

# Reading the Identity of Dramatis Personae Through the Semantics of Possible Worlds

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The semantics of possible worlds allows us to see an abundance of alternative “independent” worlds that might not even exist.

The notion is based on the principle that fictional worlds are not reproductions or representations of the actual world but dominant kingdoms of the possible. Furthermore, it accepts that heroes, locations, and facts that refer to their actual or historical equivalent constitute in a sense a particular semantic order.

The present study focuses on the fact that fictional characters and their historical and actual models are both captives of a transworld identity: a fundamental concept of the semiotic theory of possible worlds. As such, the analysis focuses on various European and American plays and the manipulation to which they subject the transworld identity of their dramatic characters. Some fertile hypotheses from quantum physics can be used as additional instruments of this study.

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## Possible worlds in fiction

Lubomír Doležel claims that the concept of *possible worlds* “resurrected by contemporary logic and analytic philosophy penetrated into the theoretical discourse of natural, social and human sciences. Treating fictional narratives as possible worlds links literary theory to a dynamic interdisciplinary network and provides it with the model of *poiesis* we could not find in ‘classical’ narratology” (*Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* ix).

It is indeed true that since the eighties, when the first attempts were made to draw on the theory of the semantics of possible worlds, critics delving into fictional worlds have welcomed it as quite promising. The theory was extensively employed in the field of philosophy in the 1950s. Nearly at the same time, in the scientific area of modal logic, the theory of possible worlds allowed a reflection on long-standing issues such as those of the logical laws of *non-contradiction* and of *the excluded middle*. In the early sixties, Saul A. Kripke, without referring to Leibnitz, as he was formulating an axiomatic foundation for modal logic and not an argument for “theodicy” (“Semantical Considerations on Modal Logic”), proposed a “model structure” that resulted in reconstructing the whole system

of logic around the hypothesis that “our actual world is surrounded by an infinity of other possible worlds” (Doležel, “Possible Worlds of Fiction and History” 786; Brandley and Swartz 2).

However, when referring to the humanities and particularly to those fields that study art works, we should accept that “fictionality is primarily a semantic phenomenon located on the axis representation (sign)–world” whereas until recently “the best-known theories of fictionality [were] based on the assumption that there is only one legitimate universe of discourse (domain of reference), the actual world” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 2). On the contrary, the semantics of possible worlds allows us to see an abundance of alternative “independent” worlds that might not even exist or “be *discovered* by powerful telescopes”, as Kripke would have said (*Naming and Necessity* 44) but which as “*stipulated*” constitute interesting *interpretative models*: “Viewing possible worlds as human constructs brings the concept down from the metaphysical pedestal and makes it a potential tool of empirical theorizing [...] Possible worlds of fiction are artifacts produced by aesthetic activities [...] Since they are constructed by semiotic systems – language, colors, shapes, tones, acting and so on – we are justified in calling them semiotic objects” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 15). The possible worlds of fiction, as semiotic creations, may not follow any of the basic rules of logic, such as the aforementioned laws of non-contradiction and of the excluded middle.

The adjacent development of the theory of parallel universes by quantum physics and its conclusions can definitely enrich the discourse of the humanities and especially that of the semantics of possible worlds, further expanding the interdisciplinary dialogue. This observation does not overlook the different objectives of the sciences. Although the semantics of possible worlds was accepted as an interpretation of the “otherworldliness” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 16) that generally characterises fiction, quantum physics is not interested in the contrast between real and virtual world because, if the parallel universes exist, then they consist of material entities such as planets, galaxies or even black holes, all of which function within the realm of reality. Possible but non-real worlds do not lie within the interests of quantum physics, since the maxim of their existence has to be either verified or refuted. On the contrary, in literary and dramatic theory, the theory of the Semantics of Possible Worlds ignores the real, because it is seen as a theoretical construction that has an explanatory function concerning the semantic structures of the narrative or dramatic worlds, and not the objective existence of these worlds (Ryan, “Des mondes possibles aux univers parallèles”). Despite all this, the particularly interesting instruments of quantum physics and its unverified hypotheses create a promising corpus of elements that can enrich the theoretical study of fiction, particularly if we bear in mind that all popular forms of quantum physics make extensive references to literature and science fiction.

