minister of justice,
Nor by a hired knife; but that self hand
Which writ his honour in the acts it did
Hath, with the courage which the heart did lend it,
Splitted the heart. (5.1.19-24)

So, both narratives insist on giving the heroic version of the event. The contradiction between the version we see onstage and the ones we hear narrated is crystal clear: as spectators we could hardly have noticed the courage these accounts took for granted. A more extreme example of imagining

Antony is provided by Cleopatra's dream of him after his death. She tells us that she saw the "emperor Antony" whose "legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm / Crested the whole world. His voice was propertied/ As all the tuned spheres" (5.2.75, 81-3). She is aware of the incredibility of such a narration, which is why she asks Dolabella: "Think you there was, or might be, such a man / As this I dreamt of?" And the answer is: "Gentle madam, no" (92-3). Thus in all these cases, showing is not as important as how Antony wanted his last image to be drawn and how his followers and enemies have received it, an image that is more or less different from what we have witnessed.

A flagrant example of how narration helps create our impressions about the characters even more than the actions of these characters as we see them onstage is Enobarbus's description of the barge of Cleopatra. Enobarbus's description is the most exquisite example of the use of *enargeia*, *phantasia* or vivid description in the play. Enobarbus narrates how Antony and Cleopatra first met and how luxurious her train was on that occasion (2.2.196-236). Full of metaphors and hyperbole, this description is overwhelmingly subjective. To Enobarbus, Cleopatra's barge was like a throne burning on water; its perfume made even the inanimate wind "love-sick" (200), let alone the humans smelling it. Even the water was "amorous" of that effect (203). Her "dimpled boys" are "like smiling Cupids" (208) and "Her gentlewomen" are likened to the "Nereides" (212). So exquisite was the show that even the air, but for fear of vacancy, "Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too, / And made a gap in nature" (223-4). At the feast, Enobarbus goes on, Antony "pays his heart / For what his eyes eat only" (231-2). The mythical, unrealistic nature of this narration is acknowledged by Enobarbus himself as he admits that Cleopatra "beggared all description" (204). Ironically, even in this admission, he insists that she is more than anything he can describe. Moreover, Enobarbus seems very artistically self-conscious, in that to him Cleopatra outpictures "Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature" (206-7). So Cleopatra is an exception to the rule, for nature here outpictures fancy. But what Enobarbus is doing is not providing access to nature, but rather providing another picture (or artwork) to represent that nature. It is like saying that the ekphrastic picture Enobarbus is now drawing of Cleopatra will undo all the previous versions; it is thus a comparison between different artworks, not between art and nature. Enobarbus's passage epitomises the

whole play as much as the characters' endeavour to exaggerate the pictures they draw about themselves and other characters. Indeed, some critics identify "hyperbole . . . as the play's basic rhetorical and structural principle" (Kahn 1997, 110). This example also shows that the narrative language in the play is hardly neutral and descriptive, but is rather crammed with metaphors and value-laden terms. In Shakespeare, the narration of the offstage events is never separated from the point of view of the narrator; so these narrations are perspectival as well as descriptive.

Thus, the Antony and Cleopatra whom we know are the sum total of all the different versions of these characters as conveyed by their fellow characters. It is not a picture of their actual state but their potential state, which we never see actualized in the play. What gets depicted is what these characters might be or might have been, and not what they really are. The actual figures onstage are inconsistent with the virtual reality projected about them. These represent two notions of character: "that while it seems to be revealed both through present action and through retrospective reconstruction, these two modes of characterization – and the 'character(s)' they evoke – often seem incommensurable" (Worthen 1986, 301). The onstage actions of characters like Antony and Cleopatra can hardly live up to the images, hyperbolic if fascinating, that are constructed about them, often before the beginning of the play's actions. Their images represent their potential, which is always greater than the actuality, even greater than what a theatrical performance can bring to life. These images are cumulatively piled up over time to the extent that the characters they portray seem impossible to stage.¹⁶ And if we agree with Phyllis Rackin about the impossibility of staging Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's barge (1972, 204), then we can see how the play establishes the fact that the performance medium is inherently limited in conveying the virtual meanings that narrative sets forth.

The limitations of the theatrical performance explain the anxiety characters display regarding public displays. If performance, as we have just observed, is inherently limited in conveying the larger historical character, in these public displays it is also deliberately distortive. Characters show their preference for the predictability and controllability of the text over their lack thereof in performance. Leading characters such as Antony, Cleopatra and Caesar,

otherwise obsessed with presence, are burdened with the idea of public spectacles. In (3.6), Caesar urges Romans against Antony by telling them that “Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold / Were publicly enthroned. At the feet sat / Caesarion, whom they call my father’s son” (3.6.4-6). Likewise, Antony, having been defeated, prefers death to being publicly exhibited. He uses this scenario to convince Eros to kill him if he does not want his master to be so publicly humiliated (4.15.71-7). Cleopatra, who is matchlessly skilled in staging displays of herself, is scared of a display directed and staged by her captor, Octavius Caesar. Twice she imagined how Octavia “with her modest eyes” (4.16.28) will be “demurring upon me” (30), or how to “be chastised with the sober eye / Of dull Octavia” (5.2.53-4). Her fears are confirmed when Dolabella tells her that his master Caesar intends to lead her in triumph (108). Like Antony, she tells Iris of these scenarios so that Iris helps her commit suicide: “Thou, an Egyptian puppet shall be shown / In Rome as well as I” (204-5). Moreover, the very fact that the character of Cleopatra was originally played by a boy actor is indicative of this incompatibility between actor and character, between the actual performance conditions and the virtual reality they purport to represent. Cleopatra herself is metatheatrically aware of this fact: “I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I’th’ posture of a whore” (215-7). The Cleopatra who condemns the future displays that do not do justice to her ‘greatness’ by employing boy actors to play her, is by the same token inviting the original spectators of Shakespeare’s play to condemn the performance they are watching, a performance that is doing the same injustice to the historical Cleopatra’s ‘greatness’ by using a boy actor to play her part on the Jacobean stage.

Thus, in spite of their fondness for theatricality, these characters are afraid of playing roles other than the ones they are used to play. They are not so much afraid of being humiliated as of being humiliated in public. That is to say, they are worried by the presence of spectators: Cleopatra is afraid of being ‘seen’ by Octavia’s ‘sober’ and ‘modest’ eyes. The theatrical aspect of these shows is affirmed by Proculeius’s reasoning that Caesar wants this show to “Let the world see / His nobleness *well acted*” (5.2.43-4; emphasis added). According to Anthony Brennan, “The characters are very conscious that they are public figures, and it is of central importance to these world-beaters how they appear

in their own eyes and the eyes of their friends” (1989, 134). The question is not of the effect of the actor’s presence on the spectator, but the other way around: the actor himself is affected by the presence of the spectator. It is a reciprocal presence, one in which both actors and spectators are aware of and affected by the presence of each other (see Power 2008, Chap.3). Moreover, they treat these shows differently, since in their own shows they are directors as well as actors. But in Caesar’s show, Caesar is the director and they are mere puppets, as Cleopatra tells Iris she will be. “Recounted from the perspective of the captive forced to be an object of the common gaze in that spectacle, all the scenes stress the loss of physical autonomy and the shame of not being able to control who looks at one’s body” (Kahn 1997, 127). In this sense, victory and defeat are more symbolic than material, and they have to do with who can assume the role of the director who manipulates the shows. Consequently, Cleopatra’s voluntary death can be said to score a victory over Octavius in that she remains capable of controlling her body and determining who is to look at it.

These different representational modes, with their varying emphases on the actual or virtual components of theatre, have also been shown to be metatheatrically relevant to the polarization established by the play between Egypt (represented by Cleopatra) and Rome (represented by Caesar) with Antony torn between these two extremes. Alan Stewart (2009) shows that the play creates a conflict between Roman historiography, represented by Caesar’s obsession with writing, and Egyptian theatricality, represented by Cleopatra’s ‘shows’ and her pervasive playfulness, which is most apparent in her masterfully staged death scene. At the end, the effect of her theatricality has indelibly inscribed the way she will be remembered and seems to override the version of history of Antony and herself which Caesar intended to produce."Egyptian theatricality becomes an effective challenge to Roman historiography, and within the terms of the play, may be said to defeat it"(Stewart 2009, 114). Phyllis Rackin (1972) likewise identifies in Cleopatra a theatrical mode which is in stark contrast to Rome’s Platonic rationalism. Cleopatra can hardly be known as herself but she rather enjoys a staged identity which presents her as what she ‘seems’ or ‘is like.’

Shakespeare also distinguishes between Rome and Egypt by the contrast between the Romans’ diligence in information-gathering and the neglect of the

Egyptians to do likewise. The latter would rather live their life as it is: “The Roman scenes are full of information and business, but in Egypt there is a more palpable texture, a stronger sense of felt life” or “the enjoyment of the thing itself” (Leggatt 1988, 177). This is nowhere clearer than in Antony’s description of the crocodile to Lepidus:

LEPIDUS. What manner o’ thing is your crocodile?

ANTONY. It is shaped, sir, like itself, and it is as broad as it hath breadth. It is just so high as it is, and moves with it own organs. It lives by that which nourisheth it, and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.

LEPIDUS. What colour is it of?

ANTONY. Of its own colour too.

LEPIDUS. ’Tis a strange serpent.

ANTONY. ’Tis so, and the tears of it are wet. (2.7.38-46)

Antony’s definition of the crocodile in its own terms, not by likening it to anything other than itself, is characteristic of this Egyptian tendency. That Antony is adopting the Egyptian position here is partly imposed by the way Lepidus and the others position him ‘*your* crocodile’, a position that he happily accepts. The Romans strive to understand the world significantly while the Egyptians treat it phenomenally.

In conclusion, we have shown that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a play in which Shakespeare allocates a large role to the virtual component of theatre. The virtual plays a wide role as a measure of the limitations of the actual are projected, and also as a cognitive tool that helps spectators make sense of the events taking place onstage. As the virtual is mainly conveyed through narration, we have demonstrated the centrality of acts of narration to the play’s structure. It is through these acts that the actual and the virtual, the onstage and the offstage, gain a superb continuity and seem simultaneously present. It is a play where the virtual and the actual impinge on each other, where neither is complete without the backing of the other, and where the two subtly contribute to convey the story in ways neither is capable of conveying by itself. The virtual or possible not only helps make the actual more intelligible; it is also, in a metatheatrically crafted fashion, set in tension with the actual. The playwright invites us to think more deeply about the nature of both and their constant struggle for authority. Shakespeare’s skill is such that he turns the breaching of the unities of place and time into an advantage, since by exploiting the offstage space he is able to convey feeling and reactions that are hardly expressible otherwise. Moreover, the metatheatrical aspect of the play in dealing self-

consciously with these matters is subtler and more accomplished than the treatment in *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although it has no choric direct addresses to the audience as in the last two plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* engages vigorously with questions about the nature of theatrical performance, its different components, and the struggle of authority amongst them.

The play can be read as an attempt by the playwright to establish a position among the theories of theatre prevalent in the early modern period. Shakespeare's practice goes even further than Buonamici's views. The adherence to the dramatic unities, most vocally defended in England by Sir Philip Sidney, is notoriously inadequate to Shakespeare. We have referred to a contradiction which Phyllis Rackin identifies in Sidney: namely his conviction that the poet should depict a new reality and at the same time his insistence on adhering to the rules of this actual reality. She wittily observes the relevance of this theorizing to *Antony and Cleopatra*: "The contradiction in Sidney's essay, like the conflict in Shakespeare's play, is finally a conflict between two theories of poetry and two orders of reality; but while Sidney seems unaware of the contradiction, Shakespeare insists upon it"(1972, 206). In the Shakespearean canon in general, we cannot fail to notice an awareness of the duality of the actual and virtual inherent in the theatrical medium. Rather than dispense with one at the expense of the other, Shakespeare seems to reconcile them and tries to exploit their combined effect. According to Harry Berger, Shakespeare's artistry "lies in his peculiar way of relating theatrical and dramatic space time" (1968, 18-9). The final result is the creation of a coherent and intelligible dramatic and theatrical experience which, although it does not abide by the prevalent views of its time, it was capable of superseding them with a higher form of artistic creation.

Conclusion

The virtual component of the theatrical performance is mainly produced via the use of theatrical signs and dramatic narration. It chiefly fulfils a rhetorical and communicative function, in the sense that it renders the whole resultant fictional world more intelligible, coherent and plausible to the spectator. In early modern

England, theories of drama and theatrical practice fluctuated from concentrating on one or the other term of the actual/virtual dichotomy. Shakespeare's practice, on the other hand, is too wide and varied to ascribe to him either of these modes exclusively. However, the three cases we have studied all show the role Shakespeare allocates to the imaginary forces of the spectator in achieving the global comprehensibility of the fictional world. The virtual reality elicited through the imagination's encounter with the actual material happenings onstage helps shape that general feature of the fictional worlds. While in *Henry V* the Chorus entreats the audience to evoke that offstage reality, the players in *Pyramus and Thisbe* deny their spectators that right, which results in the wholesale derision of their performance. The interaction between the two components of theatre culminates in *Antony and Cleopatra*, so much so that no one component is operative without the other. Moreover, Shakespeare sometimes metatheatrically thematizes the relation between, and relative reliability of, the actual and the virtual in these plays. Besides, the virtual also underlines the potential of the plays which opens them up to different dramatizations and performances. The gaps left by the performance encourage the readers and spectators to fill them in differently, thus coming up with as many different versions of the plays as there are readers/spectators.

The approach employed in this Chapter is mainly interdisciplinary. It builds on modern theories of fictionality of theatre, performance theory in the Renaissance as well as relevant remarks from Shakespeare criticism. It aims to bring all these intellectual disciplines into dialogue with each other. Generally, due to the dominance of historicist approaches, Shakespeare scholars have been suspicious of the viability of theories of fictionality. The above discussion should have shown that we can come up with period-specific theories of fictionality that take into account the working factors and performance conditions of any given period. The analysis in this chapter shows that bringing these discourses together can afford illuminating insights into the nature and mechanisms of Shakespeare's plays, regarding the performance conditions, the plays' expectations of their spectator, and the game-like quality of the performance. The plays surveyed in this chapter belong to different periods and different genres. However, this is not to argue that they should be taken as representative of these periods or genres. Further studies can be conducted to

draw clearer guidelines about the treatment of these issues in different periods or among different genres of the Shakespeare canon.

In this chapter we have been dealing with the possible and virtual on the level of discourse, which in theatre we identified as performance. In the following chapter we will be dealing with it on the level of story or the plots of the plays. We will be concerned with the hypothetical actions that might have taken place in the past. There we will also see how virtual events are set in different relations with the actual ones and that the result of their interaction is to enhance the probability and intelligibility of the whole work.

Chapter Two

The Actual and the Virtual in the Shakespearean Text

Macbeth. Will it not be received,
When we have marked with blood those sleepy two
Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,
That they have done't?

Lady Macbeth. Who dares receive it other,
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar
Upon his death? (*Macbeth*: 1.7.74-9)

Macbeth and his would-be Queen are not only concerned about Duncan's murder itself, but also about the investigation into the identity of the killer(s) that will ensue at the aftermath of the murder. Thus, their concern is centred on the scenario they will create and convince the other skeptical characters to adopt – or 'receive'. Their job, that is, is cognitive in essence. The scenario they are to put forward is necessarily different from the real story of what happened during the murder scene. In more technical terms, they aim to create a *virtual* course of events (one in which the chamber grooms have killed Duncan) which diverges from the *actual* course of events (in which Macbeth committed the murder). The virtual scenario they advance should be so convincing that it would seem the only course there is, so much so that nobody will think of any alternative scenario – 'receive it other'. To establish its credibility, they have to increase the probability of their virtual scenario by piling up as many pieces of possible evidence as they can. These pieces of evidence include: marking the hands of the guards with Duncan's blood, using their own daggers in the murders, counterfeiting 'grief and clamour roar upon his death' – indeed, she will do more than that by fainting when she hears the news.¹ Later Lady Macbeth adds another piece to lend support to their claim, which is wearing their nightgowns: "Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us / And show us to be watchers" (2.2.68-9). This way Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are directing in advance the way in which other characters are going to draw that conclusion. These characters will accordingly gather these pieces and employ probabilistic thinking to establish what seems very likely to have happened at that scene. However,

later it will appear that their plan was far from waterproof; this, in turn, will force them to improvise, with Macbeth killing the two guards and accusing Duncan's sons of hiring them. All this will breed suspicion over Macbeth's narrative by Duncan's sons, Macduff, Banquo, and others. Therefore, they are dealing less with the actual events than with the virtual event (or course of events) that will be presented as the most probable candidate among many others.

In this Chapter, I shall address the central role played by the virtual events in Shakespeare's plays. Virtual events stand in contrast to actual events, in the sense that they are not verified as facts by the fictional text. They include characters' beliefs as well as their intentions and plans insofar as they are not yet realized as objective truths in the fictional world. Actual events often occupy the reader's or critic's attention, and virtual events might be dismissed as simply irrelevant. I shall argue, however, that virtual events are no less central to the development of the plot than are actual events. In Shakespearean drama, the virtual events constitute the background that motivates and moves the action forward. Conflict always arises due to divergence between the actual and virtual courses of events. Moreover, the virtual is a fertile domain for deception plots where plans and counter-plans work on proliferating mistaken beliefs in the other characters. Further, an access to the virtual events gives insights over the inwardness of characters, and it influences the overall intelligibility of the action.

The role of the virtual events in the literary work has been the interest of 'possible worlds' narratology. Therefore, in the following section I shall look into the development of the idea of the possible or virtual event in narratological theory, with special attention to Marie-Laure Ryan's formulation of the virtual event. However, possible worlds theory is lacking with regard to the cognitive aspect of the virtual. As the example from *Macbeth* has shown, characters use probabilistic thinking in order to weigh among virtual events and establish the most likely candidate of actuality. Below I shall turn to the discipline of rhetoric which is mainly concerned with both the virtual and the probable. I shall demonstrate that the prevalence of rhetoric in early modern education and culture has given Shakespeare and early modern dramatists an entrée into the use of virtuality and probabilistic thinking in their plays. So, I shall first delineate the narratological approaches which have contributed to the elaboration of the concept of the virtual. Then I shall sketch the notions of virtuality and probability

in Classical and Renaissance rhetoric and how it might have influenced the thinking and practice of Shakespeare and early modern dramatists. Lastly I shall analyse the role played by the virtual events in two plays of William Shakespeare: *Richard II* and *Cymbeline*.

Virtuality in Narrative Theory

The virtual or possible events play a variety of roles in the literary plot and substantially contribute to its dynamism. The importance of these events has piqued the interest of narratologists and been the central concern for possible worlds theorists. Since virtual events have not been the focus of Shakespeare criticism, I need to turn to narratology for guidance about their nature and function. In this section I shall survey the main narratological approaches that emphasize the role of the possible or virtual events in plots. This survey will culminate in some possible worlds frameworks that have been mainly dedicated to the investigation of the virtual and possible events in narrative, such as the work of Umberto Eco, Marie-Laure Ryan, Lubomir Dolezel and Gerard Prince. Finally I shall point to the lack of an account of probability in these theories and suggest how to fill in that lacuna.

The notion of the possible or virtual event was not comfortably accommodated in narratology. A stark 'actuality' bias is sensed in the narratological accounts of events and actions in narrative texts. In most narratological accounts, the actions and events are restricted to those events that actually happened. Gerald Prince divides narrative events into stative and active (Prince 1982, 62), both of which belong to the factual domain, because he considers that narrativity is a "function of the extent to which their [events]' occurrence is given as a fact (in a certain world) rather than as possibility or probability. *The hallmark of narrative is assurance*" (ibid., 149; emphasis added). Mieke Bal also suggests that "we must restrict our investigation to only those facts that are presented to us in the actual words of the text" (1997, 116). Defining an event as "a change of state," Wolf Schmid states that a necessary condition for the event is that "its associated change of state must be *real*" (2010, 9; emphasis in original). These examples make clear how dogmatically biased classical narratology has been against virtual or possible events.

Nevertheless, in spite of that 'actuality' bias there has been a growing interest in possible and virtual events since the early days of narratology, although their full significance is overlooked and they remain subordinated to the factual events. Indeed, modal categories appear as early as A. J. Greimas's (1977) grammar, who regards modal utterances as part of the narrative utterances. Tzvetan Todorov (1977) also considers mood as among the second categories of his grammar. In his classical "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1975), Roland Barthes first classifies narrative units into functions and indices, the former having the functionality of doing, and the latter that of being. Then he divides functions into cardinal functions and catalysts. Catalysts are modally significant: they open possibilities or alternatives of action. But a more sustained engagement with the topic is conducted by Claude Bremond in his "The Logic of Narrative Possibilities" (1966). Bremond designates the basic narrative unit as the 'function:' these functions group in *sequences* to form the larger narrative. An elementary sequence is comprised of three obligatory functions: one that opens a possibility, the second achieves (or fails to) that virtuality and the third is the result which closes the process. Thus, the movement from one state to another is based on the space of possibility opened by the former state.

An awareness of the importance of virtual and possible events to the analysis of narrative features early in the work of Umberto Eco. Eco (1979) identifies the benefits of using these notions to account for those events of the fabula that did not take place but are nevertheless crucial to our understanding of the fabula and the inferences we make about it. He divides the possible worlds in the narrative into three categories: first is the fictional world as conceived by the author; second are the subworlds that are imagined, wished, or believed by the characters. The third is the class of subworlds that are imagined, believed, or wished by the Model Reader and which the actual world of the text will either approve or disapprove (1979, 235). The main dynamism in the functionality of these different worlds and subworlds is alternativity: "It is useful to use the notion of possible worlds when one refers to a state of affairs, but only if one needs to compare at least two alternative state of affairs" (1990, 69). This idea is especially fruitful as we focus on the divergence between the actual and the virtual courses of events.

A more detailed observation of modalities in narrative theory is carried out by Lubomir Dolezel. According to Dolezel, modalities regulate and shape the structure of the fictional world. He discerns four types of modalities: the alethic, deontic, axiological and epistemic (1998, 114). The alethic modality shapes what can and cannot exist in the narrative world. It is denominated by the modal operators of 'possibility,' 'impossibility,' and 'necessity.' The deontic modality shapes the norms accepted in that world and is denominated by the operators of 'permission,' 'obligation,' and 'prohibition.' The axiological modality is denominated by the operators of 'good,' 'bad,' and 'indifferent'. It polarizes the world of entities into these conflicting values. Dolezel adds a dynamic dimension to these modalities as he distinguishes between *codexal* and *subjective* levels in each, the former governing the world as a whole while the latter is character-specific, and does consist in the physical, instrumental and mental capacities of an individual character (ibid., 118). The disparity between the two is capable of initiating a conflict, when, for example, what is codexally impossible or forbidden is subjectively necessary or obligatory, and so on.

A major contribution made so far in the field of 'Possible Worlds' narratology is Marie-Laure Ryan (1985, 1991). She holds that the propositions which express the successive states of the fictional world are of two primary types: the first are "those with an absolute or autonomous existence;" in other words, they are taken to be the real situation of the fictional world and she calls them the 'factual domain' or the 'Textual Actual World.' The second are "those whose existence is relative to somebody, i.e., which exists through a mental act of a character" (1985, 720). So they are relative to characters and consequently each is called 'character's domain'.

The characters' domains or sub-worlds are divided into the Knowledge World, Obligation World, Wish World, Intention World, and Fantasy Universe. The first three correspond to Dolezel's epistemic, deontic and axiological modalities, respectively. The Fantasy universe comprises dreams, day-dreams, hallucinations, fantasies and fictional stories told by the characters. Thus, these worlds, which are the content of the character's domain, can be conceived as either images of the factual domain (Knowledge worlds and Intention Worlds), as models of what the textual actual world should be (Wish Worlds and Obligation Worlds), or as escapes from or true alternatives to the actual world of

the narrative universe (Fantasy Universes). In all cases, they are constructed by the human mind (mental constructs) and they all form the virtual domain of that narrative universe. “The virtual in the narrative universe exists in the thoughts of characters. Narrative concerns primarily human (or human-like) action, and action is determined by the mind’s involvement with external reality” (1991, 110). Thus, on the part of the characters, these mental activities which form the virtual domain, are attempts to shape, interact with and grasp the actual domain. On the part of the reader, an access to these mental activities helps the reader fully understand the actual action, how it came to be the way it is and the underlying mental processes whereby it came into being.

The narrative universe is dynamic in the sense that the characters’ private worlds are interacting with each other and with the factual domain. This interaction results in conflict. Conflict ensues from dissatisfaction of some private character domains and is eliminated by these domains coinciding as much as possible with the factual domain. So characters take actions to satisfy their private domains but this may result in the dissatisfaction of others characters’ private domains. Consequently, Ryan claims that the modal system – which comprises unactualizable or as yet unactualized possibilities – is the underlying system for the movement of narratives and for the actual actions taken by characters; accordingly, focus must be placed not on the factual actions *per se*, but on these virtual ones. The modal systems of Wish-Worlds and Obligation-Worlds set the goals for the agential actions, while the Knowledge Worlds and Intention Worlds serve to devise the plans whereby these goals are to be realized. Moreover, these virtual events are responsible for the diversification and the complexity of the embedded narratives generated by the human mind and consequently of the complexity of the plot that comprises them.

For the rest of this Chapter we will be mainly concerned with the epistemic aspect of modality, i.e., with the Knowledge and Intention Worlds of characters which

hold collections of private narratives that determine their behaviour and give meaning to their actions. Whether they are verified by the actual event or remain purely virtual, these private embedded narratives weave their strands into the texture of the plot and turn it into a layered structure, a bundle of possible stories. (ibid., 147)

The content of these two worlds has deeper implications for the characters' set goals and devised plans. In setting a goal to be achieved, by forward logic the planner must take into account the goal state and returns backward to his/her current state and measures the intermediate states which specify the actions s/he should carry out to rule out that difference. Some steps of the plan may be carried out by subagents whose reactions, perceptions as well as their own private plans and goals should be taken into account by the main agent (ibid., 135-42). Once agreed, the plan of the main agent must be disclosed to the subagent. The plan disclosed by the main agent to the subagent is called the 'overt' plan. It may be the actual plan of the main agent or a faked one aimed at his/her deception. The latter is called a 'virtual' plan, "a pretended scheme, never meant to be fully executed" in which "the main agents hide their actual intent from the subagent" (ibid., 143).² Plans and goals are present- or future-oriented. But the virtual projection may contain also retrospective reconstruction of past events. This reconstruction may be correct or incorrect, faked or sincere. All these strategies of the proliferation of the virtual domain will enhance the tellability of the story. According to Ryan, "the complexity of a plot depends on an underlying system of purely virtual embedded narratives . . . The aesthetic appeal of a plot is a function of the richness and variety of the domain of the virtual, as it is surveyed and made accessible by these private embedded narratives" (ibid., 156).

Another contribution to the concept of the virtual event is made by Gerald Prince's 'The Disnarrated' (1988). Prince defines the 'disnarrated' as the "events that do not happen but, nevertheless, are referred to (in a negative or hypothetical mode) by the narrative text" ([1988] 2004, 299). They include negative comparisons, modals, futures, counterfactuals and commands. Prince equates the disnarrated with Ryan's 'virtual embedded narratives.'³ Roughly speaking, the disnarrated refers to those bits of the narrative discourse that deal with things that did not take place, but are hypothetically mentioned by the narrator or one or more of the characters. Although he considers the disnarrated inessential to the progress of the narrative, Prince refers to many roles that the disnarrated might play: it is a regulator of narrative speed, when discoursing of the actual events is interrupted by contemplating the virtual, 'disnarrated' ones. It also serves as a characterizational device. It can also

feature as a theme, such as the theme of reality versus illusion. It is part of the logic of the narrative; more generally, it stands for “the choices not made, route not taken, possibilities not actualized, goals not reached” (ibid., 301).

In what follows I shall use the term ‘virtual event’ in Shakespearean plot to stand in contrast to the ‘actual’ event. It mainly comprises the private embedded narratives of character domains, which form the Knowledge Worlds and Intention Worlds: it thus includes the image characters construct about the actual world, their future plans, their virtual plans, and their retrospective reconstruction of the past events. In the example above from *Macbeth*, the story about Duncan’s murder which Macbeth and his wife present is a virtual course of events since it is not the actual one. It is an image created in the reconstruction of the past event, which clearly diverts from the actual image and is meant for the deception of other characters. Besides, since the virtual events constitute the content of the characters’ knowledge and intentions, then it is mainly related to the notion of inwardness and interiority that have attracted the interest of early modern intellectuals. As there has been an anxiety regarding the accessibility to the inward thinking of persons, so one way to determine that inwardness in theatre is through an access to the virtual domains of characters.

In the following discussion, two aspects of the virtual event stand out as being of special interest: the first is the potentiality of the virtual; as it comprises the roads not taken, the virtual always points us to the possibilities latent in the text which, if actualized, will produce new texts and new stories. It is incessantly evoking the inherent plurality of the text and, consequently, of reality itself, be it actual or fictional. The second aspect is that of probability. As we are dealing mainly with the epistemic worlds or modality, it is crucial to stress the relevance of probability in this context. It is a point which Marie-Laure Ryan only mentions in passing (1991, 115). Probability is closely related to the virtual or possible events. In order for characters to determine what might have happened in the past, they need to conduct probabilistic reasoning whereby they can measure the probability of each of the different paths which the action might have taken. Only then can they determine how likely an event is to have taken place. Even in judging the credibility of the virtual plans of other characters, a character will use probabilistic thinking to determine how honest the planner is. Possible

Worlds theory does not invest in this area, and there we have little to look for of the interaction between the two notions of virtuality and probability.

It is to rhetoric that we have to turn to find out more about the interaction between virtuality and probability. Classical and Renaissance rhetoricians seem to have been quite aware of this interaction and interdependence between the actual and the virtual. The two notions of the virtual and the probable featured fairly in rhetoric. In order to better appreciate Shakespeare's use of the virtual events, we need a closer look into the discipline of rhetoric that provided the main theoretical and practical apparatus for Renaissance playwrights to deal with the notions of the virtual and the probable. In the following section I shall sketch the development of the notions of virtuality and probability in Classical and Renaissance rhetoric to see how it might have influenced Shakespeare's thinking about and practice of these notions.

Rhetoric: The Art of the Virtual and Probable

In the last section we have demonstrated the central role of the virtual events in narrative. Demonstrating the significance of the virtual has been the main contribution of possible worlds theories in narratology. However, we have pointed to the lack of any treatment of probability in these possible worlds accounts of the virtual or possible. A discipline that combines the interest in both notions of the virtual and the probable is rhetoric. The spread of rhetoric in early modern learning also accounts for the pivotal place which these two notions occupy in the Shakespeare canon. In this section I shall argue that Shakespeare's familiarity with and use of the notions of the virtual and the probable is attributable to the prevalence of rhetorical thinking in early modern England. Below I shall examine the role of virtuality and probability in Classical and early modern judicial rhetoric. Then I shall investigate how this rhetorical education has shaped relevant aspects of the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Throughout this study I am mainly concerned with one branch of rhetoric called judicial rhetoric.⁴Originally, rhetorical theory and practice are deeply rooted in the judicial system of accumulating evidence by amassing probabilities on one side of the case. In fact, rhetoric owes its first emergence to the need to

argue for lawsuits in front of the judges. As Robert P. Burns puts it, “If the trial is the heart of the law, then the law is rhetorical, for rhetoric rules where action under uncertainty is necessary” (2006, 444). This was especially the case during the Greek and Roman periods. After the decline of the Roman Empire, and through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the interest in and practice of rhetoric moved from the forum into the schoolroom, and rhetoric featured as a major discipline in Medieval and Renaissance educational systems.

The three notions of the possible, virtual and the probable, feature prominently in rhetoric. The possible, in its varied manifestations as the contingent events of the past, has played a large role in the defining the scope of the art of rhetoric (Strauver 2009).⁵ Classical rhetoricians have defined the subject of their discipline as being the contingent, mainly in the sense of the past events whose existence is shrouded with indeterminacy and uncertainty. The association of the art of rhetoric with the notion of the contingent dates back to Aristotle.⁶ In response to Plato who observed that rhetoric has no specified subject, Aristotle retorts by asserting that rhetoric has a subject and that its subject is the contingent (Gaonkar 2006). Aristotle declares that the subject of deliberation, as a rhetorical method, cannot be the necessary, but the possible: “The subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities . . . about things that could not have been, and cannot now or in the future be, other than they are, nobody who takes them to be of this nature wastes his time in deliberation” (I.ii.1375a5-7). The notion of contingency also features in later accounts of rhetoric. The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* defines the statement of fact in terms of certainty and possibility at the same time: “The narration or Statement of Facts sets forth the events that have occurred or *might have occurred*” (1.2.3; emphasis added). Quintilian gives relatively the same definition: “The *statement of facts* consists in the persuasive exposition of that which either has been done, or is supposed to have been done” (4.2.31; emphasis in original).

The virtual, in the sense of the private embedded narratives or the mental constructions, also crops up fairly frequently in rhetorical writings. Rhetoricians seem to be quite aware of the extent to which the orator needs to project these mental constructions of his audiences and the judges in order to be able to predict their reactions and respond proactively. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* advises

that the orator guide and affect the audiences' minds and thoughts by masterfully exploiting his knowledge of their private knowledge and intentions, or to put it technically, by predicting their virtual domains. For example, it advises that the orator must use the exordium to prepare his audience, most importantly the judges and jury, to listen to the oration attentively. It astutely states that: "We shall have attentive hearers by promising to discuss important, new, and unusual matter" (1.4.7). Quintilian also recommends that the orator addresses his audiences' private domains through many means. He states that the function of the exordium is to "prepare our audience in such a way that they will be disposed to lend a ready ear to the rest of our speech" so much so that "we gain admission to the mind of the judge in order to penetrate still further" (4.1.5). This can only be achieved if the orator can surmise what the audience is *possibly* thinking of at that very moment, so that he can react accordingly. By the same token, the orator must weigh the effect of every tactic on the judge's opinion so that, by projecting the *possible* courses the judge's thinking might take, the orator can plan to lead it in the courses most favourable to him. Quintilian recommends that the orator show himself weaker in acting and dissembling in comparison to his opponent, because "a scrupulous judge is always specially ready to listen to an advocate whom he does not suspect to have designs on his integrity" (4.1.9; also 4.1.56). The author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* observes that an indispensable trait of the orator is to be "well aware of the means by which belief is ordinarily affected" (1.6.10).

These rhetorical recipes reflect a deep awareness of the role of the virtual domain in directing people's motivations and intentions. In terms that Marie-Laure Ryan would favourably use, the relation of the orator to the judge is like that of the agent to the subagent, with the former guiding the latter to the implementation of his own plan, which necessitates that the orator projects all the thoughts that would go through the audience's mind. In the same fashion, Quintilian holds that the orator must implant in the judge's mind the thought that his fortune would be deplorable should he lose his case (4.1.29). And so it seems that most of the effort of the good orator should consist in dealing with the virtual domain of his listeners, sometimes adding to them some refreshments or even alleviating their fears and obsessions. This also works well not only with the judges, but also with the orator's opponent, whose

possible actions and reactions should be weighed rightly by the orator: “Nor is the art of anticipating what is likely to be said against us without its use” (4.1.49).

The notion of probability, in the sense of plausible convincing persuasion, also secured a pivotal place in rhetoric. For Aristotle, the main method of persuasion is the enthymeme, which is a form of argument like the logical syllogism. It differs from the syllogism of logic in that while the premises of logical syllogisms should be ‘certain,’ those of the enthymeme should be ‘probable.’⁷To Aristotle, “the theory of rhetoric must be concerned ... with what seems probable⁸ to men of a given type” (I.ii.1356b32-5). The orator cannot aspire for certainty but could strive to augment the probability of his arguments. Quintilian also holds that the orations should be probable and use probabilistic reasoning: the orator’s statement of facts should be “lucid, brief and plausible” (4.2.31). The significance of the ‘probability’ requirement gets clearer when he separates it from ‘truth,’ for not every true is probable: “There are many things which are true, but scarcely credible, just as there are many things which are plausible though false” (4.2.34). In *De Oratore*, Cicero also mentions ‘plausibility’ as a requirement of the statement of facts (2.19.80; 2.80.226). And he has already made the same point in *De Inventione* (1.29.44). As far as the nature of the probable is concerned, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* characterizes it as having the features of “the usual, the expected, and the natural” (1.9.16). The notion of ‘probability’ also gets directly under focus when the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* includes it within Conjectural Issue: “Through Probability one proves that the crime was profitable to the defendant, and that he never abstained from this foul practice. The subheads under Probability are Motive and Manner of Life” (2.2.3).

This emphasis on the probable in rhetoric came down to the rhetorical tradition of the Renaissance. In Aphthonius’s *Progymnasmata*, a handbook of rhetorical exercises which is ascribed to Aphthonius the sophist and which was the main rhetoric textbook in English schools during the Renaissance, narrative is defined as “Narratio est expositio rei factae vel tanquam factae” (Narrative is the exposition of what happened or what might have happened) (1572, 17v). He then mentions four characteristic features of narrative, one being ‘probable’ (ibid.). In *Foundacion of Rhetorike*, Richard Rainolde follows this tradition citing ‘probability’ as a prerequisite of narrative: “Probable, as not unlike to be true”

(1563, 13v). In his *The Arte of Rhetorique*, one of the most comprehensive accounts of the discipline in Elizabethan England, Thomas Wilson follows on the heels of previous rhetoricians in defining the conjectural issue: “The Oration conjectural is, when matters be examined and tryed out by suspicions gathered, and some *likelihode* of thinge appearinge”(1553, 50v; emphasis added). The examples he gives suggest that the orator has to collect signs that whip up the probability of his claim against the other claims.⁹ Although all these signs do not breed certainty, yet their job is to increase the probability of the crime being committed by the accused person. In possible worlds terms, the orator is trying to construct a virtual course of events (since the real course is irretrievably lost), and in doing so he is excluding the other courses the event might have taken instead. In order to convince the judge that this virtual course *is* the real one, the orator has to augment probabilities on that virtual side.

