HOUSE OF CARDS: SHAKESPEAREAN DNA IN THE TRILOGY AND THE SERIES

HOUSE OF CARDS: *DNA SHAKESPERIANO NA TRILOGIA E NAS SÉRIES*

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents a reading of contemporary literary and TV productions, the political trilogy *House of Cards, To Play the King* and *The Final Cut*, by Michael Dobbs, an English writer; the BBC series: *The House of Cards Trilogy*, based on those novels; as well as the Netflix series, *House of Cards*, that adapts both antecedent works. It brings forth some literary elements of those productions and relates them to plays by William Shakespeare, more specifically, *to Macbeth*, *to Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*, and to *King Richard III*. It also seeks to demonstrate how novelists, screenwriters and directors of series celebrate the unparalleled art of Shakespeare by reworking themes, updating contexts and rebuilding personality traits of his unforgettable characters. In short, this text aims to recover some of the genetic characteristics of Shakespeare's plays in contemporary artistic/mediatic production.

Keywords: *House of Cards*; Political novels; TV series; Shakespearean genes.

RESUMO: Este artigo faz uma leitura de produções literárias e televisivas contemporâneas, da trilogia política *House of Cards*, *To Play the King* e *The Final Cut*, do escritor inglês Michael Dobbs; da série da BBC: *The House of Cards Trilogy*, adaptação desses romances; bem como da maxissérie da Netflix, *House of Cards*, baseada nas anteriores. Detém-se em alguns elementos literários dessas produções e os relaciona com peças do dramaturgo inglês William Shakespeare, mais especificamente, a *Macbeth*, a *Otelo*, *o mouro de Veneza* e a *Ricardo III*. Tentamos demonstrar como romancistas, roteiristas e diretores de séries celebram a inigualável arte de Shakespeare ao retrabalhar temas, atualizar contextos e reconstruir traços de personalidade de seus personagens inesquecíveis. Em suma, este texto visa resgatar algumas características genéticas das peças de Shakespeare presentes na produção artística/midiática contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: *House of Cards;* Romances políticos; Séries televisivas; Genes shakespearianos.

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Introduction

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;
All several sins, all used in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all, 'Guilty, guilty!'

Shakespeare, *King Richard III*

In the last two years, from 2015 to 2017, various digital media, including the official *House of Cards* website, have been publishing images of the Netflix series along with comments on Brazilian politics and politicians. On pragmatismopolitico.com.br, we read the following comparison:

> Eduardo Cunha or Frank Underwood [the protagonist of *House of Cards*], who are you most afraid of?
>
> Since taking office as President of House of the Representatives, congressman Eduardo Cunha has already become accustomed to being compared to the cunning politician played in the American series *House of Cards* by actor Kevin Spacey.
>
> Cunha's comparison to the character Frank Underwood, a man who finds no limits to his political ambition, has even seduced British magazine *The Economist*, who made the joke in an article published in February, 2015. In the week in which the Brazilian congressman caused the fall of a minister, the PrOA asks itself: who is the most dangerous?2 (Pragmatismo Político, my translation)

"Tough to compete," the official *House of Cards* account tweeted on May 17.th, 2017, suggesting not only a resemblance between Underwood and Cunha, but a comparison between the corruption in the US government fictionalized in the American series, and the "reality" of Brazilian politics. In the first months of 2017, evidence of corruption among Brazilian politicians and businessmen invaded the news and became endemic. The May 31.st, 2017 edition of *Veja* magazine features an almost two-page photo of the Underwood couple — protagonists of Netflix's series *House of Cards* –, under the title of "Power is addictive", accompanying an article written by Marcelo Marthe. In one paragraph, he makes the following comment:

> *House of Cards* sniffs from afar what moves politics and politicians from any time and place. It is therefore impossible to resist a comparison between the series and the political reality not only of the United States in which it was modeled, but also of Brazil. It's with a dose of sadistic voyeurism and another of open-mindedness to learn about *Realpolitik* that one should taste the fifth season of the series. (MARTHE, **Veja,** 2017, p. 105, my translation)

In April last year, when interviewed by a television station, a Brazilian congressman concluded: "Contemporary Brazilian politics is made of treason, corruption and manipulation." Certainly, this politician has not read Shakespeare. He is not aware of

2 Available at: pragmatismopolitico.com.br Accessed on: 14 de mar. 2017.

the betrayal, corruption, and criminality that have been involved in politics for centuries, nor of the political novels or television series that show the negative character traits of various public figures who work around the leaders of nations. These aspects, which elicit moral indignation, are not "privileges" of Brazilian politics, nor of politics in the contemporary world. Shakespeare gives us a human and political panorama of uncontested immersion in corruption and crime in his plays. And that was England at the end of the 16.th century and the beginning of the 17.th century.

In order to take a critical look at the series *House of Cards*, both the BBC and the Netflix versions, we will use some scholars who talk about adaptation, since the two series originate from the trilogy *House of Cards*, *To Play the King* and *The Final Cut*, written by Michael Dobbs, who acted as adviser to the British Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher, John Major and David Cameron.

Using the terminology of Gérard Genette, the hypotext (source text) of the BBC series is the trilogy by Dobbs, and the hypotexts of the Netflix series are the previous two. In turn, Dobbs' trilogy, the hypotext of the BBC and Netflix series, finds inspiration for its (re)elaboration of themes, (re)construction of narratives and (re)creation of characters in Shakespeare's plays and in the experience of the ministerial advisor. The series, played out by Shakespearean actors, stresses the influence and echoes the content of the playwright's works in different places and / or times. Therefore, considering Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Richard III* and *Othello*, Dobbs' trilogy, the BBC series and the Netflix maxiseries, only the latter remains for the time being as hypertext (target text). All other texts, once hypertexts, become hypotexts of other creations. Shakespeare also found inspiration for his plays in the *Holinshed Chronicles*, a *novella* by Hecatomithi (a collection of short stories by Giaovanni Battista Giraldi, known as Cinthio), and in *Moralities*, especially in the "Vice of Dissimulation." Therefore, these last texts, among others, are the source texts of Shakespeare's plays.

In "Between Adaptation and Allusion", the fifth chapter of *Film Adaptations and Its Discontents* (2007), Thomas Leitch proposes a classification of "adaptation" considering the proximity and / or distance between the target text and the source text, or gradations of "fidelity" in film adaptation, from the most to the least "faithful". According to the writer, adaptation can be classified as:

1. Celebration: the source text is kept in its entirety in the other media. Example: the film adaptation of *Hamlet* (1996), directed by Kenneth Branagh.
2. Adjustment: need for compression, expansion, correction, updating, superimposition. Most common type of adaptation found.
3. Neoclassic imitation: a satire of the present having the past as starting point. For Leitch, the film *Clueless* (1995) is an imitation of the novel ***Emma*** by Jane Austen.
4. Revisions: more radical than adjustments, during revision the adapter rewrites parts of the text.
5. Colonization: adaptations which present new meanings. Leitch mentions *Bride and Prejudice*, by Gurinder Chadha (2004), a version of *Pride and Prejudice* for Bollywood, as example.
6. Meta(commentary) or deconstruction: adaptation as production of text. For example: *Adaptation* (2002), by Spike Jonze.