For example, the *mirror*, mentioned in the work of Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, seems to correspond to the “wormholes” of the physicists since in both cases it is a tunnel that connects distant areas of space-time. What I attempt here is to enrich fictional interpretation, wherever necessary, with notions

borrowed from quantum physics, making use of examples from dramatic texts, thus proving the effectiveness of the dialogue between the disciplines. Besides, even the notion of inflation theory and the related theory of multiple universes (Kaku 29) could be, to a certain extent, associated with the theory of intertextuality. Moreover, the so-called ‘Twin Paradox’ – with the myth of Ulysses as an example – when related to the phenomenon of time dilation (Grammatikakis 166), directly refers to the work of Iakovos Kambanellis, *The Last Act* (1998).

Unlike the possible worlds of logic, the ones of fiction are not maximal, complete and abstract sets of states of affairs (Semino 777). On the contrary, they are semiotic, cultural constructs (Eco, *Lector in fabula* 167), incomplete (Eco, *Lector in fabula* 169; Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 22), probably semantically heterogeneous – i.e. governed by different, even supernatural, laws (Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* 61; Semino 778), probably logically impossible. Moreover, as has already been mentioned, they can violate mathematical or logical laws (Ronen 55) while maintaining at least a parasitic relation (Eco, *I limiti dell’interpretazione* 255) with the actual world, and suggesting the existence inside them of a background of an actual world with all its logical principles; otherwise all the essential properties of fictional worlds would necessarily have to be clarified from scratch (Elam 104).

Finally, as Umberto Eco stresses, the possible worlds of fiction are not empty but are worlds *inhabited* by beings that possess particular traits (*Lector in fabula* 158; *I limiti dell’interpretazione* 244). Consequently, the possible worlds of fiction are constructs of the human brain and hands; they are, in short, semiotic systems (Doležel, “Possible Worlds” 787).

### Alternative worlds and transworld identity

A writer or a director creates on a piece of paper or on stage a world that has not existed until then. This world is made of entities that are neither self-referential nor devoid of meaning. They, on the contrary, constitute non-attainable possibilities, that is, entities that belong to a possible, alternative world of a play or a stage. Thus the character of “Hamlet” does not refer to a character of the actual world but to the alternative world of the Shakespearean play from which it draws the traits that define it (Doležel, “Possible Worlds” 788). The old theory of mimesis according to which the fictional beings derive from real archetypes falls apart (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 6): all the fictional characters operate within the principle of their ontological homogeneity, a necessary presupposition to ensure their co-existence, interaction and inter-communication inside a textual or stage world. This becomes more obvious if we think of works where pure fictional characters co-exist together with historical figures. “Mary Stuart” from Schiller’s homonymous work together with “Queen Elizabeth”, or the same characters as they appear in the performance *Alarme* of Theodoros Terzopoulos,<sup>1</sup> are two historical figures

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1. In the performance the dramaturgical material that we hear is based on the correspondence between Queen Elizabeth and Mary Stuart. Attis Theatre, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 seasons.

that yet are no less fictional than other purely fictional characters that emerge from a dramaturgical or directorial initiative.<sup>2</sup> They are two characters who appear in the same dramatic stage world within which the two queens “cohabitate”.

The issue in question here, which has been systematically discussed by the theorists of possible worlds, refers to the relations of accessibility between the actual world and the possible alternative worlds of fiction,<sup>3</sup> relations that range from the maximum to the slightest degree of accessibility (Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory* 32-33 ). In this context it has been argued that the Theatre of the Absurd possesses almost no accessibility, since to a large extent the necessary linking background is considered absent (Vasilopoulou). However, for Elam that assumption cannot be true because he regards the violation of logical principles and natural laws which can be seen in the works of the Absurd as underlining “their indispensability [...]. ‘Avant-garde’ suspension of the cultural and ontological principles of Wo may cause us to reflect on our understanding of our own world but do not break with it entirely” (104).