Thus, the two notions of the virtual and the probable were two characteristic landmarks in Renaissance thought due to many factors, chief among which is the spread of rhetorical learning. In the Introduction we have demonstrated the centrality of the notions of possibility and probability in the philosophical, theological, geographical and rhetorical thought in the Renaissance. Among these sites of influence, rhetorical learning was especially effective in the cultivation of virtual courses and probabilistic reasoning. During the Renaissance, rhetoric was the main discipline in the curricula, be it in the grammar schools or in the universities (Mack 2004). According to Gavin Alexander, “Rhetoric became the master–discipline of Renaissance learning and the central focus of education” (2010, 38). That kind of rhetorical learning has also affected the way learners have to project the mental constructions of others in order to anticipate the virtual actions they would take and act accordingly. In his pioneering study, *The Tudor Play of Mind*, Joel B. Altman argues for the influence of the Tudor rhetorically-centred educational system on the people’s minds and the flexibility of thinking it helped to foster: “what happens to a mind conditioned to argue *in utramque partem* – on both sides of the question – as Renaissance students were trained to do? Surely one result must be a great complexity of vision, capable of making everyman not only a devil’s advocate, but also a kind of microcosm deity” (1978, 3). Stephen Greenblatt also spots this agility of thought or ‘widening of possibilities’ in the

early modern period, which he calls 'improvisation,' by which he means "the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario," (1980, 227) or "the ability to insert the self into the sign systems of others" (1991, 98). Greenblatt's notion of 'improvisation' is conceptually and practically kindred to that of the projected plans and the virtual in the narratological sense. To improvise thus means to be able to project the virtual plans of the subagents and act accordingly. This, in turn, is based on calculating the possible scenarios through which the subagent's actions may go.¹⁰

The proliferation of rhetorical education, which highlighted the importance of virtuality and probability, has had its impact on the drama of the period. The relation between drama and rhetoric was very intimate in this period. Generally, drama and rhetoric share the same aim of affecting an audience. Rhetoric, just like drama, is often held in public and in front of an audience. Consequently, the skills required by both arts are characteristically similar, especially the art of delivery in rhetoric and the way it was taught to actors, as we have shown in Chapter One. As Peter Womack puts it, "If theatre was rhetorical, that was partly because rhetoric was already theatrical" (2006, 80). Many Renaissance dramatists were trained in the grammar schools whose syllabi were mainly based on classical rhetorical texts. Moreover, the drama bequeathed these rhetorical tendencies, most forcefully forensic rhetoric, from Classical drama, especially Latin comedy. Latin New Comedy is accredited with this strong forensic tendency, so much so that even rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian make reference to and give examples from Terentian comedy. The comic plots of Plautus and Terence bulge with intrigues and misunderstandings which induce characters to conduct inferential processes based on circumstantial evidence to arrive at the real course of events. Forensic rhetorical reasoning was a decisive factor that helped Renaissance dramatists shape their evidential plots and episodes of deception and intrigue. This can explain the forensic or detective-like features of English drama in the Renaissance (Hutson 2007). With occasional exceptions, English Renaissance dramatists were generally used to such forensic techniques; in their plays, they have planted and skilfully manipulated evidence of time and place and made intricate reference to causes and motives. Part of the mimetic appeal of that drama derives from its forensic

legacy. "Evidence, of course, entails representation, and this immediately links courtroom practice to theatrical mimesis" (Mukherji 2006, 3).

Thanks to his grammar school education, Shakespeare must have been fairly familiar with these rhetorical techniques and exercises, which is directly reflected in his plays. Early in his career, Shakespeare has tried his hand and mastered this form of forensic rhetoric. Always in the plays characters are faced by certain problems which they try to solve using this forensic way of reasoning. Shakespeare's fascination with the richness and complexity of the virtual and probable is prominent throughout his career: examples of that range from the use of forensic reasoning to solve the puzzles of the double twins in *The Comedy of Errors*, to the intricate way in which Don John weaves the accusation of adultery against Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*; it also features in Hamlet's various techniques to prove Claudius guilty of his father's murder. In these and many other examples, Shakespeare has masterfully shown how characters, faced with a tricky situation, try to choose among the conflicting interpretations by weighing evidence on each side of the case, and then take side according to which one is more quantitatively probable. Characters in Shakespeare tend to use this sort of reasoning to work out the virtual narratives, which only incidentally converge with the actual ones. This crafty improvisation has long been considered a characteristic feature of many a Shakespearean character, not restricted to villains, but also to good characters. The trick played in *Much Ado about Nothing* by Hero, Don Pedro, Claudio and Ursula on Beatrice and Benedick to help them fall in love with each other is a well-knit improvisation. All forms of disguise practised by Shakespeare's heroines are benign examples of improvisation. In all these examples, these improvising characters seek to proliferate the domains of the virtual, thus alienating the other characters' thinking from the actual state of affairs. However, when this is done on a felonious ground, this divergence between the actual and the virtual can be tragic, as in *Othello*, or comes perilously close, as in *Cymbeline*, unless generic conventions dictate the contrary, as we shall see below.

In addition to its concern with probabilistic thinking, Renaissance drama also addresses the virtual domain in relation to what Katharine Eisaman Maus (1995) calls 'inwardness'. Knowledge of the virtual domain or the private worlds of characters allows us to access the inward selves of these characters.

Inwardness and interiority, moreover, have been associated with the authentic and genuine self, in contrast to the merely outward form which mainly implies inauthenticity. Maus observes that in the Renaissance the value of inwardness is emphasized by writers, religious and otherwise, and the accessibility of the virtual domain of other people featured significantly in the period as the question of how to know what other minds are thinking of. Theatre, however, has a special tension with inwardness due to its investment in the material outward display. With the playwrights' insistence on the limitations of their theatrical medium, "theatrical representation becomes subject to profound and fascinating crises of authenticity" (1995, 32). But the inaccessibility of the virtual is nevertheless recommended by some new approaches to practical politics as evidenced by Nicolo Machiavelli. The successful prince, Machiavelli advises, is one who can keep his real intents and thinking inaccessible and hidden from other people, while he himself should attain an understanding of how others think. This dangerous dissociation between the actual behaviour and the virtual domain is pertinent to the rhetorical insights which emphasized that the orator should manage the perceptions of his audiences to his own advantage. Machiavelli's ideas, as Hugh Grady (2002) convincingly argues, have much to bear on a certain mode of representation of politics in Shakespeare. The question of inwardness and the accessibility of the virtual and private worlds of characters are pertinent to our analysis in this Chapter, and will feature prominently in our discussion of the character of Bolingbroke in Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

In this section we have demonstrated how the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been affected by the rhetorical education of their time. Among other things, this influence has been manifest in their dealing with the virtual and the probable in their plays. One area of this influence is the use of forensic methods that heavily rely on probabilistic reasoning. Another common theme which these notions have raised is the reality vs. illusion which has many manifestations in early modern drama, one of which is the practice of disguise, misconception and mistaken identities. Moreover, they are also relevant to the idea of inwardness and the irresistible urge readers and characters feel to access other characters' virtual domains. These notions also illuminate the theme of deception that prevails in drama, be it carried out for good or evil

reasons. There are many other aspects of the use of the virtual events in the Shakespearean drama which will unfold in the following discussions. Below I shall further illuminate these points with reference to two plays of the Shakespeare canon: *Richard II* and *Cymbeline*.

Virtuality and Probability in Shakespeare

So far we have shown the significance of the virtual events in general and in Shakespearean drama in particular. We have also remarked that one source of Shakespeare's acquaintance with and use of these notions of the virtual and the probable is the spread of rhetorical education in early modern England. Here I shall examine two plays of Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* and *Richard II*, to address the role of virtual events in the working of Shakespeare's plays. The two plays belong to two different periods, genres, general interests, etc. More importantly, the virtual component features very differently in each play. In *Cymbeline*, there is a proliferation of the virtual domain, and characters are constantly constructing virtual and alternative courses of events, both deliberately and by mistake. In *Richard II*, on the other hand, there is shortage and scarcity of the virtual domain made accessible to readers and audiences. Audiences are only confronted with the actual actions of characters from which they have to construct the virtual domain. In both cases, however, the virtual remains essential to the intelligibility of the play and its availability defines how the play will be received by its audiences.

Cymbeline

In an epilogue to his book, *The Improbability of Othello* (2010), Joel B. Altman identifies a mode of writing in Shakespeare, which he calls 'romantic,' where the playwright seems to relax his adherence to the principle of probability. This is even more so in the plays generally called 'Romances,' *Cymbeline* included. In these plays, Altman argues, Shakespeare felt restricted by probabilistic representation and so looked for more 'wondrous' modes of presentation. According to Altman, Shakespeare

seems also to have recognized that probable theater reflects conventional thinking and that conventional thinking, if reassuring, is delimiting. He

wanted more for his staged persons and his audiences, and therefore violated the Aristotelian dictum that 'a likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility'. (2010, 346)

While the element of 'wonder' is unmistakably characteristic of *Cymbeline*, yet I shall argue that probabilistic modes of thinking are also prominent in this play. One area of the use of probabilistic thinking in the play is the wager scene. Probabilistic reasoning in this scene is related to and manifested by the range of virtual domains that the play generates. *Cymbeline* is a play matchlessly rich in cultivating virtual courses of events and it thrives on the convergence, and often divergence between the virtual and the actual domains of actions. This aspect of the play can best be seen as manifested in three areas. The first is the use of forensic rhetoric; second is the foregrounding of the act of improvisation as theme in the play; and the third is the gap between the virtual and the actual courses of events.

The use of forensic rhetoric features clearly in the wager story. This scene takes place in Act One, when Giacomo promises to prove to Posthumus the dishonour of his wife Imogen. Thus, the forensic nature of the wager is quite apparent: Giacomo has to prove, as a lawyer in a court would do, that Imogen is dishonourable. To achieve this qualitative aspect of his claim as truthful or not, he has inevitably to follow a quantitative approach wherein he has to increase the probability of his claim via collecting plausible evidence. He goes to Britain for this purpose and, quite shrewdly, has the opportunity to get into Imogen's room while she is sleeping. In the room he has to carry out his enquiry and collect as much misleading evidence as he can to convince Posthumus of Imogen's infidelity.

First enamoured by the beauty of both Imogen and her bedchamber, Giacomo manages to turn his attention back to his main mission, namely to write down everything that can be used as evidence:

Such and such pictures, there the window, such
Th'adornment of her bed, the arras, figures,
Why such and such, and the contents o'th' story. (2.2.25-7)

Like the story on the tapestry, Giacomo himself is after a 'story' which, to be convincing, he has to fill in relevant content and arrange it in an intelligible way. His aim is basically rhetorical: to persuade Posthumus of Imogen's infidelity rather than really defile it. "Iachimo would rather poison Posthumus' mind than possess Imogen's body. So he does not touch her" (Nevo 2003, 101). The main

interest then for Giacomo, as it will be to Posthumus, is solely in stories about Imogen, not in the actual manipulation of her body. According to Alison Thorne, “sexual guilt” turns out to be “a matter of rhetorical persuasion rather than direct proof” (1999, 184).

Acutely aware of his main job, Giacomo turns then to weighing the importance of every piece of evidence according to how probable it can render his claim. He concludes that details of her body make his claim seem comparatively more probable:

Ah, but some natural notes about her body
Above ten thousand meaner movables
Would testify t'enrich mine inventory. (2.2.28-30)

Although he aims to quantitatively increase the evidential data in his inventory, yet he is aware of the qualitative difference among different items: surely details of her own body (which should be an autonomous and guarded area) are more supportive of his claim than a mere description of the chamber, which is a more feasibly accessible space.

The most precious token he can take in this regard is the bracelet from her arm: “Tis mine, and this will witness outwardly, / As *strongly* as the conscience does within, / To th'madding of her lord” (2.2.35-7; emphasis added). Giacomo carries on in his collecting of ‘evidence’ until he notices the mole on her breast: “Here’s a voucher / Stronger than ever law could make. This secret / Will force him think I have picked the lock and ta’en / The treasure of her honour” (39-42). Mentioning ‘law’ in this context is hardly surprising, and it shows that he understands his mission as a lawyer who accumulates evidence to defend or prosecute some person. Moreover, in order for Giacomo to be able to judge what seems more or less probable, or the stronger and weaker evidence, he has to project Posthumus’ virtual response to and interpretation of every single bit of evidence that Giacomo is going to present. This accords with the rhetoricians’ recommendation, mentioned above, that the orator should skilfully manipulate the virtual domain of the judge. In order to efficiently do that, Giacomo has to project all the virtual routes Posthumus’ thought will go in, and manage his available evidence accordingly.

Back in Italy, Giacomo professes himself the winner of Imogen’s honour (2.4.53). Posthumus demands proof: “If you can make’t apparent / That you

have tasted her in bed, my hand / And ring is yours" (56-58). Quite interestingly, Posthumus's request is not very ambitious: he only asks Giacomo to make the claim 'apparent'. The *OED* shows that there were two main meanings for the word 'apparent' in the 17th century: first is the evident and clear; and the second is "Appearing to the senses or mind, as distinct from (though not necessarily opposed to) what really *is*" or "Likely so far as appearances go." Thus Posthumus is asking for a proof that is like truth, one that is the result of rhetorical deliberation. This is what Giacomo has and what he is going to make. Giacomo, on the other hand, seizes this opportunity and makes clear the nature of the evidence at his disposal:

Sir, my circumstances,
Being so near the truth as I will make them,
Must first induce you to believe; (61-3)

The evidence Giacomo has, then, is circumstantial, not direct evidence. More captivating is his admission that his proof 'comes *near* the truth' and does not aspire to be the truth itself. He does not offer, nor does Posthumus ask him to, present eyewitnesses on the deed. The only other thing Giacomo offers is his 'oath'. Thus it appears that their contestation is mainly rhetorical and it aspires not to determine the actual event, but what looks probable according to the evidence presented.

To make his case Giacomo starts by describing the contents of Imogen's chamber, such as the hanging tapestry and its splendour, which invites Posthumus' objection: "This is true, / And this you *might have heard* of here, by me / Or by some other" (2.4.76-8; emphasis added). Posthumus, it seems, is no less aware of the play of possibilities than Giacomo. In possible worlds terms, while Giacomo claims to present the actual course of event, Posthumus is quick to weigh the evidence and suggest an alternative or virtual course of events. The evidence Giacomo presents is hardly enough, for his knowledge of her chamber could have come from other sources than of the fact of himself being there. This time Giacomo loses in the quantitative game, so he reacts by trying to augment the probability of his claim, now by mentioning more particular details: "More particulars / Must justify my knowledge" (78-9). In Roland Barthes's (1986) terms, these particulars and details would enhance the reality effect of the story. However, the particulars Giacomo mentions, the chimney piece and the roof of her chamber, are not convincing enough for Posthumus to

surrender to his claims, because these details could have been known otherwise than by being into Imogen's room. This forces Giacomo to reveal the bracelet and claim that Imogen has given it to him. Struck first by surprise, Posthumus retorts shortly after that: "Maybe she plucked it off / To send it me" (104-5). So, the event that Giacomo presents as actual, that he made love to Imogen, is evidenced by the bracelet. To Posthumus, however, that evidence is still compatible with another virtual course of event, namely the supposition that it is Imogen who gave the bracelet to Giacomo. Thus, we have here two virtual courses of events, both compatible with presence of the bracelet with Giacomo. But Giacomo makes a witty move:

GIACOMO. She writes so to you, doth she?

POSTHUMUS. O no, no, no – 'tis true. Here, take this too.

[He gives GIACOMO his ring] (105-6)

Giacomo is here decreasing the probability of Posthumus's supposition for, had she sent it, she would have written so to him. And since she did not, then she was not sending it to Posthumus. Posthumus, for a moment, is quite convinced of that and grants Giacomo winning the wager. However, Filario, their host, gets involved in this playful, though deadly serious, game of possibilities, suggesting that "It may be probable she lost it, or / Who knows if one her women, being corrupted, / Hath stol'n it from her?" (2.4.115-6). Filario is suggesting another virtual plot in which Imogen did not give the bracelet to Giacomo nor send it to Posthumus, but rather it was stolen from her. This plot is no less 'probable' than the other two, which induces Posthumus to withdraw his past judgement. But when Giacomo swears that he had it, Posthumus starts to undermine the probability of Filario's plot on behalf of that of Giacomo: "She would not lose it. Her attendants are / All sworn and honourable. They induced to steal it? / And by a stranger? No, he hath enjoyed her" (124-6). What sounds probable to Filario is even less so to Posthumus. This third virtual course being dismissed, the only remaining version, which Posthumus reluctantly accepts, is Giacomo's.

What is interesting about this scene is its quasi-judicial nature, for Giacomo here is assuming the role of orator or prosecutor, trying to convince Posthumus, who is assuming the role of a judge. However, Posthumus proves a bad judge by Renaissance standards, for he allows his ears to be affected by one side of the argument only, and never listens to the other side. In his essay 'Of Judicature', Francis Bacon (2002) states that judges should listen to both

sides with patience, and they should distribute their hearing among all parties, especially the modest or weak side of the case. Posthumus did none of these; he did not even listen to Imogen's defence of herself, let alone do that with patience and gravity. More interesting is the lasting influence of Giacomo's rhetoric, for until the last revelation, Posthumus is persuaded by his insinuations. Even when Posthumus forgives Imogen before the battle and determines to die for her, he still believes Giacomo's story (Kahn 1997, 168). Posthumus' reaction to the evidence presented is very complicated and, at some points, far from logical. Giacomo presents three kinds of evidence: the room description, his knowledge of the mole on her breast and the bracelet. Among these, the strongest should be the mole on her breast. However, Posthumus focuses on the bracelet after he dismisses the description of the bedchamber. The irony in this dialogue is that the discussion begins as rational, but ends up more penitential than rhetorical. For although he works on weighing evidence on a rhetorical and probabilistic basis, Posthumus accepts Giacomo's oath as evidence. Lorna Hutson elaborately shows that some practices of penitential theology in the justice system, such as confession and swearing, belong to the pre-Reformation judicial system. In post-Reformation judicial practice, the use of evidence replaced these practices (2007, 45). What is interesting here is that Posthumus first works on forensic evidence but then, quite unpredictably, lapses into an acceptance of oaths as judicial evidence. Moreover, by excluding the possibility that the bracelet might have been stolen with the help of the servants, Posthumus shows more trust in the fidelity of Imogen's servants than in Imogen herself. And so it seems that Shakespeare might have wanted to indicate how hopelessly premature his protagonist is, at this stage of the play at least (Glazov-Corrigan 1994, 392).

The second manifestation of the virtual domain in the play is the practice of improvisation. Improvisation is practiced by many characters who quite adroitly employ the divergence between the actual and virtual domains of the other characters. Two examples will suffice in this regard. One has to do with the Queen's plan to have Imogen poisoned. The Queen asks Doctor Cornelius to prepare some poisonous drugs. She explains that she needs them to: "try the forces / Of these thy compounds on such creatures as / We count not worth the hanging, but none human" (1.5.18-20). This is the plot she presents as actual,

but for Cornelius it is only a virtual one: “[*aside*] I do suspect you, madam. / But you shall do no harm” (31-2). Suspecting thus, he engages in an act of improvisation, since the drugs he has given her would cause a swoon but are not strong enough to kill a human being. As a result of his improvisation is that “She is fooled / With a most false effect, and I the truer / So to be false with her” (42-4). The box has a long journey throughout the play, moving from the Queen to Pisanio (60-74), whom she directs to give it to his mistress, Imogen. Then it moves from Pisanio to Imogen (3.4.188-192), who drinks the drug when she feels sick in the cave (4.2.38). Drinking the drug makes her swoon and be thought dead, until the true story of the drug is revealed at the end of the play by Cornelius himself (5.6.249-58). What is interesting about this example is that both improvisations are at work: on the one hand, the Queen has partly succeeded in importing the drug to Imogen whom she wanted to have killed. On the other hand, however, Cornelius’s counter-improvisation also worked well, for although Imogen had the drug, she never died. Cornelius was thus successful in projecting the virtual plan of the Queen and in (re)acting accordingly. In narratological terms, the Queen as an agent did not account for the fact that the subagent to her plan, Cornelius, is not an automated one, but might have a plan of his own. According to Marie-Laure Ryan, “At every step involving a subagent, the planner must project the alternatives facing the subagent and foresee the subagent’s reactions” (1991, 136). Cornelius’s move, moreover, has far-reaching implications for the plot of the play. “It enables the tragicomic transformation of grave and serious events into restorative and gratifying ends” (Nevo 2003, 108). This line of the story also shows the exhilarating potential of the possible and virtual event: at every juncture of this complex course, the action could have turned out differently, which would have led to other results than the ones actualized in the play’s world. An awareness of these unactualized possibilities is necessary if we are to appreciate the aesthetic import of these episodes.

The other example is related to Pisanio’s improvisation when he was ordered by his master Posthumus to kill Imogen. Pisanio, be it noted, “enjoys a certain cunning – the Queen calls him sly” (Lewis 1991, 346). Realizing the illusion of Posthumus, he attributes it, quite correctly, to the work of rhetoric which we detailed above. He tells Imogen that “Some villain, / Ay, and singular

in his art, hath done you both / This cursed injury" (3.4.119-21). To reconcile his conscience with obedience to his master, he decides, on the one hand, to convince Posthumus that he has really killed Imogen, and, on the other hand, to help her escape and never be recognized. To do the first thing, he tells her that "I'll give but notice that you are dead, and send him / Some bloody sign of it, for 'tis commanded / I should do so. You shall be missed at court / And that will well confirm it" (124-7). This way he will construct in Posthumus's mind a virtual course of events in which Imogen is dead. To foster the *likelihood* of this event, he will give some signs that qualitatively enhance this supposition: one is a bloody sign, suggesting Imogen's blood, and the second is Imogen's absence from the court, which will also suggest her death. Pisanio's improvisation will succeed until the end of the play. To protect Imogen from Cloten, he advises and help her to disguise as a page: "and but disguise / That which t'appear itself must not yet be" (144-5). To conduct the disguise is also to create a virtual course of events, which the other characters think to be actual. According to Stephen Greenblatt, disguise can be a form of improvisation (1980, 252). The disguise works according to Imogen's and Pisanio's plans, by keeping her identity covered from her brothers, her father, the Roman ambassador Lucius, and even Posthumus, until it is revealed by Pisanio at the end (5.6.229-32). These acts of improvisation are integral to the progression and continuation of both the play and the royal family: "Pisanio, like Belarius, must now betray his master in order to save an heir to the throne" (Simonds 1982, 143).

It is to be noted that the acts of improvisation have taken a geographical dimension, being linked as they are to the division the play establishes between the court and the wilderness. Milford Haven here stands for "the 'green world' or other place which in Shakespearean comedy is liberating and restorative" (Nevo 2003, 106). The court, on the other hand, is associated with intrigues and villainy. Even Imogen, frustrated by her father's court, voices the same distinction: "When rich ones scarce tell true. To lapse in fullness / Is sorer than to lie for need, and falsehood / Is worse in kings than beggars" (3.6.12-4). Accordingly, improvisation is always associated with the court and its figures; but in the natural landscape, where we find that "Wordsworthian connection between the exiled royal family and a nature that is divine" (Carr 1978, 323), people scarcely get involved in such behaviour.

The third area of the cultivation of virtuality in the play is found in the proliferating gaps between the actual and virtual courses of events. As the play moves on, we are shown the divergence between what actually happened and what the characters think to have happened. In this play, everyone “is at every point unaware of or deceived about the major facts affecting [their] situation” (Nevo 2003, 92). In narratological terms, this marks the gap between the facts of the textual actual world and the private worlds of the characters’ beliefs and conceptions. The above examples of the wager scene, deception and disguise testify to the exhilarating potential of the virtual domain of the play. The story of the two princes is very interesting in this regard. While the actual course of action is hidden from the other characters, it is revealed to the audiences around the middle the play in (3.3). Before this time, both audiences and characters are denied access to the actual course of events, and only then are the audiences given that advantage, when it is revealed by Belarius: “How hard it is to hide the sparks of nature! / These boys know little they are sons to th’ King, / Nor Cymbeline dreams that they are alive. / They think they are mine” (3.3.79-82). Among characters it is only Belarius that knows this secret, which he now shares with the audiences. This secret is kept up to the end of the play, when Belarius, worried about the fate of the two princes, discloses it to Cymbeline (5.6.328-32).

The bitterest irony is when Imogen meets Belarius and the two princes, not knowing that they are her brothers. However, the two brothers do not have the same access to the actual world as Imogen does. Although both sides are ignorant about their siblinghood, the brothers are two times removed from reality: knowing neither that Fidele is a woman nor that this woman is their natural sister. For Imogen the irony is more piquant because she wishes that the two youths were her missing brothers: “[*Aside*] Would it had been so that they / Had been my father’s sons. Then had my price/Been less, and so more equal ballasting / To thee, Posthumus” (3.6.73-6). Ironically, the virtual course she imagines, expressed by her counterfactual statement, is the same as the actual course of state of affairs, an irony that the audience can fully appreciate. Here also we can see how the actual shadows the virtual resulting in these bitter ironies, for the three siblings are naturally driven to love each other in some mysterious way. The brothers’ natural passion induces them to love

Fidele: Arviragus says that he loves Fidele “as my brother” (3.6.69). So, although their natural familial passion is “unavailable to conscious knowledge, it is evidently unconsciously registered” (Nevo 2003, 106).

The story of Posthumus, Cloten and Imogen is also full of these divergences between the actual and virtual courses of events. Thanks to Pisanio’s plot, Posthumus thinks that Imogen is now dead, while actually she is alive. After she takes the drugs, Imogen is thought by Belarius and her brothers to be dead, which she is not. When she wakes up to see Cloten’s corpse by her side, she mistakes him for Posthumus. So, both Imogen and Posthumus think the other to be dead, which is not the case in the actual world of the text. It is interesting how Shakespeare sometimes leads characters unknowingly to amass signs to augment the probability of the virtual and consider it as an actual event. When Imogen wakes up to see Cloten’s corpse by her side, she mistakes him for Posthumus, proving that by the similarity of the corpse to Posthumus: “The garments of Posthumus? / I know the shape of’s leg; this is his hand, / His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh, / The brawns of Hercules” (4.2.311-3). And although Cloten speaks of being similar to Posthumus – “the lines of my body are as well drawn as his” (4.1.8) – this is hardly enough to establish their identification, which reduces her to a state of unsympathetic foolishness (see Lewis 1991, 354). When Guiderius hears the solemn music of the bird, he thinks it probable that someone has died: “What does he mean? Since death of my dear’st mother / It did not speak before. All solemn things / Should answer solemn accidents” (4.2.191-3). When they see the swooning Imogen, they immediately conclude that she is dead. It is as if even metaphysical forces are tricking characters to live in that virtual, rather than actual world. The interesting thing in the play is that not only do characters mistake the virtual for the actual, but also the actual for the virtual. This specially happens with Imogen who, waking up near Cloten’s corpse, cannot tell whether she is living in reality or dreaming:

I hope I dream,
For so I thought I was a cave keeper,
And cook to honest creatures. But ‘tis not so.
‘Twas but a bolt of nothing, shot of nothing,
Which the brain makes of fumes. Our very eyes
Are sometimes like our judgements, blind. (299-304)

The proliferation of the virtual domains in the play and its divergence from the actual domain has resulted in the play being considered one of the most complex among Shakespeare's plays.¹¹ This feature, together with the three-plot structure of the play, makes it look "like a jigsaw puzzle whose broken-apart and mixed-up pieces must be matched and put together" (Nevo 2003, 95). This all is due to the unprecedented proliferation of the virtual courses of events. In Marie-Laure Ryan's words quoted above, the plot of this play can be seen as a 'layered structure, a bundle of possible stories'. The other consequence is the cultivation of doubt in the play. As we have seen, doubt is cast on all inputs of the material senses, mainly on hearing and seeing. As far as hearing is concerned, we have referred to Giacomo's deception of Posthumus being carried out via the ears (Simonds 1982). Giacomo also uses 'seeing' to carry out that deception. Imogen is also deceived by seeing the corpse of Cloten, which she mistakes for Posthumus. All these instances and many others would elevate 'misconception' to a general theme in the play. The spread of misconceptions is related to the proliferation of the virtual events in the play. For among Shakespeare's plays, "perhaps none is so preoccupied with characters' misperceptions than is *Cymbeline*. The characters and the audience constantly share the difficulty of distinguishing appearance from reality" (Lewis 1991, 344). The third consequence is the cultivation of ironies in the play. In narratological terms, dramatic irony can be seen when a character considers as virtual what the audience know to be actual or actualisable event. Consequently, we have seen how the play is fraught with ironies to which almost all characters fall prey. For example, when Pisanio tells Imogen of Posthumus's wish that she meet him in Milford Haven, and that the time for it can be a whole day walk, she exclaims: "Why, one that rode to's execution, man, / Could never go so slow" (3.2.70-1). Imogen would be really going to her execution blissfully unaware, if Posthumus' instructions to Pisanio were to be implemented.¹²

A central issue that captures our attention in the whole discussion above about the virtual in the play is the sense of potentiality that it implies. When Posthumus in the wager scene starts to entertain the possibility of Imogen's infidelity to him, this just shows the range and limits of his love of and trust in her. No matter how vehemently he praises her at the start, his agreement for the wager betrays his view of what Imogen can potentially do and be; it is

interesting how sexual his language is, when he asks Giacomo if he had 'tasted her in bed', even before Giacomo starts to give his evidence. Imogen's subjectivity is defined by Posthumus less by what she actually is than by what she can potentially be.

Yet this sense of potentiality of the virtual events can also be a liberating strategy and a means for survival. Cornelius saves Imogen's life by recognizing the Queen's potential for evil and Pisanio similarly recognizes Posthumus's liability and potential for deception. In fact, Imogen is saved two times from death through these acts of improvisation: first time by Cornelius and the second by Pisanio. Characters have been looking for less costly alternatives, different from the choices given them in the plot. The characters' potential, moreover, also helps deepen these characters' self-awareness as well as our understanding of them. We could not discover these potentialities of Imogen's adaptability nor Pisanio's wit if it were not for these improvisations, nor, I think, have they been fully aware of their own potential, either. Again, it does not only show the inherent plurality of the text, but also the plurality of the subject and the possibility to be otherwise. The play also shows how, for much of their lives, the characters live in and promote virtual identities. Moreover, although these virtual identities are not actual, they are real, for they have effects in the plot, helping to achieve goals, save lives, and push the action towards resolution.

In conclusion, we have investigated three areas in the play where the virtual is paramount: the rhetorical aspects of the wager scene, the acts of deception and improvisation in the play, and the interaction between and confusion of the virtual and the actual events and states of affairs. All these areas show how cognitively functional and indispensable the virtual events are to our understanding of the play. It shows that the actual events form a limited portion of the complex modal structure of the play: almost all the complexities of the plot and the divergent itineraries the action takes are the result of characters' (mis)conception of what happens and their generation of these virtual scenarios. It partly explains the notorious complexity of the play's structure repeatedly noticed by critics. Especially in the wager scene, it also shows how satisfaction with virtual courses of events can have tragical consequences. In all these examples, we have also seen how the probable is indispensable to any account of possibility, and this shows the limitation of some narratological possible

worlds accounts of possibility, which have largely failed to notice the inherent links between the possible and the probable, especially relevant to the ways in which characters construct these virtual courses of events. Recognizing the proliferation of the virtual domains in *Cymbeline* will serve as an entree into another play, *Richard II*, where we meet an opposite situation, namely the scarcity of the domain of the virtual and its enclosure. This will require more cognitive effort on the part of the reader or spectator in that they need to reconstruct that virtual domain, albeit retrospectively.

Richard II

Perhaps falling short of the appropriate critical terminology, A. P. Rossiter describes the frustrating ‘inconsistencies and discontinuities’ of *Richard II* by making recourse to the geological term ‘unconformities’, by which he means “The whole *may* be consistent, but only if we have a theory of derangements or interruptions” (1963, 24; emphasis in original). *Richard II* has been notorious for its ambiguities, the lack of motivation of its characters, its challengingly non-linear temporality and the indeterminacy of the historical questions it raises. Critics have always pointed out to this bewildering feature of the play. According to Henry Berger, “In the opening scenes of *Richard II*, the inflation of speech is no more conspicuous than the silences it constitutes as hidden behind it” (2004, 107). And, as Robyn Bolam puts it, “In *Richard II* what is unsaid is often as significant as the poetic language which plays off visually on-stage” (2002, 141).

In this section I shall address this peculiar quality of the play in terms of the actual/virtual dichotomies developed above and their general role in the intelligibility of the play. I shall argue that, to an extent unparalleled in Shakespeare’s work, *Richard II* allows very limited, if any, access to the mental domains of the major characters, especially Bolingbroke, and that this leads to a disorienting ambiguity between the actual and the virtual plans of these characters, and consequently to determining their motivation. This inaccessibility also highlights the notion of inwardness in the play. The play is also indeterminate regarding many controversial issues about what really happened. These issues remain unresolved up to the end of the play. Finally, this feature of the play dictates a further effort by the reader to make sense of

the whole plot, although answers to many of these questions will remain inconclusive. Below I shall deal with the effect this characteristic of the play has had on sifting the characters' motivations, and then address the indeterminate historical facts presented in the play. Later I shall show how the adherence to the actual or virtual domains marks the differences between the characters of Richard and Bolingbroke, and finally will discuss how all of this supports (or thwarts) the intelligibility of the whole play.

The first aspect of the play is the inaccessibility of the inwardness of characters and the difficulty of determining their intentions and motivations. In drama, motivation is among the crucial facts audiences need to know about characters. In fiction the motivation of characters can be accessed via the declarations they make in their speech or through narratorial comments. As the latter is absent in drama, audiences depend solely on these characters' declarations and on deductions made possible by their actions. Identifying the agent's motivations is very crucial in rhetorical enquiry: "judicial *narratio*. . . as designed to produce a particular telling of events that made sense as evidence of *motivation*, and hence of 'character'" (Hutson 2007, 137; emphasis in original). The rhetorical enquiry and the logic of probabilities on which it is based are indeed motivated by the urge of uncovering the inwardness of characters or the invisible human intentions and motivations. "It is a desire driven by the sense of the inscrutable at the core of the psyche, a mystery that can entice or horrify, tempt as well as resist 'plucking [out]'" (Mukherji 2006, 6). In possible worlds terms, motivation requires access to the characters' private worlds or domains, and it is complicated when we try to sift the actual from the virtual plans of these characters. Since we are unsure about too many things throughout *Richard II*, then it is the 'apparent' rather than the 'known' that will dominate as the main category of our knowledge in the play.¹³ On the virtual level, the play is exceptionally interesting since in it the audience, let alone the other characters, are denied access to the virtual worlds of some characters, most notably Bolingbroke. Even when spectators make inferences about the mental private domains of characters, these inferences are always proven inadequate, and are frustrated by the characters' real actions. The characters' real motives are often other than those explicitly expressed (Berger, 2004, 109; Nuttall 2009, 184). In this play both ways are filled with complications. On the one hand, characters

seldom declare their intended actions and plans. On the other hand, very little can be extracted from the narrative structure of the play to identify these motives. This is true especially of the two main characters in the play: King Richard II and, even more significantly, Bolingbroke.

The behaviour of King Richard II is not wholly comprehensible when he reacts to the first challenge to his kingship in the play, namely the Bolingbroke-Mowbray conflict in (1.1). The King appoints a day to settle the accusations Bolingbroke makes against Mowbray. However, on the appointed day of the combat the king, to everyone's surprise, aborts the combat and instead orders the two combatants banished: Mowbray for life and Bolingbroke for ten years, to be later reduced to six to lessen his father's, John of Gaunt's, grief. The significance of and the motivation behind the king's action have invoked endless speculation. While some critics have considered that action to undermine the feudal tradition to which Richard owes his kingship (Rackin 1990), others have read in it a consolidation of his authority and the force his words (breath) has over his subjects (Parvini 2012). Yet the motivation is far from settled as well: is it because he is afraid that, should Mowbray appear guilty, the King will also be suspected of the murder, or that the winner will grow politically stronger and thus poses a further challenge to Richard's authority? The King's declaration of his motives is not taken seriously by critics: "For that our kingdom's earth should not be soiled / With that dear blood which it hath fostered" (1.3.124-5). Later actions of the king show that the life of Bolingbroke, let alone Mowbray, means little to him. So, why the king aborts their combat ceremony and orders them exiled remains a mystery in this play.

Even more than King Richard II, the character of Bolingbroke presents daunting challenge to the play's readers and audiences to make sense of his actions and to identify the way he plans and intends to act. This special disposition of Bolingbroke is attributable to his closed mental territory out of which very little can be glimpsed, and when glimpsed, will be ruthlessly contradicted by his actual action. He is very silent about his intentions and his steps are cautiously calculated. He keeps his motives as secure as possible.¹⁴This is most clear when the audiences try to construct the reason behind his armed return to England. The first declaration he makes to York is: "As I was banished, I was banished Hereford; / But as I come, I come for

Lancaster . . . And therefore personally I lay my claim / To my inheritance of free descent" (2.3.112-3, 134-5). Bolingbroke's supporters have also understood his purpose to be 'for his own':

NORTHUMBERLAND. The noble duke hath sworn his coming is
But for his own, and for the right of that
We all have strongly sworn to give him aid;
And let him never see joy that breaks that oath! (2.3.147-50)

This speech of Northumberland is also dubious: on the one hand, it seems to imply that even the support of the nobles was conditional, and is only limited to help Bolingbroke take his personal rights, no more. On the other hand, the word 'his own', of which Bolingbroke will make frequent use, is equivocal as to what anybody might consider as Bolingbroke's 'own'? Even the stance of the other lords supporting Bolingbroke is not clear: are they supporting him only to get his own, or have they a premeditated position against King Richard? The conversation among Northumberland, Rose and Willoughby at the end of act 2, scene 1, indicates that they have had enough of King Richard II and might imply that their intent in supporting Bolingbroke is to depose Richard, regardless of Bolingbroke's rights and intentions.

So, Bolingbroke does not state from the beginning that he intends to depose Richard and replace him. But the contradiction between his declared aims and his real action is so frustrating that we soon will watch him behaving as a king when he declares his intent to have Bushy and Greene executed: "The caterpillars of the commonwealth, / Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away"(2.3.165-6). In (3.1), Bolingbroke judges Bushy and Greene and orders them executed, laying claim to a right which is otherwise an exclusive right of the King. In this very scene, Bolingbroke's declarations are very interesting though in no way any more revealing. His speech about the king is full of encomium: "You have misled a prince, a royal king, / A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments" (3.1.8-9). So he unequivocally admits the royal rights of Richard, and he introduces his legitimacy in terms of his blood relationship with Richard, "Near to the King in blood, and near in love" (17). However, judging by the play's action so far, it is of grave doubt whether Bolingbroke was really 'near in love' to King Richard II. Interestingly, he accuses them, among other things, of making the king 'misinterpret' him (18). However, it is not clear whether it is only the king who misinterpreted Bolingbroke or also the other characters, and

even the audiences as well. His inherently ambiguous and dubious positions emit from his enclosed private domain and cannot but be misinterpreted. As Brents Stirling puts it with regard to Bolingbroke, "Never, in an age of drama marked by discursive self-revelation, has a character disclosed his traits with such economy and understatement" (1951, 34).¹⁵

As the play progresses, the question of Bolingbroke's real intentions becomes even more complicated. While his initial claim is that he has come only to claim his confiscated fortune, in a later occasion, he adds another condition while showing allegiance to the king:

Henry Bolingbroke
On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand,
And sends allegiance and true faith of heart
To his most royal person, hither come
Even at his feet to lay my arms and power,
Provided that my banishment repealed
And lands restored again be freely granted: (3.3.34-40)

The new additional condition is the repealing of his banishment. Also newly added this time is a negative condition which he never voiced earlier: "If not, I'll use the advantage of my power/ And lay the summer's dust with showers of blood" (41-2)¹⁶. Part of the interest of the play lies in this gradual unfolding of Bolingbroke's virtual domain as a result of his action. With Bolingbroke's revelations about his action being very sparse, the audience is left only with the real actions to make sense of the events. Accordingly, no differentiation can be made between his real and virtual plans. Virtual plans are scarcely expressed in his speech, and when expressed, they are soon contradicted by his real actions. Characters' real plans are given voice in soliloquies and asides. Unlike Hamlet, Macbeth, Iago or many a Shakespearean protagonist, Bolingbroke never soliloquises in this play. The duality between intention and action, or between virtual and actual plans, is missing in Bolingbroke, since what we get is only the actual action, and we have to (and, it seems, so does Bolingbroke) re-modify the intention to match any step being newly taken. According to Joel B. Altman, "Bolingbroke has the potential, though it is unexpressed, to be what he becomes since he becomes it, however inconsistent are his claims on given occasions. He acts, in the theatrical sense, according to the decorum of the scene in which he finds himself"(2010, 277).

This inaccessibility of Bolingbroke's intentions infects not only the audience but also the other characters. We have just shown the uncertainty regarding Northumberland's interpretation of Bolingbroke's aims. Nor are we sure whether Richard himself has interpreted Bolingbroke correctly. When Bolingbroke lays out his conditions mentioned above Richard responds favourably.

