A Possible Worlds Account of Dramatic Genres in Shakespeare

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Abstract:

The paper provides an account of the difference between tragedy and comedy in Shakespeare based on 'Possible Worlds' theory. It argues that, viewed from a possible worlds theory perspective, comedy is rooted in a sense of possibility and contingency while tragedy is rooted in a sense of necessity. Comedy and tragedy diverge in the kind of dominant modal operators, the kind of private worlds and the nature of dramatic conflict in each genre. The theoretical framework provided in this study is applied to two Shakespearean plays, one tragedy and the other comedy: *Romeo and Juliet* (1592) and *A Midsummer Night's dream* (1595). It shows that, although the two plays deal with the a relatively similar theme, their generic difference leads to a completely different treatment of this theme.

تفسير الاختلاف بين الأنماط الدرامية عند شكسبير بناء على نظرية العوالم الممكنة

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<u>ملخص البحث:</u>

تقدم الدراسة الحالية تفسيرا للفرق بين الكوميديا والتراجيديا عند شكسبير اعتمادا على نظرية العوالم الممكنة. حيث انه من منظور نظرية العوالم الممكنة، فان الكوميديا تعتمد على إحساس متجذر بالإمكان، أما التراجيديا فإنها تعتمد على إحساس متجذر بالضرورة. يختلف النمطان في ثلاث أمور: النظرة الجهوية الغالبة وطبيعة العوالم الخاصة بالشخصيات وطبيعة الصراع الدرامي في كل منهما. تم تطبيق الاطار النظري الذي قدمته الدراسة على مسرحيتين لوليام شكسبير، احدهما تراجيديا والأخرى كوميديا: *روميو وجوليات* (١٥٩٢) *وحلم ليلة منتصف الليل* (١٥٩٥). يبين التحليل انه على الرغم من ان المسرحيتين تتناولان نفس الموضوع، الا وهو الحب،، الا ان اختلاف النمط الادبي لهما أدى الى معالجة مختلفة تماما لهذا الموضوع.

1: Introduction

> Paris. That "may be" must be, love, on Thursday next.
> Juliet. What must be shall be.
> Friar Lawrence. That's a certain text.   (*Romeo and Juliet*: 4.1.20-22)

The above metalinguistic exchange between Juliet and Paris from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1592) betrays a sweeping sense of necessity and inevitability that shrouds the whole play and ends up in the untimely deaths of the two star-crossed lovers. In fact, this Shakespearean vision of necessity that shaped this early tragedy has continued to inform his practice in the later, more mature tragedies. Moreover, this vision informs not only Shakespeare's tragedies, but also his comedies. This is part of a broader sense of both possibility and necessity that sets the ground for the comedies and tragedies, respectively. Unlike tragedy, Shakespearean comedy is grounded in an inherent sense of possibility. A deeper understanding of the differences between dramatic genres in Shakespeare, then, is predicated on and informed by a more detailed understanding of the concepts of possibility and necessity.

One philosophical framework that provided deep insights into the nature of the concepts of possibility and necessity is Possible Worlds theory. The concept of endless 'possible worlds' was suggested by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his *Theodicy* (1710), but then it was seized on by scholars of modal logic and philosophy to solve issues of modal statements and quantification, among other things (See Bradley and Swartz 1979). Literary theory took notice of the concept and literary theorists became increasingly aware of the utility of this concept in analysing narrative, namely to put forward an account of different narratological phenomena, such as plot structure and movement, fictionality, metafiction, conflict, etc. Both metaphors constitutive of this concept – 'world' and 'possibility' – are functional in analysing literary texts. Possible worlds theory envisions the fictional work as constructing a possible world with its own laws of validity that cannot be measured based on real world data. The theory has been used to investigate the issue of truth in fiction (Lewis 1978), the analysis of fictionality and the construction of plot (Ryan 1991, Dolezel 1998, Bell and Ryan 2019), the analysis of counterfactual statements (Dannenberg 2008), of modality and literary theory (Martin 2004), etc.

One area of application of possible worlds theory in literature during the last decade has been genre theory. Critics have applied the theory to provide a better account of the nature of such genres as the fantastic, science-fiction, hypertext fiction, etc. However, no such account has been provided to underpin the difference between tragedy and comedy. In this paper, I will argue that possible worlds theory can account for the differences between comedy and tragedy in Shakespeare. The 'Possible Worlds' framework can make many contributions to the theory of genres

and especially to the differentiation between comedy and tragedy. Viewed from a Possible Worlds perspective, comedy and tragedy show clear differences in terms of the logical status of each genre, the kind of private worlds involved in the conflict, the nature of the conflict in each, and the overall movement of the plot. In what follows I will survey the main strands of genre theory in its account of tragedy and comedy, with a special focus on the Renaissance period. Then I will put forward a Possible Worlds account of the differences between the two genres in Shakespeare. Lastly, I will set out to illustrate this point by making reference to two of Shakespeare plays, a tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet* 1592) and a comedy (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1595). As the two plays deal with the same subject – namely, love – , the analysis can show how each has approached that subject differently based on the aforementioned framework.

2: Genre Theory and Dramatic Genres

Genre is generally understood as a tool of categorizing literary works. However, genres serve more complicated functions. Genres can be seen as "forms of cultural knowledge that conceptually frame and mediate how we understand and typically act within various situations" (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 4). In this sense, genres have an ideological function as well as a historical dimension. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren define genre as an institution. To them, genres are "Institutional imperatives which both coerce and are in turn coerced by the writer" (1956, 226). Moreover, different schools have viewed genres differently. The stucturalists, for example, argue that genres shape literary meaning; genres are what makes some meanings possible to express in the first place. The Romantics, on the other hand, repudiate the concept of genre and hold that it hinders creativity. Reader response theorists see genres as a heuristic tool that the critic uses to persuade the reader of their interpretations and of reading the text in any specific way (See Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 13-23). Benedetto Croce follows the Romantics in considering the concept of genre to be a rather prohibitive and restrictive strategy that does not go in line with the creative power of aesthetics and literature ([1953] 2000. 26). In his seminal book, *Kinds of Literature*, Alistair Fowler defines genres as types rather than classes. He argues that they are a functional category, guiding readers' interpretations of individual literary works (1982, 37). The postmodernists are skeptical of the concept of genre since, they argue, it is an essentialist concept reminiscent of Platonic essences (See Martindale 2011, 242).