In addition, there are those who support that the so-called actual world is nothing more than an additional alternative possible world (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 24): it depends on the way we view everything that surrounds us.<sup>4</sup> For example, the world that little “Alice” of Lewis Carroll finds herself in, or the world of Tauris where “Iphigenia” finds herself, constitute for them the only actual world, whereas our world, through their eyes, is nothing more than its alternative version. As Umberto Eco has claimed, “the expression ‘actual world of reference’ indicates any world that its inhabitants could base their evaluation and judgment of other alternative possible worlds on” (*Lector in fabula* 173). This formulation may lead us to realise that our own existence is under threat if we accept the phenomenological abysmal fact that our world is just *one among many other* alternative possible worlds (Monneret). However, we should also stress that the broader the “encyclopedia” of a reader-spectator is (Eco, *Lector in fabula* 142), the less is the number of worlds this reader can recognise as possible.<sup>5</sup> At

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2. For example in the performance *Alarme*, in addition to the two queens the director introduces a third character, that of the Narrator-People who comments on their discussion.

3. The matter of accessibility between the World of Drama (Wd) and the World of Reality (Wo) has long concerned all the theorists of possible worlds. Accessibility is defined as the relation R between the two Worlds (Elam, 103).

4. Some concepts that have been accepted as akin to the notion of accessibility are the principle of ‘minimal departure’, the concept of ‘recentering’ the reader /spectator towards the view of the narrator or the composer of the story and the ‘theory of deictic shifts’. All the above bring into discussion how the dramatic characters perceive their world. This relation is looked into by Dan McIntyre in his paper *Point of View in Plays: A Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Viewpoint in Drama and Other Text-types*.

5. What is crucial here is the role of the “encyclopedia”, that is, the total knowledge a reader/spectator possesses during his/her “inferential walks” (*promenades inférentielles*) that imperatively distract him/her from the specific reading or viewing, while he/she tries out his/her predictions (*prévisions*) about what is to happen, as Umberto Eco has observed

the same time, in different historical periods and for related cognitive reasons, the degree of accessibility varies. (Elam 107).

The semantics of possible worlds adheres to its principle that fictional worlds are not reproductions or representations of the real (realia) but dominant kingdoms of the possible (possibilia) and as such they establish differentiated relations, and relations of differing distance, with the actual world. Yet, it also accepts that people, locations, and facts that refer to their actual or historical equivalent constitute in a sense a particular semantic order. There is indeed some relation between a historical figure, for example that of Queen Elizabeth, and all the fictional characters of Elizabeth, a relation, though, that exceeds the boundaries of the actual world (Doležel, "Possible Worlds" 788-789).

Fictional characters and their historical models are both captives of a *transworld identity* (*identité à travers les mondes*). This is a concept that comprises one of the fundamental topoi with which the semiotic theory of possible worlds approaches its research objective (Eco, *Lector in fabula* 183; *I limiti dell'interpretazione* 252; Elam 131; Doležel, "Possible Worlds" 788; *Heterocosmica* 16, 255). This is because the specific field is associated, on the one hand, with the consent that possible worlds are not empty theoretical hypotheses, but *worlds inhabited* by specific entities, and on the other, with the fact that the people who inhabit them *possess an identity* which connects them with a specific fictional world, a fictional world where they act in accordance with the possible real or fictional models that they inhabit alongside their own worlds. In this light, even if fictional and historical characters differ in some traits, even if these are quite essential, they all constitute possible replicas that inhabit alternative worlds.<sup>6</sup> Thus it becomes clear that the theory of intertextuality through the semantics of possible worlds acquires an additional support for the solution of some very particular problems.