Northumberland, say thus the king returns:
His noble cousin is right welcome hither,
And all the number of his fair demands
Shall be accomplished without contradiction. (120-3)

His demands having been granted, Bolingbroke must now be satisfied and so must be the king, who is not asked to abdicate. But, to our surprise, the action never takes that logical course, and what happens is quite stunning for how each character (mis)understands the other:

BOLINGBROKE. My gracious lord, I come but for mine own.
KING RICHARD II. Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all. (194-5)

Stunning, since the audiences are left without any answer as to what Bolingbroke's real demand was: if it were overthrowing Richard, then why did he not ask that? If it were for his own, then how did Richard understand it otherwise? Again this stems from the inherent ambiguity of the phrase 'my own', which confuses the political with the legal aspects of possession. This may follow from a long-standing tradition in Britain of defining the rules of succession of monarchy in terms of the rules of the inheritance of lands (Scott 2002, 275). In fact, Richard, Bolingbroke, Gaunt and York all use these affinities between royal succession and land inheritance. For example, Gaunt reproaches Richard by saying: "Landlord of England art thou now, not king" (2.1.113). So, it may be that Richard has understood Bolingbroke's 'my own' as referring to the royal position. So, Bolingbroke's 'own', used by Bolingbroke, Northumberland, and even Richard, is far from settled. When Bolingbroke shows his gratitude to Northumberland and Percy, he tells them: "And as my fortune ripens with thy love" (2.3.48), which means 'his own' is not a fixed category and has grown in size due to the new political condition and the support he has received.

The vagueness of Bolingbroke's intentions brings about the gravest mistake in the play, namely Exton's murder of King Richard II. While Exton thinks that he has access to Bolingbroke's real intention regarding Richard, namely to get him killed, it ironically appears otherwise (or at least so claims

Bolingbroke). Interestingly, Exton's belief is based on his (mis)understanding of Bolingbroke's declaration, "Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?" (5.4.2), said while Bolingbroke is looking at Exton, who thought that Bolingbroke wishes him to kill Richard. Having committed the murder, he is surprised, as we were many times so far, that Bolingbroke's wish was otherwise:

BOLINGBROKE. Exton, I thank thee not; for thou hast wrought
A deed of slander with thy fatal hand
Upon my head and all this famous land.

EXTON. From your own mouth, my lord, did I this deed.

BOLINGBROKE. They love not poison that do poison need;
Nor do I thee. Though I did wish him dead,
I hate the murderer, love him murdered. (5.6.34-40)

Thus, Bolingbroke's vagueness, which enabled him to overcome the others, has also been a cause which laid slander 'upon his head and all this famous land'. So, even the utterance taken directly from Bolingbroke's 'mouth' is far from reliable. In fact, it is not Exton who misinterprets Bolingbroke, but almost everyone among the characters, let alone the audience. However, it is not for sure whether Bolingbroke did really intend that ambiguity, although in all cases the murder of Richard will always be considered as his own crime.

This inaccessibility of the virtual (or otherwise lack of inwardness) in Bolingbroke has been considered by many critics as characteristically Machiavellian. In Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli advises that the prince should hide his real intents and conceal his mind under the façade of virtuous behaviour. He must "be a great pretender and dissembler" and "be very careful never to let anything fall from his lips" that is contrary to these virtues ([1513] 2005, 61, 62). Hugh Grady remarks that "This is a mistake which Bolingbroke emphatically does not make" (2002, 75). Even more, in contrast to other Machiavellian figures like Richard III and Marlowe's Barabas, Bolingbroke does not even give any soliloquy. In his *Essays*, Francis Bacon refers to this quality as dissimulation. Bacon defines dissimulation as "in the negative, when a man lets fall signs and arguments, that he is not that he is" ([1625] 2002, 19). He regards it as akin to and consequent on secrecy which he praises as "politic and moral" (ibid., 20). Bacon's attitude towards dissimulation is rather vague; although he considers it politically practical, yet he points out that it subverts trust and truthfulness. Secrecy and even dissimulation can best describe Bolingbroke's behaviour. These aspects of his character are perplexing to other characters and the audience alike. Maus (1995) and Bacon (2002) both refer to

the discomfort expressed regarding inwardness and secrecy, and the urge people feel to uncover these secrets. In the light of the above, this aspect of Bolingbroke's political behaviour is a distinct feature of the whole play and might account for the cries of unintelligibility of the play that many critics have voiced.

The second interesting feature of the play is the paucity of facts regarding many crucial questions raised throughout the plot. In possible worlds terms, many spots are left uncovered in the play's textual actual world, and many questions left unanswered. The result is that the borderline between the actual and the possible grows even thinner. This aspect of the play becomes even more unsettling given the essentially historical nature of these events as it will taint with scepticism all the claims of certainty of historical truth. The play seems to generate suspicion about all the issues it tackles. These issues range from Bolingbroke's 'miraculous' return to England, the legitimacy of the new king and the reality of deposition, the identity of Woodstock's murderer, and York's attitude to his 'son' Aumerle. For example, Bolingbroke's extraordinarily speedy return to England has been a baffling puzzle to the play's readers and audiences. We first hear of his armed return to England from Northumberland at the end of act 2, scene 1, only some moments after Gaunt's death and the king's decision to expropriate his fortune. In that very scene, and immediately after the king and Queen exit, we hear Northumberland, Ross and Willoughby voicing their complaint about the irresponsible policies of the king and exchanging news about the coming of Bolingbroke to England. This means that obviously there is not enough time for Bolingbroke to hear about the king's decree, much less to react by collecting an army "With eight tall ships, three thousand men of war, / Are making hither with all due expedience, / And shortly mean to touch our northern shore" (2.1.288-90). In the light of the discussion above about his real intentions, this throws grave doubts as whether this landing was really pre-mediated and makes it appear "to have been planned before Richard's seizure of his inheritance, an act that was then appropriated retroactively as the justification for invasion"(Altman 2010, 208). However, no sufficient explanation is available here since, as it is jokingly put, "Even in the days of telephony, the internet, the Channel Tunnel, and the hovercraft this is very good going on Bolingbroke's part" (Sutherland and Watts 2000, 87).

Whether this is a structural drawback or a strategically planned arrangement on the part of the playwright, it betrays the ambiguity immanent in the play and contributes to the dramatic interest of the blurred virtual domain of the characters.

Another crucial issue shrouded with scepticism in the play is that of royal succession. The play leaves undetermined who is the real, legitimate king to emerge at the end of the play. Although Bolingbroke asks Richard to be summoned to surrender his crown in front of the commons so that “we proceed / Without suspicion” (4.1.147-8), Richard in fact creates just the opposite effect. To shake the ground under Bolingbroke’s legitimacy as a king, Richard very dramatically succeeds in casting doubt about his real position regarding his abdication and to divert the attention from Bolingbroke to himself. This suspicion is best expressed via the instability of naming in the latter part of the play, especially the use of the title of ‘king’ which is at one and the same time is used for both Richard and Bolingbroke, and sometimes neither. “For the rest of the play Richard is ... a king and no king. And so, by logical inference, is Bolingbroke” (Leggatt 1988, 70). One interesting moment of this chaos of naming is made by Richard: “God save the king, although I be not he. / And yet Amen, if heaven do think him me” (4.1.165-6). Now, it seems, even Richard’s confidence in his name, movingly shown at the beginning of act 3, has deteriorated and the name of the king ceased to generate that symbolic force which Richard used to attribute to it.¹⁷ Another visual implication that Richard succeeds in creating is holding the crown from one side and getting Bolingbroke to hold it from the other side, resulting in the effect that we have both men bareheaded with the crown empty between them.

Another question that is wrapped with suspicion is the murder of Woodstock, Earl of Gloucester, the king’s uncle. Right from the beginning, the murder of Woodstock functioned as a subtext for the play (Bolam 2002, 146). It has occasioned one of the most dangerous accusations of Bolingbroke against Thomas Mowbray, whose answer is more elusive than the accusation itself. Mowbray denies that he killed Gloucester but admits his neglect: “Neglected my sworn duty in that case” (1.1.134). In act 1, scene 2, the Duchess of Gloucester accuses the king of killing her husband, and urges John of Gaunt to revenge his brother, which he refuses, given that Richard is God’s anointed deputy on earth.

In that scene, Gaunt openly accuses the king of Woodstock's death (1.2.38-9). The Duchess, on the other hand, accuses the 'butcher Mowbray' of her husband's death (48). In 2.1, Gaunt frankly reiterates his accusation to Richard of Gloucester's murder (2.1.125-32). Later on the murder of Woodstock crops up frequently in the play, especially when Bolingbroke, in 4.1, tries to determine who the killer of Woodstock is. Interestingly, in this scene we get a new suspect, Aumerle. The mutual accusations among Bagot, Aumerle, Fitzwater and Surrey lead Bolingbroke to summon the most decisive eye-witness to the case, Thomas Mowbray. The latter has passed away in Venice and the question is put off to be decided by combat. The combat never takes place and the murderer is never exposed. The confusion is apparent in this small part of Act 4 in which the word 'lie' is used 14 times among these peers. So, the play ends without ending the mystery of who carried out the murder of Woodstock, and who gave the order for that, although King Richard II himself features as the main suspect.¹⁸

The third area of interest is how the actual/virtual dichotomy can be a clue to characterization. The dichotomy between the actual and the virtual, and the adherence of characters to one or the other, has shaped the characterization of the two main figures in the play: Bolingbroke and Richard. Bolingbroke is rooted in the actual world of real action and offers very little entree to his mental and private domain. The enclosure of Bolingbroke's private domain and the inaccessibility of his real intentions and plans result from his adamant refusal to live in imagination and his insistence to adhere exclusively to the real situation he is in. This is clear from the passionate exchange that takes place between him and his father John of Gaunt before Bolingbroke leaves the English soil. To alleviate his son's grief, Gaunt advises him to mentally manage his distress: to *think* that the king did not banish him, to *suppose* that he is flying from a pestilence that plagued his native land, to *imagine* that he is heading to what is dear to him, to *suppose* the birds musicians, the flowers fair ladies. These instructions, which the audiences of the *Henry V* Chorus would have happily followed, Bolingbroke resoundingly rejects. He is a man who cannot live in a virtual domain he creates, but only in the real world as it is here and now: "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?" (1.3.257-60). Bolingbroke's enclosure may be due to the fact that he shows less mastery of the arts of language. This is why, perhaps, he tends to depend on his hand to settle his difference with Mowbray, and not on language as Richard would always do. So in Bolingbroke's world we have only actions that are not supported by any background of intention, motivations, or plans. The audience, consequently, has to re-construct the private domain of Bolingbroke from his actions.

Richard's character stands at the other extreme. Especially from act 3 onward, Richard seems to live exclusively in his mental world and shows very little contact with reality. This detachment from reality has many manifestations in Richard's behaviour. On the one hand, he indulges in mental reconstruction of his reality, and gets immersed in the fictionalizing 'seeing as' strategy which Gaunt recommended but Bolingbroke decisively rejected. When he arrives at Barkloughly near the Welsh coast (3.2), Richard starts talking to the earth, which he considers as his mother. He then works out an extended conceit in which he imagines the earth as listening to him while he urges it to employ her spiders, adders, and venoms against her sovereign's foes. He never shies away from these 'senseless conjugations' as he calls them (3.2.23). The difference between Bolingbroke's literal language and Richard's metaphorical language stems from the tendency of the former to 'see' and of the latter to 'see as'. In Chapter One we saw that the 'seeing as' principle is the basis of fictionality and theatricality. This fictionalizing tendency culminates in Richard's prison soliloquy (5.5), when he indulges in comparing his prison cell to the world, comparing his brain to a mother and soul to a father, who both beget and populate his cell with thoughts. Later he compares himself with the clock: his thoughts are minutes, his sighs the jarring sound, his fingers the handles and his eyes the watch. All this shows how introverted and contemplative Richard is, a character that is the least suited to practical politics.

On the other hand, Richard seems to be completely detached from his present and is dwelling either in the past or future. Once he realizes his inevitable downfall after the news of the scattering of his Welsh soldiers, the murder of his courtiers, the joining of York with Bolingbroke and the surrender of his northern castles, he turns to history, to speak about relevant things long past,

refraining from taking any action for the time being: "For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground, / And tell sad stories of the death of kings" (3.2.151-2). This invites the rebuke of the Bishop of Carlisle: "My lord, wise men ne'er wail their present woes, / But presently prevent the ways to wail" (174-5). The second aspect of his indulgence in the virtual is his reflection about himself as part of history or of his story as a historical narrative, which is voiced in his last meeting with the Queen in his way to the Tower: "And ere thou bid goodnight, to quit their griefs / Tell thou the lamentable fall of me, / And send the hearers weeping to their beds" (5.1.43-5). Thus, it seems as if Richard is either living in the past or future, but never in the present. This suspension of the present, and hence the detachment from the actual action, are what set Richard apart from Bolingbroke and shaped his tragic fate. In both instances, however, Shakespeare seems to have been experimenting with how to delineate some complex accounts of the human personality in his tragedies. In fact, *Richard II* stands out as an emblem in this stage of Shakespeare's career in the sense that he created a tragic personality not available in his earlier tragedies. As critics always like to assert, "Richard himself is one of Shakespeare's sharpest studies of a personality" (Leggatt 1988, 61). I would rather say that, in the light of the above discussion, Shakespeare's experimentation with the personality of Bolingbroke is no less impressive, for if the kind of Richard is to culminate in future creations like Hamlet and Macbeth, Bolingbroke has no counterpart in Shakespeare's later masterful creations of character.

Up to now we have surveyed the scarcity and inaccessibility of the private domains and virtual intentions and plans and its effect on the mystification of characters' motivations, the uncertainty of the historical facts in the play and its role as a characterization technique. Now we are heading towards an assessment of the overall effect of these characteristics on the general intelligibility of the play. Needless to say, the play challenges its audiences and demands more intellectual effort on them than many other plays in the Shakespeare canon. The audience has to collect the incoherent information and arrange it in any possible way to elicit a possible meaning. As we showed in the Introduction, this process is similar to what Joel B. Altman calls 'the language of theatrical potentiality.' This shows the centrality of the virtual and private domain

of characters to the understanding of the action. We have already conceived of the virtual as a potential which can be manifested in a variety of ways or 'meaning possibilities'. These possibilities render the work a fertile soil for different, even conflicting explanations and interpretations. When denied direct access to the virtual domain, auditors will craft their way into it depending on inferences they make from the scarce information scattered in the text. The rhetorical or communicative function of the virtual, which we developed in the last Chapter, should be most apparent in the instance of *Richard II*: due to the radical shortage of facts presented to them, the audiences need to make as many inferences as need be, in order to make sense of the otherwise incoherent and contradictory data given to them. This, in turn, will bring to the fore the question of the role of the reader or auditor in constructing the meaning of the action. *Richard II* is a play notoriously demanding on the part of the reader or spectator due to its characteristics mentioned so far.

Yet, given these sense-making strategies, readers can still elicit a meaning behind the chaos of the play. Even A. P. Rossiter, with whose pessimistic words we have opened this section, admits that readers, for all its uncertainty, can at least get a sense of possibility, even probability of the action of the play: "We must be satisfied with a fair degree of probability and the absence of final certainty" (1961, 35). Sutherland and Watt observe that, rather than out of artistic immaturity, the playwright worked out these inconsistencies quite deliberately and that theatrical convention will allow its readers to make sense of it, just as readers of science fiction can make sense of impossible time contractions and other features: "As with SF [science fiction], all that is required is that the audience understands the rules of the game, and plays along" (2000, 91). However, an amount of uncertainty is inevitable in *Richard II*. One of the most distinctive features is that it is an 'implicit drama' as Travis Bogard (1955) would put it. While a play like *Richard III* would be called explicit, in the sense that at its end we get a certain moral and political lesson, in *Richard II* "Instead we hear different voices trying to understand the world in different ways, and the overall effect is speculative"(Leggatt 1988, 59).

Conclusion

Virtual or possible events are absolutely central in Shakespearean drama. Shakespeare has assiduously cultivated an interest in the virtual and probable thanks to his rhetorical education. Access to the virtual domains of characters provides insights into their motivations and intentions, and would unlock their inwardness. Further, virtual events might give rise to numerous misconceptions among characters. They also serve to initiate conflict in the fictional world, because characters always strive to satisfy their private domains at the expense of other characters. Our theoretical framework is jointly rooted in modern possible worlds narratology and Classical and Renaissance rhetoric. The intensive rhetorical learning in the early modern period has helped Shakespeare and his contemporaries to invest heavily in the notions of the virtual and the probable in their plays. The two plays discussed in this Chapter are very different in terms of date, genre, and mood, but they both attest to the centrality of the virtual events to the understanding of drama. While in *Cymbeline* we have an upsurge of the amount of virtual events and courses of action, in *Richard II* this domain of the virtual remains enclosed and permits very little access. The two plays also differ in their treatment of rhetoric. In *Cymbeline*, we saw that Posthumus seeks only an 'apparent' proof. In *Richard II*, when Richard asks John of Gaunt whether Bolingbroke is accusing Mowbray for some 'known' danger, Gaunt answers that it is an 'apparent' danger instead. While the 'apparent' evidence Posthumus asks for is supplied mainly by rhetorical deliberation on the part of Giacomo, the 'apparent' danger which Gaunt identifies in Mowbray is to be proven only by force of hand on the part of Bolingbroke. In *Richard II* actual politics takes over, and the upsurge of poetical language Richard cherishes is of no use in a world where no virtual thinking is allowed to play a role.

In this Chapter, we have also aimed to prove the utility of certain concepts of narratology to give insights into aspects of Shakespeare's plays. The current state of Shakespeare studies has generally discouraged scholars from looking into modern narratology due to its formalist and structuralist origins. The above analyses should demonstrate that such approaches, as possible worlds narratology, can indeed throw considerable light on relevant issues in Shakespearean drama. Moreover, it must be clear that these approaches could

illuminate many aspects of the discipline of rhetoric. The blend between rhetorical and possible worlds concepts carried out in this Chapter has afforded considerable insights into both. The observations in this Chapter can also contribute to the enquiry of the relation between rhetoric and Shakespearean drama, which is an increasingly growing field. Further detailed studies can be carried out on other plays of different genres, to discover nuances of Shakespeare's delineations of the virtual and actual in his plays. For example, *Othello* proves a fertile play to do such an analysis. There are already copious insightful remarks made by Stephen Greenblatt (1980) and Joel B. Altman (2010). Another intricate example about tragical effects of the divergence between the actual and virtual is *Romeo and Juliet*. One counterpart to it can pop to mind, which is *Much Ado about Nothing* which, like *Cymbeline*, also invests in the proliferation of the virtual and also employs forensic rhetoric of the sort we have dealt with in the wager scene above.

Yet however dominated *Richard II* is by the actual actions of the characters, parts of that actual map of events dealt with in the play are blurred and the audience is left uncertain about many historical 'facts' raised in the course of the action. With this shortage of fact as well, the borderline between the actual and the possible becomes very thin. While possibility might be tolerated, even acclaimed in fiction, Shakespeare is experimenting with this form of modal epistemology in his re-writing of history. If *Richard II* seems immune from the impact of deliberative rhetoric, Shakespeare, it seems, has gone that far in other history plays as to elaborate on the cognitive role of rhetoric and the probable on the reworking of history. In the next Chapter, we will examine the three parts of *Henry VI* and address the role played by rhetoric and the notion of probability on the factual status of historical worlds.

Chapter Three

The Possible Worlds of Shakespeare's Histories

RICHARD PLANTAGENET. The truth appears so naked on my side
That any purblind eye may find it out.

SOMERSET. And on my side it is so well apparelled,
So clear, so shining, and so evident,
That it will glimmer through a blind man's eye.

(1 *Henry VI*: 2.4.20-4)

In this famous scene set in the Temple garden, York and Somerset are bickering about some historically controversial events that took place prior to the beginning of the play. In order to sort the supporters of each side, and since their attendants are reluctant to speak, York suggests that those who support his argument pluck a white rose and Somerset advises his supporters to pluck a red one. In this way they set the grounds for the Wars of the Roses that will last for decades. In this scene, York, Somerset as well as their supporters are obsessed with establishing the truth about the events that happened prior to that time. The word 'truth' is mentioned 8 times in this small scene (out of 12 in the whole play), let alone the pronominal references to that word. In other words, both York and Somerset are striving to retrospectively reconstruct the actual past events whose validity is far from agreed-upon. However, each presents a special mode of truth: York's 'naked' truth and Somerset's 'apparelled' truth. Technically phrased, the difference is between truth about the actual past as a purely ontological category that has to do with what really happened, or rather as a cognitive category having to do with how that past is represented in ways that render it more credible and probable.

In the last Chapter, in our survey of the functions of the virtual events in Shakespeare, we unproblematically distinguished between the actual and the virtual in Shakespearean drama. However, in Shakespeare's representation of the historical past, the distinction between the actual and possible is made on cognitive rather than ontological levels. In this Chapter I shall argue that, in his representation of history, Shakespeare tends to problematize the very notion of the actual past. Shakespeare stresses that the actual past, as we now conceive

it, is a representation. As such, he highlights two aspects of the representation of past reality that we have considered essential to the nature of the possible or the virtual: its rhetorical (or cognitive) function and its potentiality. In their contest about the past, characters are more concerned about providing a credible representation of the past (apparelled truth) than about establishing the absolute factuality of that past (naked truth). That representation of the past is essentially carried out through rhetorical and narrative strategies which emphasize the cognitive aspect of the representation. Although the very facts of the past might pass uncontested, the past reality still carries the potential of different representations and interpretations. Thus, the potentiality of the virtual as well as its rhetorical function also infects the representation of the actual past itself.

The questions about the nature of the actual past and its affinities with the virtual have theoretical and practical overtones. Theoretically, they are pertinent to the preoccupations of possible world theorists in two main points. First, possible worlds theory has generally rejected claims about the fictionality of the actual past, claims mainly associated with the postmodern challenge. Possible worlds theorists have opposed the claim made by Hayden White and others that, since historical writing uses literary devices, then history has a fictional aspect. But as we shall show later, this rejection results from confusion about the meaning attached to the concept of 'fiction'; this concept has acquired two main meanings: an ontological meaning in the sense opposite to 'historical truth' and a cognitive meaning in the sense of literary and narrative organization. The second point has to do with the nature of the actual world: whether or not our knowledge of and access to the actual world is "independent of any mediating concepts, categories or structures of representation" (Norris 1992, 41). Two main positions can be discerned within possible world theory regarding this question: an essentialist position which holds that possible worlds, the actual world included, are independent of their linguistic representation; and a constructivist position which holds that they are only accessible through and thus influenced by their linguistic and cultural representations. These two views would adhere to the 'naked' versus 'apparelled' truths, respectively.

Practically, the question of the cognitive and potentialist aspects of the actual past becomes more provocative as we approach the domain of history

and historical truth. It is not a question of whether the real past existed or not; rather it is the question of whether our understanding and appreciation of the past is independent from or contingent on the representations of that past. In Shakespeare's history plays, characters are desperate to prove their unmediated version of the real past. In this Chapter, I am less concerned about the actual/virtual dichotomy (which we pursued in the last Chapter) than with the exact nature of the actual world itself. I shall address these questions in the History plays, here represented by the three parts of *Henry VI*, and will demonstrate throughout that characters in these plays always treat historical truth in cognitive rather than merely ontological terms. Although they claim otherwise, these characters are less concerned with what really happened than with how to present their version of events more credibly and persuasively, using rhetorical, narrative and literary techniques. Given that these plays are intensely grappling with issues of historical writing and historical truth, it can be argued that this observation might also cover the practice of historiography in the early modern era when these plays were first performed.

Below I shall firstly examine the theoretical aspects of the debate between possible worlds theorists and adherents of the postmodern challenge (mainly Hayden White) about the effect of the rhetorical and narrative strategies on the factual status of historical representation. Then I shall turn to the early modern intellectual milieu and show that these questions about the representation of the past were hotly debated in the fields of history and, even more, in literary and rhetorical theories. Lastly I shall show how these controversies are reflected in these three plays; and I shall explore how characters view their role in transmitting historical material and what that can tell us about a view of Renaissance historiography which the plays might have been keen to present.

Possible Worlds of History: The Ontological and the Cognitive

In this section, we shall trace the debate regarding the influence of representation on the fictional or factual status of the actual past. This will set the context for the contested issues between the possible worlds theory and postmodern views of reality. I shall argue that, in this debate, possible worlds theorists mainly address the ontological dimension of fictionality and confuse it

with the cognitive sense intended by White and others. The discussion will also unveil two views in possible worlds theory regarding the nature of the actual world: the essentialist and constructivist views. Lastly, I shall make a case for a 'potentialist' realism view of the actual world, mainly advanced by J. Fisher Solomon (1988). This view, I shall argue, invests the represented past reality of the actual world with features which we have strongly associated with the virtual, namely its potentiality and cognitive function.

The question of whether historical representation results in ontological truth or just acceptable and credible interpretations of the past is an old one, but has taken a systematic theoretical shape in the latter part of the twentieth century. The sceptical questioning of the nature of historical representation came to be called the postmodern challenge. I do not intend to go through all the ramifications of that debate¹, but will only concentrate on the work of two pioneering theorists in this domain, Roland Barthes and Hayden White, for they have been the subject of the debates triggered by 'possible worlds' theorists about the matter.

Both Barthes and White stressed the discursive, cognitive nature of historical representation. In his essay, "Historical Discourse", Barthes holds that historians on the level of discourse make use of the very narrative techniques used by writers of narrative fiction, such as shifters, indexes, and functions. History, he argues, cannot be reduced to a mere collection of facts, but has to do with how these facts are presented: "the historian assembles not so much facts as *signifiants*" (1970, 153; emphasis in original). He also avers that although historical writing purports to refer to the real past, it really, as any other language-use, does not refer to anything outside itself. Thus, in claiming to refer to the 'outside reality,' history mistakes the signified for the referent. According to Barthes, the main discursive category used in history since the nineteenth century is narration. Narrativity was the main historical style in nineteenth century historical writing, when history was trying hard to separate itself from fiction and myth and establish itself as a discipline. However, narration itself was borrowed from fictional genres, namely the realistic novel. At the end of his essay, Barthes phrases the paradox this way: "Narrative structure was evolved in the crucible of fiction (via myth and first epics), yet it has become at once the sign and proof of reality" (ibid., 155).

Hayden White takes up the narrativist claim and moulds it in a more elaborate theory about historical representation. In his *Metahistory* (1973), White employs the theory of narrative genres, mainly adopted from the theory of tropes by Northrop Fry, to study and analyse the realistic modes of historical writing. In this book, White sets out to “consider the historical work as what it most manifestly is, that is to say, a verbal structure in the form of narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them” (1973, 2). He then presents many levels of conceptualization of the historical work, mainly: chronicle, story and emplotment (ibid., 5).² Chronicle is a collection of the unprocessed historical events listed in their chronological order. Story is the endowment of this set of events with a marked beginning, middle and end. Then comes the role of emplotment to explain that story and endow it with meaning by associating it with one of the plot structures familiar in literary genres such as a tragedy, comedy, romance or satire. White refers to and explains in detail other modes of explanation, such as explanation by argument and by ideological implication. But we concentrate on emplotment since White signals it out as his focal point, and it is the most relevant to narrativity. And it is mainly through emplotment that historical works share a common strategy with literary works.

One corollary of laying bare the narrative structure of historical discourse is to acknowledge that there is no essential difference between the discourses of history and literary fiction. For Hayden White, in fact, this concern with fictionality was already there in *Metahistory*³: the term ‘fiction’ appears as early as that book, and White uses the term ‘fiction’ and its derivative ‘fictive’ in that earlier book (see White 1973, 6). In *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), White complains that “in general there has been a reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions the contents of which are as much *invented as found* and the forms of which have much in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences” (1978, 82; emphasis in original). Speaking of the process whereby a story is endowed with meaning by being emplotted one way or another, White declares: “That is essentially a literary, fiction-making operation” (ibid., 85). So White’s argument, fairly or not, was taken to say that there is no fundamental

difference between fiction and history and that by being narrative, historical representation is also fictional.

Although historians were sceptical about these views of historical representation,⁴ literary scholars generally met postmodern views about history, especially White's ideas, hospitably.⁵ However, literary theory was not homogenous regarding that claim. Possible worlds theorists were especially uneasy about these claims. Below I shall sketch two attempts to accommodate these views to a possible worlds framework by Lubomir Dolezel and Marie-Laure Ryan. Both Dolezel's and Ryan's discussions of the postmodern challenge are based on mistaken understanding and confusion of the ontological and cognitive senses of fictionality sketched so far. While White and Barthes use fictionality in a cognitive sense, Dolezel and Ryan focus on its ontological sense. In its cognitive sense, 'fiction' is taken to mean the quality of the work that makes it intelligible, usually in being moulded within frames that a certain culture regards as acceptable. In its ontological sense, 'fiction' has to do with that dimension of a work which precludes its claim to literal truth. Paul Ricoeur identifies these two senses and complains about the "equivocation created by the use of this term [fiction] in two different senses: first as a synonym for narrative configurations, second as an antonym to historical narrative's claim to constitute a 'true' narrative" (1984, 64)⁶. White's insistence on the cognitive aspect of fictionality was misdirected towards that of the ontological status of historical writing.

Lubomir Dolezel has opposed the postmodern challenge on the basis of 'possible worlds' theory. Dolezel relocates the problem from the level of discourse to the level of worlds and asks whether "the possible worlds of fiction and history are identical in their function and global structure or show some marked differences in these respects" (2010, 33). Dolezel responds to White's claims by arguing that although fiction and history might have discursive similarities, yet they are irreducibly different on the level of possible worlds: the possible worlds of fiction and of history are markedly different. On the level of worlds, Dolezel marks four differences between the possible worlds of fiction and history. The first is a functional difference. While fictional worlds are alternatives to reality, historical worlds are images of the actual past. The second difference is a structural difference, according to which fictional worlds

can be structured of any kind of existents, natural and supernatural, while historical worlds are restricted to natural existents. The third is agential constellation: the agents appearing in a world of historical representation are restricted by the original cast that happened to exist in the represented past, while in fiction additional agents are allowed. The fourth difference between the possible worlds of fiction and history lies in their treatment of incompleteness, which is an unavoidable feature of both kinds of worlds. But while gaps in fictional worlds are ontological, in historical worlds they are epistemological (see *ibid.*, 33-38). Dolezel goes on to identify a difference between fiction and history on the level of discourse as well. Fictional texts are categorized under the concept of *poesis*, since they are performative and call the fictional worlds they project into existence. So, they do not refer to worlds that pre-exist them and, consequently, are not to be judged as true or false. Historical discourse, in contrast, is an example of *noesis* whose function is to acquire knowledge of and serve as a model for the actual past. Thus, historical statements are constative and consequently are subject to truth valuation (see *ibid.*, 42-4).

It is clear that Dolezel is mainly concerned with the ontological aspect of fictionality, rather than its cognitive aspect. His view of the actual is essentialist, in the sense that he is treating the actual world as a given, unmediated by cognitive factors. Even his distinction between *poesis* and *noesis* is ontological in nature. This inability to set the two aspects apart leads him to summarize White's argument fallaciously: "Emplotment is a literary operation; literature is fiction; therefore, history is equivalent to fiction making" (Dolezel 2010, 21). The two sides of the syllogism are not the same: 'emplotment is fiction' refers to the cognitive process of making intelligible, while 'literature is fiction' refers to the ontological status of literature as lacking literal truth. This misleading syllogism does not do justice to White's claims. Hayden White was careful to dissociate himself from the ontological side of the argument and to lean instead on the cognitive side. White insists that the existence of the fictive component of emplotment in no sense "detracts the status of historical narratives as providing a kind of knowledge" (1978, 85).⁷ On the other hand, White's emphasis on 'emplotment,' 'interpretation,' and 'discourse' only betrays that concern with that cognitive property of the historical discourse whereby it renders the events narrated more intelligible to its readers. 'Emplotment' is derived from the

concept of 'plot' in narratology⁸ in the wider sense of "the global dynamic (goal-oriented and forward-moving) organization of narrative constituents which is responsible for the thematic interest (indeed, the very intelligibility) of a narrative and for its emotional effects" (Prince 1987, 72; also Ricoeur 1984, 65).

Marie-Laure Ryan also disagrees with Hayden White for endorsing the fictionality of all narrative and that any representation of reality consists in acts of selection, emplotment, interpretation, and even the "making-up" of events to fill in the gaps. According to her, "the thesis presupposes a referential definition of fictionality incompatible with the intensional account defended in this book" (1991, 259). Her other objection is that if all external data are mentally processed, then "every mental representation is a fiction. By embracing too much, the term 'fiction' becomes a useless category" (ibid.). She also insists on the existence of external referents: "As a type of semantic structure, story or plot is a signified, not a referent. Reality, on the other hand, is a referent and not a signified" (ibid., 264)⁹. It is clear that all these objections have to do with the ontological aspect of fictionality. However, her worry about stretching the meaning of 'fiction' too far is reasonably justified, although that sense of organization is only restricted to the deliberate, conscious effort done in literary and representational media.

The discrepancy between emphasis on the ontological or the cognitive category results from the fact that possible worlds theory and some aspects of the postmodern challenge belong to different critical paradigms, each with its distinctive view of 'fictionality.' The work of Hayden White can be partly classed with formalist oriented criticism, such as the theories of the Russian Formalists and the New Critics for his typology is quite indebted to Northrop Frye's theory of literary genres. Moreover, White's formulation bears resemblance to their insistence that the distinctiveness of the literary work is based on its specially ordered and coherent configuration and that fiction results from transforming 'story' into 'plot' (Foley 1986, 51). In this paradigm, 'fictionality,' in its ontological sense used by 'possible worlds' theorists, was not the central question for formalist literary criticism. Rather, the central question for literary theory before the 1906s was 'literariness,' and even when 'fiction' was used it mainly denoted the property of being of a literary quality. In its ontological sense used nowadays, 'fictionality' emerged as a central question in literary theory from the

1970s onward. We have Ruth Ronen to thank for paying attention to the “conflation of fictionality and literariness apparent in literary studies” (1994, 80)¹⁰. And for Ryan, to be sure, this sense of literariness should be kept apart from fictionality: “the three features literary, narrative and fictional remain distinct, and do not presuppose each other” (1991, 1).

What all these discussions also imply is that there is no consensus among possible worlds theorists about the very status of the actual world. We mentioned two positions at the start of the Chapter: the essentialist and constructivist positions. The essentialist view is obviously defended by Lubomir Dolezel, as shown in the discussion above, and it stresses the status of the actual world as a given, fixed entity that is unmediatedly accessible to us. Against this view is the constructivist one, mainly adopted by Umberto Eco (1979; 1990), according to which the actual world is the sum total of the conceptions and beliefs we carry about reality which are defined according to our different encyclopaedias: “Within the framework of a constructivist approach to possible worlds, even a so-called ‘actual’ or ‘real’ world of reference must be taken as a possible world, that is, as a cultural construct” (1979, 222). Marie-Laure Ryan (1991), as we have seen, has leant more towards an essentialist view of the actual world. However, in her later work, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* (2001), she tries hard to reconcile a possible world approach with a postmodern view of the actual world: “With an indexical definition, the concept of actual world can easily tolerate historical, cultural, and even personal variations. Without sacrificing the idea of an absolutely existing, mind-independent reality, we can relativize the ontological system by placing at its center individual images of reality, rather than reality itself” (2001, 101). The constructivist view, in fact, opens the door to the interference of language which, to a great extent, defines and shapes our conceptions of reality. Hence, I think, we should seriously look into how the past stages of the actual world(i.e., history) can be influenced and shaped by the representational strategies we use to access it. The constructivist view of the actual world attempts to reconcile the extreme realist stance with the fictionalist stance of postmodernism.

Another fruitful attempt to stand in between these two extremes is J. Fisher Solomon’s notion of ‘potentialist’ realism. According to Solomon, as we cannot accept the sweeping fictionalism of the postmodern treatment of history,

we cannot likewise accept the extreme realist position of the existence of a given, fixed and unmediated reality. Solomon thinks that, although some facts can be unequivocally verified about any historical event, this does not mean that we can have absolute and detailed knowledge about that event. Yet, these facts can serve as the backdrop for understanding the event and interpreting it in given ways. In other words, these facts establish the potentiality of the past reality to be interpreted in these ways. "These potentialities do not absolutely determine our interpretations of the specific actualities that bear them, but they can help guide them. They can . . . help us both evaluate and hierarchize our possible interpretations" (Solomon 1988, 46). The interpretations of the past events are carried out by tracing how similar events unfolded in relatively similar circumstances. The events under question would thus have the potentiality to behave in a relatively similar fashion: "The basis for these guesses lies in the regular behaviour, the real propensities of material history itself" (ibid., 48). Thus, the potentialist realist stance would preserve the factuality of the past and at the same time leave it flexible enough to accept different interpretations based on probabilistic reasoning.

Although Solomon places potentialities in reality more than in discourse (ibid., 45), the strategy for tracing potentialist interpretations and connections is basically rhetorical. This strategy is based on measuring the probability and likelihood of events and interpretations according to certain general propensities and regularities. With this sense of potentiality, we are in a position to "extrapolate from present evidence to future events on the basis of observed regularities, rational conjectures, the weighing of probable outcomes, etc." (Norris 1992, 43). Both areas of probability and regularities are intimately rhetorical. As for probability, we have observed how probability has been a central theme and strategy in Classical and Renaissance rhetoric. As far as regularities are concerned, rhetoric has dealt with these regularities in terms of topics. In other words, the rhetorician can explain certain events by fitting them in some general categories that have relatively similar themes. Topics are an integral part of rhetoric since Aristotle. The use of topics also relies on a sense of potentiality: by having similar features with a certain category, a historical event or action has the potentiality to behave and unfold in similar terms as the other members of that category. Although the particulars of each category are

different, yet their general propensities and behaviour are supposed to be similar: "similar historical circumstances bear similar historical propensities, that while ontological actualities differ from moment to moment, their potentialities need not" (Solomon 1988, 48). In light of potentialist realism, our knowledge of the actual world is based on understanding the potentialities that exist in its objects and events; this understanding is informed by probabilistic thinking, which is an integral part of rhetoric. Individual events, or groups of events, can be comprehended when they are made to fit in one of the master-plots that we associate with major happenings in history. Thus, the two components of the virtual event – potentiality and probability – are also present in approaching the actual world (historical past included), although this is not to compromise an amount of verifiably factual knowledge of the past.

In this section we have surveyed the debates regarding the factuality of our knowledge of the actual world, especially relevant to the historical past. We have observed that the above debate has been mainly misplaced on the ontological dimension, while it should be dealt with on the cognitive dimension. We have also remarked that certain possible worlds theorists have endorsed a more flexible view of the actual world as a cultural construct. Lastly we have introduced the idea of 'potentialist realism' and shown that it better preserves the factuality of the actual world and at the same time holds it susceptible to interpretations and explanations based on the potentiality of events and objects. Although it is not wholly rhetorical, this potentialist stance leaves the door open for rhetorical and probabilistic strategies (which are mainly associated with the virtual) to intrude in our understanding of the actual world and its historical past. In the next section, we shall trace these controversies down to the early modern period, especially in regard to how they reflected in the debate regarding the difference between literature and history.