Historically, the interest in the categorization of literary genre is as old as the interest in literature itself. However, genre theory has its formal start with Plato, who differentiated between two types of narration (diegesis) or indirect narration and (mimesis) or direct narration (*The Republic*, Books II and III). This distinction set the ground for the more fundamental distinction between fiction and drama, and has been the basis for later attempts to theorise genre, most notably Aristotle's attempt in the *Poetics*. Aristotle kept the distinction between fiction and drama, but more

importantly for our purposes here, he distinguished between two types of drama: tragedy and comedy. In Chapter VI of the *Poetics*, Aristotle points out that all drama is an imitation of an action. But while tragedy is an imitation of a serious action (1965, 38), comedy is an imitation of a non-serious action. Yet, the main influence on Renaissance tragedy in theory and practice was not the Greek tragedy or Aristotle's *Poetics*, but rather, it was Horace's *Ars poetica* and Seneca's plays, among other things (Reiss 1999, 232). Following Horace, Seneca's tragedy was more leaning to moralising. Renaissance tragedy followed suit with that tradition, especially at its earliest stages.[1]

Building on this classical tradition, writers during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance put forward their own views on tragedy and comedy. One main strand of thought on tragedy was the concept of the change of fortune. This started with the definition of tragedy that Chaucer gave in "The Mink's Tale" and was passed to the Renaissance dramatists. Another foundational text in this tradition was John Lydgate's poem *The Fall of Princes* (1438). These texts launched the *De Casibus* tragedy tradition which dealt with how princes fall out of fortune after they enjoyed great power and fame. The tradition was inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (1355-78) and it continued throughout the Renaissance in such works as *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1574). Another main characteristic that Renaissance tragedy preserved from Aristotle is the high social rank of its protagonists[2]. However, unlike tragedy, comedy was undertheorized, basically due to the fact that Aristotle's Poetics deals mainly with tragedy, leaving comedy perhaps to a separate manuscript, which is said to have been lost. However, the borderlines between tragedy and comedy during the classical period were very clearly demarcated. Yet, during the Medieval period, and after drama re-emerged from the Church, these borderlines were blurred, as the moralities and mysteries contained elements of both tragedy and comedy. Besides, as Andrew Stott reminds us, as per Boccaccio and Chaucer, comedy came to mean not a separate genre but to denote everything that is not tragedy (2005, 23). Moreover, publishers of plays in the early Tudor period did not bother to categorise their plays as comedies or tragedies (See Gurr 2011, 73). Yet, the Renaissance theorists called for a reinstatement of boundaries. Sir Philip Sidney, for example, berated contemporary dramatists for mixing comic and tragic elements in one play ([1595] 1999, 383). Although Shakespeare's first folio (published posthumously in 1623 by his colleagues John Heminges and Henry Condell) was divided on a generic basis (Comedies, Histories and Tragedies), yet the application of precise prescriptive criteria did not come into effect until the 1640s (Gurr, ibid.)

Renaissance critics focused mostly on the moral aspects of tragedy and on its class distinction from comedy. Alexander Neville, for example, states that tragedy depicts the change of fortune in a Prince's life and thus serves as a warning ([1563] 1999, 125). In his *Defence of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney follows Horace in his definition of tragedy and comedy. His view of both genres is moralistic: he sees comedy as showing the follies of people to be avoided and tragedy as showing the

consequences of grand sins and crimes ([1995] 1999, 363). Thomas Heywood, in his *Defence of Drama*, follows Donatus in describing comedy as beginning with trouble but ending in peace, while tragedy begins with peace but ends in trouble. However, his view is likewise moral: both tragedy and comedy show us the good to be followed and the evil to be avoided ([1608] 1999, 493). Similar moralistic views are voiced by George Whetstone who holds that in comedy, "the conclusion shows the confusion of vice and the cherishing of virtue" ([1578] 1999, 174) and by Sir Thomas Elyot who emphasised the importance of poetry, including the dramatic genres, in education ([1531] 1999, 65-6). In "The Moral Function of Poetry," Ben Jonson states that poetry teaches discipline to young men; and to the grown ups, it teaches greater virtues ([1607] 1999, 469-470). In *The Art of English Poesy*, George Puttenham situates the genres in a moral mould. To him the first genre that started with correcting the follies is satire. But since it was too vulgar, comedy emerged as a more civilised form. Later, with the appearance of princes and kings, and given that comedy is designed to make fun of lesser classes, poets devised tragedy: "but because the matter was higher than that of the comedies, the poets' style was also higher and more lofty, the provision greater, the place more magnificent" ([1589] 2007, 123). Thus, it appears that most of the Renaissance thinking about genres was inspired by their classical sources and that Renaissance critics did not consider the philosophical aspects of the difference between the genres.

Modern genre theories have put forward various explanations for the differences between genres. Francis Cornford, for example, related comedy to fertility rituals and rites of regeneration and recreation (1914, 18). Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), advanced the idea that the genres are related to and derived from the cycle of death and rebirth, symbolised as it is by the seasonal cyclical movements: tragedy is related to winter, comedy to spring, romance to Summer and irony to autumn (1957, 158-60). Moreover, It always ends with the victory of the young generation over the old one, a victory which is signaled by a ritual – a party or a wedding (ibid., 163). The psychologist Henry Bergson saw in comedy a drive to assert liveliness, creativity against the mechanical and automation to which life might be occasionally drifting (Bergson 1913). A C Barber (1959), on the other hand, saw in Shakespearean comedy a continuation of a saturnalian spirit and an expression of the festival culture of Elizabethan England. Michael Bakhtin was thinking of the same line when he showed that comedy is expressive of the lower, marketplace voice as opposed to the official voice of power. To Bakhtin, comedy works according to a comic logic that runs alongside official culture, making fun of it and caricaturing it. According to Bakhtin, the marketplace "offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (1984, 6). The New Historicists, most notably Stephen Greenblatt, saw in comedy an attempt at a subversive blast against monarchical power. However, according to the subversion and containment hypothesis, this very attempt at subversion is itself a mechanism of the ruling power to assert its dominance at the end (Greenblatt 1988). R. W. Maslen

argues that comedy is a very class-conscious genre, asserting the existence of the common man and his right of expressing himself (2005, 5). He thinks that the essence of Shakespearean comedy is the issue of bad-timing. William Demastes thinks that comedy is in the final analysis a conservative art; in its satirical stance towards abnormalities and deviations from the norm, it basically works on restoring the established order (2008, 6). Thus, the above survey shows that the concepts of possibility and necessity have not been central to the modern theorizing about literary genres. Hence stems the significance of the contribution that Possible Worlds theory can make to the explanation of genres.