Let us consider, for example, the issue of locations: if someone tries to draw on a map the routes Sherlock Holmes follows around London in one of the novels where he features, then one might be disappointed by the incorrect mapping of London in the novel, because the London in which the renowned detective walks is not the real one (Doležel, "Possible Worlds" 788). Following the same logic,

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(*Lector in fabula* 145 & 151). Doležel adds to the notion of "encyclopedia", which is admittedly limited from a historical-social view, the notion of all fictional encyclopedias that strongly differentiate from the real one as they refer to beings and states totally foreign to our daily routines (*Heterocosmica* 177). In essence, we enter the world of intertextuality and the knowledge of all the possible intertextual references (of possible worlds of other fictions) which the specific possible world may suggest or imply as known (Tsatsoulis, "Implicit, Presupposed and Implied in the Dialogue in the Plays of Andreas Staikos" 21).

6. Those who introduced variations on the concept of transworld identity were Hintikka, by talking about the individuation function or the "role" the character plays under each and any given/different condition or the textual environment (30), and Rescher, discussing the "versions" of a character, namely the different ways of expressions of the same subject inside different possible worlds (88).

a critic reviewing Loula Anagnostaki's *To You All Listening to Me* presented as a drawback the fact that the Berlin she was referring to had nothing to do with the Berlin he knew all too well (Payatakis 8). However, the Berlin of Anagnostaki is the Berlin of an alternative possible world within which the heroes of the play move, it is not the critic's real world where he had walked or lived (Tsatsoulis, "The Post-avant-garde Writing of Loula Anagnostaki" 288). The two Berlins are in close affinity but they meet in two different worlds.

Is it only the name that makes us believe that they are the same Berlin? In other words, does the proper name constitute a rigid designator, as Kripke claimed, so that we should consider that two individuals from different worlds maintain a relationship of prototype-to-simulacrum? In Kripke's logical theory (*Naming and Necessity* 48-49), the name comprises a rigid designator if in every possible world that can be found, it defines the same object. Otherwise, we should regard it as a non-rigid or accidental designator.<sup>7</sup>

The most common example is that of an American president – let us say Bush – who in a fictional text is presented as a simple farmer. If we consider the name as a rigid designator we could say that, despite the essential differences, the farmer of the fictional world is a duplicate (Lewis 27-28) of the American president since, in contrast with essentialist views, as Doležel (*Heterocosmica* 17) points out, fictional practice has the tendency to contradict even the most essential and widely known attributes of historical or fictional characters when it displaces them to another possible and totally dominant world. The displacement comes with radical alterations. For example, in the *Last Temptation of Christ* by Kazantzakis, the essential attribute of the celibacy of "Jesus" is cancelled. Does Kazantzakis' "Jesus" constitute a duplicate of the founder of Christianity?

I think that we should consider what Hintikka says when he indirectly refers to the notion of transworld identity: what is transferred to a possible world is the "role played by the specific individual within specific developments" (30). Further, I would add that we should examine to what extent a character displaced to another possible world possesses the necessary attributes needed to elevate him/her to an indispensable actant for the development of the fictional action.

Thus, in the case of Kazantzakis' "Christ" the issue does not have anything to do with whether our established views on this person and His teaching are challenged, but if His role as an actant is related to that of the original. In a different context, we accept that the character of "Helen", in the homonymous work by Euripides, lacks a basic attribute, that of being the spouse of Paris and as such residing in Troy. The play is about an alternative world, both to the Homeric world and that of the known tragedies, in which only an "Idol" (*Eidolon*) – an alternative version – of Helen is explicitly stated to have been transferred to Troy. This has inspired many contemporary parodic variations of the myth

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7. Cf. the idea developed by Thomas G. Pavel: "[...] within fiction names work like usual proper names, that is as rigid designators attached to individuate objects, independent of the objects' properties" (*Fictional Worlds* 37).



such as the play of Vasilis Ziogas, *The Kaffirs or the True Story of Menelaus and Helen (a Comedy of Phlyakes)*. However, the “necessary” and “essential” attributes<sup>8</sup> of the mythical Helen remain strong in all the Possible Worlds she travels through. In the same way, the mythological Medea is endowed with the horrendous infanticide from the homonymous Euripidean tragedy, and it is with that trait that she will carry on her transworld journey, contradicting thus her mythological model.