Probability, Rhetoric and History in Early Modern England

The questions raised in the last section regarding the factuality of the actual world and historical representations also sparked robust debates in early modern England among historians on the one hand and literary and rhetorical theorists on the other. A good many of these controversies have their starting

point with Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, where he considers that history deals with what has been while poetry deals with what might be. In this section I shall argue that Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history spells out that potentiality and probability are essential features of poetry, and might imply that they are not features of historical discourse. After Aristotle, however, the interest in these features was taken over by the field of rhetoric rather than poetry, and rhetorical discourse has moved these features to actual world events, as reflected by the use of '*narratio*' which re-shapes the order of events as they really happened. Although literary and rhetorical scholars in the early modern period preserved Aristotle's distinction, yet they extended the features of potentiality and probability to historical discourse itself. These debates are also thematized in many other forms of historical representation, and I shall show that they featured heavily in the history play genre, mainly at the hand of William Shakespeare. Below I shall delineate the discussion of the issue in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and then trace the interest in the creation of credibility of representation in rhetoric. Lastly, I shall trace the influence of these debates on Shakespeare's history plays.

In his differentiation between poetry and history, Aristotle emphasizes the cognitive and potentialist dimensions in poetry, as distinct from history. The potentialist dimension consists in the requirement of poetry to depict what 'might be' instead of what has been. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle puts forward the idea that while literature and rhetoric are proper realms of the potential, history is the exclusive realm of the actual. Aristotle distinguishes between history and poetry on the ground that the former deals with what actually happened (or the *has been*) while the latter deals with what would potentially happen (or the *might be*). He writes: "(I)t is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the *kinds* of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity. The difference between the historian and the poet is . . . that the one relates actual events, the other the kinds of things that might occur" (IX.1451a35-1451b5; emphasis in original). Consequently, poetry is more philosophical than history. Put differently, poetry deals with general and universal truths while history deals with particular truths. Even when poetry deals with particular historical individual, the final lesson is a universal one.

As far as the cognitive dimension is concerned, it is highlighted by Aristotle's insistence on probability as a criterion of poetry. Aristotle's interest in probability is so intimate that, relative to the small size of the *Poetics*, the word for 'probable' registers its highest number of occurrences in Aristotle (Sansone 2012, 168). Aristotle stresses the cognitive dimension and his main concern seems to be the intelligibility of the presentation of the action, rather than its ontological status. According to some translations, so to speak, the distinction Aristotle draws is one between the 'actual' and the 'probable', not one between the 'actual' and the 'possible'. This way Aristotle, quite astutely, pulls the mat from under ontologically-oriented attacks on poetry, like that of Plato. In a famous passage from the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes: "Things probable though impossible should be preferred to the possible but implausible" (XXIV.1460a25). Or, in another translation, "Probable impossibilities are to be preferred to improbable possibilities" (Dorsch 1965, 68). 'Possibility' here is to be understood as the ontological category, while 'probability' is the cognitive one. By making the 'probable'¹¹, 'credible' or 'convincing' (according to various translations) the criterion of poetry, Aristotle is placing the emphasis on the work-reader axis rather than on the world-work axis. By prioritizing 'probability' over 'possibility', he is making the point that the basis of representation (or mimesis) is more a cognitive relation between the work and reader or beholder and less a relationship between the work and world.¹²

The cognitive dimension is also manifest in Aristotle's treatment of 'mimesis,' which refers to the organizational capacity of the literary work that produces its cognitive effect. This organizational aspect of mimesis is mainly highlighted in Paul Ricœur's reading of the *Poetics*. According to Ricœur, the essence of the mimetic activity lies in the power of organizing into an intelligible whole what are otherwise coincidental and incoherent incidents. Thus he considers the 'imitation or representation of action' and 'the organization of the events' as quasi-identical processes (1984, 34). As Aristotle considers the poet as both imitator of action and maker of plot, the two concepts are hardly separable. And thus the probable emerges from this organizational activity the final end of which is to make the human action more intelligible: "To make up a plot is already to make the intelligible spring from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or the probable from the episodic"(ibid., 41). In

this sense, the probable cannot be separated from the universal or potential. The potential, the things that might happen, can only be defined in terms of what men of a given type would do in certain circumstances. "[T]he possible and the general are not to be sought elsewhere than in the organization of the events, since it is this linkage that has to be necessary or probable"(ibid., 40-1). This organization is mainly carried out through narrative techniques. So, it is this organizational power of the mimetic activity that renders events probable and intelligible. 'Probability' in Aristotle, so argues Ricœur, is roughly the combination of credibility and persuasiveness. Although the latter was the pivotal point in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle, as we have seen above, also touches on the cognitive relation of the work to its recipients in his very notion of the 'probable' in the *Poetics*. The quality of literary works which we call 'mimesis' consists in two things: the internal organization, and the credibility as judged by the listener. The latter is consequent on the former. Thus, Aristotle's criteria for poetry encompass the two concepts of potentiality and probability. The former has to do with the aspect of poetry of dealing with the universal rather than the particular. The latter consists in the cognitive function of poetry and is mainly carried out through the organizational power of mimesis. Aristotle is silent in the *Poetics* whether or not actual discourse (i.e., history) is entitled to have these two features.

As Aristotle assigned the two features of potentiality and probability to poetry, rhetoric has moved them to the realm of actual events. Although Aristotle has dealt with these dimensions in both the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, poetic theory after Aristotle only marginally elaborated on them. And it was rhetoricians who took over the job of elucidating the full significance of these concepts, mainly due to their central role in arbitration and deliberations, legal and otherwise. We surveyed their emphasis on virtuality and probability in the last Chapter, but now we are only directing the attention to the role played by narrativization and organization in achieving probability. Classical rhetoricians studied all these features under what they called the Statement of Facts or *narratio*. We have already seen how rhetoricians like Cicero and Quintilian stress the importance of the *narratio* in presenting a certain course of events as the actual ones. As it depends on the selection and ordering of events, the *narratio* helps make intelligible a string of events that is otherwise incoherent

and disconnected. Lorna Hutson goes even further to suggest that “a sophisticated attitude to the capacity of narrative to contribute to judicial probability, by making ‘the intelligible spring from the accidental’” was already of use to dramatists in the end of the Elizabethan period (2007, 123). However, the anxiety about the use of narration to reshape actual world events surfaces as we cannot fail to notice the association between the forensic force of the *narratio* and the ability to deceive (ibid., 127). For the events constructed through the artificial processes of the *narratio* are not necessarily the actual string of events that really took place.

Rhetoricians since then were pretty aware of the power of organization and narrativization in shaping the cognitive reception of actual events. So they cultivated the principle that their deliberations should not only be ontologically possible (true) but also cognitively probable (truth-like). On the one hand, books of rhetoric stressed the distinction between truthful and truth-like and accentuated the fact that the narrative should not only be truthful but also truth-like. When author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* speaks about the Statement of Facts in legal deliberations, he mentions that it need be not only true, but also truth-like: “If the matter is true, all these precautions [regarding organization] must none the less be observed in the Statement of Facts, for often the truth cannot gain credence otherwise”(1.9.16). In *De Inventione*, Cicero also makes the point that probability is a feature of narrative that can be manipulated using different proofs (1.37.67). Quintilian mentions many strategies whereby credibility can be achieved, such as assigning causes and motives to the acts being described, using preparatory remarks, scattering evidence here and there, and so on (4.2.52-7). He goes even further to suggest that manipulating the different parts of the narrative may alter the meaning and significance of the facts being narrated and thus presents the past reality in a cognitively differentiated fashion: “I do not of course deny that just as there may be some points which you should deny in your statement of facts, others which you should add, and yet again others that you should alter, so there may be some which you should pass over in silence” (4.2.67). Elsewhere he puts it more explicitly: “Neither do I agree with those who assert that the order of our statement of facts should always follow the actual order of events, but have a preference for adopting the order which I consider most suitable” (4.2.83). By

emphasizing that the orator should behave more like a lawyer than a witness, Quintilian implies that the real facts are not so relevant as the use they are put to. It is also interesting how he suggests that these strategies are already literary and artistic ones: "It is also possible to treat the subject in such a way as to give it an air of credibility, as is done in comedy and farce" (4.2.53)

This issue also persisted in the Renaissance accounts of rhetoric. In his *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), Thomas Wilson also stresses the importance of the style of the representation in constructing the facts on behalf of the orator's client. He advises that emplotting events differently may change their whole meaning to the listeners, a principle that the orator can use for his interest: "Yea, we shall make our doynge some reasonable, if we frame our worke to natures wil" (1553, 60v). Although here he does not recommend the change of the actual order of events, he uses the word 'make' a lot with the linking verbs 'seem' and 'appear', which indicates that the main concern is the 'appearance of truth' rather than the truth itself. Things are given new meanings by being emplotted differently as "Thynge gathered by conjecture to seeme otherwise than they are, delite muche the eares being wel applied together" (ibid., 82v). Here again the tension arises between an adherence to the 'naked' or 'apparelled' truths. In the whole process the role of narrative is blindingly obvious, and Wilson warns the orator from the 'naked' repetition of facts, which is why he advises the use of variety in conclusions: "For, if the repeticion should bee naked, and onely set furthe in plain woordes, without any change of speache, or shift or Rhetorique: neither should the hearers take pleasure, nor yet the matter take effect", which is why he recommends that "it is necessary to use arte to the outermoste" (ibid., 63r). In all rhetoricians quoted above 'art' is used to mean the literary craft of composition or the poet's or dramatist's mimetic power. And this refers to the role played by the 'probable' in literary works, which are made the example to be followed by rhetoricians, and it testifies to the centrality of the organizational power of mimesis in works of art in general.

Thus far we have observed that Aristotle assigns features of potentiality and probability to poetry and remains silent as to whether they could apply for discourse about the actual world, and specifically about history. We have also remarked that rhetoric has used these features – especially the force of

organization and narrative ordering – in deliberating about actual world events. In early modern England these issues have sparked heated debates. Although Aristotle's ideas held weak sway on sixteenth century theorizing, yet his distinction between poetry and history has formed the basis for these debates. However, these discussions are plagued with a certain amount of ambiguity in the *Poetics* regarding the extent of this distinction. Generally, Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history has been read as disparaging history, and this reading has persisted in Western thought for quite a long time.¹³ However, it is doubtful that Aristotle meant that history should lack probability. He only said that poetry should have it. For history, it is not a necessary component and it could be there or not. But there is no reason whatsoever why it should not.¹⁴ This is supported by the fact that Aristotle must very likely have been silent about many aspects of the nature of history. In fact, we should not expect him to say any more about history since his main subject was poetry; and he only mentioned history in order to define poetry in terms of what it is not.

The inherent theoretical ambiguity as well as the affinities between the practice of history, rhetoric and literature, have ignited heated controversies regarding the nature of historical truth among historians, on the one hand, and literary and rhetorical scholars, on the other hand. Historians in that period are keen to stress their exclusive pursuit of the truth. This is mainly guided by the laws of history set by Cicero in *De Oratore*, which were highly respected and idealized: "For who does not know history's first law to be that an author must not dare to tell anything but the truth ? And its second that he must make bold to tell the whole truth" (2.14.62). In the same treatise he praises history as that "which bears witness to the passing of the ages, sheds light upon reality, gives life to recollection and guidance to human existence, and brings tidings of ancient days"(2.9.36). Barbara J. Shapiro (2000) persuasively observes that the insistence on registering 'fact' or 'truth' was a common tradition among the historians of the period. Richard Brathwaite, for example, insists that history requires 'Truth, in sincerely relating, without having anything . . . foisted in by our owne invention, to smooth the passage of our story" (quoted in Shapiro 2000, 40). Historians promoted the image of the 'naked' truth, as opposed to the 'apparelled' truth which stood for rhetorical ornament. "Rhetoric was often contrasted with "truth," and especially with the "naked" truth of matter of fact.":

"Nakedness" was contrasted to artifice that disguised truth. History should not be 'dressed up with gloss and artifice'" (ibid., 59). This pursuit of truth and the endeavour to separate between *factae* and *fictae*, can best be conducted by dismissing the rhetorical ornaments through which history can be presented. This tendency was further fostered by the Protestant Reformation call for the 'plain truth' as distinct from the catholic embellished 'truths'. Scholars like John Jewel, John Cheke, Roger Ascham and others called for plain style and condemned the Catholic culture of images which also claims to present the truth (See King 1982, 138-160). However, this does not mean that there was a consensus on what 'truth' counted for because, as we have seen, history in this period admitted some events which are more suitably categorized as myths and romances in modern historical standards.

On the other side of the debate, some literary and rhetorical scholars have claimed more affinity with history than historians would admit. In *De Oratore*, Cicero has flatly put it, "Videtisne, quantum munus sit oratoris historia?" (Do you not see how far history is the work of the rhetorician?) (2.14.62). History was seen in the period as a branch of rhetoric, if only as a kind of non-creative writing aimed at persuasion (Boyd 1980, 195). Mostly the writing of history in any form, prose or poetry, was aimed to instruct and edify. The final end, then, for any presentation of history was persuasion, which is a rhetorical end. To achieve this end, even the criterion of verification is compromised. As George Puttenham points out, "These historical men nevertheless used not the matter so precisely to wish that all they wrote should be accounted true, for that was not needful nor expedient to the purpose, namely to be used either for example or for pleasure"([1589] 2004, 90). As 'literature' was a generic term, it encompassed all kinds of written discourse, including 'history.' Moreover, many literary genres dealt directly with historical material, such as the history plays and historical poetry, both of which flourished specially in the latter half of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ However, the interesting thing is that history and literature were sometimes written by the same individuals, such as Samuel Daniel and Michael Drayton. Moreover, many events which we now align with fiction and myth (such as the stories of Brutus and Arthur) were considered facts and admitted in books of history as such. In short, the sharp distinction between history and literature might not be at high stakes at that period.

The affinity between literature and history were reflected in historical writing. Early modern historians was keen to make use of literary and rhetorical strategies which compromise their quest for truth and would rather highlight the end of potentiality and credibility instead. As far as potentiality is concerned, historians sometimes might seem satisfied with the potential if the actual was out of reach. When the historian's quest for the past facts may not be satisfied, he would feel compelled to search not only for what has been but also for what might have been. In fact, the latter might be a clue for achieving a sense of the former. This process might go even deeper when historians have a sense of the irretrievability of the past, so much so that they no longer opt for the has-beens and are merely satisfied with the might-have-beens. This is specially the case when the historian is trying to reconstruct a possible picture of the past events, past figures and their actions. Although this is based on certain verifiable facts, yet it works on a sense of potentiality of what could have happened. Another example of the use of potentiality is the invented speeches.¹⁶ Unable to capture the real speeches which historical figures had uttered, historians were content to register what these figures *might have said* in a similar occasion. Besides, the might-have-been is not only inevitable, but also desirable. Given the didactic end of historical writing, it is only this way that the generalizations of history can be comprehended and its lessons learned. Relevant to what we have shown in our discussion of 'potentialist realism', history was taught in Renaissance schools in terms of the general topics, or *topia* of rhetoric, where students were asked to classify historical events in terms of these general categories. In the Renaissance grammar schools, "the student was taught to analyse the materials of history (as well as those of narrative poetry) in terms of set topics and styles"(Riggs 1971, 39). So, the potentialist and universalist aspects have played a role in the didactic power of history as significant as, if not more significant than its actualist aspect. For the lessons of history to be set out, it is enough to determine what could happen or could have happened so that people can act accordingly.¹⁷

As these scholars stressed the potentialist aspect of historical writing, they also emphasized its cognitive aspect, which consists in using literary and rhetorical strategies to make its material more credible. So, it was claimed that historians need make their stories not only true but also truth-like or verisimilar.

Sir Philip Sidney claims that historians borrow poetic techniques to convey their meanings: “And even historiographers, although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads, have been glad to borrow both fashion and, perchance, weight of the poets” ([1595] 2004, 5).¹⁸In the Renaissance, Aristotle’s mimesis with its focus on the probable was very prevalent under the term ‘verisimilitude,’ which meant making narrative more believable and true-to-life. A dawning awareness of the power of verisimilitude in the period was not restricted to poets and rhetoricians but also extended, quite noticeably, to historians as well. So, in addition to their endeavour to show the truth, they also strove to present their material as truth-like, or true to reality, probable, or verisimilar. And it is here that literary elements intervene in the historical discourse. As Paola Pugliatti has shown, “verisimilitude is considered a link between poetry and history and . . . at least some Renaissance writers seem to be aware of the communicative function of fictional elements or at least fictional procedures in histories.” Historians’ need to use these elements and procedures was motivated by their awareness that the naked statement of truth is hardly viable and that “written accounts of history should constantly strive to render truth verisimilar” (1996, 71). The need to be verisimilar might compromise the historian’s goals of accuracy and wholeness. As J.H. Hexter succinctly put it, “the microscopic means of historiography have to be adapted to its macroscopic ends” (1968, 8). To be sure, verisimilitude is originally a literary category and not a historical one.

Thus it appears that early modern scholars held that even history (or the past of the actual world) is amiable to the features of probability and potentiality, which we identified with the virtual event. This way we start to appreciate the relevance of debates raised in the first section – among possible worlds theorists and proponents of the postmodern challenge – about the factuality of the actual world, and the extent to which factual representation can borrow tools and strategies from literature and rhetoric. Consequently, the postmodern ideas about the rhetorical nature of historical discourse, including Hayden White’s, must have seemed less strange to early modern scholars than they do to us now. According to Ivo Kamp, “when we consider White’s arguments in the context of Renaissance ideas about history already discussed, they instantly become less controversial . . . [Historians] saw a much closer affinity between

literary and historical sensibilities than we do today" (1996, 16; see also Rackin 1991, 22 and Riggs 1971, 12). We need not go full way through that domain as provocative studies have been conducted which show the extent to which Renaissance historical writing employed methods and strategies mainly used by imaginative writers.¹⁹

In addition to history, rhetoric and literary theory, another genre that also engaged in such controversies about the nature of historical reality is the Renaissance history play. The history plays, which flourished in the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign, touched on questions of the past, history and historical writing in a variety of ways. These questions also crop up fairly frequently in the history cycles of Shakespeare, to whom the genre owes its highest achievements. Critics have stressed Shakespeare's engagement in the history plays with questions of the past and its reproduction. According to Graham Holderness, "The plays can be read as serious attempts to reconstruct and theorize the past" (1985, 31). Others have accentuated the uniqueness of the stage as a means of reproducing history and the questions it raises in that reproduction. Brian Walsh observes that the history plays are part of the period's historical culture and that they provide another mode of historical representation which, though it departs at times from the historical sources, yet it has a new and exceptional representational power of its own. He relates the work of the theatre to the antiquarians of the period who tried to unearth the materiality of the past. The theatre is likewise trying to resurrect that material existence through the actor's body. Walsh claims that Shakespeare must have been influenced by the work of antiquaries, such as William Camden: "Theater depends upon a creative faculty for fantasy of and conjecture about the past that, as Camden admitted, is present in the historian's work as well" (2009, 20). The peculiarity of the theatrical medium is also accentuated by Phyllis Rackin who opines that the problems of historiography were further complicated when history entered the Elizabethan stage: "Played out in the theatre, the problems of historiographic representation were redefined and intensified" (1990, 22; see also Goy-Blanquet 2003, 13).

Among the questions of historical writing that were 'redefined and intensified' in the history plays is the effect of rhetorical and literary strategies on

the validity of the historical truth being represented. So in these plays we can hear echoes of the controversies between possible worlds theorists and proponents of the postmodern challenge, which we traced back to similar debates in the early modern period among historians, rhetoricians and literary theorists. Ivo Kamp refers to the relevance of the above controversies, especially the ideas of Hayden White and the tension between the historical content and the literary form in which it is moulded, to the issues tackled by the Renaissance history plays: "This appreciation prodded the late-Elizabethan Shakespeare and the early Stuart dramatists to a keener comprehension of issues of historical representation in ways resembling White's" (1996, 16). Below I shall look at how these questions featured in Shakespeare's history plays, taking as examples the three parts of *King Henry VI*.

'Naked' vs. 'Apparelled' truth in Shakespeare

So far, we have addressed the debates about the factuality of the actual world and its past, and observed that the actual world is also susceptible to some characteristic features of the virtual, namely potentiality and probability. The potentialist stance supports not only the verifiable facts but also the events, causes and interpretations which can be justified on the ground of these facts. Probability emerges in historical discourse on the basis of its need to be intelligible, credible or verisimilar. We have also remarked that, although scholars in the early modern era accepted Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, yet they stressed the potentiality and intelligibility of historical representation. These questions have also been reflected and thematized in the history plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

In this section I shall argue that in Shakespeare the representation of history is seen to deploy rhetorical and literary elements which serve to foreground the potentialist nature of historical facts and the cognitive function of historical representation. I shall explore these controversies as they have been thematized in Shakespeare's *1, 2 & 3 Henry VI* as examples from these plays are enough to elucidate the matters in question.²⁰ I have chosen these plays since they have received less critical attention than the later histories²¹. Moreover, these questions are pertinent to these three plays because they deal

directly with questions of historical truth and historical representation. Characters in these plays are obsessed with finding out ways to prove their historical point of view to other contesters. As these plays chronicle the beginning and roots of the Wars of the Roses, they have been characterised by severe factionalism, where every faction is keen to establish what it considers as historical 'truth'. We have seen how the word 'truth' features extremely frequently in the temple garden scene, the scene that sets the ground for the further controversy, which shows how they are ceaselessly trying to anchor the actual world of their past. By exploring how characters in these plays manage to write their history, I shall argue that the plays examine the extent to which historical discourse uses rhetorical and literary representational devices, and how these contribute to the refining of the cognitive and potentialist aspects of that discourse. In these plays there are three areas where historical truth looked appavelled in rhetorical and literary devices: the use of emplotment, the use of tropes, and the use of theatricality in the staging of history.²²

The first area, emplotment, occupies a pivotal position in any discussion of historical narrative representation. Emplotment, generally understood as organization or configuration of events, is so necessary to any definition of narrative and it is that feature that renders any raw historical material into an intelligible whole. "Emplotment transforms or configures a multiplicity of events, characters, and conditions into a narrative, and narrativity constitutes its form of understanding chiefly through emplotment broadly conceived" (Berkhofer 1997, 118). As emplotment is guided by the requirement of intelligibility, it also unveils the open potentiality of historical events. Although the emplotment works on verified facts, yet it points to their openness to multiple interpretations and susceptibility to arrangement and re-arrangement. It thus shows how representation might have an adverse effect on how history, emplotted differently, is read and re-read as differently. There are many telling examples where the different arrangement and selection of historical events can yield new historical narratives and causes history to be re-read differently and characters to act according to these new readings.

One such example is in *1 Henry VI*, when Joan is managing to persuade Burgundy to dissociate himself from the English league and join the French forces. She pleads to him, among other things such as the suffering of his

countrymen, by invoking one event that he seems to have failed to consider so far: the unconditional release of his enemy, Duke of Orleans, by the English:

Call we to mind, and mark but this for proof:
Was not the Duke of Orleans thy foe?
And was he not in England prisoner?
But when they heard he was thine enemy
They set him free, without his ransom paid,
In spite of Burgundy and all his friends.
See, then, thou fight'st against thy countrymen,
And joint'st with them will be thy slaughtermen. (3.7.68-75)

Joan here is not feigning any false event, but she re-orders these events in a new way, bringing into focus one event (that of the English release of the Duke of Orleans.) Ordered this way, these signifiers yield new signifieds, with their referents remaining the same. This proves that although reality is still the same 'out there', our understanding and evaluation of it will vary according to what elements of that reality are highlighted, the way they are ordered, and which among them is brought into prominence. Put in technical terms, plot or discourse is "an interpretive model built up by the mind as it tries to understand events – whether real or imaginary" (Ryan 1991, 264). Emplotment does not consist in the creation of some new events, but is the re-managing of already established ones. Joan also seems well-versed in the arts of rhetoric, for she is following the rhetoricians' recipe that different arrangement of events yield different meanings of these events. Joan's convincing of Burgundy "demonstrates her clever manipulation of the political art of rhetoric" (Watson 1990, 48). Burgundy knows of that event so far, but, having read it in a different paradigm, he did not attach to it the significance he does this time. Joan seems very aware of the fact that "The events are *made* into a story by the oppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others" (White 1978, 84; emphasis in original). Re-emphasized and put into a different array of events, this event now carries a new meaning to Burgundy, signifying the English carelessness about his interests and ruling out any sense of their league. History being re-interpreted, his attitude now is radically different and so he is going to act differently.

The effect of Joan's words has been alternatively attributed to her feminine charm. According to Nancy A. Gutierrez, the effect of Joan's words stems from her feminine and witch-like power (1990, 192). Maurice Hunt, on the other hand, holds that Joan has bewitched Burgundy by using terms of seeing, such as

'look', 'behold', 'see', etc. which unconsciously undid his resistance to her demand: Joan achieves that effect by using visual imagery and appealing to her countrymen's pathos (2002, 90). However, these strategies would not have been effective in this instance were it not for the rhetorical artistry to play its role. Had her feminine bewitching been enough Joan would not have needed to narrate her reasoning the way she did. As far as terms of vision are concerned, they definitely have had a conceptual effect on Burgundy, but can only work within the rhetorical frame she moulded them in.

Historically speaking, it is interesting to know that the real event of the dissociation of Burgundy from the English and taking sides with the French took place over many years of negotiations (see Goy-Blanquet 2003, 31-3). More interesting still, Joan and Burgundy are never reported to have met at all. So it can be argued that, by creating this unhistorical event, and by collapsing the long story of many years into one short moment, Shakespeare just wanted to demonstrate, especially to those familiar with the historical details, the power of narrative to achieve in one argument what was achieved over many years.

No less illuminating an example is that of Warwick in *3 Henry VI (The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good King Henry the Sixth)*, after Edward has betrayed his embassy to King Lewis VI and chosen to marry Elizabeth instead of Lady Bona, Lewis's sister for whose hand Warwick is sent to ask. Irked by Edward's position, Warwick denounces his allegiance to him and, shocked by this event, he undertakes a new reading of the events that have marked his relation to the Yorkists. Interestingly, he brings into prominence events the real significance of which he was so far reluctant to realize:

That I am clear from this misdeed of Edward's,
No more my king, for he dishonours me,
But most himself, if he could see his shame.
Did I *forget* that by the house of York
My father came untimely to his death?
Did I *let pass* th'abuse done to my niece?
Did I impale him with the regal crown?
Did I put Henry from his native right? (3.3.183-90; emphasis added)

In order to make intelligible his last story, Warwick had to 'forget' and 'let pass' some events (such as the untimely murder of his father and the abuse of his niece) the significance of which was inconsistent with the old story, and so were rejected as anomalous. But with the new events popping up, these old ones can

now be harmoniously added to make a comprehensive whole. Unlike Burgundy, it is Warwick who reminds himself of events which he 'forgot'; like Burgundy, however, Warwick re-arranges the events, with the forgotten ones now brought into prominence, thus forging new readings of the past. "The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs" (White 1973, 7). This new reading of his history turns old enemies into friends and old friends into enemies. Now he composes a new history, radically divergent from the old one; and now Warwick has to forge new convictions, the most salient of which is the admission that the rule of England is Henry's 'native right', although, ironically, Warwick has been very zealous to argue on York's side, considering the house of Lancaster as usurpers (*3 Henry VI*: 1.1.23). Thus, these two examples show the role emplotment or configuration plays in the reshaping of historical events, creating ever new narratives that would in turn explain these events differently. This shows how far emplotment is crucial in constructing intelligible historical interpretations of events, and how, this way, history is subject to rhetoric and literary discursive manipulations. It also reveals the openness and vast potentiality of historical past or events of the actual world to acquire new meanings according to the way they are re-arranged.

The second area where the rhetorical and literary devices intervene in any historical narration is the use of tropes and figures, which include metaphors, parables or even proverbs, in conveying a point of view about one specific character or event. These would convey information but only combined with value judgement, and would thus compromise the truthfulness of that information. They become much more interesting when they are used in narrating historical events, since it will call into question the claims of validity and impartiality implicitly made when narrating historical events. They serve a cognitive end in enhancing the intelligibility and probability of the historical narrative. Mark Turner observes that stories in general, and parables in particular, are a basic means whereby humans make sense of their world, in explaining, predicting and judging their experience. Literary parables and even proverbs work by presenting one story and projecting it on another story. By

taking the wisdom of the first story for granted, the listener is implicitly invited to judge the second story accordingly. “This projection of one story onto another may seem exotic and literary, and it is—but it is also, like story, a fundamental instrument of the mind. Rational capacities depend upon it. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally” (1996, 5). They also reveal the potentiality of the historical events. Like emplotment, they invest in the potentiality of historical narrative to entertain as many different interpretations as the tropes projected into them, and the potentiality of the original story to be projected on different tropes and parables.

Historical writing is fraught with figurative language, and Shakespeare's histories abound with extended metaphors and analogies that are used to represent a historical reality by means of analogy. When characters are presenting their own narrative, they sometimes make recourse to metaphorical analogies to back it up and make it more intelligible. One significant example is to be found in *2 Henry VI (The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster)*, when York is contemplating how the King agreed to give away two French cities in return for his marriage to Margaret. York's plight is deepened since he thinks that what they have given is his own, for he considers himself the rightful heir to the English throne:

I cannot blame them all – what is't to them?
'Tis thine they give away and not their own!
Pirates may make cheap pennyworths of their pillage,
And purchase friends, and give to courtesans,
Still revelling like lords till all be gone,
Whileas the seely owner of the goods
Weeps over them, and wrings his hapless hands,
And shakes his head, and, trembling, stands aloof,
While all is shared and all is borne away,
Ready to starve and dare not touch his own.
So York must sit and fret and bite his tongue,
While his own lands are bargained for and sold. (1.1.219-30)

In this extended metaphor York is re-narrating his story and so is re-writing his version of history using these analogies. Characters like York are motivated to use these analogies since they appeal to bits of human life and experience that are generally accepted or even considered as truisms, such as the behaviour of pirates in York's analogy. Moreover, they increase the probability of the claim being made, for they are piling up as many examples as possible which support that claim, the more so when the examples are considered as natural or social axioms. Consequently, they evoke an immediate, clear and decisive judgement

on the part of the hearer, for none would agree that what pirates do is legal. Thus, the claims expressed by these parables and analogies will be readily accepted as true; it is as if the speaker is making the implicit claim that what he/she is saying is as true as the analogies he/she is using. Moreover, to be more believable and more happily applicable to the original stories, some of these analogies are minutely detailed and extended, as the above example clearly shows: the pirates are to be understood as the Lancastrians, the ship owner as York, and the courtesan as Margaret, and so on. So, these analogies are more narratively coherent models, and can represent reality more intelligibly to the listeners. And it shows the inherent potentiality of the actual events (such as the marriage of Henry and Margaret) that they can acquire new meanings by being projected on different metaphors.

The analogies foster the sense of the apperelled truth since metaphorical representations are closely intermixed with narrative presentation and consequently will compromise the claim for a naked truth or a pure ontological reality. One area in which they compromise that truth is in the addition of perspective and intrusion of point of view. Metaphorical statements, employed in a narrative representation, also serve to describe that reality, just as literal statements do. But they have to them an additional dimension: they express the speaker's point of view and the image he/she makes and intends to convey to the listeners. As F. R. Ankersmit puts it, "the difference between literal and metaphorical statements lies in the latter's capacity to define or individuate a 'point of view'" (1983, 193). Metaphorical narration is more acutely focalized than literal narration and so in addition to the events being narrated and the narrative structure imposed upon them, we have a third element which is the way these events are to be evaluated and emotionally responded to. "This implies that metaphorical statements can never be completely reduced to literal statements that only have descriptive or cognitive content" (ibid.). In York's narration, for example, not only are we presented with past or historical events narratively structured, but we are asked to sympathize with his cause and denounce the deeds of his enemies: clearly enough, we are meant to adopt his attitude and respond accordingly. As a result, these metaphors convey more than the description of what *really* happened.

Furthermore, the heavy use of these metaphors helps further affiliate historical and literary discourse. And as point of view is a characteristically literary device, this shows how far literary devices are employed in historical writing. Moreover, they work as an organizational category, just as narrative emplotment does. Without these metaphors, “our view of the world will immediately disintegrate into disconnected and distractible bits of information. Metaphor synthesizes our knowledge of the world” (Ibid., 194). Metaphors are inevitable, just as narratives are. However, they can be seen as fallacious, since the similarities claimed in them are more often stated than proved. More often than not, they are supposed to be taken for granted. In this sense, they are more performative than constative. We denounce what pirates do, but why *should* we consider Henry VI a pirate? It is the metaphor that invites us to do so.

The significance of the attitudinal or perspectival dimension of these metaphors can best be appreciated in cases where there are conflicting metaphorical representations about one character or one event. A case in point is the different, even divergent ways in which the image of Gloucester is constructed during *2 Henry VI*. Gloucester, until his murder half way through this play, serves not only as a conflicting side against the others but a site where all the conflicts intersect. Save for the young king, all the others characters, themselves in conflict, share the one wish of getting rid of Gloucester. These characters use ‘flock’ and ‘gardening’ imagery to portray him in different ways. Richard Duke of York, speaking about Somerset, Suffolk, the Bishop and Buckingham, refers to their conspiring against Gloucester: “Till they have snared the shepherd of the flock, / That virtuous prince, the good Duke of Humphrey” (2.2.73-4). Although he might be a hypocrite here, York’s statement portrays the relation of Gloucester to the king as that of a shepherd to a flock, ascribing thus to him all the features of a shepherd: kindness, concern, and protection. On the other hand, they all position Henry and endow him with features of innocence, weakness, and helplessness. This implies the view that Gloucester is really faithful to and a good carer for the king. Later, Margaret, urging the king against Gloucester, uses gardening imagery to describe him: “Now ‘tis the spring, and weeds are shallow-rooted; / Suffer them now, and they’ll o’ergrow the garden, / And choke the herbs for want of husbandry” (3.1.31-3). The relation between the king and Gloucester is that of the gardener

to the weeds, which he should pluck if the garden is to flourish. Interestingly, the subject-object relationship between the two is shifted in the two metaphors. Margaret's perspective is readily backed up by Suffolk: "The fox barks not when he would steal the lamb" (55). Shortly later, York changes position and joins Gloucester's enemies. Interestingly, he uses the same animalistic imagery to warn against the Duke's danger on King Henry VI:

YORK. Were't not all one an empty eagle were set
To guard the chicken from a hungry kite,
As place Duke Humphrey for the King's protector?

QUEEN MARGARET. So the poor chicken should be sure of death.
(3.1.248-51)

These tropes give ever new images about the relation between the King and Gloucester, though they serve the same purpose of demonizing Gloucester. They are similar to that of York in positioning the king as the lamb in both analogies while Gloucester is changed from a shepherd to a fox or an eagle.

The King also becomes involved in constructing the image of Gloucester. King Henry VI seems to provisionally adopt his queen's analogy: "My lords, at once, the care you have of us / To mow down thorns that would annoy our foot / Is worthy praise" (3.1.66-8). Here he uses the same gardening image and now Gloucester is a thorn that the others are trying to pluck lest it hurts Henry's feet. Gloucester himself takes part in his image-making. Defending himself against the lords' arraignments, Gloucester represents himself to the king repeating York's initial analogy: "Thus is the shepherd beaten from thy side, / And wolves are gnarling who shall gnaw thee first" (191-2). In the midst of this debate the king is to interfere with a significant extended analogy after Gloucester having been arrested:

And as the butcher takes away the calf,
And binds the wretch, and beats it when it strays,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughterhouse,
Even so remorseless have they borne him hence;
And as the dam runs lowing up and down,
Looking the way her harmless young one went,
And can do naught but wail her darling's loss;
Even so myself bewails good Gloucester's case (3.1.210-17)

In this emotionally charged description of Gloucester's case, the king is re-shaping the relationship between the two: this time it is the king who is caring for Gloucester who is presented here as a victim; and it is the other lords who are described as butchers. After the exit of the king, the queen and the lords are

negotiating how to rid themselves of Gloucester, reiterating the same animalistic analogies mentioned above, with one new addition by Margaret who asserted that Gloucester is deceiving Henry as “the mournful crocodile / With sorrow snares relenting passengers, / Or as the snake rolled in a flow’ring bank / With shining chequered slough, doth sting a child / That for the beauty thinks it excellent” (226-30).²³ In this speech, Margaret is also advancing a point of view about the king himself as a child who, thanks to his innocence (credulity, perhaps!) is easily deceived by the crocodile-like tears of Gloucester. In these illuminating examples from Henry’s speech to the others, analogies are extensively used to give an image of reality which serves to amplify the character’s perspective and consequently justify his/her stance:

Henry constructs an elaborate allegorical picture of himself as a cow unable to save its calf from the slaughter-house . . . the speech is not just a way of analysing what is happening but a way of fixing himself in the role of helpless onlooker, as though he had no choice in the matter. It is in a curious way a speech of self-justification, and, in the lines that follow, Gloucester’s enemies pick up the method, constructing a series of miniature allegories to justify the killing. (Leggatt 1988, 25)

The above examples show that historical representation is not a purely descriptive activity. Rather, evaluation is indelibly inscribed in any representation. As these characters are striving to convey what they consider as facts, they cannot help pouring it into evaluative and perspectival moulds. The abundance of these analogies in the histories is a testimony that narration is impossible without a ‘point of view’ in which the narrator is positioned and from which he/she perceives the events being narrated and, using these analogies, invites us to view these events that way.²⁴

These tropes and analogies also work like a narrative to serve a forensic claim of a crime that has taken place. This use is partly similar to the use of emplotment and also to forensic rhetoric mentioned in the last chapter. An example of that is Warwick’s forensic reasoning in *2 Henry VI* regarding the murder of Gloucester in which he accuses Suffolk and Winchester of killing the dead Duke:

WARWICK. But both of you were vowed Duke Humphrey's foes,
[To CARDINAL BEAUFORT] And you, forsooth, had the good Duke to keep:
'Tis like you would not feast him like a friend;
And 'tis well seen he found an enemy.

QUEEN MARGARET. Then you, belike, suspect these noblemen
As guilty of Duke Humphrey's timeless death?

WARWICK. Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?
Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest
But may imagine how the bird was dead,
Although the kite soar with unbloodied beak?
Even so suspicious is this tragedy. (3.2.182-94)

The forensic nature of Warwick's speech is quite clear. He is trying to convict Suffolk and Winchester of Gloucester's murder using some general themes or topics. These topics, however, are not derived from human behaviour but rather from metaphorical tropes whose truth is taken as a given. The potentialist and cognitive aspects of Warwick's image of reality are glaringly obvious. In his account any segment of reality (like the incident of Gloucester's murder) has the potential to be interpreted differently and to acquire meanings as different as the stories projected on it. It is the susceptibility of reality to these different plottings and re-plottings that constitutes its inherent potentiality. Besides, this also points to the urgency upon historical contesters to make their claims into intelligible and convincing stories. The rhetorical nature of this speech is foregrounded since its final end is to convince those present (including the King and his entourage) of the responsibility of Suffolk and Winchester for Gloucester's death. All these examples point to the fact that the reality being constructed in these contentions about historical events is not objective. At its best it is a potentialist reality that employs all kinds of tools, literary and rhetorical, to present itself as a possible interpretation of the historical events.

The third area in which Shakespeare injects literary and rhetorical elements into the representation of history is theatricality. It has to do with creating the self-consciousness, shared by actors and spectators, that what is being presented is not history but a performance. This consciousness, in turn, will leave the door wide open to viewing history in terms of fictional and literary genres. The interrelation between theatre and history is clearly recognized. Although the performance of self-conscious theatricality (including the play-within-a-play) was regarded as "a constituent and intrinsic component of the comedic genre" in general (Fischer and Greiner 2007, xiii) and of Shakespeare's comedy in particular (K. Ryan 1989, 91), some scholars have also pointed out the

importance, even the centrality, of this technique in historical drama in general and Shakespeare's histories in particular. More generally, theatricality has been identified as crucial to thinking and writing about history itself. According to Herbert Lindenberger, "If the idea of theatre and theatricality has been particularly relevant to historical drama, it has also enjoyed a peculiar affinity with the writing of history itself. When history becomes conscious of itself, it often expresses itself in theatrical terms" (1975, 29). Thus, we tend to think of political figures as actors on the stage of history (as Queen Elizabeth I once told her Parliament after the execution of Mary Stuart) and of a certain sad event as a tragedy of that given figure and so on. Shakespeare's histories show heightened awareness of this aspect of history. "Shakespeare was alert to a variety of historical processes and his political characters often behave theatrically – at worse being guilty of dissimulation, at best as though they are conscious of taking part in a play" so much so "that we might even surmise that a classic definition of postmodernist novels as 'historiographical metafiction' well describes Shakespearean history plays" (Hattaway 2002, 19).