3: The Possible Worlds of Tragedy and Comedy

Possible Worlds (henceforward PW) theory provides a philosophical account of the difference between tragedy and comedy. [3] As mentioned above, Possible Worlds theory was instrumental in providing answers to many enduring questions in the study of fictionaltiy and narrativity. However, the theory has been recently applied to put forward a general understanding of the concept of literary genre using its two basic metaphors – possibility and worlds. Concepts of possibility and worlds have been found relevant to the understanding and analysis of genres. This relevance takes different forms. First, through the dialectical relation between genres and texts. This relation can be conceptualised in terms of 'token/type' relationship (Frow 2006, 11). This relation can be explained out in terms of possibility/potentiality and reality/actuality, in the sense that genres represent a pool of possibiloities, some of which will be realized in each text that belongs to the genre. In other words, the text actualises the potential latent in every genre. Second, the rhetorical structure of each genre contains the level of commitment of the speaker towards his statements – degrees of probability and possibility - which differs from one genre to another. In other words, there is a modal element in the structure of genre (ibid., 75). Third, the 'world' metaphor proves also useful when talking about genres. Different genres are said to construct different worlds. As John Frow states, "The text constructs a world which is generically specific. It is different from the worlds performed in other genres of writing" (ibid., 7). This realization of the genres as worlds would contribute to the heuristic value of literary genres. "The idea of generic worlds directs a genre-savvy critic to the dimensions of these collective representations—including time, space, categories of actors and settings, causality, and motivation—and the interpretation they call for" (Seitel 2003, 279). These accounts, then, focus on concepts of actualisation, worlds and modality in general.

More specifically, the concept of a literary world has been instrumental in understanding particular genres. For example, Nany H. Traill (1995) applies Possible Worlds theory to the study of the genre of the fantastic, providing a new rationale for the categorization of the works of this genre, laying special emphasis on the category of the paramount. In *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* (2001), Lowell Edmunds uses the possible world framework to analyze the peculiar nature of Roman

poetry and argues that Roman poetry constructs counterfactual worlds. Katerina Vassilopoulou (2008) also uses possible worlds to account for the special nature of the Theatre of the Absurd. She argues that the oddities in this theatre can be explained out using the 'accessibility relations' concept from the Possible Worlds theory. She also finds out that this theory can explain the lack of the conflict in the Absurdist drama. Alice Bell (2010, 2014) applies possible worlds theory to hypertext to show the utility of possible worlds not only to explicate individual text, but also to explore the poetics of the genre itself. In his essay "The Best/Worst of All Possible Worlds: Utopia, Dystopia and Possible Worlds," Mattison Schuknecht attempts to give an account of the formal differences between utopian and dystopian texts using the possible worlds framework. Schuknech employs a intrauniverse approach, which deals with the formal nature of the conflict in each genre. He borrows Dolozel's (1998) scheme of the four narrative modalities. Schuknech thinks that the governing modality in utopian and dystopian fictions is the deontic modality. "Specifically, dystopian texts contain extensive conflict between the modalities of the deontic system, while utopian texts contain a substantial degree of harmony between the same modalities" (2019, 239).

However, no account has been given of the difference between tragedy and comedy using the Possible Worlds framework. Below, I will present a Possible Worlds account for the difference between the two genre of tragedy and comedy. I argue that, from a Possible Worlds perspective, the two genres differ in three major ways: the logical status of the modal operators that are dominant in each genre, the nature of the private worlds used, and the nature of the dramatic conflict in each of the two genres. In the theoretical framework below, I will rely mainly on Maria-Laure Ryan's (1991) model of Possible Worlds theory since she provides the most comprehensive and articulate treatment of narrative conflict, private worlds and modality in the literary text.

The first difference between tragedy and comedy has to do with the logical status and the modal operators that dominate each genre. While comedy moves according to the modal operator of possibility, tragedy works on that of necessity. Events in tragedy are perceived as necessary and inevitable, while in comedy they are seen as possible and contingent. That is to say, a character in comedy preserves the right of changing an option s/he has made so far, which is hardly possible in tragedy. Put in logical terms, if we regard the wishes or obligations of characters as being expressible in the form of propositions, each consisting of an item and a property ascribed to it (See Bradley and Swartz 1979, 7), we may argue the nature of the relation between the two components of the propositions differ in terms of their modal status. While in tragedy the relation that holds between an item and the property ascribed to it is a necessary, inevitable one, in comedy it is a possible, contingent relation. Related to this is the fact that propositions in comedy are always modalized while in tragedy they are not.

For example, in *Twelfth Night*, Orsino has long wished to be betrothed to Olivia, and has undertaken many ways to get her approval. Lastly he settled on employing the disguised Viola to convey his messages to Olivia. But although Orsino's wish has moved the play till the end, this wish is an contingent one: his love object has, out of a sudden, turned out from Olivia to the non-disguised Viola. Expressed in logical terms, we may view the relation between Orsino (here the item) and his wish (the property ascribed to that item) as a possible, contingent one that can be changed at any time. By the same token, Olivia's love to the disguised Viola has, no less suddenly, turned towards Viola's brother, Sebastian (See Act V, scene I). However, some comedies might end up with satisfying everyone except one character. This is most evidently the case with Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. This phenomenon is identified by Northrop Frye. Comedy always contains what Frye calls *pharmakos*, the scapegoat figure that has to be sacrificed or excluded by the end of the play (1957, 148).

This is not common in tragedy, where the relation between items and their properties is always necessary. The ideas a tragic character entertains are inseparable from him/her. For example, Othello's thoughts about Desdemona stick so deeply in him and cannot in any way be ruled out from his mind; otherwise, he would not have had that tragic end. This is true of Macbeth, Lear, Caesar, etc. Had all these tragic figures behaved like *an* Orsino, the genre of Shakespearean tragedy would not have existed. William Demastes sees that the tragic hero is ready to sacrifice everything to achieve his goal. He doesn't accept his place in the universe or society and constantly attempts to transcend it (2016, 12). That a character in comedy can change positions means that s/he has more options, and, accordingly, more possibilities that s/he opens to him- or herself. This also leads us to conclude that in tragedy a character is inseparable from his/her wishes and obligations, but in comedy he is only loosely so.