7. Analogue: The target text has some elements analogous to the source text. The film *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1998) and its dialogue with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is mentioned as an example.
8. Parody and pastiche. Leitch mentions *Young Frankenstein* (1974) and *Scotland, Pa*. (2001) as examples.
9. Secondary, tertiary and quaternary imitations: far away from the original, or copies of copies. Examples of imitations: *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), directed by Lambert Hillyer, and *Multiplicity*, directed by Harold Ramis (1996).
10. Allusion: according to Leitch, presents the smallest degree of fidelity to the source text. He mentions *Superman* (1978), as an allusion to the story of Moses or Jesus.

In the last decade, the use of the term "fidelity", when it refers to adaptation, has been avoided, because it is understood that the adapted text establishes an intertextual / intermediate dialogue with the original text and vice-versa rather than a somewhat faithful copy of the previous text. In addition, in Leitch's gradation, there is an apparent inadequacy in the terminology used. We can speak of adaptation as "celebration", but it would be rather awkward to call an adaptation "adjustment". Adjustments are needed in any mediatic transposition, therefore some items, presented by the author, can be considered techniques used by the adapter rather than gradations of adaptation.

One year before the publication of Leitch's book, Robert Stam expanded on what he had written in *Introduction to the Theory of Cinema* (2000), in the article published by the academic journal *Ilha do Desterro*, where he emphasized again that terms such as "fidelity", "betrayal", and the like, do a disservice to adaptation. He writes:

> In this essay, I would like to propose an alternative language to talk about adapting novels to cinema. The conventional terminology of criticism about adaptations has often been profoundly moralistic, rich in terms that suggest that cinema has somehow done literature a disservice. Terms such as "infidelity," "betrayal," "deformation," "violation," "bastardization," "vulgarization," and "profanation" proliferate in discourse about adaptations, with each word carrying its specific burden of ignominy. "Infidelity" carries insinuations of Victorian modesty; "betrayal" evokes ethical treachery; "bastardization" connotes illegitimacy; "deformation" suggests aesthetic aversion and monstrosity; "violation" refers to sexual violence; "vulgarization" implies class degradation; and "profanation" implies religious sacrilege and blasphemy. (STAM, 2006, p. 19, my translation)

Linda Hutcheon reiterates Stam's idea in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), stating that "Adaptation is repetition, but without replication [...] the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying" (p. 07). According to the Canadian theorist:

> If the idea of fidelity should not frame any theorizing of adaptation today, what should? According to its dictionary meaning, "to adapt" is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable. This can be done in any number of ways [...] the phenomenon of adaptation can be defined from three distinct but interrelated perspectives, for I take it as no

> accident that we use the same word — adaptation — to refer to the process and the product.
>
> First, seen as a *formal entity or product*, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works. This "transcoding" can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a manifestly different interpretation. Transposition can also mean a shift in ontology from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama. (HUTCHEON, 2006, pp. 07-08)

Around 1999, Patrice Pavis, despite working mainly with theater, already considered adaptation a recreation and provided us with a series of terms that also aid in the analysis of the intersemiotic or intermediate adaptation. According to him,

> [...] cuts, reorganization of the narrative, stylistic "softening", reduction of the number of characters or places, dramatic concentration in some strong moments, additions of external texts, assembly and addition of unrelated elements, modification of the conclusion, modification of the fable in function of the staging discourse. Adaptation, unlike translation or updating, enjoys great freedom; it is not afraid to change the meaning of the original work, to make it say otherwise... To adapt is to recreate entirely the text considered as simple matter. (PAVIS, 1999, p. 10, my translation)

Therefore, we do not agree completely to the notion of fidelity used by Leitch, but we use the terminology that he and other theorists present, whether it refers to adaptation or to adaptation techniques. Two types of adaptation presented by the writer will be kept in this work: celebration and allusion. We also use several terms in the analysis of adaptation of series, because although theorists principally discuss the adaptation of novels or plays for film, terms such as "adjustment", "compression", "expansion", "update", "change culture and frame", "fable modification", "conclusion modification", among others, apply perfectly to the analysis of television series.

Intermedia recreation as a celebration

Possibly the most attractive term used by Leitch is "celebration," which is closely related to the expression "to pay tribute to", suggested by Hutcheon. It is difficult not to consider an adaptation as a celebration of the adapted text and / or of the author of the adapted text. Whether the adapter uses transfictionality (SAINT-GELAIS, 2011), or just alludes to the title of an earlier work, his interest and creativity fix themselves for some time to that text, no matter the end medium, bringing to the second text something already existing in another fictional / artistic universe. Despite the comprehensiveness of the concept of Saint-Gelais, transfictionality suggests that fictional universes or characters from these universes transit between and cross borders that would demarcate different media.

We can visualize celebrations of various kinds. However, we mention only three, included below:

1. celebration through the presence of a source text in a target text;

2. celebration by means of the recreation of a source text;

3. celebration by allusion to a source text in a target text.

None of these types of celebration necessarily involves recreating a different media text, but as we are talking about intermediality, our focus is on recreating a source text in another mediatic language.

Celebration through presence is perhaps the most difficult to find. It implies the presence of the source text in its entirety in the target text. This difficulty is greater when we talk about different media. An example of this type of celebration is the poem "Kubla Khan" (1798), by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, recited in its entirety by the protagonist in the musical *Xanadu* (1980), directed by Robert Greenwald. In recent years and in the academy, our encounters with poems happen more frequently through reading verses printed on paper than by listening to recitation. And in the case of the musical, Coleridge's poem, recited within visual media as well, multiplies the modalities in which poems can be received by the listener / spectator. The recitation of the whole poem "Kubla Khan" in the musical is a celebration, in the sense of an homage, artistic and public accolade, exaltation or praise of Coleridge's poem.

Celebration through recreation is the type of adaptation most commonly used. In it we can include all filmic adaptations of novels, plays and other artistic manifestations, revealing a greater or lesser proximity between adapted text and adaptation. Examples abound. In this type of celebration, adjustments such as compression, expansion, updating and recontextualization are necessary when considering the materiality of the language into which the source text is being transposed, and the time and place of the adapted narrative. There are countless adaptations of novels / plays for the movies. Let us remember *The Great Gatsby*, by Baz Luhrmann; *Romeo and Juliet*, by Franco Zeffirelli, by Baz Luhrmann, by Carlo Carlei; *Hamlet*, by Laurence Olivier, by Franco Zeffirelli, by Michael Almereyda, by Javor Gardev; *Pride and Prejudice*, by Robert Leonard, by Joe Wright; among many others.