In the *Henry VI* dramas, historical figures often show their acute awareness that they are just playing roles on that huge stage of history. Sometimes they self-consciously ask for certain roles to play. In *3 Henry VI*, while York's sons are negotiating how to convince their father to breach his promise to Henry VI, Edward insists that he "can better play the orator" (1.2.2). But it later seems that Richard is better in 'playing' that role. The theatricality of oration is a theme that runs throughout the play. In Chapter One, we demonstrated the close affinity between early modern rhetoric and theatre, so much so that one discipline was borrowing techniques from the other. Later in that play, King Henry approves Clifford's advice: "Full well hath Clifford played the orator" (2.2.43). Richard also is very aware of his need for role playing: "I'll play the orator as well as Nestor" (3.2.188). Still again, he acknowledges the unavoidability of playing roles that were assigned to and imposed upon him by Nature. Here he refers to the 'fact' that he was born with teeth, which dumbfounded the midwife and other women: "And so I was, which plainly signified / That I should snarl and bite and play the dog" (5.6.76-7). Moreover, role-playing is rooted in even so serious an activity as fighting in warfare; receiving post from Margaret threatening him with war, Edward exclaims:

“Belike she minds to play the Amazon” (4.1.104). Joyous with their provisional victory over Talbot in *1 Henry VI*, Alencon boasts that his countrymen will “hear how we have played the men” (1.8.16). Later he approves Joan’s role in persuading Burgundy to join the French: “Pucelle hath bravely played her part in this, / And doth deserve a coronet of gold” (3.7.88-9). Early in the same play, the messenger narrating how Talbot was taken prisoner casts the brunt of blame on John Fastolf: “Here had the conquest fully sealed up, / If Sir John Fastolf had not played the coward” (1.1.130-1).

On a still deeper level, characters seem no less conscious that their current actions will be played over and over, and will be told and retold in the future course of history, serving as the subject matter for future stories and plays. Their concern about their future stories stems from the deep aesthetic and historical awareness that elements in these stories might be changed to serve the requirement of intelligibility and also of the inherent potentiality of their stories to be given new meanings by being framed differently. This is nowhere clearer than in York’s recognition that his plight will turn into a popular tragedy: “Keep thou the napkin and go boast of this, / And if thou tell’st the heavy story right, / Upon my soul the hearers will shed tears” (*3 Henry VI*, 1.4.160-2). York here is not only aware that he will be a history, but is equally conscious of the devastating effect of historical representation. So he is obsessed that his story might not be told right, and his tragedy might not make the effect it should. Ironically, his story is now being told (or better, shown) while he is uttering these words. (The title of early editions was ‘*The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*’). Later in that play, King Henry, speaking to Richard of Gloucester who came to kill him, is likewise aware that his story, with the murder of his own son included, will turn into a historical material: “My breast can better brook thy dagger’s point / Than can my ears that tragic history” (5.6.27-8). On another level, these characters speak of historical events, political designs and military actions as if they were part of a theatrical plot. In *2 Henry VI*, Gloucester is using a theatrical metaphor as he tries to show the king the real motives behind the lords’ accusation against him: “I know their complot is to have my life” (3.1.147). Thus, he views his death as one event in their plot. However, it is not the closing event: “But mine is made the prologue to their play” (151). So, he makes all historical figures in *2 Henry VI* appear like actors on the stage of

history. The interesting point here is that, in a sense, they are being revealed as actors on the stage of the Rose theatre when these lines are uttered. "Such lines trigger a recognition that all these great events are 'play'd in jest by counterfeiting actors' . . . both the professionals who are acting *Henry VI* and the dedicated amateurs in history's pageant they are portraying" (Leggatt 1988, 10).²⁵ In *3 Henry VI*, back from the battle for a moment after his army seemed to be vanquished, Warwick is told by Edward that his brother has been killed. Exasperated by Edward's and his own inertia, Warwick says:

Why stand we like soft-hearted women here,
Wailing our losses, whiles the foe doth rage;
And look upon, as if the tragedy
Were played in jest by counterfeiting actors? (2.3.25-8)

Warwick's situation can be read as occupying the role of audience and so is still partly outside the theatrical illusion: "His momentary isolation from the battle that rages before him seems now to reflect an attitude more suited to the audience at a play" (Richter 1962, 92). Kathryn Schwarz, on the other hand, reads these lines in terms of blood-relations connecting male characters in the play, and concludes that Warwick, in uttering these lines, has stepped completely outside of the theatrical illusion: "A brother's death removes battle from abstraction – the stage, the genre play, the counterfeit – to lived experience, from a set of conventions acted out by rote to an urgent condition of necessity" (2003, 351). The word 'tragedy' was used interchangeably with and even preferred to the words 'play', 'act' and 'scene', and it always invoked a theatrical sense. Warwick's self-conscious reflexivity leads him to speculate about what is going on before him *now* as a theatrical performance and so is liable to be acted over as a play again and again. Ironically, his speech is itself part of a real performance and he himself is one of its 'counterfeiting' actors.

What these examples clearly show is that historical truth is itself performative, not constative. 'Role-playing' indicates that a character is assuming a personality other than his or her own. So, if in reality, past or present, things are hardly what they seem, then the reconstruction of that reality gets more and more complicated and the retrieval of its 'truths' becomes harder to attain. Performance, then, turns out to be an integral part of reality and is not imposed by any external authority. This equation between reality and performance fosters the sense of the virtual component that is always needed

to help us make sense of the theatrical performance. Consequently, it enhances the potential nature and the cognitive function in the actual world itself. Moreover, it also disarms the contrast Dolezel draws between a fictional discourse that is performative and a historical discourse that is constative as being no longer valid from the point of view presented in these plays.

There are many other more 'literal' instances of role-playing, such as Joan's disguise as peasant in *1 Henry VI* (3.2), the townsman's feigned 'miracle' in *2 Henry VI* (2.1) and Eleanor's behaviour and Hume's deception of her, and so on. However, Shakespeare pushes that perception of history to a considerable extreme in the example of Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI*. Motivated by York, Jack Cade launches a rebellion against Henry VI, claiming himself to be John Mortimer and, thus, makes claim to the English throne. Though crammed with public murders, Cade's scenes are among the comic episodes in the play. Part of the comic effect of these scenes stems from Cade's claims and self-conscious performance, whereby he infelicitously and circularly endows himself with titles and establishes his own history. Cade claims his father to have descended from Edmund Mortimer who married the daughter of the Duke of Clarence, third son to Edward III. According to that version, the second son of Edmund Mortimer, Jack's father, was stolen by a beggar-woman and grew up ignorant of his birth and worked a bricklayer.

As part of the performative nature of Cade's discourse, he does not have recourse to any verifiable truths or historical facts. When Stafford's brother objects that his claim about the Mortimers is false, Cade says: "Ay, there's the question – but I say 'tis true" (4.2.127). Cade's discourse completely dispenses with what Barthes (1970) has called "shifters of listening" or, following Roman Jakobson, "testimonial statements" which are present in any historical discourse, whereby the historian refers to his source as a testimony to what he/she is saying. Cade's claims are all performatives: they do not tell facts that pre-exist them, but establish these facts as he utters them, by the very act of uttering them. Unlike any other performatives, however, they lack any felicity conditions and the only warrant of their truth is their very utterance: "Away! Burn all the records of the realm. My mouth shall be the Parliament of England" (4.7.11-3). Further, we can say that, as performative statements, they are not subject to any truth judgement. They needn't, even cannot be true or false. Ironically, one

of his followers, Smith the weaver, is too unwitting to understand the status of Cade's statements. After Cade has claimed the descent of his father who worked a bricklayer, Smith the weaver is trying hard to give a testimony to Cade's claims: "Sir, he made a chimney in my father's house, and *the bricks are alive at this day* to testify. Therefore deny it not" (4.2.134-5; emphasis added). Interestingly, Smith's use of ostensive history (the live chimney) is quite strong, yet it does not give warrant to Cade's claims, since the only thing it can prove is that Cade's father was a bricklayer, which is not a matter of dispute.

No less interesting is his bestowal of knighthood on himself, when he is told of the arrival of Sir Humphrey Stafford and William Stafford:

MESSENGER. Fly, fly, fly! Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother are hard by with the king's forces.

CADE. Stand, villain, stand – or I'll fell thee down. He shall be encountered with a man as good as himself. He is but a knight, is a?

MESSENGER. No.

CADE. To equal him I will make myself a knight presently.

[*He kneels and knights himself*]

Rise up Sir John Mortimer.

[*Rises*]

Now have at him! (4.2.100-8)

The deontic power needed to bestow knighthood is here also warranted by Cade himself. The irony is that *Cade* is not equal to the Staffords until he becomes a knight, and the only one who can make him a knight is *Cade*. Thus, the unworthy Cade is made worthy by the unworthy Cade. There is another, related sense in which Cade is also presented as a performer, as York likens him to a 'wild Morisco' or a morris dancer (3.1.365). The two juxtaposed meanings of performance explored here with relation to Cade help us capitalize on the theatricality of history. For as a performing actor, Cade's existence is testified to by his own phenomenological presence on-stage, not by his functioning as a sign referring to and authenticated by something other than his own presence. And as history shares with theatre the quality of referring to another reality outside of itself, here Cade is dispensing with his semiotic function on behalf of his phenomenological existence. In terms we used in Chapter One, he foregrounds his performant function at the expense of his referential function. So his history is no longer in need of testimonial statements, and is established solely by his very presence. Thus, it implies that most of what we consider as verified is no more than a claim and that a good deal of history is a performative activity. These two points are given prominence by the use of

this exaggerated example of Jack Cade. His claim of descent and bestowal of knighthood, however, are more closely related to each other than they may first appear and Shakespeare's skill is such that, by juxtaposing them together, he shows how the claims to truth made by historical representations may be no better grounded than these baseless social conventions.

Thus, one theatrical feature that is laid bare in the Cade scenes is conventionality. Significantly, it reflects on the social dimension of conventionality. These episodes expose the social reality as a sum of conventions at its best. Not only in theatre, then, but also in reality what we see is not based on real attributes but merely on conventions, which compromises the status of the actual world and consequently of history itself. This enhances the view that what we take to be the actual world is a cultural construct. To be sure, titles and names have no factual material existence. They are just potentialities arising from the actual state; in other words, they are more of interpretations than facts. The ironies exposed in the Cade episode betray, among other things, scepticism about these social conventions, such as the bestowal of knighthood. With Cade naming himself Sir John Mortimer, "the stage presents us with a visual parody of the power of naming" (Watson 1990, 74). According to Ellen C. Caldwell, the Jack Cade episode questions the validity of all ceremony at the heart of the aristocratic society, for performing it that way "inverts the ceremony and questions its sanctity" (1995, 54). So, the behaviour of Cade is attributable not only to York but to the whole aristocratic society (Cartelli 2003, 327).

Up to now we have surveyed how the historical representation is inescapably enshrined within rhetorical and narrative strategies – emplotment, tropes and theatricality – that put its claim to naked truth into compromise, and set it in line with the virtual features of potentiality and probability. In some instances, however, characters are desperate to catch the 'naked' truth which is the ideal goal of any historical representation. Nevertheless, these characters are equally aware that a naked representation of truth is an oxymoron, which is why they tend to dispense with linguistic and narrative representation in favour of a direct material presence of the historical fact itself. They tend to use 'ostension' as a method of telling history. Ostension is a way of defining something by bringing

the thing itself or its examples into view. By bringing the physical thing onstage characters manage to dispense with the potentiality and probability associated with any representation. On the one hand, bringing the very thing onstage would narrow the potentiality of any added interpretation or connection. On the other hand, since the thing itself is present, ostension eliminates the need for representational tools to make the thing or event intelligible. However, in the last resort Shakespeare is careful to point to the overall cognitive aspect of the representation, and the irony that even their ostensions are made intelligible as being part of a performance which is representational in essence.

One blatant example is Richard of Gloucester's presentation of the evidence for his deeds in the battle of St. Albans. At the beginning of *3 Henry VI*, Richard Duke of York is busy reviewing his triumph over the king's forces and gives opportunity for his sons and supporters to report and prove their deeds:

EDWARD. Lord Stafford's father, Duke of Buckingham,
Is either slain or wounded dangerous.
I cleft his beaver with a downright blow.
That this is true, father, behold his blood.

[*He shows a bloody sword*]

MONTAGUE. [*to YORK*] And, brother, here's the Earl of Wiltshire's blood,
[*He shows a bloody sword*]

Whom I encountered as the battles joined.

RICHARD. [*to Somerset's head, which he shows*]

Speak thou for me and tell them what I did.

YORK. Richard hath best deserved of all my sons.

[*To the head*] But is your grace dead, my lord of Somerset? (1.1.10-18)

What these characters are doing is writing the battle, writing their past and chronicling their history. As evidence of this construction of the past, each collects some data, the strongest among which was the head of Somerset, being based on that material datum. The strength of this evidence stems from the fact that, in contrast to the other data presented, it is the least liable to interpretation.²⁶ There is only the actual fact, and no room is left for any potentiality or a potentially alternative interpretation. Even blood is not sufficient as evidence for it may be of somebody else other than the ones these warriors claim to have wounded or killed. Moreover, with it York cannot be sure whether this wound was deadly or not. Hence Edward's honest claim: '*Is either slain or wounded dangerously.*' With the head, on the other hand, there is only one fact: that Somerset is killed, which is why it is only Richard's claim which invoked York's exclaim: "*Richard hath best deserved of all my sons.*" And it is so unmediated that Richard even does not speak what he has done, as others did;

rather, he asks the head, his evidence, to 'speak' for him and 'tell' them what he did. So, Richard's history, unlike the others', is not written with words, but with ostensive data. He is seeking to present a 'naked' rather than an 'apparelled' truth. Although Richard dispenses with verbal narrative reconstructions, yet he still aims at intelligibility, this time in theatrically ostensive means.

In a previous context, York is also claiming this method as historical verification. Beleaguered by Somerset's inefficiency in France, when the latter has lost all the remaining English conquered territories, York is asking for an evidence of Somerset's prowess: "Show me one scar charactered on thy skin. / Men's flesh preserved so whole do seldom win" (*2 Henry VI*: 3.1.300-1). Somerset's claims of having fought in France can only be verified by his 'scars'. It is men's flesh, not their words, that speak true. And thus it is not speaking (nor writing) that is the best method of historical proof, but rather it is 'showing'.

Yet the piquant irony Shakespeare is making in these examples is that, despite these characters' ceaseless endeavours to get out of the grip of narrative and rhetorical representation, they are still enmeshed within it, and their presentation can only make sense within that representational frame. After all, the head which Richard throws on the stage is not the historical Somerset's head, but a dummy head used to represent the head of the historical Somerset or, more accurately, to represent the head of the actor who plays Somerset. (Interestingly enough, this account is historically anachronistic: Richard Duke of Gloucester could not have killed Somerset since he was only three years old at the first battle of St. Albans in which the Duke of Somerset was murdered.) Moreover, the head, as part of a theatrical performance, is not capable of speaking for Richard, but rather it can only make sense as part of the larger, more complex frames of representation in that performance. The head, in other words, is being spoken for rather than speaking itself. Nor are the scars which the actor playing Somerset is asked to show his own (if he had scars to show at all). Even if such scars are shown, they would only be intelligible as part of the performance of this play. Thus even in their hardest efforts to escape the confines of rhetorical representation, historical potentiality and the openness to interpretation, these characters find themselves again entrapped in the literary device of metatheatricity which we above considered as contributing to the image of apparelled truth.

A more complex and illuminating instance of the inevitability of historical representation is in the story of the invitation of Talbot by the Countess of Auvergne in *1 Henry VI*. This example shows that even direct encounter, which is not mediated by any historical representation, is in need of cognitive efforts to be intelligible. The Countess feigns that she is impressed by the military characteristics of Talbot but in fact she intends to imprison him and save her country from his scourge. More significantly, she first wanted to see him, so that “Fain would mine eyes be witness with mine ears, / To give their censure of these rare reports” (2.3.9-10; emphasis added). The Countess’s speech betrays her scepticism about any act of representation. Although she is contemporary with Talbot, her knowledge of him is a historical knowledge in the sense that it is based on ‘reports’. (Spatial distance is exerting the same epistemic gap as temporal distance.) The Countess is quite conscious of the fact that her knowledge, based on those reports, is anything but reliable. Hence her attempt to back up her ‘ears’ with her ‘eyes’. When she first sees Talbot, she is alarmed by the gross disparity between seeing and hearing:

COUNTESS OF AUVERGNE .And he is welcome. What, is this the man?

MESSENGER. Madam, it is.

COUNTESS OF AUVERGNE. Is this the scourge of France?

Is this the Talbot, so much feared abroad

That with his name the mothers still their babes?

I see report is fabulous and false.

I thought I should have seen some Hercules,

A second Hector, for his grim aspect

And large proportion of his strong-knit limbs.

(13-20; emphasis added)

Reports, then, are ‘fabulous’ and ‘false’. This raises her historical awareness and leaves her shocked by the discrepancy between what she is seeing and what she ‘should have seen’. The what she ‘should have seen’ is a virtual potentiality of Talbot which is constructed thanks to the former representations made about Talbot and on which the Countess has based her image of him. She is quite aware that historical representation results in a potential reality and not the actual one. As a result, she prefers ‘seeing’ to ‘hearing’. Paradoxically, Talbot corrects her ‘wrong belief’ by problematizing even the validity of ‘seeing’ and the verifiability of ostensive history. When she tries to imprison him, he derides her since “that you have aught but Talbot’s shadow” (45). Now, even ‘seeing’ is not sufficient guarantee of knowledge, for although he is standing by her, what she can see is just his shadow. Utterly perplexed, she exclaims: “He

will be here, and yet he is not here. / How can these contrarities agree?" (58-9). This is not the Talbot proper, but the shadow that must be complemented by its substance, i.e., his soldiers. So, even the presented physical thing is not yet the whole story, because its potential is something beyond itself. The potential of Talbot is in his soldiers, who help make Talbot what he really is.

The scene has provocative metatheatrical and metahistorical significance. Metatheatrically, Talbot may be alluding to the theatrical nature of his existence, as the word 'shadow' meant 'actor' in the early modern period. After all, the past is in essence irretrievable, and the scene marks the futility of desiring to recover it again. Phyllis Rackin observes that the Countess prefers the physical objects to written history as more verifiable and trustworthy. So, the desire to see the real Talbot is impossible to achieve, be it through historical record or theatrical representation. "Like the Countess, Shakespeare's audience wanted to see the renowned Talbot, and like her, they were likely to be disappointed" (Rackin 1985, 334). On the metahistorical dimension, the scene marks the shadowy and paradoxical aspects of the historical representation itself. For although these various media claim to represent the real past, they really give no more than a shadowy image of that past. And as theatre and history share a quality of referring or looking from a distance, reference both presents the past and distances us from it, constantly reminding us that it is a semiotic mechanism not real recovery. "Like Talbot, the past represented here is both present and not present" (Walsh 2004, 132). It is both here and not here, with us capturing only its shadow while its substance, unlike Talbot's soldiers, is irrecoverably receding. The metatheatrical and metahistorical dimensions are closely linked together and they help to capitalize on the essential problematic of historical drama in general: "just as the appearance of the actor himself may not live up to the legend of the character he is portraying; behind the challenge to Talbot, Shakespeare is dealing with one of the fundamental problems of historical drama, characteristically calling attention to the difficulty rather than smoothing it over."(Leggatt 1988, 3)

The lesson Talbot is teaching the Countess is twofold: first, that historical representation is always selective and reductive: faced with a complex phenomenon, it reduces it to its most salient aspect and selects that aspect as the sole representative part of that phenomenon. Hence the marginalization of

many groups of historical actors; armies, for instance, are reduced to their leaders. Representations are always shadowy. Secondly, Talbot demonstrates that understanding reality is not a mere sensory activity, but is also a cognitive one. His more advanced lesson is that not only ears, but also eyes, unwedded by cognitive operations, are unreliable for the capture of that reality. It is her eyes that 'misconster' his body and mind (2.3.73). In this deeper example, even ostension is in need of a cognitive framework if a reality is to be perfectly captured. And the Countess has learned that lesson: "Victorious Talbot, Pardon my abuse./I find thou are no less than fame has bruited, / And more than may be gathered by thy shape" (67-9).²⁷

These examples reveal the affinity between historical representation and theatrical representation. As representations, both attempt to retrieve a reality that is no longer there. Moreover, they demonstrate that even historical persons might tend to understand their reality (which is the past being represented) in theatrical terms. This affinity between historiography and theatre would highlight the performative and theatrical nature of history resulting in a deeper understanding of how people in the past 'performed' their present to get us to read it as a full-fledged story or a play. And in turn this capitalizes on the extent to which history is being narratively emplotted and cognitively oriented.

Conclusion

Shakespeare problematizes the concept of the actual world and its historical past by stretching the essential characteristics of the virtual (its cognitive function and potentiality) to apply also for history. The possible and actual of reality are treated as more cognitive than ontological categories. Historical reality is a potentialist reality since it is mediated by representational strategies and is open to many interpretations. As a representation, it has also to be made intelligible via the use of many strategies that are literary or rhetorical in nature. Thus, the truths which historical representation yields are more 'apparelled' than 'naked'. Shakespeare's interest in these issues is due to the debates about these issues in early modern England among literary and rhetorical scholars as well as historians. These debates are fuelled by Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history, which seems to promote potentiality and intelligibility to

poetry rather than history. Although many scholars generally accepted Aristotle's distinction, yet they identified these many features in historical writing itself. As far as Shakespeare's practice is concerned, characters in the three parts of *Henry VI* are desperate to prove their historical claims using rhetorical devices that would make their claims more credible and convincing. The use of these devices highlights the probabilistic and potentialist nature of their historical representations which they, however, deliberately attempt to conceal. We have investigated in detail three areas of representational intervention of the perception of historical reality: emplotment, use of tropes and theatricality.

Emplotment enables characters to re-arrange past events to make an intelligible and comprehensive whole, and it invests in the potential of events to acquire ever new interpretations. Tropes work the same way by projecting imaginary stories into the real events which helps to give them new meanings compatible with the metaphor or trope. With theatricality, the plays might also intensify the sense of artificiality and representation by depicting the whole historical process as a form of theatrical playing and performance. Interestingly, even when characters try to break from the shackles of representation and aspire for the 'naked' truth by presenting the real thing onstage, their attempts are ultimately futile. As we have observed in Chapter One with regard to theatre, we are reminded of the irretrievability of the actual in history. In both history and theatre, representation is all there is. In Chapter One we have problematized the concept of pure iconicity, and in this chapter we have shown that ostensive history is, at its best, an oxymoron.

The other main point I would like to stress here is the contribution the above discussion would make to the current paradigm debate in literary theory. As we have seen in the Introduction, 'Possible worlds' theory can be situated within a paradigm that supersedes poststructuralist and postmodernist currents and powerfully contributes to their main concerns, especially the influence exerted by discourse and representation on the fictionality of reality in general, including scientific and historical 'realities'. Christopher Norris (2007) takes great pains to demonstrate that 'possible worlds' is one advanced contribution to that debate which originated with the positivistic fostering of the two cultures: the objective scientific culture and the subjective speculative one. Postmodernism and poststructuralism, argues Norris, can be seen as a reaction,

though an extremist one, to that doctrine. What these latter approaches did was to deny objectivity at all even to the realm of sciences. In the Introduction we showed the advantages this approach yields to historiography. In one way, it is a move “beyond the typically poststructuralist idea that language, discourse or representation go all the way down and hence that there is no distinguishing between historical and fictive narratives or scientific and non-scientific texts” (2007, 122). If positivism denied existence of any kind to fictional objects and ascribed falsehood to fictional, or even scientifically unverified statements, postmodernism denied objective unmediated knowledge for even the scientific and historical modes of enquiry. The possible worlds framework, on the other hand, acknowledges real existence to all those modes of objects, factual and fictional, and reckons existence as an attribute that is to be judged only relative to a given world, thus giving a realist account of all these modes of representation. Theories of ‘possible worlds’ proved efficient in defending fiction against positivist views. But, as the above discussion must have shown, it is not clear that it could as efficiently defend non-fiction against the sweeping fictionalization of the postmodern trend. So, whether the present formulations of ‘possible worlds theory will live up to these high expectations voiced by Norris and others is a matter at stake!

The above discussion should have shown the relevance of the debates of the postmodern challenge to the intellectual controversies in early modern England. It also broadens our appreciation of the discipline of rhetoric for it was a site for such controversies. It should have also demonstrated the affinity between historical and theatrical representation. As both are striving to represent an absent reality, both are subject to the same limitations and challenges. Further research can be carried out on other Shakespearean histories to trace that tendency in his representation of historical representation. The three plays of *Henry VI* belong to an early stage of Shakespeare's career and might serve to argue that this historical, discursive and rhetorical awareness has been present since that early stage. Moreover, Shakespeare's indirect approach to these issues can be compared to more direct pronouncements available in other playwrights, such as Ben Jonson's treatment of historiography in his *Sejanus his Fall*.

The concept of 'potentialist realism' advanced in this chapter will also feature in the next Chapter on counterfactuals in Shakespeare. On the one hand, although a counterfactual takes it for granted that there is an actual fact, yet it opens up that reality to different understandings and interpretations, as well as to ideological manipulations. On the other hand, the use of counterfactuals underscores the employment of probabilistic thinking to underpin what was possible in a given situation in the first place. Though we shall investigate counterfactuals in plays belonging to different genres, the history plays will also feature clearly in the below discussions, which again shows the relevance of these questions to historical representation.

Chapter Four

Counterfactuality and Contingency in Shakespearean Drama

The gardener in Shakespeare's *Richard II* draws a comparison between the gardeners' work in weeding the royal garden and the work of the king in the whole realm by contemplating the fate of the deposed king:

O, what pity is it
That he had not so trimmed and dressed his land
As we this garden!

. . . .

Had he done so to great and growing men,
They might have lived to bear and he to taste
Their fruits of duty. Superfluous branches
We lop away, that bearing boughs may live.
Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,
Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down. (3.4.56-8, 62-7)

Many readers are likely to pass over this speech, dismissing it as mere fancy contemplation for it cites events that failed to exist in the past. David M. Bergeron, for example, observes that "This moment in the play does little to advance the narrative and derives from no hint in the sources" (2002, 49). This opinion exemplifies a common reaction to such passages in Shakespeare. However, the significance of this speech stretches far beyond the mere advancement of the narrative. By revisiting the recent past, the gardener constructs a counterfactual statement, exploring how the present might have been different had certain past events been undone. More importantly, he implies that the king could have avoided that fate had he acted differently. Observing the present status of the King, the gardener attributes it to nothing other than the king's own actions. This rather rational attribution of causality in a play partly dominated by medieval values and expressions of Providentialism is quite remarkable.

The significance of counterfactual statements like these in Shakespeare has so far attracted little critical attention. Partly due to their inherent limitation in

forming the actual story, critics usually pass them over in favour of actual events. Even when some scattered examples are tackled, they are not studied as part of a larger category of counter-to-fact statements that deserve attention as such. Yet, such neglect misses the intricate ontological and cognitive niceties that such uses usually imply. Moreover, this practice blinds us to the multiple dimensions of analysis that counterfactuals have invited in other disciplines like philosophy, psychology, history and the social sciences.

This Chapter sets to examine such counterfactual statements in the Shakespeare canon. It argues that these counterfactual statements in Shakespearean drama work basically on virtual events and that they exhibit the two features of probability and potentiality which we considered essential elements of virtuality. Through the causal links they create, counterfactuals use possible and virtual events in order to enhance the intelligibility of the actual events and probability of the action in the plays. On the other hand, it is only through probabilistic methods that we can establish what was and was not possible in a given situation. So they feature a reciprocal movement from the ontologically possible to the cognitively probable and vice versa. Counterfactuals also exhibit the rich potential of virtual events, as they show the many layers of alternative possible realities latent beneath the actual event. Counterfactuals in Shakespeare's plays form a functional category which serves a variety of ends; it is also a multifaceted phenomenon which is manifested in mainly four dimensions: psychological, historical (or political), philosophical and literary. They show how characters respond emotionally to dramatic events, how they evaluate these events and attribute success or failures to actions and persons, based on the scope of the alternative possibilities they imagine for these events. Politically, they explain the basis on which characters cast blame in national misfortunes according to their imagined ideal political state of affairs, surveying their history for certain turning points before which things could have turned out differently. Philosophically, they demonstrate a tendency towards more rational causal thinking and away from providential accounts of historical events. On the literary dimension, they enhance the ontological and cognitive aspects of the fictional world, and demonstrate the viability of possible worlds approaches to the study of literary structure, and they serve to enhance the ontological and cognitive aspects of the fictional world.

In the light of the above, counterfactual statements share some features with the virtual events that we discussed in Chapter Two, which mostly consist of the characters' intended plans and projected scenarios, and which either converge with or diverge from the actual course of events. There we stressed that these virtual events, although they may not be actualized during the course of the action, do still form an integral part of the plots of the plays. Counterfactual scenarios form one set of virtual events or unactualized possibilities in the course of action. But while some virtual events discussed so far are future-oriented (forming the characters' prospective attitude about what will happen and what to do next), counterfactuals are past-oriented. Even when virtual events are about the past, they are used to re-construct the actual past. With counterfactuals, however, the actual past is already known and we contemplate how it could have been different. So, whereas we have the 'fact' as a given in counterfactuals and so try to imagine a counterfact, in other types of the virtual event the fact itself is in question and not yet determined. Although these counterfactual scenarios diverge from what really happened, they are far from trivial. Throughout this chapter we will encounter more of the characteristic features of counterfactual statements in Shakespeare.

Counterfactuals, Possibility and Causality

The main two aspects of counterfactual thinking are causality – the ability of counterfactual statements to imply causal judgement – and possibility, since they are choosing among inherently possible alternatives to any given event or action. Generally, a counterfactual is defined as a conditional statement with a false antecedent specifying a past event that did not take place (Roese and Olson 1995, 2). Counterfactuals have been attracting increasing attention in philosophy and other disciplines thanks to their methodological value as a tool for explaining causality. Causality and causal relations are among the basic conceptual tools that enable people to make sense of their world (Piaget 1974). Counterfactuals are not the only method whereby causation can be explained, for there are other methods to explain causality, chief among which are explanation by direct causes, explanation by covariational factors, and the covering law model, which we shall explain below soon.

Counterfactuals are set apart from these other methods of causation in two important respects: their principle of explaining causality and the kind of causal explanation they yield. As far as the first point is concerned, counterfactuals are based on a special use of the possibility principle. Direct causal explanation is based on actuality, for it explains an event by only looking at what really happened (A, therefore B), while counterfactual reasoning explains an event by looking at what might possibly have happened if it were not for the existence of the cause in question (not B, therefore not A). "Whereas counterfactual reasoning is about possibility, causal reasoning is about reality" (Spellman, Kincannon and Stose 2005, 28). Causal explanation is reality-based. But both counterfactual and covariational explanations are possibility-based. Both counterfactual reasoning and covariational reasoning work on evoking possibilities. However, they differ in that the goal of the counterfactual is "*finding ways to undo the outcome or something like it*" while that of the covariational is that of "*finding ways that would increase the probability of the outcome or something like it*" (Mandel 2005, 23; emphasis in original). This entails another difference between the counterfactual and the covariational modes of reasoning: the former can only undo one factor at a time and so it attributes causality to one cause only, while the latter, also called contributing factor explanation, looks at the relative importance of different factors or causes. Consequently, while covariational reasoning works well with equifinality (the idea that the outcome can be brought about separately by many different causes), counterfactual reasoning does not (see Spellman, Kincannon and Stose 2005, 28; Mandel 2005, 26; Goertz and Levy 2007, 13).

The second difference is related to whether the causes attributed through counterfactual reasoning are sufficient, necessary or both. Goertz and Levy (2007, 24) arrange these variables from the strongest to the weakest as (1) necessary and sufficient conditions, (2) sufficient conditions and (3) necessary conditions. It has been argued (Mandel 2005, 15) that one problem with counterfactual scenarios is that they invoke necessary causes while in everyday use causation tends to imply sufficient causes. However, in common sense uses as well as the way causality is attributed in literature, the differences between these modes are mostly blurred. As we will see later, Shakespeare's

characters always imply both necessity and sufficiency in attributing causality, but necessity can be seen as more basic in these counterfactuals.

Thinking about possibilities is the main characteristic of counterfactual reasoning. Although causal relations generally imply necessity, yet paradoxically the essence of counterfactual thinking is rooted in possibility and contingency (Hawthorn 1991, 13). So, although causality implies that when the cause exists the result should follow, counterfactuals argue about the cause itself that its existence was one possibility among many alternatives; one that could have been avoided and, when avoided, the result would not have happened either. This is why counterfactuals cannot be imagined without imagining possibilities. Our ability to think counterfactually is facilitated by our ability to imagine alternative possible scenarios that diverge from the actual. This is made clear by the psychological, historical and philosophical treatments of counterfactuals. Psychologically speaking, "People imagine counterfactual alternatives by keeping possibilities in mind" (Walsh and Byrne 2005, 72). Byrne (2005, 115) distinguishes between direct causal reasoning and counterfactual reasoning on the basis of imagining possibilities: when people think causally they imagine only one possibility but when they think counterfactually they think in terms of two or more possibilities. That is why people tend to practice causal reasoning more frequently than they do counterfactual reasoning: "Inferences based on one possibility are easier than those based on multiple ones" (ibid., 23). Historically speaking, a counterfactual approach to the past legitimizes the existence of countless possibilities of the actual past. It is based on the inherent potentiality in human action to open up for countless alternatives. Human history has been no more than the collective of millions of human decisions, all of them contingent, all of them mutable. Consequently, "the past becomes present (or is renewed) as a function of the possibilities objectively implied in this past" (Scalmer 2006, 3; see also Cowley 2005, xvii). Philosophically speaking, traditional treatments of counterfactual conditionals in philosophy (Stalnaker 1968; Lewis 1973) have been based on the 'possible worlds' theories, and have endeavoured to account for counterfactuals in terms of possibility.

However, ontological possibility is not an end in itself in counterfactual reasoning. Rather the ultimate aim behind constructing counterfactuals is cognitive: counterfactuals enhance causal reasoning and causality is one of the

basic principles whereby humans make sense of their world and how things tend to happen in it. Thus, it turns out that one way to understand and make sense of the actual events and their causes is through the possible. The possible is conceptually indispensable in our cognitive development and it is a skill that humans start to develop through imaginative work in the early stages of their childhood (Harris 2000). The utility of the possible in explaining the actual has been recognized in different disciplines. According to Robert Cowley, "There is no better way of understanding what did happen in history than to contemplate what very well might have happened" (2005, xvii). Since the possible, with its inherent potentiality, is an integral part of reality, then its recognition is a prerequisite for the understanding of that reality. Although the direct experimental methods are still profitably in use, investment in the possible can widen the range of our understanding of historical and social phenomena: "From the imaginary, unexploited traces of the actual might be discerned" (Scalmer 2006, 4). In the field of the social sciences, Max Weber made the resounding claim that "In order to penetrate the real causal interrelationships, *we construct unreal ones*"(1949, 185-6; emphasis added).

Counterfactual thinking, moreover, is a form of rational thinking. It is far from being mere fancy, based on playful flights of the imagination. Although it has been dismissed by many as such, its proponents have managed to set certain criteria for its rational orientation. Firstly, as Robert Cowley has put it, "Probability is the key" (2005, xvii). Counterfactual scenarios must be kept within the range of what is considered probable according to the standards of the field in question. This buttresses the dialectic between possibility and probability which we have emphasized throughout this thesis. That is why the counterfactuals constructed by historians are viewed as more probable since historians know more of the details and have enough experience of what could happen in any given situation (Scalmer 2006, 3). Another criterion is consistency with the agreed historical facts, for understanding and interpreting these facts is the ultimate aim behind the construction of counterfactuals (Tetlock and Belkin 1996, 23). Consequently, some writers have suggested that counterfactual scenarios should differ as little as possible from the historical facts, calling this the 'minimal re-write' rule (for a list of these criteria see

Scalmer 2006, 7). All these criteria are set in order to elevate counterfactual thought experiments into more valuable, reliable and sense-making experiences.

Thus far we have remarked the main two sources for interest in counterfactuals as causality and possibility. This interest has ranged over many disciplines like philosophy, sociology, psychology, history and others. However, some of the philosophical nuances about causality surveyed above might not be readily applicable in Shakespeare, where a more flexible and common-sense meanings of that aspect might be applicable. The possibilistic aspect of counterfactuals has proved to be a liberating strategy for opening ever new horizons for human existence. Below we shall see how these aspects of counterfactuals are reflected in Shakespeare's plays as well as the uses to which they are put.

Counterfactuality in Shakespeare's Drama

Literary works before postmodernism occasionally have recourse to counterfactual statements in their attempts to illuminate some aspects of the actual course of events. Postmodern fiction, however, has gone farthest in that direction, creating whole counterfactual worlds. The investigation of counterfactuals in literature is underdeveloped, but thanks to some recent adventures in this domain, we have begun to develop a better idea of the significance of this device in literature (Dannenberg 2008; Dolezel 2010; Warbel 2011; Widmann 2011). Most of these studies, though, take prose fiction as their starting point and rarely touch on drama. In this Chapter I shall discuss the counterfactual statements used in Shakespeare's plays by looking at the various ways characters in Shakespeare's plays think counterfactually. I investigate the reasons why characters use counterfactuals and the overall significance of this use. Through the analysis of these counterfactual statements we will see how characters are using these essentially virtual scenarios to make sense of their lives and also how they use probabilistic methods to establish what they consider to have been possible in the first place. In this regard, we can primarily discern two kinds of counterfactual use in Shakespeare's plays: figurative and literal. Then I shall single out the literal counterfactuals as the main subject of this Chapter and study them in the main

four dimensions mentioned above: psychological, historical, philosophical and literary.

Figurative counterfactuals are used non-seriously in order to approach reality figuratively – more specifically, they are always deployed to form hyperbolic statements about reality. They are not serious since their antecedents consist in physically impossible events. There are a few examples of this kind of counterfactuals scattered throughout the plays. For example, In *King Lear*, when Lear asks the blinded Gloucester whether he can mark the penning of the challenge, the latter painfully answers: “Were all thy letters suns, I could not see” (4.5.133). In *Richard II*, the Duchess of York is chiding her husband for betraying her son Aumerle’s treason to the king. York indignantly replies: “Were he twenty times my son, / I would appeach him” (5.2.101-2). At the climax of Othello’s suspicions about Desdemona’s relation to Cassio, she tells him of her worries about Cassio’s death, which invites Othello’s exasperated answer: “Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge / Had stomach for ‘em all” (5.2.81-2). It is blindingly obvious that the letters turning into suns, York being twenty times Aumerle’s father and Casio’s hairs being lives are all impossible from the vantage point of the physical world. Some of them, like the last two examples, cannot even be imagined.