It is this feature of the logical structure of the two genres that can explain the high and low seriousness associated with tragedy and comedy, respectively. Comedy is more a place where 'everything is not what it is', so much so that characters rumoured dead are discovered to be alive and relatives lost are sooner or later found. It is a place where the laws of nature are for a time suspended and so is the cause-effect relationship where causes do not lead to their consequences. In tragedy this is hardly the case. Tragedy is a sphere where the laws of nature are hardly neutralized. Even more, they are fiercer than they are in real life. In tragedy, results are necessarily consequents on their causes, but in comedy they are only contingently so. According to Northrop Frye, tragedy is more disinterested and emotionally detached. It is more liable to inalienable human and scientific laws. That is why tragedy flourishes in times when scientific laws sway strong as during the time of the Greek and the European renaissance. (1957, 206-8).

The second difference between tragedy and comedy is in terms of the kinds of private worlds most prominent in each genre. According to Ryan, private worlds are characters' mental constructs about what really exists in the world of the text. They include their knowledge about that world (knowledge worlds), their wishes of what will happen (wish worlds), their sense of their obligations or what they have to do (obligation worlds), their own created worlds within the actual world of the text (fantasy worlds), etc. (See Ryan 1991, 114-20). As far as the contents of the characters' private worlds are concerned, the two genres differ considerably. In comedy, characters' private worlds consist mainly of wish worlds (W-worlds), while in tragedy they mostly consist of obligation worlds (O-worlds). This has a massive impact on the nature of the two genres and the ways characters are expected to behave in each. Wish worlds are more flexible than obligation worlds. Wish worlds can have a scale of desirability and can be constantly switched forth and back if one is not available, but obligations are always of a rigid nature and have to be fulfilled anyway. Frustrated, wishes may change but obligations will stick to the same position until they are satisfied. And their satisfaction always requires the destruction of another party. This is succinctly put by Ryan:

> But a character's W[ish]-world may be flexible enough to offer alternatives, so the nonrealization of the highest wish can be partially made up by a less desirable but still positively valued way.
>
> The potential flexibility of W-worlds suggests that the axiological operators 'good' and 'bad' are not binary categories, but the poles of a continuum. W-worlds are layered structures in which various situations are ranked according to their degree of desirability. In the course of a narrative, characters may aim successively at various layers of their W-world, settling for lower levels as the higher ones become unattainable. (1991, 118)

Back to *Twelfth Night*, we can see that both Olivia and Orsino do modify their wishes as they realize that the primary wishes they set for themselves are unattainable.

This is quite unexpected in tragedy, where the characters see themselves as being motivated by obligations that they have to fulfil, rather than mere desires that may be compromised. For instance, Macbeth considers the preserving of his throne as an obligation to which he is deadly committed. And so does Othello regarding his honour which he sees Desdemona to have indelibly tainted. No less committed is Hamlet for revenging his father against his uncle. The rigid nature of the obligations is such that they are hardly to be shifted or reconciled. The force of the PW theory lies in part in its differentiation between wishes and obligations. This differentiation can account for the consequences attendant on that distinction regarding the nature of characters and the way they are expected to behave. And it is this domination of comedy with wishes and tragedy with obligations that explains the relative flexibility of the characters in the former and their one-sidedness in the latter.

Moreover, one can easily notice that this difference is related to the first one, of the logical status of possibility and necessity. Consequently, it can be argued that the first is consequent on this second difference: the flexibility of the wishes and rigidity of the obligations correlate with the possibility-based and necessity-based nature of comedy and tragedy, respectively. It is to be noted, however, that while the modality invoked here is alethic and deontic modalities, rather than the epistemic modality which John Frow referred to (2006, 75).

The third difference lies in the nature of the conflict in each genre. In tragedy, conflict ensues when a private of world of some character does not coincide with the textual actual world. The textual actual world is the exact representation of a referential reality that is depicted by the text (Ryan 1991, 24-5). Characters will always try to make that textual actual world as closer as possible to his/her own private world. This will inevitably entail the dissatisfaction of another character's private world with which the textual actual world has been coinciding so far. Thus, the private worlds of tragic characters are exclusive by nature, where their satisfaction is based on the 'either-or' principle: only one side can be satisfied at a time. In comedy, the nature of the conflict is totally different. The comic plot and its dissolution do not move that way. The private worlds of comic characters are inclusive, in the sense that the satisfaction of one coincides with and entails the satisfaction of another. Thus, it works according to the 'both-and' principle.

As Ryan puts it, this exclusive nature of the conflicting worlds in tragedy can be attributed to two factors:

> The layers of a W-world differ not only through their degree of desirability, but also through their degree of compatibility with T/AW [Textual/Actual World]. A W-state defined over few propositions is compatible with a greater number of possible worlds than a W-state defined over many propositions, and T/AW has a greater chance to be one of these worlds. Another factor of this compatibility is of course the nature of the individual propositions. The W-state defined over the proposition "x is king" may for instance be harder to realize than another state defined over forty. (ibid.)

Although Ryan is speaking here about W-worlds, her speech can be generalized about other kinds of worlds. And it is to be pointed out that this is still compatible with our association of comedy with wish worlds and of tragedy with obligation worlds, for it is not the nature of the world per se that matters as it is the way the character views that world. In tragedy, characters view their wishes as obligations and treat them and act accordingly.

So, according to Possible Worlds theory, the two factors that determine the compatibility of the characters' private worlds and the textual actual world are the number of propositions involved in the private world and the nature of the propositions themselves. The presence of both of these factors varies considerably in tragedy and comedy. On the one hand, in tragedy characters set themselves many aims, which renders the process of their satisfaction in the textual actual world increasingly difficult. In comedy, in contrast, the characters have certain specific aims the realization of which in the actual world of the play is easily achievable. On the other hand, the aims of the characters in tragedy are highly ambitious in comparison to those of comedy. While an Orsino may wish just to consummate his love, or a Voila to find a lost sibling, a Macbeth or a Lady Macbeth is satisfied with no less than the Scottish throne. Nor are Lear's elder daughters satisfied with the delegation of the state affairs to them, but rather aspire to strip their father of everything, including his royal train and companion knights.