The question of the name as a rigid index is probably posed in the cases of the plays *Antigone's Wedding* by Konstadina Vergou, *Antigone's Arranged Marriage* by Vasilis Ziogas, and *Omonia-3, an Epistolary Play* by Stephanie Fleischmann. In this latter play we see among the characters a thirteen-year-old American “Ifigenia” and a Greek dogcatcher of the 21<sup>st</sup> century called “Agamemnon” who at no time communicate with each other. Although there is no relation whatsoever between the above characters and their Ancient Greek namesakes, we should admit that the operator of negating the principle of their identity (Eco, *Lector in fabula* 193) presupposes that in some other world it prevails. In other words, if the womb of a world where Antigone dies unmarried, Iphigenia is sacrificed and Agamemnon leads a war after sacrificing his children does not exist, then the negations of the principle of identity attempted in the above plays could not have existed.<sup>9</sup> The reason is that only one “Antigone” justifies a decaying bride, as happens in Zioga's play, only the presence of one “Agamemnon”, even a dogcatcher, creates the necessary association with the warmonger Bush and the war in Iraq, and finally only one “Iphigenia” refers to a young woman, like the twenty-year-old “Jessica”, recruited to be sacrificed in an aggressive war, all issues addressed in Fleischmann's play. Here the concept of transworld identity is totally disentangled from the framework and the necessary attributes of the character in order to function metaphorically. Thus, although in these cases the name seems to function as an “accidental designator”, we can say that our encyclopedic knowledge about its attributes allows us to see its metaphorical meanings that another name could not have acquired in the specific possible world of the plays written by Vergou, Ziogas and Fleischmann. This is related to the semantic distinctiveness of the proper name that Barthes called the “linguistic form of reminiscence”, something obviously presupposing the knowledge of a fictional encyclopedia, that is, of a broader ability to recognise existing intertextual relations: “Under every word of modern poetry lies a kind of an existential geology within which the whole meaning of the name is gathered [...] The Word is encyclopedic, it simultaneously includes all its possible versions” (Barthes 60).

8. For the necessary and essential attributes of a character see Eco, *Lector in fabula*, “Les propriétés nécessaires” (174-180) and “Les propriétés essentielles” (180-186).

9. These assumptions reinforce Keir Elam's conclusions mentioned earlier when he argues, drawing on the Theatre of the Absurd, that between the dramatic world and the real one of the spectator there is always a substantial amount of overlapping, even in cases where the first notably departs from the second (104).

Besides, the fact that the real and dramatic worlds remain two worlds of different ontological status, where accessibility from one to another can only be assured through semiotic channels, does not contradict the conclusion that dramatic, and in general fictional, worlds gain their semiotic existence independently of the text that constructed them. They are transformed into objects of an active, evolving, and recycling cultural memory (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 202), a fact that explains how dramatic (fictional) characters remain always active examples, equivalent to real ones.

### **Infinite doubles in an infinite world**

Within the domain of quantum physics as well, in an infinite universe, where whatever has finite possibilities to happen must happen infinite times, every individual must have infinite doubles that act in the same way as him/her while simultaneously he/she must have infinite other doubles who could choose all the possible ways of action that individual could have chosen but did not (Barrow 223).