This restriction of the possibility to even imagine the precedent serves to distinguish figurative from literal counterfactuals. Seelau *et al* would dismiss the above examples as a kind of fantasy, and they argue “that counterfactual thinking, unlike free-form fantasy, is strongly constrained by people’s knowledge of the laws that govern the world around them” (1995, 60). In other words, while counterfactuals are used by people to speculate about things that could have happened, this special kind is used to assume the existence of things that could not happen. In other words, they do not pose any alternatives to reality. From the literary point of view, however, they are far from being pointless, since they are all examples of figurative language mainly used here to make hyperboles. Byrne (2005) would otherwise include these examples under what she calls ‘semifactuals’. Since literal or proper counterfactuals presuppose a result that is mainly expressed in the consequent, that result is different from the actual one (hence the prefix ‘counter-’). Semifactuals, on the other hand, assume the same consequent no matter what the antecedent is. Thus, semifactually used, these

figurative counterfactuals are partly deployed to point to an invariant outcome, and to deny causal relations between the antecedent and consequent. Causality, which is very crucial to any counterfactual thinking, is not implied in semifactuals.

Literal counterfactuals, which will occupy our focus for the rest of this chapter, are used by characters to seriously speculate about the way things could have turned out differently. They are literal in the sense that their antecedents, though assumed to be counter to what has really happened, did have an opportunity to have happened. They express the limitless potentiality of things to develop into different paths. In other words, they were within the realm of the possible, and so they are seriously employed by characters to speculate about alternative paths the course of action could have taken but failed to do. They are put to uses that are directly relevant to these characters' private and public lives. To account for its multi-faceted nature, we will address four dimensions of counterfactuality in Shakespeare: psychological, historical, philosophical and literary.

The Psychological Dimension

The psychology and social psychology of counterfactual thinking has attracted increasing attention in the last decades (Roese and Olson 1995; Byrne 2005, Mandel, Hilton and Cattelani 2005). This research has resulted in many findings regarding the motivation to conduct counterfactual thinking, the different modes of that thinking, the laws that determine our counterfactuals and our emotional responses to these constructions. I shall show the relevance of some of these distinctions to Shakespeare's use of counterfactuals. The characters' use of counterfactuals always unveils their emotional states, especially their responses – positive or negative – to events and actions. It also betrays their urge to assess their achievement relative to their potentiality. It also reveals their ideological and emotional biases, as these responses are based on value judgements.

One psychological distinction is between self-focused counterfactuals (undoing some actions or attributes of one's self) and externally-focused counterfactuals (mutating aspects external to the self). "This pattern should be a

functional strategy because attributions to the self should promote feelings of control, whereas external attributions should not” (McMullen, Markman and Gavanski 1995, 150). Another crucial distinction is between *upward* and *downward* counterfactuals. This depends on the kind of comparison made between the factual and counterfactual events: whether the counterfactual state is imagined as either better (upward) or worse than the actual (downward), respectively. Each of these comparisons would generate a special type of emotion: regret or satisfaction, respectively:

Counterfactuals can take different forms, and these forms appear to have different emotional consequences. One type of counterfactual is called an *upward comparison*, and it involves a person considering how the outcome could have been better, for example, “If only I hadn’t taken a new route to the airport I wouldn’t have missed my plane.” This type of counterfactual consistently has been found to lead to increased feelings of regret after a negative event. Another type of counterfactual thinking entails a person replaying the event with a worse outcome or making a *downward comparison*. This type of counterfactual usually takes the form “At least,” or “It could have been worse,” and it may have more positive emotional consequences, such as feelings of relief. (Kasimatis and Wells 1995, 82-3; emphasis in original)

These distinctions are of a great value in Shakespeare’s plays. In these plays, characters almost always employ upward counterfactuals, contemplating the ways things could have turned out better than they actually did. By generating this type of counterfactual comparison they always express deep regretful emotions in reaction to bad events that could have been avoided, but were not. As we have observed, characters measure their actual achievement against their potential, and respond accordingly. For example, a self-focused upward counterfactual is voiced by Cardinal Wolsey in *King Henry VIII (All is True)* after the wheel of Fortune has turned against him: “Had I but served my God with half the zeal/ I served my king, He would not in mine age / Have left me naked to mine enemies”(3.2.456-8). As a counterfactual, this statement consists in undoing a factual action (the long service Wolsey made to the king, to the exclusion of his religious duties) and contemplating what the result would have been (a better reward for the cardinal at the end of his life). His seriousness is anchored in the possibility of the mutated antecedent (that Wolsey had instead served his God zealously). An externally-focused upward counterfactual is mounted by John of Gaunt in *Richard II*. Irked with Richard’s public and private policies against his uncles, which consisted in the murder of

Gloucester and the destruction of Gaunt himself, John of Gaunt speculates in the presence of Richard about how this situation could have been avoided:

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 possessed, (2.1.104-7)

The external focus of this counterfactual statement is indicated by the absence of any first-person pronouns from its antecedent and consequent. Here Gaunt is contemplating what some other person, namely his father Edward III, prophet-like, could have done to eschew these devastating effects that resulted from Richard becoming king. The causal relation in this counterfactual is both explicit and implicit: explicit in attributing the destruction of Edward's sons to Richard (*how his son's son should destroy his sons*) and implicit (attributing the accession of Richard II to the short-sightedness of Edward III and his failure to recognize Richard's destructive potential). However, the context privileges only the first explicit causality and no blame is directly mounted against Edward III. "Gaunt is here clear that the country he loves, the England that is like a moated manor house, has been destroyed by Richard" (Nuttall 2009, 187).¹

Downward counterfactuals, which set a state of affairs worse than the actual one, are very rare in Shakespeare. In *1 Henry VI*, immediately after the French discovered the dead Talbot, they contemplate his courage. Charles makes a very significant remark: "Had York and Somerset brought rescue in, / We should have found a bloody day of this" (4.7.33-4). On the one hand, this expresses a French modesty in front of Talbot's colossal power, based on their recognition of Talbot's full potential as winner of battles. On the other hand, there is a causal relation implied by the counterfactual statement: the reason behind Talbot's defeat is not the French prowess, but the irresponsible acts and negligence of the English lords, York and Somerset, who refrained from sending support to Talbot. Even if by 'bloody day' Charles does not imply a wholesale defeat, it still suggests that, if rescue came in, the French victory would not have been so easily won. Whatever the reason, however, this statement marks a feeling of relief and satisfaction that events could have turned out worse than they did.

The paucity of downward counterfactuals in Shakespeare goes in line with the findings of psychological research. Psychologists state that people tend to

imagine outcomes that are better than the real ones, and negative outcomes are found to constitute the main impulse to constructing counterfactuals (Olson, Roese and Deibert 1996, 297). Psychologists have attempted to give some explanation to this tendency. Mandel (2005, 20), for example, holds that counterfactuals usually concentrate on prevention strategies and so focus on human error, the result being the generation of more upward counterfactuals than downward ones. Imagining a better state is more favourable than imagining a worse one. "We are happy to imagine a better world, but less enthused by its deterioration" (Scalmer 2006, 6). It seems that people are more concerned about the failure to fulfil one's potential and their lost opportunities than about priding one's self with their achievements. Moreover, it has been shown that upward counterfactuals enhance learning opportunities for those who construct them, while downward counterfactuals always function as a 'wake-up' alarm (Segura and Morris 2005). Psychologists differ as to whether the regret which results from an upward counterfactual is more commonly associated with past actions (Byrne 2005, 44) or with past inaction (Mandel, Hilton and Catellani 2005, 6). As shown from the above examples and the ones below, Shakespeare's characters tend to feel regret more for inactions than for actions. This is especially clear from the *Richard II* examples and those from *Henry VI* to be detailed below. As far as the pedagogical value of counterfactuals is concerned, it is mainly at work with self-focused counterfactuals, when characters are contemplating their own actions and inactions. However, most examples so far and below show that they are externally-focused in the sense that characters tend to contemplate the actions and inactions of other characters. One pedagogically functional counterfactual is that of cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII* mentioned above.

It is to be noted, however, that the registers of 'better' and 'worse' employed in counterfactual comparisons are perspectival, in the sense that what some characters may consider good, another may regard as bad. Thus, characters structure their counterfactuals according to their subjective and prejudiced value systems. In *As You Like It*, when Orlando defeats Charles in boxing, Duke Fredrick is first pleased by the achievement of this young man, whom he does not know. But once Orlando tells him of his descent, that he is the son of Sir Rowland de Boys, Fredrick gets exasperated:

I would thou hadst been son to some man else.
The world esteemed thy father honourable,
But I did find him still mine enemy.
Thou shouldst have better pleased me with this deed
Hadst thou descended from another house.
But fare thee well, thou art a gallant youth.
I would thou hadst told me of another father. (1.2.190-6; emphasis added)

The counterfactual antecedent, "*Hadst thou descended from another house,*" is definitely biased since Fredrick himself admits that this is one of the best houses in his dukedom: "*The world esteemed thy father honourable,*" and so his judgement is singled as abnormal since it is contrary to what the whole 'world' would consider otherwise. Orlando already possesses the honourable potential, regardless of whether Ferdinand is pleased or not. Fredrick's forming of this counterfactual as an upward one shows his personal prejudice against Orlando.

Sometimes, the value-judgement that is integral to downward and upward counterfactuals is blurred or overshadowed on behalf of other functions for these statements. For example, in *Hamlet*, when Gertrude tells Claudius of Hamlet's killing of Polonius, Claudius exclaims: "O heavy deed!/It had been so with us had we been there" (4.1.12-3). Claudius is contemplating a counterfactual state of affairs in which he himself, instead of Polonius, was hiding behind the curtain. The consequent is that he would have been killed, just as Polonius was. However, the kind of value-laden comparison in this counterfactual (if Claudius is making such a comparison at all!) is ambiguous. From the rest of his speech it is made clear that Claudius is not making a point of his luck at not being there, nor is he comparing himself to or considering his fortune better than the unlucky Polonius. Rather he is making a point about Hamlet; Claudius claims that he recognizes a murderous potential in Hamlet that can infect almost everybody: "His liberty is full of threats to all- / To you yourself, to us, to everyone" (4.1.13-14). This is more like a semifactual and his point is something like: "Whoever was there, Hamlet would have killed him or her."

At other times, this value-judgement is completely silenced and left to the spectator to make. One example of the vagueness of the value judgement of counterfactuals is the surveyor's narration of the disloyalty of the Duke of Buckingham to the king in *Henry VIII*. The surveyor narrates a counterfactual statement that Buckingham is said to have uttered: "That had the king in his last sickness failed, / The Cardinal's and Sir Thomas Lovell's heads / Should have

gone off" (1.2.185-7). The ambiguity of whether the comparison is upward or downward stems from the fact that it is (reported as) Buckingham's speech narrated by the surveyor in the presence of the king and the cardinal. From Buckingham's point of view, it is an upward counterfactual, improving on the factual state; but from the point of view of the king and the cardinal (and the surveyor), it is a downward counterfactual, worsening the actual state of affairs. And the question of which comparison is being made is left to the spectator to determine. This prejudiced and even ambiguous use of counterfactuals refers us to a main point: as fact and factual statement are liable to ideological manipulations, so are counterfactuals. And as a fact is only a perspective, so is the counterfact. This also points to the potentialist aspects of reality and its susceptibility to contrasting interpretations and manipulations. This use of counterfactuals is also enabled by the fact that the effect of a counterfactual is listener-specific because "the very same counterfactual can engender dramatically different affective reactions" (Markman and McMullen 2005, 77).

Another distinction has been drawn between behavioural and characterological counterfactuals. In the former, the changes in the antecedent are related to the actions and doings of a character, but in the latter they concern his/her personality traits (Dannenberg, 2008, 120). However, as the discussion so far about Shakespeare's counterfactuals has shown, the borderline between these two areas – actions and personality – are always blurred. In the counterfactuals mentioned above, it is not clear whether the blame is cast on the personality of the target character or on some specific actions he/she did, and it is not clear in the first place whether personality traits and actions can be profitably separated in Shakespeare.

These examples have shown how counterfactuals, although they are imaginary scenarios, can shed light on how characters are thinking, on how they assess the results of their and others' actions and how they respond to these outcomes. Characters use these purely possible events in order better to appreciate the significance of the actual actions they went through. They also determine their response – positive or negative – as well as their stance towards and evaluation of the actions of other characters. In the next sections more examples will be given which also attest to the crucial psychological revelations that counterfactuals can afford.

The Historical Dimension

The second dimension of counterfactual thinking in Shakespeare's plays is the historical dimension, and it has to do mainly with the use of counterfactuals in contexts of political factionalism and dissent. Counterfactuals used to contemplate turning points and historical events always serve political ends. Counterfactuals are heavily used in discussions about history and historical events. For example, it is an observed fact that military history is one of the most fertile areas of investigation of counterfactuals in general and counterfactual history in particular (Cowley 2005, xvi; Scalmer 2006, 7). Like individuals, nations are also concerned of measuring their actual achievements against their potential capabilities. Here we are mainly dealing with Shakespeare's history plays, where characters make use of counterfactuals to assign causes of political events to certain figures. This is mostly used to lay blame on certain leading figures, attributing to them the causes of national and military failures. This use also betrays the ideological biases and prejudice based on political positioning of different users of counterfactuals. Below I shall trace the development of the use of counterfactual in historical analysis and then turn to look into this phenomenon in Shakespeare's plays.

Generally, there are two main genres which explore counterfactual scenarios in history: counterfactual history and counterfactual historical fiction. Counterfactual history is a mode of historical writing which explores not the actual past but the potential courses which history could have taken had certain turning points been mutated. It is a revisionist effort to examine alternative possibilities in historical situations. Historians have tried to speculate about what the history of the West would be if certain crucial moments in its history were undone. Attempts have been made, for example, to speculate how the West would have been had the Persians won the battle at Salamis, had Jesus never been crucified, had England remained a Catholic country, and had the history of technology been different (Telock, Lebow and Parker 2006). In an earlier collection of essays of the same genre, contributors have speculated about what might have happened had Hitler won World War II, had Charles I avoided the English civil war, and so on. (Ferguson 1997).² The second genre is counterfactual fiction which has thrived especially in the postmodern era.

Fictions depicting counterfactual histories began to appear in the nineteenth century, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's "P.'s Correspondence" (1845) or Edward Everett Hale's "Hands Off" (1881). However, it was never established as a separate genre until the mid-twentieth century (Dannenberg 2008, 205; Dolezel 2010, 105). Famous texts include Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* (1953), Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle* (1962), Kingsley Amis's *The Alteration* (1976), Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992), John Whitbourn's *A Dangerous Energy* (1993). It is interesting that the turning points that are made the focus in both genres are relatively similar: the English Reformation, World War II, the American civil war, and so on.

Counterfactual history and the fiction of counterfactual or alternate history belong to two different disciplines: history and fiction, respectively. However, they are so affiliated that many would consider them one and the same thing. This is due to the fact that counterfactual history has not yet established itself as a respectable branch of historical scholarship; many professional and academic historians have shown scepticism and hostility toward counterfactual history, which to them is no more than an imaginative game. In their view, counterfactual questions are simply not worth asking. Counterfactual history is more welcome among literary critics and fiction writers than it is among historians (Ferguson 1997, 8). Lubomir Dolezel investigates the ontological and linguistic status of counterfactual history, as falling midway between history and fiction. As far as the ontological status of counterfactual history is concerned, Dolezel states that "*All worlds of counterfactual history, whether conducted by historians or by fiction makers, whether their function is cognitive or aesthetic, are semantically fictional*" (2010, 122; emphasis in original). Accordingly, the linguistic status of counterfactual statements is similar to that of fictional statements in general. More specifically, instances of counterfactual arguments in these two genres have been found analogous to experiments in science fiction and Hollywood film, which "are not academically respectable" (Ferguson 1997, 3). However, at least two differences can be discerned between science fiction and counterfactual fiction. The first has to do with the relative distance from the actual world: counterfactual fiction takes the actual world as its starting point and so refers to many actual events, but science fiction departs largely from it. The second is that science fiction usually reconfigures the future while

fiction of counterfactual history revisits the past in order to modify it and ends up with a different present (see Dolezel 2010, 106-7).

It must have been clear, from the examples of counterfactual statements in Shakespeare cited so far, that most of these statements are taken from the History plays in comparison to the comedies and even tragedies. And as Shakespeare's histories are mainly dealing with hectic periods with the Wars of the Roses lasting very long, then they are unsurprisingly a fertile ground for the use of counterfactuals. If we combine this with the fact that in the Renaissance, history was almost inseparable from politics (Hattaway 2002, 15), we achieve insight into the political significance of counterfactuals. So, our exploration of the political dimension of counterfactuals in Shakespeare will be devoted to the history plays. However, in no sense can Shakespeare's plays be considered as counterfactual historical fictions, since they do not construct a counterfactual historical reality that 'differs substantially from the actual state of affairs'. Rather, they employ some scattered instances of counterfactual thinking conducted by characters to serve certain functions to be specified later in more detail.

Examples of counterfactual thinking, however, are not distributed equally over Shakespeare's histories: they abound in some plays and are relatively rare in others. Generally, this can be attributed to the idea (or fact), often cited as an accusation against the use of counterfactual historical thinking: that counterfactual thinking is more common in certain nations at certain times than others. More specifically, counterfactual history is more prevalent with unfortunate groups who happen to lose in the incessant conflict of history. (In *King Lear*, for example, counterfactuals are made by Lear, Kent, Fool, and rarely by any of the other camp.) According to Edward Hallet Carr, one of the fiercest opponents to counterfactual history, it is a game for the losers: in unfortunate groups, "theories that stress the role of chance or accident in history will be found to prevail" (quoted in Ferguson 1997, 5). Accordingly, history is for the winners, but counterfactual history (if history it can be called) is for the losers. These unfortunate groups will thus insist that their identity is constituted by their potential capability as by their actual achievements. Interestingly, counterfactual thinking is more frequently conducted in Shakespeare's three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard II* than in any other history play. In the light of the above argument, this may be explained by the fact that these plays, more than

other histories, depict the plight of a nation torn with civil-war in all its misery and wretchedness. And it is in these plays that monarchs get deposed and then killed. Nor is it surprising that most of the counterfactuals used in these plays are upward ones, betraying the characters' aspiration to get away from or to do better in their conflict-ridden situation. Downward counterfactuals are exceptionally rare, and are only used by the winners, as in the example of Charles in *1 Henry VI* cited above.

The utility of using counterfactuals in discussions about history lies in their capacity to explain causation. Specifically, proponents of counterfactual history have adhered to its inevitability in ascribing causal relations in any historical survey, and accordingly, of doing counterfactual historical thinking. According to Tetlock and Parker, "(L)ike it or not, we are all counterfactual historians. There is absolutely no logical way to make causal inferences without simultaneously making assumptions about how events would have unfolded if the causal factors we consider crucial had taken on different forms" (2006,15). In what follows we will see how characters make use of counterfactual thought experiments in order to explore the potential of different players and to attribute causes to certain events, which enables them to cast blame on certain characters rather than others.

In Shakespeare's history plays, characters often have recourse to counterfactuals to determine causal relations. For example, in his narration of how Talbot was captured by the French, the messenger in *1 Henry VI* tells the English lords: "Here had the conquest fully been sealed up,/ If Sir John Fastolf had not played the coward" (1.1.130-1). The messenger is here implying that, all other factors apart, the main cause behind the English loss of this battle is the treason committed by Sir John Fastolf due to his cowardice.³ The counterfactual is also making a point about Talbot and the English army: despite its loss, the messenger points to the potential heroism of the English army, in the sense that their defeat is, at its worst, a mere contingency. The counterfactual, then, sheds light on how certain characters explain given events and actions. On the French side, while later in that play the French are discussing their defeat and loss of Orleans to Talbot, Charles accuses Joan of causing this defeat, which invites her rational reasoning: "Or will you blame and lay the fault on me?— / Improvident soldiers, had your watch been good, / This

sudden mischief never could have fall'n" (2.1.58-60). Charles then accuses Alencon, and so the latter makes a similar answer: "Had all your quarters been as safely kept/As that whereof I had the government, / We had not been thus shamefully surprised" (64-6). Both Joan and Alencon are using counterfactuals to identify the real cause behind the French defeat. Joan attributes it to the soldiers not being good, and Alencon to the other quarters not being safely guarded as his quarter was. It should be noticed, moreover, that all these are upward counterfactuals voiced by the losers on the field of history. The only downward, modest counterfactual is the one cited above of Charles referring to the dead Talbot: "Had York and Somerset brought rescue in,/We should have found a bloody day of this" (4.7.33-4).

Military action outside the histories is also a fertile ground for the generation of counterfactual statements. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, after the battle of Actium Camidius appears to lay the blame of the defeat on his general Mark Antony: "Had our general / Been what he knew himself, it had gone well" (3.10.25-6). The significance of this counterfactual is its scope since it casts all the blame on the one factor of Antony's fluctuating character – that under Cleopatra's spell, he had not been what he knew himself. (Ironically, Camidius is giving voice to the 'Cleopatra's nose' theory later formulated by Blaise Pascal.) At the same time, however, the counterfactual refers to the military potential of Antony which is shrouded by his affection for Cleopatra. Later when Antony's army makes a temporary victory, Scarus revisits the first battle, but this time distributing the blame, making all the army, not Antony alone, have their share of it: "Had we done so at first, we had droven them home / With clouts about their heads"(4.8.1-3)⁴.

However, not all counterfactuals are as direct as the messenger's statement. In the example cited above of John of Gaunt's chiding of Richard II, the causal relation is explicitly stated: (*how his son's son should destroy his sons*). But the brunt of the blame in the counterfactual statement (*Had thy grandsire*) cannot be ascribed to Edward III, given the shiny image constructed to him throughout the play, and so all the blame returns to be dropped on Richard himself. A clearer instance of how characters conceive of the events going on around them and how they ascribe responsibility to different agents is

given also in *Richard II*, in the speech of the gardener (cited at the beginning of this Chapter):

O, what pity is it
That he had not so trimmed and dressed his land
As we this garden! We at time of year
Do wound the bark, the skin of our fruit trees,
Lest, being over-proud in sap and blood,
With too much riches it confound itself.
*Had he done so to great and growing men,
They might have lived to bear, and he to taste,
Their fruits of duty.* Superfluous branches
We lop away, that bearing boughs may live.
*Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,
Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down.* (3.4.56-67; emphasis added)

The gardener ascribes the decline of Richard to his own action; the counterfactuals in these lines imply that Richard's policies are both a sufficient and necessary cause for his downfall. He fell down because he did not oppress the power of growing men.⁵ Although he is speaking retrospectively, the scene shows that "The gardener is a better judge of men than Richard is" (Bach 2003, 239). And in the contexts of the counterfactuals of both Gaunt and the gardener, the misfortunes of England are equally ascribed to the king himself, which is voiced by the many epithets given to England in both speeches; Gaunt is just speaking of it as: "This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England, / This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,"(2.1.50-1) and the gardener and his men are also discussing the wretched conditions of "our sea-walled garden, the whole land" (3.4.44).⁶

From the political point of view, the last two examples from *Richard II* are significant since they cast the blame of political degeneration on the head of the state, the king himself. However, they differ regarding the point at which they think the course of action could still have been changed. This difference is due to the different perspectives of the two characters in placing the turning points, which can be defined as "those decision nodes where it would have been relatively easy to move onto a different path" and after which that movement becomes increasingly difficult (Goertz and Levy 2007, 29). While Gaunt speaks about the turning point as that of the very crowning of Richard, the gardener considers it to be the moment where Richard began to let other lords get stronger than himself. These political overtones might have had certain implications for the original audience of *Richard II* with regard to the figure of

Elizabeth I. These implications, and the partial censorship they ensued, partly explain the force of the political import of counterfactuals.

By the same token, it is interesting that counterfactuals about the king himself in the *Henry VI* plays are delayed to the third part, when civil dissention begins to seem inevitable. At the beginning of *3 Henry VI*, the king is shocked by seeing York assuming his place, but he is still asking Westmoreland to be patient. Henry's behaviour sparks the harsh reproach from Clifford: "Patience is for poltroons, such as he [*indicating YORK*]. / He durst not sit there had your father lived" (1.1.62-3). This speech is both an encomium for Henry V (which is a general motif in the three parts of *Henry VI*) and a reproach for Henry VI. According to Clifford, the deterioration of the state, which culminates in York assuming the position of the king, is attributable to Henry's character alone: only Henry is to be blamed for this situation. York did not dare to do that if Henry V ruled, but he dares do it since it is now Henry VI who is ruling. At the same time, it points to the rebellious potential in York, which only needed an opportunity to be realized. It is interesting that it is again Clifford, now lethally wounded in the battle of Towton, who makes a similar counterfactual in his last soliloquy:

And, Henry, hadst thou swayed as kings should do,
Or as thy father and his father did,
Giving no ground unto the house of York,
They never then had sprung like summer flies;
I and ten thousand in this luckless realm
Had left no mourning widows for our death;
And thou this day hadst kept thy chair in peace. (2.6.14-20)

As this extended counterfactual statement would imply, the ascendance of the house of York, the killing of men and the widowing of women as well as the king's dethronement could all have been avoided if Henry behaved as a king. Consequently, he is the cause behind all these plights that befall his nation. One of Henry's most loyal supporters, Clifford here is bitterly ascribing his own plight and that of the whole nation to Henry VI. Although that plight has been caused by the House of York, yet the causational agency attributed to Henry is preventive: it means that no matter how vicious the Yorkists are, they could have been prevented as was done by Henry IV and Henry V. What Clifford's counterfactuals then imply is that "Shakespeare himself was keenly aware of the fact that the War of the Roses could have been averted had it not been for the King's incompetence" (Parvini 2012, 110).

Clifford's point is later made by Queen Margaret as she listens to her son's scolding Richard of Gloucester, ordering him to speak as a subject does to his master. Sparked by Prince Edward's speech, Margaret and Gloucester make this shared counterfactual:

QUEEN MARGARET. Ah, that thy father had been so resolved.

GLOUCESTER. That you might still have worn the petticoat
And ne'er have stolen the breech from Lancaster. (5.5.22-4)

Margaret is also here ascribing the wretchedness of her situation to Henry's lack of resolve. Ironically, while Clifford wished that Henry had acted like his father and grandfather, Margaret wishes that he had acted like his own son. Both Clifford and Margaret cast the blame on Henry himself. The last example can also be read as two counterfactuals which share the antecedent but diverge in the consequent. The antecedent is expressed in Margaret's statement, but she did not complete the counterfactual since Richard of Gloucester interrupts her and suggests another consequent. According to Margaret's counterfactual, if Henry was so resolved, the Yorkist rebellion would now have been crushed. But according to Richard's counterfactual, if Henry was so resolved, Margaret would have had little influence on Henry who would have accepted to hand kingship over to the Yorkists after his death. In both scenarios, the civil dissent would have been avoided although with different gains for the Houses of York and Lancaster.

In these counterfactual statements the nuances of causal attribution are very informative in terms of both who is being blamed for what. As far as the former is concerned, the blame is mainly cast on the monarch himself, as with Richard II and Henry VI. However, in the *Henry VI* plays, sometimes the blame is also shared by Margaret. This seems to be the attitude of York's sons when they meet the King, the Queen and others before York in 3 *Henry VI*. As in his previous counterfactual, Richard of Gloucester says that the house of York would not have revolted were it not for Margaret dominating the King and ruling instead of him: "Hadst thou been meek, our title still have slept, / And we, in pity of the gentle King, / Had slipped our claim until another age"(2.2.160-2). It is not, of course, completely clear that Richard is honest about 'slipping their claim' and letting Henry rule peacefully if it were not for Margaret to interfere. On another occasion, Edward makes the same point, though more equivocally. Reproaching Margaret, he pins the blame on Henry's marriage of her: "And had

he matched according to his state, / He might have kept that glory to this day” (2.2.152-3). In this speech it is not clear whether he is blaming Margaret or Henry’s decision or that the blame is joint between them. Together with Richard of Gloucester’s counterfactual above, we can discern a general tendency by the Yorkists to direct the blame to Margaret than to King Henry VI himself. As for what is being blamed, it is difficult to determine in these examples whether these are behavioural or characterological counterfactuals, whether the personality of the king or some of his actions (or inactions) are the real reason behind these miseries. Needless to say, these counterfactuals about Henry are more about inaction than about action: Henry here is being blamed for not having acted the way he should or not having acted at all to prevent these miseries.

The advantages of the use of counterfactual historical reasoning notwithstanding, it can also be subject to serious abuse. Counterfactual arguments run the risk of being ideologically biased and self-serving. For, among these limitless possibilities, the counterfactualizing agent may choose to stress only those that promote his or her claims, no matter how solid they are: “counterfactual arguments . . . often march in lockstep with the ideological agenda of the investigator” (Tetlock and Parker 2006, 31). In sum, counterfactuals may carry not only the rational reasoning of the investigator, but also his or her biases, prejudices and self-interests.

As examples of ideologically-biased counterfactuals we can look into the beginning of *1Henry VI* where, lamenting the death of Henry V, Gloucester implicitly mounts a hostile remark against the Bishop of Winchester: “Had not churchmen prayed, / His thread of life had not so soon decayed”(1.1.33-4). Gloucester’s remark is paradoxical since he ascribes to the Churchmen devilish and godly features: devilish, since their prayers caused the death of this great king; and godly since their prayers are so immediately heard in Heaven as to cause the death of Henry V (Heims 2010, 97). Anyway, what the statement means is that the main cause behind the death of the king was the Churchmen. The absurdity of this counterfactual is that there is no way to test its validity. The only function it serves is to express Gloucester’s prejudice against Winchester, due to their cut-throat competition over the control on the young king, and so the phrase is not intended by Shakespeare to be taken at all seriously. It might

have a direct meaning if we (following the editors of the *Norton Shakespeare*) understand it as a pun on 'prey', which implies that Winchester really conspired against the dead King. Another self-serving counterfactual in *2 Henry VI* is made by Somerset and Queen Margaret against York. Hearing the news of the Irish rebellion, York suggests that a lord other than Somerset be sent there to put it down. This invites a counterfactually oriented reply from Somerset and Queen Margaret:

YORK. That Somerset be sent as regent thither.

'Tis meet that lucky ruler be employed—
Witness the fortune he hath had in France.

SOMERSET. If York, with all his far-fet policy,
Had been the regent there instead of me,
He never would have stayed in France so long.

QUEEN MARGARET. Thy fortune, York, hadst thou been regent there,
Might happily have proved far worse than his. (3.1.290-5, 305-6)

In order to refute York's disparaging statement about Somerset, Somerset and the Queen, politically camped together against York, form downward counterfactuals to imply that things could have turned out worse than they did. Downward counterfactuals, as we have shown above, are used by the lucky and victorious camp. The implication made here by Somerset and Margaret is significant: although Somerset's fortunes in France may be bad, still they are not the worst there is. The worst could still have happened had York been there. So York's disapproval of Somerset has been turned against York himself, and accordingly what Somerset did is now considered good – and even victorious - in comparison to what York might have done had he been in France instead. Consequently, thanks to these counterfactuals, Somerset's defeat can be viewed as victory. The political prejudice latent in this counterfactual is very evident: how could York have done worse than losing the French cities? York, on the other hand, is very aware of this self-serving quality of these counterfactuals, which is why he immediately and forcibly answers:

York. What, worse than nought? Nay, then, a shame take all! (307)

It seems that Margaret is well-versed in using baseless, self-serving counterfactuals. When the king is told that the rebels, led by Jack Cade, are now in Southwark and that Cade intends to crown himself in Westminster, Buckingham advises the king to fly away. Margaret's response to this situation is remarkable:

QUEEN MARGARET. Ah, were the Duke of Suffolk now alive
These Kentish rebels would be soon appeased! (4.4.40-1)

This partly decontextualized statement betrays a psychological, rather than a logical and practical need for Margaret. Desperately injured by Suffolk's death, Margaret cannot help contemplate, albeit in vain, what the dead Suffolk, whose affection she frivolously gained, could have done had he been still alive. The way she forms it, as an upward counterfactual, is also ideologically informed, since this way she wants to prove, at least to herself, that with the presence of Suffolk things would be better than they are now without him. Better, that is, even to the king himself and to the state. The counterfactual, moreover, implies a potential which Suffolk possesses to prevent and crush any rebellion. The egocentric quality of Margaret's counterfactual statement is further stressed by the fact that it does not evoke any response whatsoever and passes completely unnoticed by the king and the attending lords. After all, the Duke of Suffolk is known less for his valour than for his financial corruption.⁷ All this proves how personal interests, political ideology and other factors will orient which counterfactuals we consider plausible and which are not.

Brian Walsh has rightly observed regarding *1 Henry VI* that "The play's idea of causation is in fact rooted largely in factionalism" (2004, 135). This is especially true with the attribution of causality through counterfactuals in the Henry VI plays. As factionalism is one of the central themes in the whole history cycles, we come to better appreciate the role of causation in these plays. And as counterfactuals were the main causational method, it should be now become clear how vital counterfactuals are in these plays. The psychological and political dimensions of counterfactuals are hardly separable. The political uses of counterfactuals also afford profound insights into the psychology of characters through scrutinizing the choices they have made. The sense of regret that characters voice in these instances betrays their intolerance of the faulty choices that have been made and show how gloomy the world seems to them, triggering these counterfactualizing faculties. In the last part of this Chapter, we will discuss the literary significance of these uses. Here suffice it to say that these counterfactuals enhance the coherence of the literary worlds of these texts. Even the self-serving, ideologically-informed counterfactuals, to which reference has already been made, do serve to illuminate the personality

of the characters who construct them, betraying their crises, pitfalls, and concerns.

The Philosophical Dimension

The third dimension in the study of counterfactuals has to do with their philosophical value. The counterfactuals in Shakespeare's plays enhance the sense of the rational attribution of causality and insistence on human agency and free will. The sheer sense of inherent possibility in counterfactuals highlights the multiple choices and the alternatives available in every juncture of events. This, in turn, shatters the sense of determinism and its implication of the only one route that events should have taken. Providential claims as well as prophecies are often discredited in Shakespeare and contradicted by the real actions of the plays. In discrediting the providential logic, Shakespeare has contributed to the new spirit emerging in his time towards more rational explanations of causality in historical and human happenings in general.

Philosophically speaking, to conduct counterfactual thinking is, in one way, to grant the contingency of history and to refuse the deterministic views of history according to which there is only one way the course of history should move, and in no way can that course be changed. According to David Lewis, in a world where deterministic laws prevail, it needs a miracle to think in a counterfactual way (1973, 75). It is interesting that many historians who attack counterfactual history have a deterministic view of historical necessity. One such harsh attack on historical counterfactuals is mounted by Benedetto Croce: "Historical necessity has to be affirmed and continually reaffirmed in order to exclude from history the 'conditional' which has no rightful place there . . . What is forbidden is . . . the anti-historical and illogical 'if'" (quoted in Ferguson 1997, 6). Ferguson discerns three different modes of deterministic thinking, religious, materialist and idealist, which differ in their explanation of the origin of determinism. However, "All three schools of thought regard 'what if' questions as fundamentally inadmissible" (ibid.,5).

Thus, according to this survey, counterfactuality and determinism are irreconcilable. Proponents of this view of the contingency of human history would hold that "counterfactual thinking provides strong arguments against

historical determinism.” (Dolezel 2010,118). However, some scholars think that the counterfactual and the deterministic modes of thinking are to some extent reconcilable in theory and practice. Tetlock and Parker think that even deterministically oriented historians “often invoke ‘revisionary’ counterfactuals that attenuate rather than amplify deviations from reality.” To these historians even in counterfactual situations “history would have been but briefly detailed and quickly put back on track by the intercession by equilibrium-restoring causal forces” (2006, 19).

In early modern England, deterministic thinking was mainly spelled out through Providential arguments that tended to ascribe important historical events to divine intervention. It is still a matter of much debate regarding the extent to which Providential views of history were dominant at that period. It has been pointed out that the Providential bent of the Middle Ages was losing its grip on the thinking of the period on behalf of modern ideas of history popularized through the works of Niccolò Machiavelli amongst others. Phyllis Rackin (1991) shows that the medieval Providential historical view was giving way to the Machiavellian historical methods which advanced a more realistic, cause-and-effect based interpretation of historical events in a world where the hand of God is either absent or invisible. This paved the way to the emergence of the modern view of the historical event in which contingency is an integral component. According to Paul Ricoeur’s definition, "An event is what could have been done differently" (1984, 97). I shall not go full length into these debates here, but will contend that the frequent use of counterfactuals at that period by historians shows a growing conviction of a causal rather than a Providential interpretation of events. They might tend at times to adopt a providential explanation of some events, but for the most part historians sought realistic explanations for the majority of other events.

Machiavelli himself makes frequent use of counterfactuals to express his conviction of the contingency of the historical events he is investigating. In Chapter XXV of *The Prince*, Machiavelli says of Fortune that it “shows her power where there is no well-ordered virtue” ([1513] 2005, 84). He applies that to Italy which, if defended like its neighbours, would not have been invaded and so destroyed by Fortune. Later in the same Chapter he talks about Pope Julius the Second’s expedition against Spain and the Venetians: “For if he had waited

until he could leave Rome with agreements settled and everything in order, as any other pontiff would have done, he would never have succeeded”(ibid., 86). So although the person in question here is a Pope, his success is never attributed to a divine intervention on his side, but rather to consequences for certain decisions he chose to make under the right conditions. In England, historians occasionally made recourse to counterfactuals to explain historical events. Writing about the miseries that befell Queen Margaret, Edward Hall casts the blame on her because, among other things, she helped in the murder of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, the king’s wisest and most faithful advisor: “For surely he [Gloucester] being alive and having the moderation and governance of the commonwealth, King Henry had never wavered in so many hazards and jeopardies of his life as he did” (1809, 298). Hall here argues that the fate of King Henry VI (and with him Margaret) would have been quite different had Gloucester lived longer.

In Shakespeare, characters sometimes voice deterministic views. However, these views are often made on the basis of preconceived ideology rather than on sheer conviction of determinism. Even if these Providentialist pronouncements express a conviction, they will soon be contradicted by the events in the plays. As has already been shown, the causal view of events is always dominant in the plays. Outcomes are realistically attributed to real causes, mostly to deeds of characters. One major method of ascribing causation in the plays has been the use of counterfactuals. With counterfactuals emphasis is laid more on the individual agents and less on general conditions, let alone on divine intervention. So, our investigation of counterfactuals so far should have illuminated the humanistic bent usually attributed to Shakespearean drama (see Holderness, Potter and Turner 1988, 2; Hattaway 2002, 16; Parvini 2012, 99).

Below I shall trace the deterministic voices in the plays and show they are counterbalanced by the causational insight mainly based on counterfactuals. In Shakespeare’s plays determinism may be said to take two forms: first, the role ascribed by characters to divine interventions in the action and, second, the prophecies voiced by characters regarding the course the action will take in the future. Both of these phenomena are not uncommon in the history plays.

As far as Divine Providence is concerned, in *2 Henry VI*, King Henry always relies heavily on God in determining his fate and that of his nation. Told by Somerset that he is now bereft of all his territories in France, he replies: "Cold news, Lord Somerset; but God's will be done" (3.1.86). In *Richard III*, Margaret contemplates the performative power of curses and how they might be happily granted by Heaven:

Did York's dread curse prevail so much with heaven
That Henry's death, my lovely Edward's death,
Their kingdom's loss, my woeful banishment,
Should all but answer for that peevish brat? (1.3.188-91)

Later in the play, when he is to fight Richard III in the final battle, Richmond also has recourse to God to achieve victory: "God and our good cause fight upon our side" (5.5.194). In *Richard II*, the Bishop of Carlisle assures the king of God's support to him, no matter what happens: "Fear not, my lord. That power that made you king / Hath power to keep you king in spite of all" (3.2.27-8). Henry V also tends to ascribe all success he achieves to God alone: "But this lies all within the will of God, / To whom I do appeal" (1.2.289-90). Later when he listens to the casualties report after his celebrated victory in France, he vehemently says: "O God, thy arm was here, / And not to us, but to thy arm alone / Ascribe we all" (4.8.100-2). So, in these examples, characters give expression to the idea that the course of history moves in the one way dictated by God, and could not have moved otherwise. Consequently, in the world determined by divine providence any mode of counterfactual thinking is not permissible.