It is these two factors that show the exclusive and inclusive nature of the private worlds in tragedy and comedy, respectively. The high coefficiency of the desirability of the private worlds in tragedy turns the satisfactions of these worlds to the minimum. In contrast, the low coefficiency of the desirability of the private worlds in comedy allows for a maximum satisfaction of these worlds. For example, the private worlds of Macbeth and his opponents are such that they cannot be satisfied at one and the same time, and that the satisfaction of one will unavoidably results in the dissatisfaction of the others. It is *either* Macbeth *or* his opponents that may be satisfied. And so is the case with Lear and his elder daughters, and Hamlet and his uncle. In comedy, on the other hand, the relation between the private worlds of different characters is more relaxed and less tensional: for example, the satisfaction of the private world of Orsino is accompanied with the satisfaction of that of undisguised Viola and, though indirectly, of Olivia. And in *As You Like It*, the uncovering of the disguise of Rosalind and Celia is so inclusive an action that it brings to satisfaction the private worlds of Rosalind, Celia, Orlando, Oliver, Duke Senior, Pheobe and Silvius.

Translated into logical terms, it can be said that the propositions constituent of the private worlds of characters in tragedy are inconsistent with each other while in comedy these propositions are consistent with each other. According to Bradley and Swartz,

> Two propositions are *inconsistent* with one another, we ordinarily say, just when it is necessary that if one is true the other is false, i.e., just when they cannot both be true. Translating this ordinary talk into talk of possible worlds we may say that two propositions are inconsistent just when in any possible world, if any, in which one is true the other is false, i.e., just when there is no possible world in which both are true. (1979:28, emphasis in original)

And they proceed to define consistency in similar terms:

> Two propositions are consistent with one another if and only if they are not inconsistent. It follows that two propositions are consistent if and only if it is not the case that there is no possible world in which both are true. But this means that they are consistent if and only if there *is* a possible world in which both are true. (ibid., 30, emphasis in original)

Thus, it is getting increasingly apparent how the talk of the logical *microstructure* of the dramatic text, partly inspired by possible worlds logic, can illuminate the *macrostructural* differences of texts belonging to the two dramatic genres of tragedy and comedy.

Below I will illustrate the aforementioned differences between tragedy and comedy by analysing two of Shakespeare's plays, *Romeo and Juliet* (1592) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596). These two plays are chosen since they deal with the same topic: love. However, the generic difference resulted in a very varied treatment of that topic. The analysis will demonstrate how the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* is dominated by a sense of necessity while the comedy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is predicated on a sense of possibility. Moreover, the analysis will demonstrate the relevance of the concept of the fictional world to the analysis of Shakespeare's comedies. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is composed of two worlds, those of the Athenian court and the woods, which display different modal characteristics. More importantly, the analysis will show how each world is permeated by a sense of possibility or necessity, exclusively. This way we can connect the two metaphors of possible worlds theory – world and possibility – together in one theoretical thread. In the analysis of the plays below, I will deliberately make no reference to the copious volume of literary criticism of the plays, so that the analysis would be solely based on and informed by the theoretical framework provided above.

4: The Possible Worlds of Genre in Practice

4-1: Necessity and inevitability in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1592)

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1592) is a typical Renaissance tragedy as it highlights notions of justice, love, marriage and death (McAlindon 1986, 3). In tackling all these issues, the play is predominated by the necessity operator. Characters seem entrapped in a cycle of limited choices out of which there is no escape. They do not look for other possibilities. They make no compromises; if they do not get what they want, they choose death. The following analysis will highlight the necessity ethos in the play, the exclusive nature of its conflict and the obligation-oriented aspect of the characters' goals.

As a typical tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet* is predominated by necessity and inevitability. The action of the play seems to be directed in one way – the death of the lovers – and no other possibilities are presented. The most salient manifestation of this necessity is death. Death here refers to the absence of any possibilities. From its very beginning, the play is shrouded with omens of death. For example, as early as Act I, we see Romeo worried about his untimely death (1.4.106-8). He makes the same prediction, now in the form of a dream, in Act V: "I dreamt my lady came and found me dead / (Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think!) (5.1. 6-7). Later, Tybalt prophesises that "this intrusion shall / Now seeming sweet, convert to bitt'rest gall" (1.5.90-1). Furthermore, saddened by the death of Tybalt, Capulet affirms: "Well, we were born to die" (3.4.4). Thus, this necessity is voiced as predestination, a form of destiny that is tagged to people the moment they are born, perhaps even before that. Death, moreover, is depicted as stronger than love. "Now old desire doth in his deathbed lie" (2, chorus, 1). The beleaguered Paris laments that the recurrent deaths in the play leave no room for love: "These times of woe afford no times to woo" (3.4.8). These conscious announcements made by the play's characters do metatheatrically foreshadow its generic dictates as a tragedy that will end in death.

The other denominator of the tragedy is the nature of the conflict and its exclusive nature. In PW terms, the private worlds of the lovers (Romeo and Juliet) are not compatible with the textual actual world of the play. Not are they compatible with the private worlds of their parents and families. They are always opposed to each other. They cannot be satisfied at the same time. This results from the lovers making no compromises. Multiple times throughout the play, Romeo announces that he is not afraid of death and that he is ready to die if he did not get Juliet: "My life were better ended by their hate / Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love" (2.2.77-8; see also 2.6.6 and 3.5.17-8). Mercutio even declares that Romeo is already dead (2.4.13-4). And when he heard about his own banishment, Romeo exclaimed that this sentence is no less than death for, to him, there is no world outside Verona:

> There is no world without Verona walls
> But purgatory, torture, hell itself.
> Hence "banishèd" is "banished from the world,"
> And world's exile is death. Then "banishèd"
> Is death mistermed. (3.3.17-21)

Moreover, talking to the apothecary to ask him for poison, Romeo could not imagine that the latter prefers the wretched conditions in which he lives to death: "Art thou so bare and full of wretchedness, / And fearest to die? Famine is in thy cheeks" (5.1.68-9). Later, when he thinks that Juliet is actually dead, he decides to lie with her in the same grave: "will lie with thee tonight" (5.1.34). Thus, Romeo's mode of thinking is exclusive. He cannot contemplate a compromise where two things are possible at one and the same time. It is an 'either/or' mode of thinking, one in which if he does not get what he wants, he will die.