In this light, the contemporary transsexual decadent “Kassandra” in the play of Sergio Blanco *Kassandra*, reciting her sexual relations with all the Greek warriors at Troy and even with her brother Hector, claiming to be the son of Priam and Hecuba and possessing prophetic skills although unable, once more, to protect herself from looming death, does not differ from her mythical namesake except for one essential characteristic, the fact that she/he is a man. However, taking for granted our broad contemporary encyclopedic knowledge and tolerance, this does not really constitute a substantial change that could prevent us from accepting that in another possible world Kassandra could have been a transsexual acting in a different way from that of her mythical predecessor, irrespective of the consequences this might have had for the virility of all the heroes of the Trojan war, and especially for the assassination of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra. Similarly, we could easily accept a tender incestuous relation between Antigone and Polyneices, as it is presented in the play of Joël Jouanneau: *Sous l’œil d’Œdipe*, because a contemporary spectator (aware mainly of contemporary psychoanalytic revelations) questions Antigone’s infatuation with only one brother that drives her to ignore her fiancée and finally sacrifice her life.

In other words, contemporary plays often create alternative possible worlds maintaining in their versions an obvious accessibility to the original, even though it can be traced back in a dormant grammar of possibilities intrinsic in it (Escola).

### **Readers’ encyclopedic knowledge and hidden identity**

We thus accept that we can have: 1. parallel worlds, such as the performance of *The Suppliants* (2006) of Euripides carried out inside an electronic music landscape, directed by Paul Koek and Michael Marmarinos, 2. complementary worlds, which fill the gaps of the original text with meta-history or pre-history,<sup>10</sup>

10. An approach that partly refers to the concept of “paratext” as a version of intertextuality in accordance with the classification of Gérard Genette (10-11).



as in *The Country of Ibsen* of Iakovos Kambanellis (Tsatsoulis: *Ibsen's Intertexts in the Dramatic Writing of Iakovos Kambanellis*), and finally, 3. hostile anti-worlds with a complete disregard for the legitimacy of the original text (Doležel: *Heterocosmica* 206) or actual world, such as the one within which Shakespeare's *Pericles* moves. The reason I use an example from classical theatre although this version is closer to postmodernism is the misleading name of its title, which shows that a name, even as a non-rigid designator, still raises expectations in the spectator who possesses encyclopedic knowledge. However, a contemporary postmodern rewriting is one that constructs a new alternative world as an answer to the normalised proto-world. Postmodern irony signifies a difference with the past whereas its intertextual echo simultaneously reconfirms its connection with the past (Doležel: *Heterocosmica* 222).

The proper name, as a connecting thread that brings together even the most extreme versions of a character in different worlds, is not in the least trustworthy. There are cases where behind an alias, nickname, pseudonym lies a completely recognisable – because of its actions and traits – historical or fictional character. Thus, in the work of Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats...* behind the names Hester, Karthage, Xavier Cassidy, Caroline Cassidy, we can discern respectively Medea, Jason, Creon and Glafki who all engage in relevant action though adapted to the Irish landscape. The moment we deduce from the specific actions of the characters the existing analogy with the fictional and tragic original, their transworld identity is confirmed.

On a performative level, identity can be denoted in many ways without even naming the character: from the characters' costumes, behaviour, and even gestures. In a similar manner Romeo Castellucci, for example in the episodes of the performance *Tragedia Endogonidia* (2002-2004), brings on stage historical characters such as Mussolini, Charles de Gaulle and Christ easily recognisable from their costumes or behaviour despite being in stage environments totally foreign to their known actions (Castellucci and al. 118-147; Pitozzi and Sacchi; Tsatsoulis, *Conversing Images*). In fact, in one of the *Episodes* of *Tragedia Endogonidia*, the *P. #06 Paris*, "Christ" seems to be conversing on stage with the Sphinx of Oedipus: it is indeed the meeting of two characters from different environments inside a new one which proves that this particular direction establishes a new alternative possible world, where characters of different origins can co-exist. At the same time it suggests the stage presence of a hybrid identity Jesus-Oedipus. Hybrids can be terrifying as they destroy the boundaries between natural and supernatural, between what is controlled and what is impossible to control (Pavis 260; Burke 18, 101). Kafka's *Metamorphosis* created the first fundamental breach (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 186).<sup>11</sup>