Prophecies and foretelling also advance a deterministic stance when they are claimed to be of a divine origin because they imply that the fate of persons and nations is determined in advance and will not change no matter what they do. Prophecies also abound in these plays. For example, while on his deathbed, John of Gaunt makes a prophecy of the future of King Richard II: "Methinks I am a prophet new-inspired / And thus, expiring, do foretell of him. / His rash, fierce blaze of riot cannot last" (2.1.31-3). Later in the play, the Bishop of Carlisle, irked with the dethronement of the king, also prophesizes devastation and vengeance to befall the kingdom: "And if you crown him, let me prophesy / The blood of English shall manure the ground, / And future ages groan for this foul act" (4.1.127-9). In *2 Henry VI*, the Duke of Gloucester shows his anger about

the bargain whereby Henry sacrificed some French cities to get married to Margaret, and anticipates the result: "Lordings, farewell, and say when I am gone, / I prophesied France will be lost ere long" (1.1.142-3). In *1 Henry VI*, sadly contemplating the growing enmity between York and Somerset and other lords, the Duke of Exeter recalls to mind a certain prophecy about the fate of the young king, that he sees applicable now:

And now I fear that fatal prophecy
Which, in the time of Henry named the Fifth,
Was in the mouth of every sucking babe:
That 'Henry born at Monmouth should win all
And Henry born at Windsor should lose all'— (3.1.199-203)

King Henry VI, now in despair to live out his own reign, seems to put his hope in the young Henry, earl of Richmond, about whom he voices a famous prophecy:

Come hither, England's hope.
[King Henry] *lays his hand on* [Richmond's] *head*
If secret powers
Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
(*3 Henry VI*: 4.7.68-70)

So famous was this prophecy that, before the battle at Bosworth, Richard III is depicted contemplating its credibility and significance:

I remember me, Henry the Sixth
Did prophesy that Richmond should be king,
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
A king . . . perhaps . . . perhaps. (*Richard III*: 4.2.98-101)

When verified, as is always the case in these examples⁸, prophecies would also block the possibility of counterfactual thinking, just as Divine Providence would do. For if there is one way that the action should take (that preordained by Providence and expressed in the prophecy), then it would be pointless to contemplate what could have happened had they moved otherwise. So, how does the contingency of history indicated by the counterfactuals cited above fit into this deterministic view?

To answer this question, we have to differentiate between divine providence and prophecies, for each begs a different treatment. As far as Providence is concerned, we can say that all these attributions to the divine providence in the plays are voiced by characters, and in no way can be assuredly said to express the opinion of Shakespeare himself. Moreover, they are mounted for some dramatic purposes and are far from anchoring a

philosophical view to be endorsed in these plays. For example, Richard II's reliance on the role of angels to fight by his side is soon falsified (even ridiculed) by the consequent events of the play. Immediately after he utters these words, Salisbury comes to tell him that his Welsh soldiers have fled away. According to Ivo Kamps, Richard fails to recognize that the Divine Right theory is an ideology and not knowledge (1997, 20-1). As for most of the other providential claims, they are better ascribed to the characters uttering them than to Shakespeare. As Henry A. Kelly points out, "It seems best, therefore, to regard opinions concerning the providential outcome of solitary events as characterizing only the sentiments of the speakers at the time in which they speak them, and not Shakespeare's own view"(1970, 272). The only exception he admits is Shakespeare's clear ascription of Divine support for Henry of Richmond in his war with Richard III (ibid., 292-5). Moreover, even King Henry VI does equally "attribute to chance, fortune and the will of God" (Lull 2002, 95). And the aspect of setter-up and putter-down of kings is attributed more to Warwick than God in *3Henry VI* by Margaret (3.3.157) and by Warwick himself (3.3.263-4; 5.1.34). Further, Shakespeare's approach in the description of wars is very realistic in setting causes for defeat and victory. Shakespeare is very careful to establish the logical relations of cause and effect in the movement of the action in his histories, leaving little room for miracles (Quinn 1959, 47).⁹

Thus, in no way can the providential will be considered as the moving force of the action. When mentioned, the providential theme is manipulated only to achieve some dramatic and rhetorical effects. Even more; having surveyed many examples where reference to Providence is made in Shakespeare, Robin Headlam Wells concludes that "From the variety of ways in which providence is referred to in the histories and tragedies, it is clear that Shakespeare is often using it as a dramatic device to satirize credulity"(2009, 147). As a result, the expression of divine intervention does not discredit the validity of counterfactual thinking as voiced in the above examples.

With regard to prophecies, they betray a deterministic view if, on the one hand, they are made as voicing a divine revelation and, on the other hand, if they express a necessary movement of history on the basis of which the prophecy is made. In Shakespeare's histories, however, the origin of the prophecies is far from settled; while Henry VI's prophecy about Richmond may

be attributed to Heaven '*my divine thoughts*', others may not be directly attributable to that divine source. More often than not, these prophecies are based on an inductive survey of human history itself, to anticipate how events will unfold depending on how they have been seen to move in the past. In this sense, while religious determinism is based on divine providence, the determinism implied in the prophecies is based on what Ferguson calls 'material history'. It is based on the assumption that by uncovering the historical 'laws', one can anticipate the future detours of history. For example, the prophecies that abound in *Richard II* can be attributed to predictions based on knowledge of human nature rather than informed by divine omniscient powers. When the Bishop prophesies about the outbreak of civil war if Henry Bolingbroke is crowned king (4.1), he "is not speaking in terms of divine punishment here, but in terms of a human situation – if they raise one house against the other, a terrible division will result"(Kelly 1970, 210).

So, while Shakespeare's sources tend to place these prophecies in divine revelation, he chooses rather to place them on an empirical basis of human action (Wells 2009, 157-9). The clearest expression Shakespeare gives to this kind of historical inductive reasoning is in *2 Henry IV* when Henry IV, in a conversation with Warwick, remembers Richard II's prophecy to Northumberland of how he and Bolingbroke will turn out enemies. Warwick explains to him that Richard's foreknowledge was historical, rather than divine:

WARWICK. There is a history in all men's lives
Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
The which observed, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, who in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
Such things become the hatch and brood of time;
And by the *necessary* form of this
King Richard might create a *perfect* guess
That great Northumberland, then false to him,
Would of that seed grow to a greater falseness,
Which should not find a ground to root upon
Unless on you.

KING HENRY IV. Are these things then *necessities*?
Then let us meet them like *necessities*;
And that same word even now cries out on us: (3.1.75-89; emphasis added)

While Warwick here is denying the divine origin of Richard II's prophecy, yet he is referring to a kind of historical necessity, the view that from the way things

took place in the past we can infer how they are going to unfold in the future. This does presuppose the existence of certain 'necessary' laws according to which the movement of events is programmed. This practice is rooted in the potentialist aspect of reality which allows the movement among similar events to deduce relatively similar conclusions: "similar historical circumstances bear similar historical propensities, that while ontological actualities differ from moment to moment, their potentialities need not" (Solomon 1988, 48). These laws and propensities fully conceived, people can prophesy the future 'perfectly', as Richard foresaw the break between Northumberland and Bolingbroke.¹⁰ So, the sense of 'necessity' voiced in Warwick's account does not rule out the contingency of historical events. Rather it is still attributing it to a very strong cause-and-effect relationship. Although the borderline between determinism and potentiality might be thin, still they are markedly distinct: "potentialities are not determinate in the dialectical sense, but at the same time they are not wholly indeterminate either" (ibid.).

Observations like Warwick's are subject to what psychologists call 'hindsight bias', which "refers to a person's judging a prior outcome as having been more predictable and even inevitable subsequent to learning the outcome" (Sherman and McConnell 1995, 221). Hindsight bias is very significant in the study of history since it denotes a tendency according to which "observers of the past are prone to rely too much on factual frames and to slight, even ignore, counterfactual frames" (Tellock and Parker 2006, 25). Observers working within factual frames ask questions about why a certain event happened, but those working within the counterfactual frame would otherwise ask of other events that had a chance to happen and that could have happened instead, or how what really happened could have been avoided. Hindsight bias implies a factualist position, and its result is "that the outcome appears more retrospectively foreseeable than it was prospectively" (Tellock and Parker 2006, 25). Hindsight bias is then one theoretical difficulty facing the project of thinking about history counterfactually. One problem with the account of the prophecy about the fall of Henry VI and, more significantly, Warwick's and Henry IV's account of Richard II's prophecy, is that they are mainly made retrospectively. Consequently, they may have fallen victim to this bias. Since they look at it as their past, it appears to them as factual. Since they consider the past as the

domain of what really happened, then all events that took place during the past appear now to be necessary and inevitable. These events would look otherwise, however, had these speakers situated themselves in that past, for then things will appear just as possible. According to Michael Scriven, "Inevitability is only in retrospect. . . and the inevitability of determinism is explanatory rather than predictive"(quoted in Ferguson 1997, 71).

This practice based on hindsight bias, which historian Raymond Aaron calls "retrospective illusion of fatality" (quoted in Ricœur 1984, 188), will undoubtedly distort the historical observation since it will make the observer take as necessary what originally is merely possible. The epistemological danger of hindsight has been spotted by many theorists: Tetlock and Belkin call it 'outcome knowledge,' the tendency to perceive the past events more as *ex poste* than *ex ante* and they warn that it "contaminates our understanding of the past"(1996, 15). In the Warwick quote, the distortion of history is more than clear; Warwick speaks about this outcome as 'necessarily' following its premises; and it is because Richard was able to capture this 'necessary' law that his guess was 'perfect'. According to Warwick, things between Bolingbroke and Northumberland could not have turned out differently, and so the former is not accountable for any of its devastating results. (This is the paradox of causation to which we referred earlier, namely that it is based on contingencies but once it is established the cause and effect relationship will seem necessary.) Not surprisingly, this analysis appeals to Henry IV and seems to ease him out of the sense of guilt he has just shown in his narration of the prophecy, which is why he exclaims with relief: "Are these things then *necessities*? / Then let us meet them like *necessities*:" repeating the word 'necessities' twice. To be sure, it was Henry IV who first alluded to 'necessity' in his narration of what happened between Richard and himself: "Though then, God knows, I had no such intent, / But that necessity so bowed the state / That I and greatness were compelled to kiss" (3.1.67-9). An appeal to 'necessity' is a reasonable way to disclaim any responsibility for what has happened, especially if we accept that Bolingbroke was 'compelled' to be king even out of his control.

The last example also shows that, just like counterfactuals, prophecies and deterministic claims can be ideologically informed and politically manipulated. Prophetic and deterministic claims may turn out to be political

tools whereby countless infamous atrocities are committed. Henry IV is here using Warwick's biased account of the 'falseness' of Northumberland to justify his war against the rebels. So not only are these theories not neutral, but they are really destructive. As Ferguson tersely points out,

[W]e begin to see where determinist theories really do play a role in history: when people believe in them and believe themselves to be in their grip. . . . The trouble is that the theories on which he [Man] has generally based his prediction have so often been defective In a different way, belief in determinist theories made all the great conflicts studied here . . . more rather than less likely. Ultimately . . . those who died in these conflicts were the victims of genuinely chaotic and unpredictable events which could have turned out differently. Probably as many people have been killed by the unintended consequences of deterministic prophecies as by their self-fulfilling tendencies. It is nevertheless a striking fact that their killers have so often acted in the name of determinist theories, whether religious, social or racist. (1997, 88)

This account implies that providential and deterministic claims are always spelled out by political authorities to delimit the human inherent potentiality for change and block out the horizon even of the mere possibility of that change. Accordingly, the generation of counterfactuals in the domain of politics can be explained as a defence mechanism employed by people in order to reclaim their potential to change, counter this excessive determinism, and open up the imagination to new alternatives which authorities are reluctant to grant. Sean Scalmer makes this point with reference to the last few decades, when the range of possibilities has been contracted and international politics seemed to move in one unalienable direction. In reaction to that hegemonic ideology, the majority of people "remained committed to the possibility of a different world. The latter grouping has no paradise to proclaim or new order to announce. Their alternative worlds lie within the imagination" (2006, 5). And this imaginary world is given voice, among other things, through counterfactuals. In Shakespeare this is validated by the fact that these deterministic views are virtually uttered by those beneficial from the political status qua, and more often than not by monarchs. Monarchs in Shakespeare are rarely reported to have constructed counterfactuals.¹¹

Even more, some of these consequences are not simply 'unintended', but are shrewdly manoeuvred. A striking example of this is at the beginning of *Richard III*, where Richard of Gloucester, later King Richard III, discloses some of his plans to seize the throne. One of these plans, the famous G-prophecy,

consists in deliberately spreading prophecies about the potential murderer of his brother King Edward IV, duping him into thinking that it is their brother Clarence:

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams
To set my brother Clarence and the King
In deadly hate the one against the other.
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
About a prophecy, which says that 'G'
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be. (1.1.32-40)

Richard shows acute historical awareness, manifested in his understanding of how determinist views inform the actions of those who believe in them. This is coupled with his knowledge of the nature of his brother king Edward IV, namely his susceptibility to prophecies, libels and dreams. It is Edward IV's belief in the necessity of these prophecies that led him to imprison his brother Clarence and then get his murder by Richard facilitated. It is on the basis of that belief that he destroyed his brother and, consequently, himself and even his own children. The bitter irony here is that, even if the prophecy is really true, its reference is far from settled: the letter 'G' is the initial for many names; even if it is the initial of 'George', that name has many referents. And "ironically the false prophecy proves to be true when "G"—not George (Clarence) but himself, Gloucester—comes to murder the young princes" (Farrell 2009, 45-6). So, Edward's conclusion is based on many probabilities that could easily turn out to be invalid. This example thus suggests "that Shakespeare understood prophecy as imaginative behavior: in this instance as the vehicle of violent thoughts and the compulsion to confess" (ibid., 46).

Akin to Richard of Gloucester's political use of prophecies is Eleanor's dream in *2 Henry VI*. Dreams are used as channels whereby prophecies are said to be conveyed, and they are always thought to have a divine source. In an attempt to motivate him to claim the throne for himself, Eleanor claims to her husband, Duke of Gloucester, that she dreamt that she was seated in the Church of Westminster, "Where Henry and Dame Margaret kneeled to me, / And on my head did set the diadem"(1.2.39-40). More astute than Eleanor's rather naive dream is that of the Cardinal of Winchester who claims to have dreamt of the death of the Duke of Gloucester when the latter was found dead: "God's secret judgement. I did dream tonight / The Duke was dumb and could

not speak a word" (3.2.31-2). He is implying here that, as the source of his knowledge is divine, then heaven should have a hand in the death of the Duke of Gloucester. The Cardinal's dream is truer to the nature of dreams since it is more symbolic than Eleanor's. Both dreams, however, are disorientingly ambiguous.

But the fact that Winchester narrates his prophecy after Gloucester was found dead casts more doubts on his claim.¹² This last feature of prophecies is addressed by Francis Bacon in his essay "Of Prophecies." Bacon's opinion of the subject is generally negative: "My judgment is, that they ought all to be despised; and ought to serve but for winter talk by the fireside" ([1625] 2002, 132). For that he gives three reasons. One is that they are mentioned only when they prove true, and the other is that many are based on conjecture which then is elevated to the level of prediction. The last reason is especially relevant here: "The third and last (which is the great one) is, that almost all of them, being infinite in number, have been impostures, and by idle and crafty brains merely contrived and feigned after the event past"(ibid., 133).

Thus, by the use of counterfactuals Shakespeare is stressing the contingent nature of human history. The counter-use of prophecies and the references to Divine intervention is only voiced by some characters and cannot be taken to represent the philosophical view of the author. Moreover, some of these pronouncements are called into question (even ridiculed) and the ideological nature of the others is laid bare throughout the plays. Shakespeare insists, via the use of counterfactuals, on the contingency of history, and he relates results to volatile actions of the characters. Thus, while Exeter may attribute the fall of Henry VI to the prophecy saying that '*Henry born at Windsor should lose all*', Clifford attributes it to Henry's unkingly behaviour and Margaret, to his lack of resolve. And while the Welsh captain may relate the fall of Richard II to certain astronomical signs, the gardener ascribes it to Richard's failure to delimit and oppress the power of 'growing men'. In the context of these plays, Shakespeare gives more credibility to these counterfactual contemplations and less, if any, credibility to these prophecies. As far as Warwick's speech is concerned, his "homely naturalism invites us to understand prophecy as a function of character, while making any providential significance seem

incalculable if not purely fantastic” (Farrell 2009, 60). As Neema Parvini has succinctly put it, the employment of causational methods

lends Shakespeare's treatment of history a sense of contingency and immediacy that cannot be found in studies of prescribed history. We are reminded constantly of how things *might have been* were it not for certain people . . . Hotspur *might* have killed prince Hal . . . Shakespeare's history plays are not simply an account of what happened, but dynamic and probing analyses of historical causality which places the responsibility for the outcomes of events squarely on the shoulders of men and women. (110-1; emphasis in original)

In his tracing of the influence of Machiavelli's historical thought on Shakespeare's drama, Hugh Grady states that it started roughly around 1595 with the writing of *Henry V* and *Richard II*: “Shakespeare seems to adopt this Machiavellian concept of a limited historical voluntarism and a world of fortune and contingency as a general principle (at least starting in 1595) but he applies it differently to different plays” (2011, 135). However, the analysis so far of the *Henry VI* plays encourages us to re-assess this claim and look some time earlier than 1595 for tracking such tendencies of recognizing contingency and chance in history. Our survey in this section reveals that, from an early moment in his career, Shakespeare departs from the medieval Providential views and seems more in touch with the humanistic tendencies, mainly popularized in Italy and the continent by Patrizi and Machiavelli, which stressed the role of the human agency in the making of historical events. Accordingly, deterministic views voiced through Providential explanation as well as prophecies and dreams, cannot be taken as a last say by the dramatist about these issues. Rather, they can only express ideological convictions by certain characters and are often exposed as unrealistic in light of the actual events taking place.

The Literary Dimension

In this section, I shall try to shed light on the significance of counterfactuals as they are used in these plays to the ongoing discussion of the contribution of ‘possible worlds’ theory to literary studies in general. I have delayed this section deliberately since the full appreciation of the literary significance of counterfactuals is manifested by the roles they play on the other dimensions, which must have been clear at this point. The discussion in this section is inclined towards literature in general, and should by implication be pertinent to Shakespearean drama. Counterfactuals can be especially relevant to the study

of literature in mainly four aspects: explaining the truth of fiction, negotiating the usefulness of possible worlds approaches to narrative, deepening the ontological status of literary fiction and accounting for its cognitive value.

The first aspect of counterfactuals in literature is the issue of truth of fiction. The truth value of fictional works is a long-standing problem which has inspired many approaches. One fruitful way to deal with this question by philosophers and literary theorists is counterfactuals. These scholars have shown that the epistemological status of fictionality can best be interpreted in terms of counterfactual conditionals. In his work on counterfactuals, David Lewis (1973) addresses the question of truth of counterfactual statements in terms of 'relative similarity' among possible worlds. In his later work on truth in fiction, Lewis proposes that "Reasoning about truth in fiction can be very like counterfactual reasoning" (1978, 42). According to this formulation, "[t]he facts yielded by the fictional text are implicitly cast in the role of the antecedent, and the interpretive statement functions as consequent" (Ryan 1991, 49). For instance, the statement "Hamlet is hesitant" can be translated as: "If Hamlet exists, and the plot of his story is enacted in the actual world, then Hamlet is hesitant." This statement is counterfactual since the antecedent ("Hamlet exists") is not true in the actual world. Lewis specifies this relationship in terms of the following syllogism:

A sentence of the form "In the fiction f, p" is non-vacuously true iff some world where f is told as known fact and p is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where f is told as known fact and p is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where f is told as known fact. (1978, 42; emphasis in original)

This formulation, however, is not satisfactory for literary theorists of fictionality. Marie-Laure Ryan identifies many problems in this definition: mainly, it does not differentiate between the textual reference world (where the *p* is true or false) and the textual actual world (where *p* is told as true or false) as well as ignoring the possibility of unreliable narration. Instead, she proposes the following formulation:

There is a set of modal universes *A*, which are constructed on the basis of a fictional text *f*, and in whose actual world the nontextual statement *p* is true.

There is a set of modal universes *A*, which are constructed on the basis of a fictional text *f*, and in whose actual world the nontextual statement *p* is false.

Of these universes, take the one which differs the least, on balance, from our own system of reality. If it belongs to set A, then p is true in TRW, and the statement "In TRW, p" is true in AW. Otherwise, p is false in TRW and "in TRW, p" is false in AW. (ibid., 50)

And it is on the basis of this formula that she arrives at the 'principle of minimal departure' according to which we, as readers, tend to speculate about the fictional world as if it differs the least from our actual world. Unless otherwise indicated, the textual actual world should feature the same laws as those of the actual world. We will use the principle of minimal departure in our comparison between fictionality and counterfactuality later in this section. Here suffice it to say that although Ryan's formulation is more elaborate than Lewis's, I think that all the details added are already latent in Lewis's analysis. For, after all, she considers that 'Textual Actual World' and the 'Textual Reference world' are analogous. Besides, I think that Lewis was quite aware of the problem of the unreliable narrator, and that his formula 'told as known fact' is phrased to eschew that pitfall.

The second aspect is the utility of possible worlds approaches to the study of counterfactuals. The use of counterfactuals in literature gives credit to possible worlds approaches to the analysis of narrative. In contrast to the traditional formalist and structuralist approaches, the possible worlds approaches are not deterministic or teleological. This aspect of literary determinism features on both levels of text and theatrical performance. Literary determinism also serves to compare literature to history and the concept of historical determinism discussed above. In light of the above examples, we can contend that modal approaches to literature, some of which are surveyed in Chapter Two, prove more viable to treat a complex structural phenomenon like counterfactuals, and they can counter what might be called 'literary determinism.'

The first thing to be noted in this regard is the inadequacy of the traditional formalist and structuralist plot models to account for the significance of counterfactuals. Traditional formalist and structuralist models restrict their focus on only actual events that took place in the narrative. These models yield a teleological view of plot by treating it as a static construct which is to be studied in terms of its ending. Looking at the events retrospectively, from the end backwards, this "perspective upon the plot was anchored in the locus of its

completion, thus reducing everything to the timelessness of the moment” (Godzich 1985, xix). The problems with this retrospective view of events are multiple. This view would allow us to see only these events that really took place, and to lose sight of those that could have taken place but did not. This pitfall is analogous to the hindsight bias which we have identified with historical writing. According to Paul Ricoeur (1985, 39), “The regressive necessity of a law of temporal finality blinds us, so to speak, to the alternatives that a progressive reading, on the contrary, encounters” (see also Ronen 1994, 168; Herman and Vervaeck 2001, 154-5). Besides, this view blocks any potentiality latent in reality for change and transformation. The problem with this deterministic view is that with it the literary work ceases to make any sense for its readers, for if we assume that everything is preordained and people can do nothing about it, then there is no point in claiming that literature can teach or edify. “There is nothing to be learnt from the action and happenings that take place in a fictional world that has been reduced to the state of a deterministic parallel reality governed universally by immediate necessity” (Meister 2003, 12). Consequently, the pedagogical significance of counterfactuals which we observed above will be certainly missed with these traditional, actualist approaches.

Possible worlds oriented plot models, in contrast, have the advantage of accommodating these nonactualized possibilities and attaching to them the significance they assume in the texts. Moreover, these nonfactual events are no less necessary to the understanding of the plot as the actual ones. According to Possible Worlds approaches, “a virtual event inscribed in the private domain is of course as much part of the plot as one asserted as fact” (Ryan 1991, 262). Narratives and plays do not always present one story chronologically ordered, but rather switch back and forth and do often present a plurality of possible worlds as alternate versions of the actual world until one version is chosen and privileged as the actual one.

This limitation of the traditional approaches gets clearer when counterfactuals are taken into account. For these analyses will obliterate the rich pluralistic texture of the possible worlds that deviate from the actual version of events which are created by the counterfactual activity. As Hillary Dannenberg puts it, the significance of counterfactuals is that they are not

merely returning to the past, rather “they alter the past and in doing so construct a new world, one whose ramifications can also create a new present” (2008, 53). This temporal movement is usually overlooked by the ‘timelessness’ of the linear approaches to plot. Complex plots provide the reader with a plurality of versions for both the past and future. Although, in the course of reading or watching a literary work, only one of these competing versions will be ontologically privileged and established as the actual one (except, of course, in some postmodern fictions where there is no privileged version), the other versions do also contribute to a full understanding of the literary work. As one string of events is chosen as the factual, the counterfactual one(s) would help to add to our appreciation of that factual one, which is then defined less by what it is than by what it is not. As the above examples must have made clear, counterfactual versions of events are used by characters to ascribe causality to given events, cast responsibility on certain figures and attach significance to some situations and actions. If, in summarizing a play, these counterfactual statements are overlooked as simply ‘not taking place’, then we will lose sight of these vantage points in the plays.

These discussions of literary determinism have emerged with regard to prose fiction. Theatre, however, adds one more complications which is the status of theatrical performance. Any discussion of determinism should deal with the two levels of text and performance. As far as the latter is concerned, watching the theatrical performance undermines the feeling of determinism evoked by external, especially divine intervention. It can be asserted that the very act of staging history is an implicit acknowledgement of that contingency, since it foregrounds the human dimension of the actions of the historical figures; consequently, it will push to the background all other agencies, Divine or otherwise. In this sense, the spectators can only see these characters acting and reacting onstage, and so any other reference to other factors will be overlooked under the spell of the dramatic performance. By being shown how these characters were acting, what mistakes they committed and what choices (right or wrong) they made, the spectator can immediately recognize how easily these mistakes could have been avoided, and how possible it was not to go the wrong way. The spectators are aware of the potential of the human beings to act unpredictably, and so with performance nothing yet is fixed and

unchangeable. Moreover, the immediate presentness of the performance is a guarantee against the quagmire of hindsight bias to which so many historians fell prey. The immediacy and contingency of the stage performance also undermines Providential thinking (Hattaway 2002, 11). However, Stephen Greenblatt considers the contingency of the performance to be only artificial, and that eventually everything is determined by the dramatic script (1988, 17). True, but as we have shown in Chapter One, playing is inherently unpredictable; moreover, the interesting thing is that in Shakespeare even the script is giving voice to these possibilities by constructing counterfactual scenarios. We have surveyed how the texts give expression to counterfactuals and unactualized possibilities. So, the binary opposition Greenblatt refers to between a determined script and an improvisational performance is undermined, since the script itself gives voice to the contingency of the whole framework.

The affinity between literary determinism and historical and religious Providentialism gets clearer when we call to mind the fact that the early modern theorists, like Sir Philip Sidney and George Puttenham, were likening the work of the poet to the work of God (Puttenham [1589] 2004, 57; Sidney [1595] 2004, 9). The place of the historian in this scheme is further complicated for he tries to track the work of God's Providence through the historical events. According to Northrop Frye, poets begin with the form, historians move toward it (1963, 163). In their attempt to construct past events, historians work according to probabilities based on cause and effect. As we have shown in the last Chapter in discussing the work of Hayden White, historians might endeavour to endow their resultant structure with coherence or form by linking events causally to each other. Historians are affected by literary works and try hard to emulate them. Driven by a sense-making impulse which we have identified in the last Chapter, historians aspire to create a narrative as coherent as that in the works of literature. Elizabethan historians, for example, were viewing the medieval ages in terms of plots, from Richard II to Henry VII, sensing a kind of pattern that runs through all these periods. Although this method would only yield what J. Fisher Solomon calls 'potentialist realism', yet it endows the historians' patterns with a sense of determinism. This is partly due to the retrospective nature of their endeavour: "History is always constructed in retrospect" (Rackin 1990, 59). This way historical narrative will also be teleologically oriented and so

it will leave little room to the possible and contingent, and will be dominated by hindsight bias. Thus, this implies that as literary works are predetermined by a script, history is also predetermined by a script, the script of God's Providence. Then, one reason why Providentialism is held in history is because historians are using the tools and practice of poets.

The third aspect of the literary dimension of counterfactuals is their ontological status. Although counterfactuals are inherently fictional, yet they enhance the ontological status of the main work in which they appear, and also work according to the principle of minimal departure which we encountered above. Moreover, counterfactuals might be globally understood to form new fictional worlds out of well-established worlds, as in the notion of adaptation and 'counterfictionality'. Lastly, contemplating counterfactual situations might lead to ironies due to the ignorance of some characters of the real state of the actual world.

As far as their ontological status is concerned, there is no gainsaying that counterfactual worlds, of whatever kind, are "semantically fictional" (Dolezel 2010, 122). However, the fictionality of counterfactual statements in a literary work is different from the fictional mode of the work itself. According to Marie-Laure Ryan (1991; 2001), the difference lies in the idea of 'recentering'. While fictional worlds of literary texts require the reader to 'relocate' him/herself in the new world rather than his native actual world and to believe in their autonomous existence, counterfactual statements are not intended "to create alternate possible worlds for their own sake, but to make a point about AW [Actual World]" (1991, 48). Elsewhere she uses the metaphor of telescope and space travel vehicle to stand for counterfactuals and proper fiction, respectively.

In the telescope mode, consciousness remains anchored in its native reality, and possible worlds are contemplated from the outside. In the space-travel mode, consciousness relocates itself to another world and, taking advantage of the indexical definition of actuality, reorganizes the entire universe of being around this virtual reality. I call this move recentering, and I regard it as constitutive of the fictional mode of reading. (2001, 103)

Although this distinction is generally valid, two points need be made here: first, this restriction on counterfactuals as lacking 'recentering' does not apply to counterfactual fictions of alternate worlds nor to works of counterfactual history. These works are also properly fictional and do invite the reader for a similar

'recentering' in the new worlds they create, not because they are counterfactuals, but because they are fictions. This yardstick seems to apply only for short counterfactual statements scattered in a larger fictional work, such as the above examples of counterfactuals in Shakespeare. Second, the criterion of counterfactuals as 'making a point about the actual world' is also elusive. In a general sense most literary works make a point about the actual world. Examples range from allegorical works that represent reality in a symbolic manner to political literary works which always have a message about the contemporary states of affairs and so on. Accordingly, the point made by counterfactuals denotes the causality inferences made about a given event.

Another ontological affinity between fiction and counterfactuals is the principle of minimal departure. According to Marie-Laure Ryan (1991, 50), this principle should be applied to them both. Our implied assumption regarding the details of the fictional worlds is that, unless otherwise indicated, they are similar to the actual world. In order to be reliable, rational and intelligibly functional, counterfactuals have also to differ as little as possible from the known details of the actual world. This is why the account of the truth of fiction given above has taken counterfactuals as its starting point.

Between the two ends of a pure fiction and a counterfactual statement in a fictional work there is a middle ground which Richard Saint-Gelais, borrowing a term from Matt Hills, refers to as 'counterfictionality.' He defines it "as the alteration of a previous fiction, i.e. the replacement of at least one of its episodes, facts, etc., by other states of affairs" (2011, 244). Unlike counterfactuals but like fiction, counterfictions are complete fictional works. However, they share with counterfactuals the tendency to undo certain events and thus change the course of plot accordingly. But while counterfactuals are internal devices, keeping the change within the confines of the literary work itself, counterfictions constitute external, intertextual relationships with previous, usually canonical literary fictions. Saint-Gelais's notion of counterfiction is closer to the practice of literary adaptation, which can be viewed as a counterfactual applied on a broader global level. These counterfictions work on the enormous, limitless potential of any story to generate ever new stories or new versions. Saint-Gelais rightly suggests that, just like fiction proper, counterfiction differs from counterfactuals in that it does not use the "if . . . then . . ." construction

(ibid., 247). The reason, quite justifiably, is that as make-believe, fiction and counterfiction tend to conceal their fictional status, unlike counterfactuals whose fictional, non-actual status is purposefully foregrounded.

Furthermore, on the ontological level, counterfactuals enhance the status of the fictional world as real by contrasting it with other, 'less real' scenarios. Since the alternative scenarios are presented as 'counterfacts', the reader is invited to believe as 'factual' the background events counter to which they are contemplated. This point is significant especially if coupled with the indexical account of actuality advanced by David Lewis and adopted by later 'possible worlds' theorists in the literary field. According to this theory, "'Actual' is indexical, like 'I' or 'here', or 'now': it depends for its reference on the circumstances of utterance, to wit the world where the utterance is located" (1973, 86). So, both 'fact' and 'counterfact' are to be indexically viewed and relatively considered. Some events or states are regarded as 'facts' only because the text presents them as such. The same states may be denied the status of factuality in another text or context. On this basis we can regard as untenable the conclusion Dolezel derives from the falseness or nonfactuality of counterfactual statements, in relation to the factual status of historical discourse:

The theoretical import of this thesis is far-reaching: the falseness of the counterfactual statements about the past presupposes the existence of the factual, that is, true statements about the past, such as 'Germany lost World War II.' If there were no historical facts, there would be no historical counterfactuals. (2010, 122)

The problem with this argument is that it treats the factuality of historical events as an absolute value measured in contradistinction to the historical counterfactuals. But the fact that a given event can be counterfactually conceived does not invest it with absolute factuality, because even fictional 'facts' do have counterfactuals, and still they are 'facts' only relative to a certain ontological realm. i.e., they are treated and presented as such in the textual actual world. Thus, the existence of historical 'counterfactuals' does not by itself demonstrate that there are *absolute* historical 'facts'.

Counterfactuals are also used to create a sense of irony. This is specially the case with what we can call 'reverse counterfactuals' where characters' limited knowledge makes them mistake counterfactuals for facts. The result would be that, in their attempt to construct a counterfactual statement, they end up constructing a factual one. For example, we saw relevant to our analysis of

Cymbeline in Chapter Two, how Imogen feels as if the two boys had been her lost brothers. “[*Aside*] Would it had been so that they / Had been my father’s sons. Then had my price / Been less, and so more equal ballasting / To thee, Posthumus” (3.6.73-6). As, unbeknownst to her, they turn out to be in fact her brothers, she misses the fact and consequently mistakes the counterfact. So it turns out that the counterfactual scenario she has wished is itself the actual state of affairs. Sometimes characters tend to use ‘double counterfactuals’ where they fabricate a fact in order to form a counterfact to deceive other characters. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia, disguised as Sebastian, pleads to Silvia’s conscience of how the real Julia, whom Proteus has forsaken, would look like and how she would now feel. She says that when they were playing together, and when he/she was given a woman’s part to play in “Madam Julia’s gown, / Which served me as fit, in all men’s judgements, / As if the garment had been made for me” (4.4.153-5). Julia fabricates a fact, that she was Julia’s childhood playmate, in order to construct a counterfact, that she looked as if she were Julia herself. As the fact is fabricated, then itself a counterfact, then the counterfact turns out to be a fact (that the garment is really made for her). In both examples, however, the effect is relatively similar: to deepen the sense of the coherence of the literary work and the sense of the factuality of the whole framework relative to which these single events can be assessed as factual or counterfactual.

The fourth aspect of the study of counterfactuals in literature is the role they play in the cognitive function of the literary work. Counterfactuals contribute to the reader’s immersion in the fictional world. They also enhance the coherence and intelligibility of the literary work, just as narrative emplotment and organization do. Lastly, they are also a useful tool in critical interpretation which critics might occasionally use to evaluate certain events in the fictional world. As far as readerly immersion is concerned, it is suggested by Marie-Laure Ryan (2001) which she introduces as an alternative to the notion of realism. In her discussion of such writers as Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett, she views their achievements as “neither the art of revealing ‘how things are’ nor the art of imitating real-world speech acts but the art of getting the reader involved in the narrated events” (2001, 161). This immersive effect is achieved by many

cognitive strategies that are aimed to obscure to the reader the ontological status of the work. "The reader sinks down into the narrative world and becomes oblivious to her own ontological level" (Dannenberg 2008, 23). As a result of this oblivion, the reader tends to forget (or perhaps, overlook) the fictional status of the literary work and consequently treats it as an ontologically autonomous and self-contained realm. One of the strategies whereby readerly immersion is achieved is counterfactuality. Counterfactuals enhance causal relations and, both in real life and in traditional literature, causation is one of the most important sense-making strategies whereby we tend to connect and then to understand different, otherwise unrelated events. So, by employing the same principles in their works as those operative in real life, authors are inviting their readers through the use of counterfactuals to believe in the sameness of the text's world to their actual world. Moreover, this new world will seem coherent enough to entrench its own autonomy and consequently its realistic effect (ibid., 30).

Moreover, counterfactuality has special affinities with emplotment, which we identified in Chapter Three as a source of intelligibility. Both emplotment, in its Aristotelian sense, and counterfactuality are rooted in causation and probability. If we retrospectively weigh the real choices against the unreal events, then we are dealing with probabilities: calculating what actions will most probably or likely lead to which events. The knowledge that underlies such a judgement is rooted in our reservoir of plot schemata, which enables us to make these judgements. In this regard Paul Ricoeur wonders, "But does it not in the first place refer to that extraordinary laboratory of the probable constituted by the paradigms of emplotment?"(1984, 184). Based on that knowledge, we can assert that a certain event is more quantitatively qualified to take place in this given situation. This is how emplotment and counterfactuality reciprocally feed upon each other. And this is why some historians explain the increasing use of counterfactuals as contributing to the return of narrative techniques to the historical profession: "In the search for readers, many historians have sought to borrow novelistic and dramatic techniques. Counterfactuals have appealed as one mysterious method in this capacious box of tricks" (Scalmer 2006, 5). In the last Chapter we investigated how even historians make recourse to narrativization to render their discourse more intelligible to the readers, and

counterfactuals are just one aspect that can add up to the narrative structuring of the historical text.

Interestingly, the cognitive value of counterfactuals is not restricted to those voiced in the plays, but rather sometimes Shakespeare critics tend to construct counterfactuals in order to make some point about the plays or the playwright. As early as 1709, Nicholas Rowe argues that it was better for Shakespeare to let his imagination free to give us, as he really did, new and uncommon thoughts “than if he had given us the most beautiful passages out of the Greek and Latin poets” which every scholar could have given (quoted in Smith 2004, 7). Later in the century Alexander Pope makes a point about the uniqueness and individuality of Shakespeare’s characters, so much so “that had all the Speeches been printed without the very names of the Persons, I believe one might have apply’d them with certainty to every speaker.”(quoted in *ibid.*, 10). Modern critics are no exception: Neil Heims, for example, assesses the significance of the role of Falstaff in the *Henry IV* plays by asking “What would be the effect on *1 Henry IV* if Falstaff had been the anti-Falstaff?”(2010, 130), and by asserting that “Had Hal not banished Falstaff, the nature of history would have been redefined and, fundamentally, its spirit altered, subverted, not merely challenged but turned inside out and deflated”(ibid., 113). There are too many examples of this mode of critical appreciation to be covered here. ¹³Richard Saint-Gelais refers to some experiments in writing whole critical monographs about a literary work in a counterfactual fashion, a practice which he includes under his concept of counterfictionality mentioned above (2011, 247-8). Although the examples from Shakespeare criticism just cited do not in any sense qualify as counterfictions, yet they point to an important fact: that constructing counterfactual scenarios is an indispensable tool for cognitively comprehending any phenomenon.