Not only Romeo, but also Juliet is plagued by this 'either/or' exclusive mode of thinking. Juliet is no less adamant in her insistence on death over marrying any other man than Romeo. She has death as her default choice if Friar Laurence's remedy did not work: "I'll to the Friar to know his remedy. / If all else fail, myself have power to die" (3.5.241-2). Moreover, she views her position as a kind of obligation on her side. She views her goals more as obligations than desires. She sees her existence as encapsulated in an obligation world rather than a wish world (as the one we are going to see in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). To her, her relationship with Romeo is not a wish that she can discard, but rather an obligation that she has to fulfil. She still has this resolution to die as she negotiates the plan with the Friar: "Do thou but call my resolution wise, / And with this knife I'll help it presently (4.1.53-4), and she soon refers to it as the 'bloody knife" (63), insisting that she longs to die (67). She affirms that she is ready to endure all horrible things than marry Paris:

> O, *bid* me leap, rather than marry Paris,
> From off the battlements of any tower,
> Or walk in thievish ways, or *bid* me lurk
> Where serpents are. Chain me with roaring bears,
> Or hide me nightly in a charnel house,
> O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
> With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls.
> Or *bid* me go into a new-made grave
> And hide me with a dead man in his shroud
> (Things that to hear them told have made me tremble),
> And I will do it without fear or doubt,
> To live an unstained wife to my sweet love. (77-88, italics mine)

This sense of obligation is signalled by the abundance of the word 'bid me' in the above speech. The speech also shows how she leaves herself no options. She has either 'To live an unstained wife to my sweet love' or else dies. As William Demastes points out, while comedy is more disillusioned as it is more realistic of our inability to change our actual position, tragedy is not. Tragedy is rather a zero sum game (2016, 14). Thus. to both Romeo and Juliet, life is that zero-sum game where they either get everything or nothing.

The play so far has been dominated by a sense of necessity and inevitability. Characters, namely Romeo and Juliet, do not entertain other possibilities. However, there are two characters who attempt to shift the logic of the play to a possibilistic one, but they are either refuted right on or proven wrong as the course of the events progresses. The first character is Paris who woos Juliet and tries to get her out of her necessity thinking, an attempt that she immediately crushes:

> Paris. Happily met, my lady and my wife.
> Juliet. That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.
> Paris. That "may be" must be, love, on Thursday next.
> Juliet. What must be shall be.
> Friar Lawrence. That's a certain text.   (4.1.18-22)

As Paris attempts to re-orient the play's atmosphere towards a more relaxed, possibilistic ontology, one dominated by 'may', Juliet is insistent to stick to her deterministic atmosphere, one that is dominated by 'must'. Again, Juliet sees her marriage to Romeo as an obligation. However, as the Friar Lawrence agrees with Juliet's assertions here, yet he is the other character in the play that is optimistic about breaking the chain of bad events. When he first learned of the love between Romeo and Juliet, he nurses the hope that it might thrive and end the enmity between their two houses: "For this alliance may so happy prove / To turn your households' rancour to pure love" (2.3.91-2). The Friar, in other words, attempts to bypass the exclusive ethos of the play. He presents an inclusive vision where both the private worlds of the lovers and the private worlds of their parents are satisfied. Later, when he administers the potion to Juliet, he completely dismisses the prospects of death, as he thinks that it will rather only cause the "borrowed likeness of shrunk death" (4.1.104). However, Friar Lawrence is proven wrong in the end; and this 'likeness of shrunk death' turned into a real death. By the end, it is this necessity ethos that presides over the two lovers and their families.

The above analysis shows that necessity and inevitability preside over the play. In fact, the impossibility of their alliance is foreshadowed early in the play by the language that Romeo uses to talk about Juliet. He speaks about her as being impossible to obtain. When he first sees Juliet, he exclaims:

> O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
> It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
> As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear—
> Beauty too rich for use, for Earth too dear. (1.5.43-6)

The negative particle 'too' is used twice to indicate that she cannot be used and cannot be held for long on earth. Negativity indicates impossibility, which is another facet of necessity. Another verbal indicator of this looming impossibility is the excessive use of oxymoron in the play, as in Romeo's lines:

> O brawling love, O loving hate,
> O anything of nothing first create!
> O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
> Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
> Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
> Still-waking sleep that is not what it is! (1.1.167-73)

Besides, contemplating about Juliet in her tomb, Friar Lawrence says: "Poor living corse, closed in a dead man's tomb!" (5.3.30). Again, the impossible juxtaposition of 'living' and 'dead' foreshadows the impossibility of their match. Oxymorons, then, painfully betray the impossibility of the growth of the love relationship between Romeo and Juliet.

However, that resistance to necessity, which cost the two lovers their lives, is in a sense an emblem of freedom. Renaissance and Shakespearean tragedy is said to highlight ideas of freedom and choice (Holbrook 2015). That choice, to be sure, is paradoxically ensured by death. Despite all the odds, the two heroes did not lose their right to choose, even if that choice is no other than death itself. While Greek and Roman tragedy highlighted the inescapable power of non-human forces, such as Heaven, Fate, etc., Shakespearean tragedy underscored the centrality of the human will (Hunter 1999, 251). This human will is no better expressed than in the characters of Romeo and Juliet. Paul A. Kottman takes the essence of Shakespearean tragedy as being the absence of any overarching transcendent authority from which the tragic vision takes its standpoint: "Shakespearean tragedy works through the loss of any 'given'—nature, or God, or 'fate'—that might explain human societies, histories, actions, destinies, relationships, and values " (2016, 4). Thus, it is the human will, the stubbornness of human determination, that is the root cause of Renaissance tragedy. Emma Smith argues that this inevitability in Shakespeare's tragic characters stems from the dominance of genre over character in tragedy. Characters might behave stubbornly in ways inconsistent with their previous selves: "Shakespeare's tragic characters, then, can be read as subject to their plots: they are a product of genre" (2016, 95). In fact, this effect is reciprocal: the tragic vision necessitates the death of the characters and the characters' stubbornness leads to that tragic conclusion. As the above analysis must have shown, the tragic vision in the play is manifested by the necessity and inevitability that informs all actions, the exclusive nature of its conflict and the propensity of characters to view their goals in terms of obligations rather than wishes.