As for the issue of the "paradoxical" meeting of dramatic characters, it has

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11. From contemporary Greek drama we can mention the plays of Marios Pontikas, *The Murderer of Laius and the Crows* (2007), *The Gorilla and the Hydrangea* (1989) by Iakovos Kambanellis and others.

already been dramaturgically suggested by Tennessee Williams' *Camino Real* where Don Quixote coexists with Casanova, Esmeralda, Byron, Marguerite Gautier and other fictional heroes.

Similarly, in Castelluci's performance (Tackels 106; Castellucci 80-98) of *Giulio Cesare* (1997), inspired by the Shakespearean Julius Caesar, "...vski" is introduced, a character-invention of the director referring to the Russian director Stanislavsky, who in the performance, in order to justify his method, kills himself while instructing "Brutus" on what a realistic assassination is. The concrete name is not necessary in order to denote the transworld journey of Stanislavsky from the real world to Castelluci's Shakespearean stage. An analogous problem is posed by the introduction of new characters into an already established dramatic-fictional environment, a problem which Marc Escola justifiably presents by using as an example Racine's introduction of the key character "Ériphile" in his own version of the tragedy *Iphigénie*, a character crucial for the outcome of the play, sacrificed instead of Iphigenia since she proves to be the forgotten daughter of Helen and as such more suitable to be sacrificed for an expedition triggered by her mother.

### Possible worlds and quantum physics in Greek theatre

I believe that from the corpus of contemporary Greek drama we should pay special attention to two plays, although they approach the issue through different perspectives, because they denote in their texts the acceptance of possible worlds through manipulating the transworld identity of their dramatic characters. The first is the play *Don Quixote's New Adventures* by Vasilis Ziogas, who had often embarked on cosmological and metaphysical quests; here the stage directions explicitly state that the stage space is a "quantum room", referring to the parallel worlds of quantum physics. Indicative of the deliberate choice of the author is the footnote addressing the future director or set designer pointing to the construction of the setting. Here it is made explicit that the walls of the "room", if they are not built, could be made of wood or cardboard so as to depict the quantum box of Schrödinger, referring to the well known paradox of "Schrödinger's cat" which concerns quantum mechanics and which we will discuss further down. Meanwhile, inside the room, Don Quixote and Sancho land in a paradoxical manner, while it is apparent that the rules of motion and time in this space differ from those of the real world:

*Sancho: Master, I have been walking for ten minutes and haven't moved an inch [...]*

*Quixote: A place where you walk without moving can make you believe that you can experience another life.*

In the space to which the two characters have been "teletransported" and which is clearly defined by its fourth time coordinate, time expansion seems to have reached its extreme limit: whatever moves with the speed of light immobilises time itself. Exactly as in the experience of a train passenger moving at the speed of light: the platform clock would always show the time of its departure (Grammatikakis 160).

It is in this still place, where the arrow of time does not move towards the future as it does within earthen rules, that “Don Quixote” will finally meet and unite with his “Dulcinea” who hatches from a huge cocoon hanging from the centre of the ceiling. Ziogas’ dramatic world is self-defined as one alternative possible world in relation to the one of Cervantes’ novel and also to our actual world.

The second play is Loula Anagnostaki’s *Antonio or the Message* (1972), a play that because it moves within the area of the uncanny received hesitant reviews when it was first staged by Karolos Koun Art Theatre. Hager believes that this happened because the socio-political message of the play cannot be decoded if people attempt to interpret it (214).