Celebration by means of allusion is also a fairly constant practice. For example, when we begin reading the novel *Purgatorio* (2009), by the Argentine journalist and writer Tomás Eloy Martínez (1934-2010), intertextuality imposes itself, as we face the inevitable dialogue between the title of Martínez's novel and the title of the second book of the *Divine Comedy*, by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (c.1265-1321). Therefore, the title of the novel is already an alert for the reader, who must recover from his memory what was left of the reading of Dante's poem, or reread Dante to interpret the Argentine novel in greater depth. In addition, the subtitles of the five parts of the novel are also verses from the Italian poem. From the beginning to the end of the novel, Martinez celebrates, honors, updates and recontextualizes the poem *Purgatory* of the Italian medieval poet, though the celebration is not only about "gender change — from a poem to a novel" — one of Hutcheon's suggestions (2011, p. 29), or about intertextuality. In Martínez's novel, there are dozens of allusions to movies, TV shows, music, art works. This type of celebration implies an increase in the density of the target text, which becomes, through intense dialogue among arts and media, plurisignificant.

Television Series

Most of the relatively recent television series available, whether in Brazil or abroad, present their content with excellence, standing out in contemporary artistic / mediatic production. Some are celebrations, by means of recreation, of Brazilian novels or plays, or of foreign pieces. When they are adaptations of other texts, the series, unlike filmic adaptations, generally expand the source text, and offer the viewer a great number of episodes. Among them, we find political series, which, for the most part, (re)construct a panorama similar to the "reality" of the spectators, but not always known by them. They exploit the insatiable thirst for power, betrayal, corruption, and crime, as some historical or tragic plays by Shakespeare do. Some titles are listed below:

. *The House of Cards Trilogy* (1990-1994 / England: BBC, 3 parts, 12 episodes). Francis Urquhart, the protagonist, overthrows Britain's fictional Prime Minister, succeeding Margaret Thatcher, to take his place. He is elected Prime Minister several times and remains in office for about 10 years.

. *The Good Wife* (2009 -... / USA: Netflix; 7 seasons, 156 episodes). Alicia Florrick, the protagonist of the series, has as background the corruption of her husband, first as prosecutor convicted of immoral conduct, then as a candidate for the government of Illinois.

. *Political Animals* (2012 / USA: USA Network: 1 season, 6 episodes). Elaine Barrish Hammond, star of the series, former First Lady and current Secretary of State, has to deal with political opponents and personal problems in the struggle to keep her work and family together.

. *Scandal* (2012 -... / USA: ABC, 5 seasons, 90 episodes). Olivia Pope, a successful conflict manager, is a re-creation of George Bush's advisor Judy Smith.

. *House of Cards* (2013 -... / USA: Netflix, 5 seasons, 65 episodes). Francis and Claire Underwood are the protagonists of the series. They plot the impeachment of the fictional President of the United States and launch, as a couple, their candidacy for the presidency and vice-presidency of the country.

. Madam Secretary (2014- ... / USA: CBS, 3 seasons, 96 episodes). Secretary of State Elizabeth McCord has to deal with an avalanche of political challenges and the drama of not being able to give enough attention to her children.

. *Designated Survivor* (2016 -... / USA: Netflix; 1 season, 22 episodes). Tom Kirkman is Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the survivor appointed and immediately sworn in as President of the US when an explosion takes the life of the President and of all Cabinet members who outranked Kirkman and would have preceded him in the order of succession.

. Among these political series, two evoke themes and update contexts and characters from Shakespeare's plays. The dissimulation, corruption, violence and criminality present in *Richard III*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* are transposed to another time and / or another space. They are: *The House of Cards Trilogy*, of BBC (England), and *House of Cards*, of Netflix (US).

Since the first episodes of *House of Cards* by Netflix (the more popular series of the two), it is remarkable how echoes of Shakespeare's plays have resonated in the series and

how its molecules are structured from the DNA of Shakespeare's plays. Macbeth, Richard III and Iago materialize in another epoch and context before our very eyes. During the five seasons, readers of Shakespeare are mesmerized by the evocation of the English playwright's genius in apprehending the cruelty of the human soul and the ability of the series' creators to expand, actualize and (re)contextualize this inherent cruelty. But to talk about the adaptation of the series, we have to refer first to the three political novels by Michael Dobbs — *House of Cards* (1989), *To Play the King* (1992) and *The Final Cut* (1994).

Michael Dobbs' trilogy

Michael Dobbs, now Lord Dobbs, who served as advisor to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1987), became familiar with the backstage of British politics and revealed this knowledge in the political trilogy that inspired the British and American series. In the trilogy, Dobbs recreates, with irony and sarcasm, the behind-the-scenes of the parliamentary monarchy of England, working with themes dear to Shakespeare. However, instead of asides, found mainly in *Richard III* and *Othello* (with the character Iago), he includes epigraphs, a possible reconfiguration of asides: astute, spicy, and often tragicomic comments about British politics. We quote some, taken from the first volume:

> *Politics requires sacrifice. Sacrifice of others, of course. (p. 35)*
>
> *He [my old gillie] said this to me: "If you must inflict pain, make sure it is irresistible and overwhelming, so that he knows you will always do him more harm than he can ever do to you." (p. 41)*
>
> *Politics? War? As my dear wife Mortima constantly reminds me, there is no distinction. (p. 51)*
>
> *The truth is like a good wine. You often find it tucked away in the darkest corner of the cellar. (p. 59)*
>
> *But deep down it [Westminster] is still a swamp. (p. 108)*
>
> *The world of Westminster is driven by ambition and exhaustion and alcohol. And lust. Especially lust. (p. 155)*
>
> *Politics. The word is taken from Ancient Greek. "Poly" means many. And "ticks" are tiny, bloodsucking insects. (p. 187)*
>
> *All members of a Cabinet are referred to as Right Honourable Gentleman. There are only three things wrong with such a title... (p. 213)*
>
> *A politician should never spend too much time thinking. It distracts attention from guarding his back. (p. 227)*
>
> *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Truth lies in the hands of its editor. (p. 251)*
>
> *Cruelty of any king is unforgivable. That´s why there is no point at all in being cruel in half-measure. (p. 335)*
>
> *To lie about one's strength is the mark of leadership; to lie about one's fault, the mark of politics. (p. 345)*

If, on the one hand, the epigraphs of the three volumes lead the reader to vacillate between the comedy and the tragedy of the narrative, entangled in public and private life in the manner so peculiar to the English playwright, on the other hand, they tune the reader's ear to the voice and plans of the vice-whip and later Prime Minister

Francis Urquhart, making the acceptance of his wicked behavior easier for the spectator. Dobbs' narrative is constructed episodically, but in the first two volumes it retains linearity. If these novels do not require a higher degree of participation of the reader as coauthor of narrative, the third volume, conversely, demands a greater attention by the intercalation of episodes that refer to a distant past, linked to the protagonist, to the participation of new characters, and to the use of historical reports, fictional or not. The narrative develops therefore in a crescendo of dramatic intensity and presents a daring, unexpected, surprising, and bombastic end in the third volume.