4-2: Possibility and the Green World in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595)

The generic structure of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596) is far more complicated than that of his *Romeo and Juliet* (1592). Although the play is considered a comedy, yet its setting comprises two locations, each of which is associated with a certain generic mode and, consequently, with a certain modal operator. Namely, the action takes place, first, in the Athenian court (where it borders on tragedy) and then moves to the Wood (where it turns into a sheer comedy). Moreover, its plot is far more complex in that, at the end, we will have the marriage of four pairs of lovers. However, this complexity is better accounted for using the Possible Worlds framework. Below I will show how the two settings – the court and the wood – are dominated by the necessity and possibility ethos, respectively, and how the latter will take over the whole spirit of the play. Later, I will explore nature of the conflict and the private worlds of characters in the play.

While in *Romeo and Juliet* there is one pair of lovers, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there are two pairs of lovers that are at the centre of attention: Hermia and Lysander, on the one hand, and Helena and Demetrius, on the other. Just like Romeo and Juliet, again, there is a conflict between the private worlds of the lovers and those of their parents, namely between Hermia's wish to marry Lysander and her father's wish that she marries Demetrius. Furthermore, there is a conflict between the wish world of Helena (her wish that she be loved by Demetrius) and his wish world (his wish that he marries Hermia). But while in *Romeo and Juliet* these wishes are viewed as obligations and pursued accordingly and uncompromisingly, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* they remain as wishes and characters deal with them more flexibly, so much so that all knots are solved by the end and the play ends happily. As suggested above, these generic differences are inextricably linked to the two settings of the play: the court and the wood. The analysis will highlight the two worlds created by the play and the modal difference that emerges out of that, as well as the inclusive nature of the conflict and the wish-oriented perspective of the characters' worlds.

One of the most salient features of Shakespeare's comedy is the creation of two spaces. The first is always the court, and the second is a remote place which serves as a refuge for some characters not easily accommodated within the first place: the wood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Arden in *As You Like It*, etc. Frye points out that comedy in general, and Shakespearean comedy in particular, is characterized by the creation of two worlds: "Usually Shakespeare achieves his high mimetic pattern by making the struggle of the repressive and the desirable societies a struggle between two levels of existence, the former like our own world or worse, the latter enchanted and idyllic" (1957, 44). As shown above, the 'world' concept is used to distinguish between genres, in the sense that each genre creates a different genre world (Frow 2006, 7). What is peculiar about Shakespeare's comedy in general, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in particular, is that these two worlds are created in one and the same play. We can see that the modal thinking (of necessity and possibility) is displayed, among other things, in the contrast Shakespeare draws between these two spaces, relating each of them to a characteristic mode of thinking. While the court is dominated by the necessity-based mode, the wood is dominated by the possibility-based one. This is closely interwoven with another distinction, one between a wish-driven space and an obligation-driven one. The two distinctions are related in many respects: while the court is dominated by obligations that should *necessarily* be fulfilled, the wood is dominated by wishes that would *possibly* realize.

The court is dominated by obligations. Everything people do is because they *must* do, not because they *want* to. In PW terminology, to them all actions are encapsulated in obligations worlds rather than wish-worlds. In the court of Duke Theseus, most characters have no choice and the only possibilities for actions are those opened up by the Duke himself (as representative of the Athenian law). Most propositions uttered by the Duke have the modal operator of necessity, and, consequently, are shaped as obligations that should be fulfilled. This is made quite clear in the case presented by Egeus against his daughter Hermia and her lover

Lysander. Unsurprisingly, the Duke takes sides with Egeus. According to the Duke, Hermia's father to her '*should* be as a God' (1.1.46), while Demetrius for her '*must* be held the worthier' (55); and when her judgment differs from that of her father, her 'eyes *must* with his judgment look' (57, emphasis added). The Duke's discourse is dominated by obligations, which other characters are not happy to observe. Hermia and Lysander are looking for other possibilities, and Hermia's speech is full with the modal verbs indicating possibility: 'I *would* my father looked but with my eyes', (56) 'Nor how it *may* concern my modesty', 'But I beseech your grace that I *may* know/The worst that may befall me in this case/ If I refuse to wed Demetrius.' (63-4) Theseus gives Hermia the choice of wedding Demetrius or death or abjuring the world of men: '*Either* to die the death *or* to abjure/For ever the society of men' (65-6, emphasis added).

The exclusive nature of the 'either/or' principle that we came across in *Romeo and Juliet* is quite evident in the court scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, as in any dramatic world, the action must be based on the principle of choice and giving options. But for the two young lovers, choices whose second option is death are not choices at all:

> Hermia. O spite! too old to be engaged to young.
> Lysander. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,--
> Hermia. O hell! to choose love by another's eyes.
> Lysander. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
> (1.1.1.138-41)

Just as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the 'too' negative particle in this play indicates impossibility. It is clear that concepts of necessity and possibility are lexicalised in the play via the use of auxiliary verbs and other grammatical particles. Thus, the court is established in a realm of necessity. Theseus's court is a place where agency is absent and humans are dehumanized by taking away from them the ability to make choices. It is rather a supernatural realm where young men are women are enslaved for their fathers-Gods. As Theseus dictates to Hermia, her father is:

> One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax
> By him imprinted and within his power
> To leave the figure or disfigure it. (1.1.28-31)

It is not a place where action can go forward. Since there is no choice, there are no possibilities, and consequently, no action! Moreover, it is a place where there are no wishes to be realized, only obligations to be fulfilled. So governed, Athens has turned intolerable to the lovers. As Hermia exclaims:

> Before the time I did Lysander see,
> Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:
> O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
> That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!   (1.1.204-7)

However, as a comedy, the play must offer a way out of this obligation-informed atmosphere. That way out, dominated as it is by the possibility ethos, is the wood. So, for the action to move forward, and for these wishes to be realized, there should be another place where this is possible. And this place is the wood, as Lysander suggests going to his aunt's house near the wood:

> From Athens is her house *remote* seven leagues;
> And she respects me as her only son.
> *There*, gentle Hermia, *may* I marry thee;
> And to that place the sharp Athenian law
> Cannot pursue us.   (1.1.159-63; italics mine)

In this latter place - the woods - sons are respected, not simply treated as toys. Respected, that is to say, as having their choices considered and as having the freedom to make decisions and get them implemented. The woods is imbued with the spirit of possibility. Moreover, that place is far enough from Athens to prevent them being under the Athenian jurisdiction, the mouthpiece of which was Theseus. At the woods, another logic is at work, a logic of open possibilities: '*There*, gentle Hermia, *may* I marry thee;' The spatial distance between the two places, Athens and the wood, is symbolic of how far they are in terms of their logic, namely as far as the distance between necessity and possibility.

