TITLE.

The adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III*'s into Frank Underwood from *House of Cards (*NETFLIX 2012-2019) Psychopathy as a metaphor of physical deformity? A study of the dramaturgical interpretation of psychology and motivation on a contemporary television character.

The adaptation of Shakespeare's characters into 21st century drama series characters calls for a revision of what are the dramaturgical decisions screenwriters made in adapting a Shakespearean character.

But what exactly is "Shakespearean? In the context of this research I define Shakespearean in terms of two functions: 1) The characterization features adapted from Richard III to Frank Underwood, main character of *House of Cards*. Therefore, Frank Underwood is a Shakespearean character because it is an adaptation from Gloucester, main character of Richard III. (for the purpose of this paper, I will refer to Gloucester as Richard), and 2) the tools used to portray such features, in this case the break of the 4th wall to deliver dialogue.

The Shakespearean attributes from Richard III that were used on Frank Underwood can be narrowed down to the characterization or archetypical villain behavior, and the dramaturgical tools used to present that characterization. In both cases, the type of dialogue that breaks the imaginary 4th wall and addresses the audience is the most used dramaturgical tool. Another way to name these types of dialogues is asides. The origins of the characters in both dramatic series *House of Cards*, in their respective versions, British and American, have been adapted from the homonymous novels, authored by Michael Dobbs. Dobbs has widely accepted that the main character of the novel, Francis Uquhart, took inspiration from Shakespeare's *Richard III*'s and *Macbeth*'s protagonists. Consequently, the adaptation of *Richard III* in the American version of the series, is still observable to be Shakespearean.

Shakespearean, then, in this context is a character on a television series that has expressively borrowed characterization features from a Shakespearean character. I refer to characterization as the personality, behavior of character and the dramaturgical tool used to express such. Both Richard and Frank use the break of 4th wall, also referred as "direct address" or "aside" to speak directly to the audience.

I am particularly interested in studying how dialogue is used to portray character, since I believe it's a tool used in both instances to present their psychology.

The concept of psychology in character composition is an important aspect to learn for every screenwriter. However there doesn't seem to be much research or reflection on this matter. Specially how psychology works in character in television series.

There are a few descriptions of what psychology means in terms of dramatic writing, but they feel descriptive. An example is Lajos Egri (Egri 1960). He creates a list naming the grouping of those attributes a "psychology" without explaining much further in how a screenwriter can deeply it in the story weaving or character construction. The descriptions of psychology for character don't seem to be applied anymore in character construction in II Golden Age of Television.

The changes in writing for television have convulsed the rules that originated from dramatic writing for plays or long features. It seems that those rules don't apply anymore to the way television is being written now, with focus on character. Characters for television a more novelistic ones, requiring a deeper design that arguably involves creating a more complex psychology than those appearing on film. For this, literary theories seem to have more answers of theories that potentially can be used to trigger new theories of character construction than blends the classic dramatic writing advice with new screenwriting theories that focus on character for television.

Theories of character ins Shakespeare can help with that. The play I'm using in this paper, Richard III has been analyzed in terms of psychology by various authors and is set to be a good example of a complex character. Literary theories and Richard III's analysis in terms of psychology are a good reference point for starting a an analysis of character psychology in an contemporary television series of a character that is based on Richard III. The name of that character is Frank underwood, from *House of Cards*.

The psychology of a Shakespearean character takes importance in a drama series because arguably, in the second golden age of television, character complexity has been an important factor that helps composing a complex story. Since being able to compose a complex psychological character is one aspect of Shakespearean's authorship skills that is constantly appreciated in literary theories, I think it is necessary to analyze how these literary concepts can be transposed into a dramaturgical sphere. Does It seem as if the Shakespearean character as is interpreted by literary theories can be understood in dramaturgical sense by analyzing how tv screenwriters create characters? Does a deep `psychology under a Shakespearean literary appreciation mean a deeply psychological characterization in contemporary tv, how is this executed?