House of Cards (v. 1) reveals that no matter the country, dissimulation, intrigue, betrayal, and criminality reign behind the scenes of power. Driven by a desire for revenge, Francis Urquhart, the vice-whip of the conservative party of the English Parliament, works for the demoralization and fall of the fictional Prime Minister elect, Henry Collingridge, for not keeping his promise to give Urquhart a cabinet position after Margaret Thatcher's resignation. Urquhart has politicians in the palm of his hand and is willing to do anything to become Prime Minister. Mortima, his wife, companion, supporter and accomplice, appears little in the novel. They have an open marriage, with no binding terms. They move away from affairs or lovers in campaign season. Mattie Storin is a young investigative reporter, lover of the vice-whip, with a special talent for discovering the truth behind the official story. When she comes across a scandalous web of intrigue, financial corruption and murder, she threatens to reveal the truth and pays with her life for daring to confront Urquhart. "Praise for *House of Cards*", printed after the title page of the book: "This blood-and-thunder tale, lifelike and thoroughly cynical, carries the ring of authenticity… a great triumph." — *Independent*. "House of cards is fast-moving, revelatory, and brilliant. — *Daily Express*. "With a friend like Michael Dobbs, who on earth needs enemies? His Timing is impeccable. Gloriously cheeky." — *The Times*. "Razor-sharp and merciless" — *Daily Mail*. "Francis Urquhart is one of the great characters of modern fiction. — *York Evening Press*. "House of Cards is a work of a genius." — *Sunday Post*. Comments included in the fourth cover:

> A DARK TALE OF GREED, CORRUPTION AND UNQUENCHABLE AMBITION.
>
> Politics, intrigue, and passion reign in the corridors of power, no matter the country.
>
> Francis Urquhart has his hand on every secret in politics — and is willing to betray them all to become Prime Minister. Mattie Storin is a tenacious young reporter who has a knack for finding the real stories hidden behind the spin. When she stumbles upon a scandalous web of financial corruptions at the very highest levels, she vows to reveal the truth. But to do so, she must battle her own demons and risk everything, even her life
>
> *House of Cards* is a classical political thriller reinvented for new generation.

To Play the King (v. 2): After paving his way to power, the newly elected Prime Minister, Francis Urquhart, has to deal with the Head of State. The monarchy in Britain is then under scrutiny from the Prime Minister, who threatens to expose royal secrets when his plans are questioned by the idealist King. The differences of opinion between Urquhart and the King quickly turn into open hostility. The battle between the two is waged by Urquhart with fraudulent opinion polls, manipulated headlines, sexual scandals, and

threats of economic disaster, all the while striving to destroy the King and the Royal Family. The chess pieces are carefully moved in the play for power between Urquhart and the King until they reach checkmate. Comments included in the fourth cover:

> AFTER SCHEMING HIS WAY TO POWER IN *HOUSE OF CARDS*, NEWLY ELECTED PRIME MINISTER FRANCIS URQUHART TAKES ON THE NEW KING.
>
> Francis Urquhart is a ruthless politician determined to cling to his new status as Prime Minister. His power plays, however, are frustrated at every turn by a caring idealistic new king
>
> As the stage is set for a showdown between Downing Street and the Palace, Urquhart threatens to expose Royal secrets. But the new Prime Minister sets out to destroy not only the King's family and friends — but even the king himself.
>
> Continuing the dark tale of greed, corruption, and unquenchable ambition, To Play the King reveals one man will go to stay on top.

The Final Cut (v. 3): Francis Urquhart is about to become the longest-serving Prime Minister of the twentieth century, surpassing the 4227 days of Margaret Thatcher. The English people are tired of him, however, and the movement to force him out continually grows. He, on the contrary, is not yet ready to leave power. If the public demands new blood, that is precisely what he will give them. The Francis Urquhart of this volume is more cruel and vulnerable. After ten years as head of government, he is constantly visited by the ghosts of his past: the sights and sounds that accompanied the fall of his former lover, journalist Mattie Storin, from Parliament's terrace ten years before, as well as the vision and scent of the bodies of two Cypriot adolescents, burned alive, torment him. In the latter instance, the cruelty of the young lieutenant Urquhart, then age 23, is truly without limits: he burns the bodies of George and Alcides Passolides (15 and 13, respectively), soaked in gasoline. George and Alcides were brothers of Evanghelos Passolides who, in the present of the narrative, lives in England and whose purpose in life is to discover who murdered his brothers and where their bodies are buried. The dead teenagers, George and Alcides, are also the uncles of Maria Passolides who, at the end of the novel, is emotionally involved with Tom Makepeace, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Urquhart's opponent in the last elections.

> He [Urquhart] never spoke of the incident on the mountain [in Cyprus] but thereafter, at times of great personal crisis and decision in his life, whenever he closed his eyes and occasionally when he was asleep, the brilliant image and the memory of that day would return, part nightmare, part inspirations. The making of Francis Urquhart. (p. xxxiii)

In this last volume, Urquhart risks everything, because he is certain of one thing: whatever the result, his name will become part of History. And in the end, even weakened and vulnerable, he destroys, with a master stroke, the candidate already practically elected as his successor. Comments included in the fourth cover:

FRANCIS URQUHART'S SCHEMING CAREER AS PRIME MINISTER COMES TO A SPECTACULAR END IN THE HOUSE OF CARDS TRILOGY.

He schemed his way to power in *House of Cards* and had a memorable battle with the new monarch in *To Play the King*.

Now Francis Urquhart is about to take his place in the record books as the longest-serving Prime Minister this century. Yet it seems the public is tired of him at last, and the movement to force him from power is growing. But Urquhart is not yet ready to be driven from office. If the public demands new blood, that is precisely what he will give them…

This is a different Francis Urquhart, more vulnerable, more loving, and more ruthless than ever. He will risk everything, but one thing is certain: whatever the outcome of this, his greatest gamble, the name of Francis Urquhart will never be forgotten.

The BBC series *The house of cards* trilogy

The House of Cards Trilogy, which originally aired from 1990 to 1995, was directed by Paul Seed and features the characters Henry Collingridge, the Prime Minister [David Lyon]; Francis Urquhart – F.U. [Ian Richardson], vice-whip of the Conservative Party; Elizabeth Urquhart [Diane Fletcher], wife, supporter and accomplice of Urquhart; Mattie Storin [Susannah Harker], journalist and Urquhart's lover of.

This series is a celebration through the recreation of Dobbs trilogy in audiovisual and stays close to the novels. We cannot say that it extends the narrative, as it has only 12 episodes in total, divided into 3 seasons. The change in the name of Urquhart's wife, from Mortima to Elizabeth in the series, alludes to Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II (longest reign in the history of England) and suggests an overlap of the inherent strength of the two queens in the female character. The name "Mortima", possibly related to the predominantly masculine French name "Mortimer", which means "still waters", has little to do with the personality of Mrs. Urquhart, who is now closer to Lady Macbeth, so it must be taken ironically by the reader.