These four aspects of the literary dimension of counterfactuals show how multi-faceted their aesthetic value is. It has been shown how crucial they really are to the understanding of the very nature of fiction and its ontological status. It also highlights the sense of potentiality that is essential to counterfactuals. It is this potential lurking under the guise of the actual and the inevitable that enables characters to endlessly contemplate the alternative ways that could have been taken. With their analysis we also come to better appreciate the

utility of the possible worlds approaches to the study of literature. Still far more important is the contribution they make to the intelligibility of the action of the literary work.

Conclusion

This survey of the use of counterfactuals in Shakespeare has shown how effective these possible scenarios are in articulating the coherence and intelligibility of the actual events of the plays. The fascination with counterfactuality stems from the fact that it is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that has psychological, political, philosophical and literary ramifications. Through their use of counterfactuals, we get clues to the characters' psyches, revealing how they react to their past actions or failures to act, the emotional responses that these contemplations will elicit, as well as their prejudices and biases. Through the use of counterfactuals in the political domain we have observed how characters assess the choices made in public affairs and the way they attribute failure and (quite rarely) success to players on the stage of history. These counterfactuals chronicle the history of a nation through the actions or failure thereof of its major players. Philosophically, these scattered statements shed new light on how characters conceived their world and the freedom, or lack thereof, they enjoy in shaping the events the way they did. In the literary dimension, counterfactuals are shown to contribute to many philosophical debates about the nature of fictionality and the truth of fictional discourse. They do also have an integral role in weaving a coherent structure that enhances the intelligibility of the actual course of events. Significantly, the treatment of counterfactuals has given credit to the possible worlds approaches for they lay emphasis on these unactualized possibilities which traditional approaches, with their actualist bias, will certainly miss.

The analysis in this chapter is supposed to open new arenas in a wider survey of the use of counterfactuals in drama, analogous to the survey carried out by Hillary Dannenberg (2008) about prose fiction. That will give us a clearer view of the idiosyncratic use of these devices by different writers in different periods. It can be also carried out chronologically to register how the use of counterfactuals in drama has evolved over time. For had such studies been

conducted a long time ago, we would have been now in a better place to appreciate counterfactuals!

Conclusion

In this study I have argued that the possible or virtual events in Shakespearean drama are as important as the actual events. Their importance stems from two main aspects that have been foregrounded throughout the study. The first is the sense of potentiality inherent in the possible. Instead of viewing the possible as the passive negation of the real or the actual, this study has emphasized its nature as vitality or as a power latent in the Shakespearean fictional world. Actualized differently, the virtual would yield many varied realizations of that world, be it in the spectators' imaginations, in different theatrical performances, or even in the characters' conceptions of the fictional world they inhabit. The second is its cognitive function and the sense-making role it plays in Shakespeare's drama and theatre. On the level of theatrical performance, the virtual reality or possible world created in the spectators' imagination will help them to mould the otherwise disparate material happenings of the stage into a coherent whole. On the level of plot, virtual events are no less necessary a component of plots than actual events are. They help us understand the background of the actual event, the knowledge and intentions that underlay it, and the obligations and wishes that triggered it; they give us access to characters' inwardness, and so on. Furthermore, the possible itself is established by using probabilistic thinking, for characters arrive at what have possibly happened based on its relative probability of occurrence.

The duality of text and performance in Shakespeare has been present throughout the study, and it has informed its original chapters division: while Chapter One is devoted to the analysis of the role of the virtual or possible in theatrical performance, the other chapters are devoted to the analysis of the plots and narrative content of the plays, something which they share with narrative fiction in general. However, different aspects of that duality are foregrounded in different parts of the study. While in Chapter One we have shown how the purely performant function of theatre makes little use of the virtual, in Chapter Four we have emphasized that theatrical performance is a space more contingent and less predictable than the dramatic text. In performance, nothing is determined and an alternative course of events might be improvised, but in the text everything is set once and for all. Nevertheless,

the Shakespeare text itself opens a space for alternativity through its use of counterfactual scenarios.

I have tried to cover the main genres of Shakespeare's drama in this study, namely tragedy (as in *Antony and Cleopatra*), comedy (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), History (*Richard II*, *Henry VI*) and Romance (*Cymbeline*). However, the histories have occupied a larger space of our speculation about possible worlds in Shakespeare, and history plays feature in almost all chapters of the thesis. The reason for this is the special relevance of and the tensions caused by possible worlds to the questions of history and historical truth. This stems from the debate between essentialist, constructivist, and potentialist conceptions of the actual world. We have argued above for a form of 'potentialist realism'. Potentialist realism preserves the factuality of discourses about the actual world and about history, but holds that this reality still has the potential to be interpreted differently and to be applicable to many different situations if the same circumstances are retained. Besides, it is potentialist in the sense that it is mostly accessible through cognitive process and probabilistic thinking. Thus, the main two aspects of the virtual – potentiality and cognitive functionality – seem also to shape our image of the actual world and its history. In other words, we have relocated the concepts of the possible and the actual from the ontological to the cognitive dimension. As far as history is concerned, although possible worlds theorists have argued that the possible worlds of history and fiction are essentially different, we have shown that the nature of historical truth is compromised by the discursive strategies used to represent it. Moreover, for the psychological, political and philosophical reasons discussed above, Shakespeare's history plays served as a fertile space for conducting counterfactual thinking and generating alternative virtual scenarios of what might have happened. This sense of counterfactuality in history also increases our awareness of the rich potentiality latent in any historical situation.

Possible worlds theory has established its place among the literary and philosophical paradigms of the last decades, such as structuralism, formalism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. We have shown the advantage of possible worlds plot models over the formalist and structuralist ones. By holding a forward-looking view on the movement of the plot, possible worlds narratologists see each stage of the plot as opening a series of alternative

possible courses of events, from which only one will be chosen and realized as the actual one, while the others are relegated to the status of virtual events. This yields a dynamic view of the plot, rather than the static view offered by formalist models which emphasize the end of the story. It also strives to dissociate itself from postmodernism and postructuralism by insisting on the modal differentiation between the actual world and merely possible worlds and by resisting the sweeping textualism of postmodernism.

The interdisciplinary nature of this study has been a challenge and a source of fascination at the same time. The challenge has been to bring different disciplines – possible world narratology and Shakespeare studies, each with its own methods and assumptions– into dialogue with each other. Possible worlds theory is mainly a formal theory, while the field of Shakespeare studies is chiefly dominated by historicist approaches. The study has been tries to bring each discipline to bear on the other and be informed by certain assumptions of the other discipline. It is fascinating due to the intellectual effort needed to work out this synthesis of two different disciplines and due to the revealing insights which they offer into each.

This investigation of the possible worlds theory in Shakespeare has the potential to open up new avenues for further research. We can here make three suggestions regarding topics for further study. The first is a possible world framework for genre theory, especially the distinction between tragedy and comedy. Insofar as the notions of possibility, necessity, and probability are concerned, two differences between the two genres can be discerned. The first is that tragedy moves according to the laws of actuality while comedy and romance move according to the laws of possibility. As Kiernan Ryan puts it, “The tragedies are preoccupied by the brutal destruction of the potential by the actual. . . . But in his Elizabethan romantic comedies and in the haunting last plays of his Jacobean period, Shakespeare’s imaginative gaze is levelled at the remote horizon of what could be, rather than absorbed in the immediate tyranny of what is” (1989, 74). This can be explained by having recourse to some formal features of possible worlds theory. The modalities dominant in comedy are those of possibility while tragedy is dominated by the modalities of necessity. That is to say, a character in comedy preserves the right to change an option s/he has taken so far, which is hardly possible in tragedy. Moreover, in comedy

the characters' domains consist mainly of Wish Worlds, while in tragedy they consist of Obligation Worlds. Wishes are more flexible than obligations, which means that characters in comedy can adjust their goals if they appear unattainable, but characters in tragedy stick to these goals, no matter how disastrous the effects are. The second difference is that the comedies, even the Romances, do not fully adhere to the laws of probability that determine the tragedies. As Kiernan Ryan writes of the comedies and Romances, "The works' undisguised surrender of the laws of likelihood to the rule of the miraculous . . . frees Shakespeare's imagination to forsake at will the plausible logic which past or probable events might be expected to exhibit" (ibid., 81; also Altman 2010, 346). However, I think that it is less an absence of probability in these plays than a need to employ different criteria of coherence and plausibility for different genres (see Maître 1983, 37). Much more subtle differences between the two genres can be discerned according to this framework. Moreover, possible worlds theory can even contribute to a clearer view about the relationship between fiction and reality, especially in the case of history plays and the layers of reality they are supposed to reflect.

The second area where possible worlds theory can contribute to the study of Shakespeare and literature in general is adaptation. We mentioned such an attempt made by Cindy Chopoidaló (2009) in the Introduction. However, possible worlds theory has still much more to say about adaptation. Following Dolezel's (1998) notion of narrative modalities, I think that traditional adaptations seek to redistribute these modalities between the original and the adaptation. Thus, in alethic terms, what was possible in the original might turn out to be impossible in the adaptation. In epistemic modality, what was unknown in the original might be known and believed in the adaptation. In axiological modalities, what was deemed bad might turn out to be good and desirable in the adaptation, and so on. This way the changes brought about to the original work might be formally explained. Moreover, the fidelity generally expected from the adaptation can be explained according to Marie-Laure Ryan's principle of minimal departure which we surveyed in Chapter Four. According to Ryan (1991, 54), this principle does not only apply to the relation between the actual and fictional worlds, but can also apply to the relationship between a text and any other text. Furthermore, adaptation can be seen as a

form of 'counterfictionality' which we have examined in Chapter Four. Thus, a possible worlds account of adaptation can move beyond the prevalent approaches to this complex phenomenon.

The third area to which possible worlds can contribute is the teaching of literature. As we have shown, possible worlds analysis has aesthetic dimensions which might be especially appealing to young readers of literature. In this regard, the consideration by the learner of the alternative possible worlds latent within the fictional world is of immense cognitive value for the learner, because it helps them to better appreciate the significance of the actual one. In other words, we can know things by what they are not as well as by what they are, and we might come to better understand a character by considering what he/she could have done (but did not) as well as by what they actually did. Moreover, learners might be asked to evoke alternative stories by choosing other events that might have taken place in the original story. This can also help students in creative writing construct new plots using traditional stories as their point of departure.

With all these applications and many others I think that the possible in Shakespeare is a fertile place to refresh our perspective on Shakespeare's dramatic art. In addition, more work can be done on poetry, the Sonnets and the narrative poems, to find out how the treatment of possibility in Shakespeare's poetry differs from, or is continuous with, his experimentation with possible worlds in drama. For example, the speaker in the Sonnets habitually calls forth a different world and imagines himself assuming different roles. The Sonnets also touch frequently on the question of truth and the effect of representation (the poet's 'pen') on it. The narrative poems provide a fertile ground for exploring the possible worlds created by narrative. The ekphrastic passage in *The Rape of Lucrece* is but one familiar example of this power of narrative to create imaginary worlds. Moreover, further work still needs be done on other early modern dramatists and poets to discover the distinctive treatment of the concept of the possible by different writers.

Notes

Introduction

¹ The assumption of the existence of other, infinite possible worlds might seem ontologically costly since it does not pass Ockham's razor, a concept coined after the ideas of William of Ockham (1287 - 1347). It refers to a principle of parsimony on the level of ontological thinking. According to the principle of Ockham's razor, hypotheses with the fewer number of assumptions are to be preferred over those with the larger number of assumptions (see Spade 1999). In this regard, possible worlds theory assumes the existence of an infinity of possible worlds. Lewis's version of modal realism assumes that all these possible worlds are ontologically real. Whilst Lewis holds that the benefits of his view justify its ontological cost, his opponents do not.

² Indexical terms, such as 'now', 'here', 'I', 'this', etc., are expressions which do not have fixed referents. The referent of an indexical term, rather, can only be determined depending on the immediate context in which it is uttered. Its referent can be fixed after determining the speaker, time and place and other aspects of the linguistic context (see Lyons 1995, 302-12). According to this explanation, the words 'actual' and 'possible' are indexical terms in the sense that their meanings are relative to the context in which they occur. If uttered in any world, the word 'actual' refers to that particular world, be it our world or any other world.

³ Modality is that quality of human language which enables us to talk not only about the actual state of affairs, but also about possible states of affairs. It is mainly expressed in English using the modal auxiliaries 'may', 'might', 'can', 'ought to', etc., as well other nominal, adjectival and adverbial expressions (see Lyons 1977, Chap. 17). Not surprisingly, possible worlds theorists build on the concept of modality in their treatment of plot. Accordingly, plots do delineate not only actual events, but also possible events; or they depict not only what has happened, but also what might have happened and ought to happen. Later we shall see how Dolezel rightly observes that narrative modalities are the real denominators of action and conflict in the fictional world.

⁴ In Chapter Three I shall provide a reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* which emphasizes the main two aspects of possibility or virtuality: the potential and the probable.

⁵ The notion of the 'Model reader' is an essential part of Eco's semiotic theory of texts. This notion has to do with the shared codes between the author and the readers which make the work communicative. According to Eco, "The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretively with the expressions in the same way the author deals generatively with them" (1979, 7).

⁶ Alethic modality determines what is possible or impossible for the existents and actions of the fictional world. Deontic modalities determine what is obligatory, allowed or prohibited in the fictional world. Axiological modalities dictate what is considered as good, bad or neutral in the value system of the fictional world. Lastly, epistemic modalities determine what is known, believed or unknown by characters regarding the facts of the fictional world.

⁷ My use of the 'virtual' in relation to the possible worlds of theatre is not to be confused with what came to be called 'virtual theatre' developed with the help of modern technology. For a survey of the idea of 'virtuality' in literature and electronic media see Ryan (2001); for an introduction to virtual theatre see Giannachi (2004). Brenda Laurel's *Computers as Theatre* (1993) brings the different meanings of the term in computers and theatre together and also touches on the metaphorical nature of computer interface representation and theatrical representations.

⁸ For example, Brian McHale, in his *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), uses the Possible Worlds framework to shed light on ontological aspects of postmodern fiction. The main characteristic of that fiction, what he calls the 'dominant', is that it foregrounds ontological issues. According to McHale, it is this quality of postmodern fiction that justifies the use of this framework. The ontological aspect of the theory is also foregrounded in Alice Bell's *The Possible Worlds of Hypertext Fiction* (2010). Bell applies possible worlds theory to hypertext fiction, which she regards as displaying a special ontological self-consciousness.

Chapter One

¹ Prince ([1988] 2004) discerns three classes of events that form a lacuna either in the narrative story or discourse: the unnarratable, the unnarrated and the disnarrated. The third refers to some hypothetical scenarios hinted at in the text. The first two refer to events that either cannot be narrated or are deliberately elided from the text. The unperformed or unperformable are actions and events that either cannot be brought onstage or which it was decided not to put onstage.

² I mentioned in the Introduction that possible worlds theorists put forward views about fictionality. Here I am mainly discussing Ryan's (1991; 2001) theory. I shall not address Dolezel's (1998) theory of fictionality in detail since he rarely touches on the question of the fictionality of theatre.

³ This survey of the theories of fictionality is by no means comprehensive. I have addressed only those theories which address the question of the fictionality of theatre. For general accounts and surveys see Searle (1975), Currie (1990), Cohn (1999), Sainsbury (2010), and Swirski (2010).

⁴ Enargeia is often confused with another figure from which it differs only slightly: *energeia*. Heinrich F. Plett states the difference as: "'Energeia' refers to a style that is made dynamic through a pathetic-visual vividness of representation, while Enargeia refers to the perceptual evidence of detailed descriptions" (quoted in Bernhart 2007, 134). See also Plett (2010, 46-7).

⁵ It is to be noted that this does not reflect the terminology used by the Elizabethans to talk about theatre. According to John Astington (2010, 30), they used the term 'presenting' to talk about 'representation.'

⁶ Italian Renaissance literary theory displayed more variety and depth than English Renaissance theory. It also engaged more widely with classical literary theory, especially Aristotle, which makes it a fertile source of theories of theatre participation. I choose to discuss these two critics, among the many other Italian critics in the Renaissance, since they represent two contrasting views and the two poles of the actual and virtual components of theatre. This is not to imply that they have a direct influence on Shakespeare's practice, but only to show the range of views that were prevalent at that time. For more information about Italian literary criticism, see Weinberg (1961) and Hathaway (1968; 1973).

⁷ In her study of the representational and presentational modes of acting, Lesley Wade Soule calls acting the mimetic-illusionistic and playing the celebrative mode (2000, 3-4).

⁸ The terminology employed in talking about theatre in the period also implied both presentational and representational tendencies. For example, the word for play was 'show' and for action was 'gesture,' while the words 'actor' and 'player' were used interchangeably. However, Soule holds that the word 'actor', not 'player', was used in the sense of 'personation' (2000, 126). Andrew Gurr laments that English has no one word for both the senses of seeing and hearing. Rather it uses the hearing-oriented Latin word 'audience' and the seeing-oriented word 'spectator.' And he distinguishes even between these senses: while seeing is considered stronger and conveyed a stronger touch of reality, 'hearing' was weaker and rather conveyed a sense of virtual, referential reality. (1987, 86-9)

⁹ Numerous invaluable studies of Shakespeare's views of dramatic art have been conducted. One classic example is Righter (1962). In the last two decades there was upsurge of interest in the idea. See, for example, Fass (1986), Kiernan (1998), Weimann (2000) and Astington (2010).

¹⁰ See, for example, Berry (1966), Brennan (1989), Wilson (1995), Hardy (1997), Meek (2009), and Gruber (2010).

¹¹ For a historical survey of the figure of 'phantasia' see Watson (1988).

¹² According to Alan Stewart, it is a play whose "characters spend much of the play recounting, hearing of, and commenting on what has happened elsewhere" (2009, 95). And as Janet Adelman puts it, "The play consists of a few actions and almost endless discussions of them" (1973, 30). Barbara Hardy also considers it primarily a play about narration (1997, 23).

¹³ The metatheatrical aspects of the play have been frequently pointed out by critics. Janet Adelman observes that "*Antony and Cleopatra* constantly insists on its status as a play" (1973, 39). For a survey of views of this aspect of the play see Deats (2004, 4-5).

¹⁴ Laura Quinney (2008, 244) suggests that the whereabouts of Antony are of crucial concern for all the characters, especially Octavius Caesar and Cleopatra, while Pauline Kiernan suggests that Antony seems to be in Alexandria and Rome and almost everywhere (1998, 170).

¹⁵ See Pauline Kiernan (1998) for a succinct account of these and similar discrepancies in the play between the different modes of representation.

¹⁶ Phyllis Rackin (1972, 204) makes this point with regard to Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra, but it can be extended to many other descriptions of the two protagonists. Indeed, this also refers to a general feature of the play which led it to be less frequently performed than other tragedies by Shakespeare. The non-performativity of the play is ascribed, besides these hyperbolic descriptions, to the large number of scenes and its dispersed locations (Deats 2004, 35).

Chapter Two

¹ Whether her fainting was real or feigned is another matter that has evoked different interpretations and speculations. For an account of her faint, see Sutherland and Watts (2000, 65-8).

² This approach to goals and plans, jointly inspired by modal logic and artificial intelligence, might seem too mechanistic to apply to complex literary works like Shakespeare's plays. In fact, Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) applies it mainly to short stories and fairy tales. However, as I will show, at least some aspects of this formulation might be profitably applied to parts of Shakespeare's plays. For a critique of these approaches see Cook (1995).

³ However, Marie-Laure Ryan (1991, 167-9) discerns many differences between her notion of 'virtual embedded narratives' and Prince's category of the 'disnarrated.' She accepts only some of Prince's cases as falling under the category of 'virtual' and by these she stresses two main differences: first, the virtual should not necessarily have linguistic realization. Second is that ontologically the virtual forms part of the plot, whereas some cases of the disnarrated do not. Yet she still sees these cases of the disnarrated as fulfilling an aesthetic purpose: "they track forking paths on the textual map, thereby increasing the size and diversity of the territory travelled in imagination" (ibid., 169).

⁴ The other two branches of rhetoric are deliberative and epideictic rhetoric. This tripartite distinction is first formulated in Aristotle's rhetoric. I use the term 'rhetoric' to refer not to the style manuals and lists of figures of speech, but rather to the art of argument and persuasion. In the Renaissance, both meanings were common, although the former were more so. As Wendy Olmsted writes, "English writers on rhetoric (with notable exceptions such as Thomas Wilson) emphasize style and figure at the expense of argument" (2006, 68). Studies of the relation between rhetoric and Shakespearean drama also polarize around these two fields. For example, Marion Trousedale (1982) deals

mainly with matters of style, especially in the Renaissance tradition of *de Copia* and the way it is manifested in Shakespeare. Raphael Lyne (2011) also deals with rhetorical tropes in Shakespeare, but from a cognitive point of view. He widens his scope to include figures other than metaphor. Lorna Hutson (2007) deals mainly with the forensic branch of rhetoric, and will be frequently consulted in this study. Lynn Enterline (2012) is concerned with the emotional aspect of the rhetorical effect, and how Shakespeare acquired that from his grammar-school learning. Richard Halpern (1991) focuses on the ideological implications of the Renaissance educational system, mainly informed by Marx's notion of 'primitive accumulation.'

⁵ Strauver (2009) gives a compelling account of the intricate relation between modality and rhetoric.

⁶ I am not implying here that Aristotle was the main influence on Renaissance rhetoric. On the contrary, Aristotle has very little influence at this stage in the development of rhetoric. (Mack 2003, 83) I am just tracing the development of the 'probability' element in rhetorical theory.

⁷ For examples of the enthymeme, see Richards (2008, 35).

⁸ The use of the term 'probable' here breeds ambiguity, for it can refer to the event itself or to the method used to infer the occurrence of that event. I have tried to avoid this ambiguity by using the term 'contingent' for the former meaning and the term 'probable' for the latter. As I have shown above, these two meanings are closely related; rhetoric has to deal with them together, and the next paragraph shows that both were defining features of rhetorical analysis.

⁹The example Wilson gives is informative: it is of a soldier suspected of killing a farmer. The orator is trying to prove this suspicion by accumulating data that augment the probability of the soldier having slain the farmer. The soldier, so the oration goes, is one who has been leading an aimless life, and has just returned from war, where his hands have been already smeared with blood, having killed many enemies. Such a person is more likely to slay more people. Besides, he has long been known as a thief who was brought up in a den of thieves. Moreover, he is known to be jobless, a rioter, a whoremonger, etc. Another sign is that he was there at the time the crime was committed, and he was sturdy and strong whereas the deceased farmer was weak (Wilson 1553, 50-1; for similar examples see also *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 2.3.5-2.5.8).

¹⁰An interesting example Greenblatt gives is one narrated by a Bristol merchant, John Gay, about the attempt of British colonizers to trade with the natives of the New World. In November 1612, a group of Englishmen arrived at Beothuck Indian houses and, finding none there, decided to leave some signs of their presence and good will: "Order was taken that nothing should be diminished, & because the savages should know that some had bin theare, everything was removed out of his place, & brought into one of the cabins, and laid orderlie one upon the other, & the kettle hanged over them, wheearin thear was put some bisket, & three or fower amber beades. This was done to beginne to winne them by fayre meanes" (quoted in Greenblatt 1991, 101.) The intruders' improvisation

here consists in their attempt, later proved successful, to project the probable ways in which the natives' imagination could lead. The intruders are trying, moreover, to lead their imagination in a certain direction, excluding all the other possibilities; for example, that things have been removed may be attributed to animals, a possibility which the intruders managed to exclude by piling things up in an orderly manner. Even now, that might have been taken as a sign of offence, which possibility was excluded by putting the kettle and beads over the other things. So the intruders' "act entails an *imagining* of the Beothuck response when they return to the village, a *calculation* of their *probable* interpretation of the signs – and the manifest fact that the intruders have so carefully imagined the villagers' response is implicitly one of the signs that they have left" (ibid.; emphasis added).

¹¹ See Maley (1999, 148).

¹² For more about irony in the play, see Hoeniger (1962).

¹³ When Richard at the opening of the play asks John of Gaunt whether Bolingbroke is accusing Mowbray for some 'known' treason, Gaunt shrewdly answers that he is accusing him for an 'apparent danger seen in him' against the person of the king. This dichotomy between the 'known' and the 'apparent' will linger throughout the play.

¹⁴ Some critics hold that even Bolingbroke himself was not aware of his real motives and that his action was spontaneous and not premeditated, that he was guided by events, not the other way around. For example, Harold F. Folland writes that "Like Richard, Bolingbroke fails at first to realize the drastic implications of his act, and Shakespeare has not indicated just when he realizes how little distinction there is between his forcible demand for right and rebellion" (1973, 391). For our purposes, even if this is true, it does not invalidate my argument, but rather supports it.

¹⁵ Bryon Bolam even holds that the original spelling of the name, 'Bullingbroke,' implies the sense of 'deception,' being composed of the word 'bulling.' Or it may be an imitation of water, from 'boil' or 'bubble,' which explains the wide use of the 'water' imagery in the play (see Bolam 2002, 142).

¹⁶ In his historical poem, *Civil Wars*, in which he outlines the War of the Roses between the Houses of York and Lancaster, Samuel Daniel also stresses the ambiguity of Bolingbroke's intentions, alluding to the possibility that even Bolingbroke himself is tricked by the advantage of power he is going to hold. The poet depicts Bolingbroke the first night he lands on the English shore after his banishment, when he is visited by the spirit Genius. Genius warns him that his coming will leave the door wide open for civil wars in which "The babes, unborne, shall be borne to bleed"(1.89).Bolingbroke assures his Country's spirit: "I am thy Champion, and I seeke my right: / Provok't I am to this, by others spight" (1.90). Genius thus prophesies that "Thou shall not know what then will be thy minde, / When thou shalt see thyself advanced and strong"(1, 91).

¹⁷ See Weingarten (1966) and Leggatt (1988) about this instability of naming in the play.

¹⁸ On the role Mowbray is supposed to play in Shakespeare's plot, see Champion (1975). On the murder of Woodstock, see French (1971) and Sutherland and Watt (2000, 92-99).

Chapter Three

¹ The debate about this issue is very wide. In addition to the sources that I mention in the text, it is useful to look into more sustained discussions of the matter like Zogarin (1999) as an opponent of the postmodern challenge and Jenkins (2000) as proponent of that challenge. For general treatments of relevant issues, see Curthoys and Docker (2006), Munslow (1997; 2007) and Windschuttle (2000).

² One problem with Hayden White's work is that White has never used a consistent terminology. Paul Ricoeur, for example, complains of the confusion caused by this constant change of terminology causes, and the different typologies it yields (1984, 167).

³ This is contrary to Dolezel's exposition of White's theory, where he claims that the term 'fiction' is not used in *Metahistory*: "indeed, as far as I can tell, the term *fiction* does not appear anywhere in the book" (Dolezel 2010: 21; original emphasis).

⁴ White was pessimistic about the reception of his ideas in both history and literary theory (1978, 122). Critiques levelled at this view came, just as expected, from historians (Zagorin 1999; Windschuttle 2000). Robert F. Beckhofer points out that White's ideas were ignored and rarely practically applied, except in the field of intellectual history (1997, 16-8, 24).

⁵ Most scholars writing about Shakespeare's histories welcome White's thesis, such as Ivo Kamps (1996) and Phyllis Rackin (1990).

⁶ Ricoeur is interested in the structural and configurational aspect of mimesis insofar as it is a prelude to its cognitive effect.

⁷ Elsewhere White asserts that "to say that we make sense of the real world by imposing upon it the formal coherency that we customarily associate with the products of writers of fiction in no way detracts from the status as knowledge which we ascribe to historiography" (1978, 99). Acknowledging the reality of the past, White avers: "Historical discourse does not, then, produce new information about the past" (*ibid.*, 2). In a later study, he asserts that he does not deny history the status of facts and the possibility of their knowledge, but without discourse they would be more of an archive than proper history. To be sure, discourse does not add facts, but only interpretations (1999, 2-3). Thus, White's acknowledgement of the existence of historical 'facts' renders Dolezel's differentiation pointless, since White, after all, does not deny the differences between the components of historical and fictional worlds.

⁸ Gerald Prince identifies a narrow and a wide meaning for the 'plot' in narratology. In its narrow meaning, it refers to "the main incidents of a narrative, the outline of situations and events (thought of as being distinct from the

characters involved in them or the themes illustrated by them)” (1987, 71). In this text I am using it in the wider sense defined above.

⁹ Dorrit Cohn is of the same opinion when she observes that historical representation is set apart from fictional representation in that the former has the additional element of an external referent, and so the di-terminology of ‘story’ and ‘plot’ is inadequate for historical representation: “A novel can be said to be plotted, but not emplotted . . . in this respect the process that transforms archival sources into narrative history is qualitatively different from (and hardly comparable to) the process that transforms a novelist’s sources . . . into his fictional creation”(1999, 114).

¹⁰ In fact, Hayden White’s work is associated more with the Formalist, New Critical and even structuralist tradition than with the Poststructuralist and Postmodernist ones. As Anne Curthoys and John Docker put it, “White’s work is itself open to poststructuralist critique. In adopting from Frye the notion that there are agreed meanings, forms, genres, in literary language, his conception of genre and text derives more from structuralism than poststructuralism”(2006, 193).

¹¹ Aristotle defines the ‘probable’ as the thing that people of a certain type would say and do in given situations. Writing about portraying characters according to the rules of probability and necessity, he says that it means: “that for such a person to say and do such things is necessary or probable” (XV.1454a33-4). And as I will show in the next note, he is not contrasting the two terms, as he is defining one, ‘probable’, in terms of another, ‘possible.’ In other words, to decide whether some action or speech is probable or not depends on whether it is the sort of thing that happens in real life, i.e., possible. Thus the criterion of probability is the frequency of occurrence: “the possible seems plausible: about the possibility of things which have not occurred we are not yet sure; but it is evident that actual events are possible – they could not otherwise have occurred” (IX.1451b15-20).

In the Renaissance and eighteenth-century England, the criterion of probability continued to be defined on the basis of general human nature, knowledge of which is more public than scientific. And ‘public opinion’ in this sense is different from what some poststructuralist critics have taken it to be, namely as ideology in the negative sense of false consciousness. Rather, this term has positive meanings in the period (See Nuttall 1983, 57).

¹² Aristotle here is not setting the two categories in opposition to each other; rather he is asserting that the impossible can be made probable (credible): he is not saying that every impossible is probable. The ‘possible’ exists but the ‘probable’ is cognitively constructed. So, the ontological category is mediated by the cognitive one. It is only cognitively that we consider things to be possible or not. But, quite reasonably, every possible should be probable. Aristotle’s dictum is a demonstration of the power of discourse and he is anticipating a postmodern position.

¹³ See Beverley Southgate (1996, 14-8) for a survey of the effect of Aristotle's formulation on the difference between history and poetry and how it influenced later accounts of the question, especially in the Renaissance.

¹⁴ In another important passage from the *Poetics* Aristotle seems to imply that historical discourse relates non-unified, disconnected events. About the epic Aristotle writes: "Its structure should not be like histories which require an exposition not of a single action but of a single period, with all the events (in their chronological relationships) that happened to one person or more during it" (XXIII.1459a20-5). Nevertheless, the above discussion applies to this passage as well: briefly, he only says that some histories lack narrative coherence; in no sense does this mean that they *should* lack it.

¹⁵ Whether these forms of writing were considered by contemporaries to be history per se is a matter of dispute (see Kewes 2005, 5; Woolf 2005, 62).

¹⁶ The figure of speech used in such cases was called 'Prosopopoeia'. See Gavin Alexander's (2007) account of this figure of speech.

¹⁷ For similar views of the role of the possible and probable in the historical writing of the period, see Lull (2002, 89-90) and Holderness, Potter and Turner (1988, 3).

¹⁸ Sidney speaks about poetry, because poetry was the default case for imaginative literature (Nelson 1973, 39). And its 'truth' was even preferred to the fabrication of Romance (ibid, 51). This was also before the novel, in its realistic form, occupied the position of the default case of fiction in later centuries. See Chapter One for a discussion of the generic divisions of fictionality.

¹⁹ Two works may suffice for an example: John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563) and Thomas More's *Richard III* (1513) (Anderson 1984, Chap.6; Collinson 1997; Levine 1997).

²⁰ As I am using these plays as examples, I am of course aware of the authorship controversies which they have triggered. *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* have occasioned less debate. *1 Henry VI*, however, is notoriously difficult regarding its complete attribution to Shakespeare and its date relative to the other two plays. The play is generally thought to have been written after the other two plays. Critics have also identified other 'hands' in its authorship in addition to Shakespeare; one of the main candidate is Thomas Nashe. The main line of the argument in this chapter is mostly irrelevant to, and does not depend on, settling these controversies. Moreover, the common themes and ideas in the three plays that we examine in this Chapter might unveil a kind of unity among them. For discussions of the authorship problem of *1 Henry VI*, see Kirschbaum (1952), Law (1954), Harlow (1965), and Vickers (2007).

²¹ This is not to say, however, that their chances of performance were less than the other histories. On the contrary, the performance history of these plays is very rich in the twentieth century, and this dimension of the plays has received considerable critical attention. See Watson (1990) and Reeves and Rutter (2006).

²² Two disclaimers need be made before we proceed. First, I am choosing these plays although I am fully aware that they lack the narrative structure that other plays have. The plays at their best are considered episodic and shapeless. (see Dean 1982, 36; Lull 2002, 92; Dessen 2004, 273; Leggatt 2009, 133). I am not claiming that these plays have a typical, uninterrupted narrative structure; nevertheless they are full of subtle examples of the effective use of narrative and invite speculation into the nature of historical representation. It can be argued that Shakespeare shows the importance of narrative in the least narrative of his history plays. Second, given the main interest in this chapter, namely how the plays reflect on the questions of historical representation, it makes less relevant question of the extent to which Shakespeare has followed his sources. To be sure, Shakespeare's departure from his sources varies from one play to another. Occasionally, Shakespeare drastically modifies the historical events, especially in *1 Henry VI* (See Saccio 1977, 105).

²³ It is interesting that Margaret elsewhere complains that her husband is a 'pupil still' (1.3.50). Moreover, Eleanor, Gloucester's wife, also calls him Margaret's baby: "She'll pamper thee, and dandle thee like a baby" (1.3.149).

²⁴ It is interesting to note that the use of these analogies can also to be traced to the Chronicles themselves. For example, Edward Hall frequently describes Henry V as a shepherd to his flock (soldiers) (1809, 112). He also uses serpentine imagery so frequently to describe conspiring figures. Holinshed, on the other hand, used these tropes very rarely in his historical narration (see also Goy-Blanquet 2003, 80).

²⁵ Larry S. Champion (1977, 296) considers Gloucester the main character in the play and that he occupies around 69% of the second part. So, it is as if all the historical events are no more than a play.

²⁶ That ostensive evidence is not open to interpretation is also called into question elsewhere in Shakespeare. I am thinking here mainly of Falstaff carrying the body of Hotspur in *1 Henry IV* after the battle of Shrewsbury in act 5, scene 4, claiming that it was he who killed him.

²⁷ Given the significance that can be attached to this scene, we cannot but disagree with Nicholas Grene that the scene of the Countess "is remarkable in Shakespeare for its anomalousness" (2002, 192).

Chapter Four

¹ This example may be better categorized as a figurative counterfactual, since the antecedent (Edward III having prophet's eyes) is impossible, which would turn the whole counterfactual into non-serious fantasy. Nevertheless, the special context of this play, which abounds in prophecies and predictions, may guarantee the possibility of such contemplation. Earlier in the same conversation with Richard, Gaunt declares: "Methinks I am a prophet new inspired / And thus, expiring, do foretell of him" (2.1.31-2). If Gaunt grants himself this privilege, it is quite possibly that he grants it, just as seriously, to his father. Moreover, prophethood seems to be ascribed in the play to old wise men, as is indicated by the Welsh Captain's predictions about the fall of Richard: "The

pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth, / And lean-looked prophets whisper fearful change;" (2.4.10-1) So, it is more than likely that Edward III, the great king that he was, could have possessed this gift. In the upward counterfactuals of Wolsey and Gaunt, we can identify a sense of regret over what has happened.

² Collections of counterfactual historical case studies have mushroomed in the last decade. For example see Cowley (2005) and Roberts (2004). There are some case studies that centre on one topic, such as Macintyre and Scalmer (2006) about Australian history and Beckett (2011) about British Prime ministers. There is a book-length study of one case such as Harvey (2012) about the war on Iraq.

³Historically speaking, Falstolf is not responsible for the capture of Talbot and he is not as cowardly as Shakespeare depicts him (Saccio 1977, 112-3; Goy-Blanquet 2003, 38).

⁴ In a detailed historical counterfactual scenario Josiah Ober (2005) traces the effects of the battle of Actium on the future of the Roman Empire and the world as a whole, and evaluates specifically the effect of Cleopatra on the defeat of Antony. According to his analysis, that effect should not be exaggerated, because many other factors contributed to bring about that result.

⁵ Although the fall may sometimes be attributed to the flatterers (see Levin 2009, 112), it was the king who let them behave the way they did. The recurrence of the pronoun 'he' referring to Richard in the gardener's speech places this blame mainly on the King.

⁶ Critics and directors did not fail to realize the affinity between the roles of the gardener and John of Gaunt, so much so that in a production of the play in San Diego, California, the role was doubled and the two characters were played by the same actor. See Potter (2003, 302) and Hopkins (2003, 407)

⁷ For the financial corruption of Suffolk, see Cartelli (2003, 330-2) and Saccio (1977, 120-1). For the intimate relation between Margaret and Suffolk, see Williams (1974).

⁸ Alexander Leggatt, acknowledging that in the *Henry VI* plays prophecies always prove true, describes Lucy's prophecy about the Talbots as invalid. After their death, Lucy says of Talbot and his son: "from their ashes shall be reared / A phoenix that shall make all France afeard" (4.7.92-3). According to Leggatt, "The Talbots' deaths, like the deaths of heroes in later tragedies, truly constitute an ending" (2009, 130).

⁸ The miracle in *2 Henry VI* act 2, scene 1, is significant, since almost every attendant, save for Gloucester, is deceived by it. Even the King exclaims to Simpcox: "Poor soul. God's goodness hath been great to thee. / Let never day nor night unhallowed pass, / But still remember what the Lord hath done" (2.1.86-8). It shows how inaccurate the ascription of divine intervention in some events may be. Ironically, the Cardinal, Suffolk and Gloucester play with the word 'miracle' after this deception is laid bare (160-3).

¹⁰ Interestingly, in his *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft*, George Gifford asserts that even those visited by the devil might tell of future events with some validity. The reason is that Satan, having been around throughout human history, has learned how things normally turn out. So he can use that knowledge to predict future events and convey it to some men or women (1603, 62).

¹¹In some histories, however, we have moments when monarchs engage in a wishful or regrettable practice which includes undoing the actual past and imagining a different course of events. Henry VI, for example, wishes that his father had never bequeathed him a kingdom: "I'll leave my son my virtuous deeds behind, / And would my father had left me no more!" (3 *Henry VI*, 2.2.49-50). Henry IV also expresses a wish that his son Hal had been exchanged for Hotspur:

O, that it could be proved
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
In cradle-clothes our children where they lay,
And called mine Percy, his Plantagenet!

(1 *Henry IV*: 1.1.85-88)

Richard II voices his regret while in prison: "I wasted time and now doth time waste me" (5.5.49). He expresses it in terms close to the gardener's counterfactual remark: "Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down" (3.4.67).

¹²On dreams and prophecies in the *Henry VI* plays, see Watson (1990, 47); Goy-Blanquet (2003, 84-5) and Grene (2002, 132-7, 149-50).

¹² For more examples see Rackin (1990, 190) and Sutherland and Watts (2000, 34, 77, 109, 160, 171). This might constitute what Saint-Gelais calls, regarding critical counterfictions, a "sophisticated literary joke" (2011, 250).

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