The fact that the court and the woods stand as two ontologically split worlds is further supported by the text itself, which presents them as asymmetrically accessible domains. While the world of Athens is accessible to the inhabitants of the wood, the wood remains, up to the end of the play, inaccessible to the Athenians. When hearing the story of the wood, Theseus exclaims: 'More strange than true: I never may believe/ These antique fables, nor these fairy toys' (5.1.2-3). Even the lovers, who were directly affected by the fairies' actions, do not understand what happened to them. For one, Lysander confesses:

> My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
> Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
> I cannot truly say how I came here.   (4.1.145-7)

Even to the reader, the world of Athens seems more accessible to his/her actual world than that of the wood. Employing a PW terminology, we can say that Athens world preserves (E/Natural laws) and (F/taxonomy) relations (See Ryan 1991, 31-3), which the wood world incessantly violates, as in the effect of the love juice and the existence of the fairies, etc. In layman terms, it means that the world of the court obeys the natural laws that are operative in the actual world and that it contains the same existents in the actual world or at least in the fictional world of Athens as depicted in the play.

The wood provides an alternative world, which characters can access when life turns intolerable to them in the court. It is reminiscent of Bakhtin's carnival which, he argues, dates back to earlier times. The carnival is lived, not just watched. According to Bakhtin, life in the carnival is "subject to its own laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom"(1984, 7). That freedom stems from the liberating spirit that dominates the carnival. The "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (ibid., 8). However, in no way is Shakespeare an escapist, for the wood, for all its aforementioned features, is no place to dwell in forever. All Athenians, lovers and otherwise, return to the court at the end, having all their wishes fulfilled and their choices respected.

Just as in any comedy, the conflict in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is inclusive and characters' view their goals as wishes that can be changed rather than as obligations that have to be fulfilled. For example, the Duke later changes his opinion about Hermia's choice, although her father is still reluctant to that. Interestingly, the Athenian law that forces a daughter to marry according to her father's wish is still enacted. But while Hermia's father did not change his opinion, Theseus does. The inconsistency between the characters' wishes does dissolve easily, and sometimes even miraculously. Demetrius does the same, changing the object of his affection from Hermia to Helena, when the former appears unattainable for him. (Although this happens under the effect of the love juice, it is also indicated by the logic of the play and of its genre, and the plot would have moved the same way even had the love juice not been used.) Characters, we can see, can change their positions very readily to serve the desired ending. According to Northrop Frye, in such comedies the movement of the plot takes precedence over the consistency of characters. Consistency of character is not very important, as is the comic resolution: "comedy regularly illustrates a victory of arbitrary plot over consistency of character" (1956, 170).

The above analysis shows the utility of the concepts derived from Possible Worlds theory to the analysis of this play. The 'world' concept proved quite instrumental in accounting for the two realms in the play: the court and the wood. The 'possibility' concept, moreover, helped entangle these two realms with different modal mechanisms. The idea of private worlds and conflict are no less useful in understanding the plot movement of the play. The possible worlds framework showed that, although the two discussed plays deal with the same theme, the treatment they make of that same theme is drastically different.

5: Conclusion

The differences set so far between the two main dramatic genres, in Possible Worlds terms, are to do with the logical and modal structure of the plays that belong to both genres and the private worlds of characters. These concepts of possibility and necessity as well as fictional worlds, can provide a basis on which to build a clearer, more nuanced understanding of the two dramatic genres of tragedy and comedy in the Shakespeare canon. Informed by and based on these concepts, the analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has sought to prove that, although the plays deal with the same theme, they have a very different philosophical take on it. While *Romeo and Juliet* is shrouded with a necessity and inevitability (which closed other possibilities for the lovers and formed their untimely death), the world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is predicated on a sense of possibility that allowed the lovers to get united and consummate their love.

However, there are still other areas wherein Possible Worlds theory can make further contributions. For one, it can address itself to the analysis of the humorous effect of comedy. This effect, however important it may be, has been treated by critics of comedy as subordinate, in comparison to the light-heartedness of Shakespearean comedy. Further, I think it can be tackled under the concept of incongruity, about which possible worlds theory has too much to say. In addition, we can further study the coincidence structures prominent in comedy and the way to account to them via Ryan's (1991) notions of virtuality and tellability. Moreover, the other distinguished labels under which Shakespeare's plays have been categorized, such as the History plays and the Roman plays, can also be accounted for in terms of possible worlds. This time we have to make recourse to the concept of 'accessibility relations' developed within this framework. This concept would make clear the relation between any play, as a given instance of fictional literature, and the real world to which it is immediately or remotely related.

Notes

[1] During the Renaissance, tragedy was quite a heterogeneous genre, characterized by a wide diversity. Although Shakespeare's tragedies are prototypical of Renaissance tragedy, the latter is too wide to be reduced to the former (Cadman 2019, 1-3). Although some critics complained that Renaissance tragedy was reduced to Shakespearean tragedy, Paul A. Kottman suggests that we see Shakespearean tragedy, not as a subcategory of Renaissance tragedy, but as a discrete form of art (2010, 3).

[2] . However, as Peter Holbrook points out, Arden of Faversham shows that this is still a dispensable feature (2015, 8).

[3] The relation between philosophy and dramatic genre has been the subject of constant study. However, the emphasis of most of these analyses was on tragedy, rather than comedy or the other dramatic genres. Plato's and Aristotle inaugurated this line of study. In previous centuries, the most notable contributors were Nieztsche and Hegel. In the Twentieth century, this issue surfaced again, most notably with Walter Kaufmann's *Tragedy and Philosophy* (1992). Scholars have raised the issue of the similarities and differences between the two. On the other hand, some writers even claimed that philosophy itself is tragic. Carl F. Hausman (1993) makes this case especially with regard to Plato's dialogues.

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