The first season of this series aired in 1990, shortly after the publication of the first novel by Dobbs. This season is characterized by quotes from Shakespeare, *ipsis litteris*, included below:

"Good things of day begin to droop and drowse." *Macbeth* (3.2.53)
"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well." *Macbeth* (3.2.24)
"If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain grow, and which will not." *Macbeth* (1.3.58-59)
"Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,
That I may see my shadow as I pass." *Richard III* (1.2.265-266)

In terms of cinematographic technique, great emphasis is placed on Urquhart's face and the expression in his gaze. Being a Shakespearean actor, Ian Richardson brings to his performance a "tension" of Shakespeare's plays and speaks, also with his

eyes, to his spectators. A quick look at the cover of the DVD brings us to a modified Shakespeare quote in Dobbs' first novel: "This is the fire of my discontent", a reconfiguration of the first line of *Richard III*: "Now is the winter of our discontent". The image of "fire" relates more accurately to the passion for power that burns in Urquhart's heart.

Here are other peculiarities of the series: Abuse of the mantra: "You might as well think that, but I could not possibly comment" (which is reused by Underwood, protagonist of the Netflix series, in a measured way); the filming of the protagonist's "seclusion" space: the terrace suspended in the Parliament building, from where he can observe his "kingdom"; and interspersed scenes of Urquhart with his shotgun, killing birds, as well as those of huge rats moving through London, both on the roofs of administration buildings and in filthy places such as abandoned viaducts and city dumps.

Both protagonists — Urquhart and Underwood — use a *modus operandi* very similar to convey information to journalists. They do not pass it to them directly; rather, they insinuate and ask questions that lead to replies from the journalists themselves, to appear that they have let slip the scoop that they in fact intend to leak, a technique used by Iago to foment the jealousy of the Venice moor. So, they repeat: "You might as well think that, but I could not possibly comment." Urquhart takes refuge, to enjoy his achievements and observe his "kingdom" on the terrace of the Parliament building. It is a place apparently unknown to others and especially to journalist Mattie. When she comes to the conclusion that Urquhart is the killer of Conservative Party Advertising Director Roger O'Neill, it is there that she meets the protagonist and challenges him and, in doing so, is murdered by him.

The scenes in which he shoots birds accurately, while conversing with his viewers, are symbolic of certain shots against his opponents. The scenes of the rats are not entirely fictitious, although they carry a very suggestive symbolic meaning about English politicians in the series, including Urquhart. Let's look at this Internet news about rats in London:

> A large rat was caught in the basement of an apartment complex in Hackney, outside London, UK. The rodent was caught by a team that was already in the area for disinfesting the place. According to *The Sun* website, authorities did not tell residents they were disinfesting rats to avoid spreading panic. The British association for pest control explained that there has been an increase in the number of rats in the country over the last few years because the venom is no longer taking effect. They fear that the amount of rats in the UK can continue to grow.
>
> (http://www.cmjornal.pt/insolitos/amp/ratazana_gigante_capturada_nos_arredores_de_londres) (my translation)

In addition to being transmitters of more than fifty-five diseases, among them leptospirosis, rats are famous for being considered "athletes in their specialty."

> Experiments with mice in labyrinths, which have been carried out for more than a hundred years since 1900, have shown that these animals are not only able to learn the ways [of the labyrinth] quickly, but they can also invent shortcuts and return to the point of departure. [...] Scientists had an experiment in which college students and rats needed to find the output of identical design labyrinths. Humans lost flat

> out: rodents not only managed to find their way first, but also recorded the course more quickly. (http://super.abril.com.br/ ciencia/rato-o-pior-amigo-do-homem)

Being "athletes in their specialty" and fast in the invention of shortcuts to reach power are also characteristics of the protagonists of the three works in question. They lay low their leaders – the Prime Minister and the President – and assume their positions through their cunning suggestions and proposals, through the villainy of their attitudes, and the corruption of their attempts. In short, the rats symbolize the spurious character of the protagonists that causes the spread of the "plague" or evil in the administration of their countries.

Besides the insertion of these symbolic scenes in the series of the BBC, the great modification happens in the conclusion. In Dobbs' third novel, the Prime Minister is murdered through the machinations of his opponent – Tom Makepeace – by the Greek Cypriot, Evangelos Passolides, brother of the teenagers murdered in Cyprus. The Cypriot is, in turn, assassinated by Corder, the Prime Minister's bodyguard. In the series, during the inauguration of the statue of Margaret Thatcher, Urquhart is executed. A sharpshooter, contracted by Elizabeth and the bodyguard, shoots the Prime Minister. Killing Urquhart is the solution found by Elizabeth and Corder, so that he can become a martyr and hero. For Dobbs, the "birth" of Francis Urquhart had occurred at the age of 23, in Cyprus, when he had burned the teenagers alive; in the series, he burns them after having shot them, so that they cannot be identified. Now birth and death are united because Urquhart is murdered by the brother of the teenagers he killed. At any rate, in both versions, the Cypriot is considered the killer and Urquhart wins in the end. In the novel, Makepeace, who was virtually elected, is defeated by Urquhart's words and death before an audience of 40,000, and the Conservative party remains in power. In the series, Urquhart enters into history, when assassinated, as one of the most heroic and long-serving British Prime Ministers.

The Netflix Maxiseries *House Of Cards*

House of Cards (2012 -...), a series directed by James Foley (and more than 15 other directors during its five years, among them Kevin Spacey and Robin Wright), starring Garrett Walker [Michael Gill], President; Francis Underwood [Kevin Spacey], protagonist and leading member of the Democratic Party; Claire Underwood [Robin Wright] wife, supporter and accomplice / adversary of the husband; and Zoe Barnes [Kate Mara], a journalist and Underwood's lover, has, as we mentioned, 65 episodes in total, divided into 5 seasons.

When talking about the BBC series, we have already focused on some features of the Netflix series. But we would like to add, from the start, that this second series feels closer to the Brazilian spectator, because we live under a similar political regime and we are part of the American Continent. In this series, considering the country in which the diegesis takes place and its current political regime – different from the country and political regime of the country of the source texts – more adjustments, updates and recontextualizations have been introduced. Those adjustments help to characterize contemporary American society, in which technology is available to everyone and women have their own professional and political interests. This goes, of course, without mentioning the expansion of the narrative to 65 episodes.

Most of the time, cell phone text messages establish the communication between Underwood and Zoe, his lover. We viewers see projected on-screen messages that come and go among those involved. Moments before meeting Underwood and being murdered by him, Zoe exchanges messages with a colleague in the office who also suspects Underwood's involvement in the death of Peter Russo, another congressman, the protagonist's "pawn."