Indeed, if we start from the character in the title, “Antonio”, we realise that everything moves within the area of duplicates: “Antonio” lives simultaneously inside two parallel worlds, while he himself, despite his exterior similarity with his two variations, develops within the play completely different attributes. If the stage “Antonio” is the personification of inactivity, the other “Antonio”, a leader of a radical movement, moves hyper-actively within another possible world parallel to the stage. At the same time, the London which we infer to be the stage space shows characteristics of Athens during a dictatorship, a space of anomie which could be the real one if it weren’t for its abominable inverted reflection within which even “Antonio”, who is a fighter in an alternative world, has become a pathetic, nearly autistic creature.

The most crucial scene which states the co-existence of these two worlds – alternative universes that momentarily cross each other – is where a “Boy” looking out of the window starts describing a creepy landscape filled with murders and debris, quite foreign to the London we know. The next moment though, another completely different description is given. The two alternative worlds are presented through the same window simultaneously, opposing each other. In both, “Antonio” is equally present. The fact, which is hidden behind the transworld identity of the character and hides the writer’s political message, is not accidental and has to do with the state of lasting inactivity against the Greek dictatorship of the time (Tsatsoulis, “Open Possibilities, Rational Asymptotes and Alternative Worlds in Loula Anagnostaki’s Plays” 76).

The text with its infinite unanswered questions seems to refer to a paradox of quantum physics, that of “Schrödinger’s cat”, which took its name from the Nobel physicist. Schrödinger formulated a wave equation representing all the possible states of an atom, and through this variable he precisely described the motion and orbit of the wave accompanying an electron, which in doing so acquires the shape of a packet, a packet of possibilities (Grammatikakis 216; Kaku 199). The “cat paradox” poses the question whether a cat, enclosed in an opaque box aimed at by a loaded gun, can be simultaneously alive and dead. The trigger is connected with a radioactive source and is to go off only if radioactive emission is detected. It should be noted here that since the radioactive emission is a pure quantum-mechanical phenomenon, it is unknown whether, when or if it

could happen, therefore there is equal possibility for the gun to fire or not to fire (Grammatikakis 228). Thus, until we open the box, the cat is simultaneously alive and dead, a being in a hybrid condition: a “συναμφοτέρον”, a coexistence of contraries as the interpretative key to man and the world (Grammatikakis 214). The truth can only be known if an observer opens the box. The answer was given by Hugh Everett (1957) who introduced the notion of multiple universes, basing it on ensuring through decoherence the continuity of the wave variable of both the supposed dead cat and the live one. So, the cat can be both alive and dead, because the universe has been separated into two parallel universes, where each one represents a different outcome of the observation and as such the two attributes of the cat can separately exist. These two universes are not unreal but equally real and objective (Kaku 221). In the same way, the two worlds described by the young man peering out of the window in Anagnostaki’s play are two parallel but equally real worlds. The double “Antonio” is like Schrödinger’s cat: in one universe he is a passive observer, in the other a fighter, a counterpart of a quantum being characterised by wave-particle duality, like the electron whose position is impossible to define exactly and which is different every time it is observed (Gribbin 44). So, the observer’s role is of crucial importance. The question remains, especially during the period of the dictatorship the play refers to, in which of the two possible and at the same time real worlds someone lives, having the illusion that his or her world is the only possible one and so feeling content with it.

### Implications

Concluding these brief comments I would like to underline that if world drama has the freedom to move historical or fictional characters within alternative possible worlds, then the same is true for stage dramaturgy: every being or world, passing from the paper to the stage, becomes automatically ontologically different and so alternative from the text. If we accept this fact we could put an end to the conflict of what is or is not allowed in any directorial intervention and its limitations. At any rate, what really counts for the dramatic or stage language is not the reference, but the inference. Those who strongly support a literal interpretation, that is, of some referentiality, are actually entrapping imagination within the finite boundaries of one unambiguous and as such unbearably dull world.

After all, as Thomas Pavel says “our world, as it stands, is neither necessary in its entirety nor the only possible one. For this reason, the logic of the possible worlds is adopted by people who love freedom” (“Mondes possibles, normes et biens”).

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