Claire Underwood, Francis' wife, is a woman with her own ambitions and does not live in the shadow of, nor as an accomplice to her husband. Several times, when he disrespects her and destroys her plans for political ascension, she becomes a fierce adversary, causing serious consequences for her husband's unusual plans. Dissimulation is also one of her hallmarks. Just to cite an example: when asked why the couple never had children and confronted with news stories regarding her having had an abortion, she says she had indeed done so, because she had been raped by a military man, her college friend. While the rape really happened, she hadn't actually gotten pregnant at the time. The abortion or abortions she had undergone were more than five years after the assault. Her assistant then tries to confiscate the medical records so that Claire's lie is not discovered. Like Lady Macbeth, she is a woman who leaves no descendants. Like Lady Macbeth she has moments of regret, but they are not intense enough to lead her to sleepwalking and suicide. They last only a few minutes, from which she stands stronger and more resolute. The name "Claire" is the same as the woman who stands out most in the Parliament of the British series, Claire Carlsen. She is a fearless PPS (Personal Parliamentary Secretary) of Urquhart and, despite having different convictions from his, she is fascinated by the cold and calculating control that the Prime Minister exercises over her and her colleagues.

The Underwood couple lives an open relationship, where not even a *ménage à trois* is ruled out. Claire's relationship with a famous New York photographer, since before her marriage, still holds and is her refuge in times of great tribulation. But she cannot adjust to the serene and pleasant social life that her lover offers her, a life without machinations and Machiavellian plans. As soon as her husband needs her, she leaves her lover and returns to Underwood. He, the husband, had promised her, when asking her to marry him, that if she agreed to marry him, she would never be bored. The promise is fulfilled when he puts her in touch with the frenzy of political life Washington provides, which she can no longer do without. This characteristic of Claire is sharply accentuated in season 5 when she poisons another lover, the White House speechwriter, because she had told him, in a moment of intimacy and weakness, about her husband's murders. Therefore, the vulnerability she feels in caring for him and revealing secrets that can destroy her husband's career leads her to kill him.

Symbolic elements and updates are also recurrent in this maxiseries: the two taps of Underwood's ring, the use of text messages for communication between the characters, and the use of time lapse, a technique that produces an opposite effect to that of slow motion, which is used in the opening of the episodes.

The tapping of the ring on a wood surface reiterates Underwood's power, and he uses it as a judge uses the gavel to conclude legal proceedings, reminding the assembled that he is the most important figure in the court, whether they like it or not. He talks to Raymond Tusk, a millionaire close friend and unofficial adviser to the President of the United States. Underwood worries because, according to him, the millionaire

knows the difference between power and money and that is precisely what makes him a dangerous man. The protagonist conjectures: "He does not measure his wealth with private jets, but with bought souls. I worked too hard to get so close to the [US vice-presidency] award and let my hand cut off before I grabbed it" (S1 E2 48:35). About the tapping of the ring, Tusk says:

> "Can I ask why do you do that?"
> "Do what?"
> "Tap your ring like that. I've seen you do it on TV. Two taps every time you get up from a table or leave a lectern."
> "Something my father taught me. It's meant to harden you knuckles so you don't break them if you get into a fight. It also has the added benefit of knocking on wood. My father believed that success is a mixture of preparation and luck. Tapping the table kills both birds with one stone."
> "Your father was a peach farmer?"
> "Yes, he was. Not a very successful one."
> "Lack of preparation or lack of luck?"
> "Lack of both. He was better at giving advise than following it." (S1 E12 19:33)

Regarding the meaning and use of time lapse, Sílvio do Amaral Rocha explains:

> Time lapse is slow motion backwards. The landscape is filmed for a whole day, uninterrupted. At the time of showing, those hours are condensed in a single minute. With cameras, the result is similar - although the path is different. Instead of filming without stopping, photographs are taken at regular intervals. Moved to an editing program, these images are placed in chronological order, giving the impression of motion (when choosing the time of display of each photograph, the result is the same). (http://veja.abril.com.br/blog/augusto-nunes/feira-livre/imagens-em-movimento-time-lapse-uma-camera-lenta-as-avessas/)

Its use allows you to create dramatic effects in action movies, convey character sensations, show the passage of time, highlight visual or reflective effect. The opening of the Netflix series, which, unlike the title sequences of other series, must be watched by the viewer, as it is placed in the episodes once they have already begun, demonstrates the inexorable and rapid passage of time. It suggests, through the recording and projection of shadows that crawl quickly upward into the towering administration buildings and commemorative statues, and cover them in a matter of seconds, the darkness that plagues the political world of Washington. The red brake lights of cars mark out the darkness of the night, suggesting a trail of violence and, at the same time, the rapid flow of American time and life — the frenzy of immediacy, fluidity, and liquidity which mark contemporary existence. At night, the city's fixed lights stab the rivers of Washington, D.C.

Shakespearean Dna

The leads of each of the series, Ian Richardson and Kevin Spacey, both Shakespearean actors, bring to their performances their respective experience in the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays, recreating characteristics of protagonists like

Macbeth, Richard III and Iago, in addition to moving in the Shakespearean substrate, already existent in the Dobbs trilogy.

The protagonists feel betrayed by their superiors, because of unfulfilled expectation. Just as in *Othello*, a play in which Iago, who believes he is entitled to the rank of lieutenant, is thwarted by *Othello* who gives Cassio the job, Urquhart and Underwood both feel betrayed by the Prime Minister and the President, respectively.

In *Othello*, Iago, angry, ventures with Rodrigo:

> IAGO
> [...] Three great ones of the city,
> In personal suit to make his lieutenant.
> Off-capped to him, and by the faith of man
> I know my price, I am worth no worse a place.
> But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
> Evades them, with a bombast circumstance
> Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,
> And in conclusion
> Nonsuits my mediators. For 'Certes", says he,
> 'I have already chosen my officer.'
> And what was he?
> Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
> One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
> A fellow almost damned in a fair wife
> That never set a squadron in a field
> Nor the division of a battle knows
> More than a spinster - unless the bookish theoric,
> Wherein the togged consuls can propose
> As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice
> Is all his soldiership - but he, sir, had th'election
> And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof
> At Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds,
> Christian and heathen, must be be-leed and calmed
> By debitor and creditor. This counter-caster
> He, in good time, must his lieutenant be
> And I, God bless the mark, his Moorship's ancient! (1.1.7-32)

Urquhart (BBC) feels betrayed because he had been promised a senior post in the Prime Minister's Cabinet shortly after Collingridge takes office; however, he remains as vice-whip of the Conservative Party. The series opens with a shot of Urquhart's desk. The camera then moves to a close-up on the head of the vice-whip who, in his office, takes Margaret Thatcher's photo in his hands, observes it and says, "Nothing lasts forever!" And overturns the picture on the desk. He looks at the camera, staring at the viewer, and goes on: "Even the most glittering reign must come to an end." His wife Elizabeth, in the series, is the instigator of the revenge against Prime Minister Collingridge. Underwood (Netflix) feels betrayed because he had been promised the position of Secretary of State, however, the President-elect breaks the promise, gives the position to a Senator, and he continues as a leading Democrat and House Majority Whip. Underwood, who had promised to call his wife Claire upon confirmation of his appointment, does not call her. As soon as he has been told that he will not be the new

Secretary of State, he leaves the office and wanders disgusted and disoriented through the streets of Washington until he is enveloped in the night, suggesting a symbiosis between the darkness and his state of mind. Upon arriving home, he is scolded by his wife for not calling and, knowing the cause, instigated by her to rebel against the President's decision. In this scene we see adjustments, recontextualization and updating of Macbeth who, after his encounter with the witches, arrives at his castle and is received by Lady Macbeth, who encourages him to hasten his ascent to the throne of Scotland by assassinating Duncan, the reigning king and his friend.

The protagonists demonstrate a relentless desire for power. Both Urquhart and Underwood do not hesitate to commit murder if the crime frees them from "setbacks" or brings them closer to power. The first characters to be murdered are Roger O'Neill (BBC) and Peter Russo, a US Democrat (Netflix), both corrupt and addicted to cocaine. Journalists Mattie Storin, in the BBC trilogy and series, and Zoe Barnes, in the Netflix series, discovering Urquhart's and Underwood's responsibility in the crimes, are murdered by the protagonists. Here we have a retelling of *Macbeth* and *Richard III* and the murderous instinct of their protagonists. With Macbeth, the desire to eliminate Duncan, the King of Scotland, is born when he listens to the prediction of the witches who greet him as Duke of Cawdor, Duke of Glamis and future King of Scotland. This desire is embraced and encouraged by Lady Macbeth. With Richard III, the desire to be King leads him to murder all the members of his family who would have the right to ascend to the throne before him and to propose marriage (after having eliminated his wife Lady Anne) to one of his nieces, daughter of the King, his brother, who preceded him, to "legitimize" his conquest.

The protagonists of the trilogy and series are cunning, driven by ambition, cruelty, villainy and envy. When another politician is chosen to be part of the Cabinet (BBC) and as Secretary of State (Netflix), the criminal trajectory of the protagonists begins. They hold privileged information about their colleagues or arrange and record situations and compromising dialogues involving drugs, prostitution, corruption and betrayal, to blackmail them in the present or the future, and get them off the path of their rise to power. Richard III, blinded by the ambition to reach the throne of England, does not hesitate to have brothers and infant nephews killed. Macbeth, seeing the first predictions of the witches come true, is moved by the devastating ambition to see the last prediction, becoming King of Scotland, come to pass. Therefore, even before lodging Duncan, the then King of Scotland, in his house, Macbeth plans, along with the wife, the assassination of the sovereign. Then, already crowned King, also believing in the prediction of the witches that the next kings of Scotland would be of the lineage of Banquo, his companion in battle, hires assassins to kill Banquo and his son during a ride on horseback. Banquo is killed, but his son escapes. When Macbeth fails to destroy the leaders of the rebellion who seek to defeat him, he kills their families and servants. After Macbeth's encounter with the witches, the once greatly celebrated warrior's life is marked by a trail of blood leading to his death. In the play *Othello*, the Moor of Venice, the general is manipulated by Iago, who, enraged at not having been chosen as lieutenant, revenges himself by inventing a tale that the general's wife is involved with Cassio, who had been chosen instead. Othello plays a role similar to that of the Prime Minister of the trilogy and the BBC series, and of the President of the US. He is naive enough to allow himself to be carried away by the aspiring lieutenant's insinuations, to see "evidence of his wife's infidelity" where it does not exist, to be "blinded

with jealousy" and convinced that, since the women of Venice were reputedly frivolous, Desdemona would also be, spurred on by the fact that, just as she had cleverly deceived her father to marry him, so would she easily deceive her husband. Prime Ministers and the President of the United States, like Othello, become puppets in the hands of underlings who seek revenge and / or long for power.

The protagonists of the trilogy and series have great power of concealment and manipulation. Accordingly, it is necessary for them to have a "pawn" to do their "dirty work"- the media for leaks of confidential information, revelation of degrading secrets of the parliamentarians and manipulation of opinion-poll results, thus changing the direction of politics. Generally, the chosen politicians are drug addicts and, in co-opting them, the protagonists save them from accusations that could compromise them. They are "weak" men, with chemical dependency issues and a history of corruption and relationships with prostitutes; they serve the protagonists' spurious purposes, and when they become a threat, they are eliminated.

Barbara Heliodora, in the "Introduction" of the publication Ricardo III by Saraiva (2013), writes that:

> Using the experience of moralities, in the sense of radical confrontations between good and evil, Shakespeare draws inspiration, taking advantage of several aspects of one of his more traditional characters, Vice of Dissimulation, whose humor and joy in doing evil appear in Ricardo without any reference to this in the biographies that served as the source. [...]
> If, in general, villains are easier to be idealized and staged than "angels of candor," they can pose a major obstacle to their creator. By choosing a tyrannical villain as the protagonist, the author comes up against some basic problems: there is a loss of tragic potential, insofar as the fall of the character identified with evil does not lead the spectator to the harrowing sensation of "tragic waste." Rather, it may be seen as deserved punishment; no less important is the loss of sympathy and solidarity on the part of the audience. Faced with the figure of Richard III, Shakespeare found a solution to such problems by making the character fascinating by his capacity for concealment and daring: by witnessing it, shrouded in a phenomenal (black) sense of humor, the spectator, if not sympathetic, is taken by curiosity to know if Richard will or will not get everything that is proposed in the first scene of Act I. Revealing directly to the audience his plans in relation to the crown, Richard can then exhibit his extraordinary gifts as an actor (of Vice of Dissimulation), interpreting the role of timid, wronged, simple, rejected, etc. to those around him. It is crucial to the proper functioning of the play that he does not behave like a villain in front of those who take part in the action. (p. 8, my translation)

In other words, the breaking of the fourth wall, that is, the passing of information that the other characters are unaware of to viewers by the "villain" in asides or soliloquies, either in *Richard III* or *Othello* (with the character Iago), recreated in the two series, along with bringing us closer to the villains, also makes us accomplices in their scheming and crimes. At the beginning of the series, in addition to those objectives laid out in asides, the protagonists, Urquhart and Underwood, take us by the hand to contextualize the moment and present the characters; describing other congressman with sneering expressions, and revealing Machiavellian plans in an ironic and humorous way, often trivializing unethical and criminal attitudes, and thus manipulating us as they manipulate their superiors.

Urquhart enters Parliament's headquarters and climbs the stairs talking to the spectators, days before the Conservative party Prime Minister Collingridge's victory. In passing through his companions, he goes on to describe those who will have more importance in diegesis. Underwood is at the New Year's Eve party celebrating the victory of the President-elect of the Democratic party. Like Urquhart, he introduces his colleagues to us, the spectators, and talks about the political situation in Washington. The revenge plan is obviously not known by the Prime Minister / President or colleagues of the protagonists. We, however, have this inside information. There is an adjustment in this part, as we mentioned earlier. In the BBC series, this revelation of revenge takes place through an aside, when Urquhart, alone, seated at his office reveals that things will not stay the way they are. In the BBC and Netflix series, the desire for revenge is strengthened when Elizabeth and Claire urge their husbands to avenge themselves on their superior. As we can see, from the beginning of the series, the similarity between Elizabeth / Claire and Lady Macbeth is clear. They project themselves as strong, determined, unshakable female characters. In short, it is by means of asides, a technique widely used in *Othello* and *Richard III*, that we know the true nature of Urquhart and Underwood. Richard and Iago's asides and soliloquies also reveal the "vice / art of dissimulation" and, especially with Iago, the power of manipulation and the meticulous planning of his revenge.

In *Richard III*, the fact that the protagonist is dissimulate is not privileged information for the spectators. This feature is already known by some of the characters, especially by the women of the court. "Bloody thou art; bloody will be thy end" (4.4.195) predicts the Duchess, Richard's mother. In addition to the fixed idea of killing those who are in the way of his climb to the throne of England, there are a few moments in which he designs other plans, such as when he conquers Lady Anne, marries her and orders those around him to spread the word that she is very ill so that her death will not come as another surprise to the English court and people. The death of Lady Anne leaves him free to ask for the hand of the niece in marriage, legitimating his accession to the throne.

Iago, on the other hand, besides being dissimulate, designs a subtle and cunning plan to instill in Othello an overwhelming jealousy of his wife Desdemona. Of the Shakespearean characters mentioned in this work, Iago is the one who has the greatest power of articulation and manipulation. He is skillful in actions, speech, body and facial expression. At the beginning of his insinuation to Othello that Desdemona is unfaithful, he "pretends to be reluctant" to say what he thinks, repeats Othello's questions in a feigned attempt to avoid talking about the problem, and frowns to indicate a possible concern.

IAGO
My noble lord...
OTHELLO
What dost thou say, Iago?
IAGO
Did Michael Cassio, when you wood my lady,
Know your love?
OTHELLO
He did, from first to last.
Why dost thou ask?

IAGO
But for a satisfaction of my thought,
No further harm.
OTHELLO
Why of thy thought, Iago?
IAGO
I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
OTHELLO
O yes, and went between us very oft.
IAGO
Indeed?
OTHELLO
Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?
IAGO
Honest, my lord?
OTHELLO
Honest? Ay, honest?
IAGO
My lord, for aught I know.
OTHELLO
What dost thou think?
IAGO
Think, my lord?
OTHELLO
Think, my lord! By heaven, thou echo'st me
As if there were some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something,
I heard thee say even now thou lik'st not that
When Cassio left my wife: what did'st not like?
And when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed'?
And didst contract and purse thy brow together
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me
Show me thy thought. (3.3.91-118)

Iago has a keen sense for the weaknesses of his victims. He knows that it is more effective to insinuate something to Othello than to be direct in his speech and risk bringing the Moor to anger. Instead of verbalizing his slander, he speaks of the levity of the women of Venice and the ease with which Desdemona deceived her father:

IAGO
[...] Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio.
Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure;
I would not have your free and noble nature
Out of self-bounty be abused: look to't.
I know our country disposition well —
In Venice they do let God see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.
OTHELLO
Dost thou say so?

IAGO
She did deceive her father, marrying you,
And when she seemed to shake, and fear your looks,
She loved them most.
OTHELLO
And so she did.
IAGO
Why, go to then:
She that so young could give out such a seeming
To seal her father's eyes up, close as oak –
He thought 'twas witchcraft. But I am much to blame,
I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
For too much loving you. (3.3.200-215)

Iago performs a varied number of roles convincingly: with Othello, he transforms from loyal employee to honest and supportive friend; with Desdemona, he is sympathetic and affable; with Cassio, he is informal and friendly; with Rodrigo, he can reveal a little more of his vile personality, but we only know who he really is from his soliloquies and asides. In this sense, the characterization of the two villains in the series constantly alludes to Shakespeare's characters and presents nothing new about human nature, nothing more than what the playwright had already revealed in his plays at the time he lived and wrote. Urquhart and Underwood, like Iago, provoke and manage a series of disasters in the lives of other characters, their colleagues and supposed friends; they plan and execute their revenge and the fall of their superiors or "enemies" step by step; they play various roles depending on the moment and the person they are talking to; they have an accurate perception of the weaknesses of their victims. They know that half words and insinuations are more powerful and destructive than straightforward and open accusations.

Final Remarks

House of Cards (the trilogy and series) roughly comprises two or more texts in interaction (intertextuality between Shakespeare's plays and Michael Dobbs' trilogy); two or more media in interaction (intermediality between Dobbs trilogy, the BBC series and the Netflix maxiseries) and two or more interacting cultures (interculturality between 16.th and 17th century England and 20.th century England; England of the 16t.h, 17.th and 20.th centuries and the United States of the 2.st century). In Shakespeare's England, the political regime was Absolutist Monarchy, in which the King is the Head of State and the Head of Government. In Dobbs' England, the Parliamentary Monarchy has the Queen as Head of State and the Prime Minister as Head of Government and, in the United States, the regime is Presidential Republic, in which the President, indirectly elected by the people, holds the power. Therefore, as stated in the beginning of this work, adjustments, updates, and recontextualizations are necessary for the re-creation and reception of the series.

Finally, the Dobbs trilogy, as well as the two series, celebrate Shakespeare's art: Dobbs' political novels update the themes of the English playwright, (re)contextualizing human passions in the political spheres of England in the 20.th century. The BBC series adapts these novels and inserts techniques used by the playwright, such

as asides and soliloquies, to enter not only the nature of the protagonists, but also to captivate the viewer, who holds inside information and becomes an accomplice in the plots, corruption and villainy of protagonists. The Netflix maxiseries also uses these techniques, but extends the duration of the narrative (65 episodes), (re)contextualizing it in another century (21.st), another country (United States of America) and other political regime (Presidential Republic).

Worthy of note, before the closing of this article, is the behavior of the Prime Minister of England and the President of the United States who are manipulated by the protagonists, move away from the position and do not run for re-election. Although naive as Othello and easily entangled by the subtle and silent ingenuity of those who plan to take revenge, they are thoughtful, lucid characters committed to the development and progress of the country and its people. Both Prime Minister Collingridge and the King in Dobbs' trilogy, as well as the leaders in the productions directed by Paul Seed (BBC) and James Foley (Netflix), represent with dignity and conscience the public will to do right, to do the best for the people of their country. The biggest problem of these leaders is the reliance on unscrupulous and corrupt politicians who surround them. Accompanying this positive construction of the nation's leaders is an apology to Elizabeth I (Queen of England from 1558 to 1603), in Shakespeare's time; Elizabeth II (Queen of England from 1953 to the present) in the days of Dobbs and Seed, and Barack Hussein Obama II (President of the United States from 2009 to 2017), in the 21.st century.

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