I think this will bring light on the actual practices and understanding that screenwriters have in characters composition in a screenwriting era that demands characters with a deeper psychology,

The one feature that arguably affects both characters is that both can referred to as having a "sociopathic" behavior that can be categorized a personality, which can arguably be linked to their ruthless behavior, however there are other sub textual and dramatic behavior that are left out of the sociopathic behavior and arguably can be still attributed to the character's psychology albeit not clinical psychology, but just behavior. I want to be able to find out how this

clinical psychological concept works next to dramatic psychology, the differences and comparison between the two characters and what that means for creating a psychology of character in contemporary screenwriting.

Method.

The purpose of this paper is to make transparent the dramaturgical way a character's psychology is designed in a contemporary television drama.

The use of dialogue and how it helps composing a complex psychology seems to be Shakespeare's territory and what I want to do with that is to discuss the deployment of a Shakespearean style in the show house of cards, with the objective of discussing how dialogue helps constructing complex characters in contemporary television, if following the Richard III example was successful, id the Shakespearean character still has relevance, what are the differences and what are the similarities? What was accomplished dramaturgically, in terms of character construction in writing Frank Underwood recreating the Shakespearean effect? Did the use of dialogue achieve creating a character psychologically complex? What implication does the

I categorized Richard III and Frank Underwood's dialogue function in terms of characterization using Linda Aronson's concepts of ""personal, public and internal". Then, I drew I comparison between them.

I chose dialogue to analyze both Richard III and Frank's characterizations because each uses dialogue extensively to describe themselves. It is arguably the one dramaturgical feature that Frank borrows from Richard III the most. Arguably also, is that characterization is provided predominantly through dialogue rather than enactment, at least initially, so I expected to find out about how their psychology was constructed by their authors, similitudes between them and differences.

The categories used in the analysis are: "personal, "public" and "internal" (Aronson 2010: 93). Linda Aaronson's categories are specific in terms of "what the audience needs to know" about the character in the story. I focused on the dialogue lines because both writers seem to lean on its dramaturgical function to provide information about their main characters, what I wanted to find out is if this information can be broken down in different types or categories.

The use of dialogue informs audiences about character's internal and external disposition. This is done with the break of the 4th wall, a recourse used by both Richard and Frank to reveal information about themselves in preparation for the rest of the story. Richard III, (still named Gloucester), informs about his evil nature, what his role and disposition are and the motivation behind it: his physical deformity. The same model of character introduction appears to be used in the introduction of Frank Underwood: he breaks the fourth wall to explain a personal philosophy that doesn't allow him to withstand "unnecessary pain", proceeding to kill a dog with his own hands. The exposition in these first scenes is high but is not an uncommon way to start

a story. What is interesting is how Frank Underwood's writer, allegedly borrowing many of the Richard III's features used by Shakespeare, does not develop a step by step characterization model adapted by Shakespeare. It is evident, form this very first scenes that even if the recourse of the break of the 4th wall is used by both characters, it is necessary to perform an analysis that provides mor insight in terms of types of dialogue uses and the characterization meaning of such.

Consequently, I developed a system of comparison between two characters. I started with the first scene, typifying each dialogue into a specific category of personal, public or internal, allowing me to follow a characterization "trail" in the rest of each story. This sampling is highly qualitative, because it focuses verbatim in each character's dialogue, allowing me to draw similarities and differences in the break of 4th wall or "addresses" to audience. Since the dialogue used by Richard and Frank have the similarity of being used to break the wall, I wanted to find out which other uses have in common, what are the differences and how those evolve throughout the story.

After the first scene analysis, I categorized each dialogue of the main character of Richard III's full play, and 13 episodes of the 1st season of *House of Cards*. This allowed me to compare the trajectory of the types of dialogue in the story development in a quantitative manner, allowing me to realize about which types of dialogue were consistently used, which were disregarded. It allowed to perform a constant qualitative comparison with the initial findings.

Past			Present		
Personal	**Public**	**Internal**	**Personal**	**Public**	**Internal**
Date, place of birth? Where grew up? Family? Relationships with family? Unpleasant and pleasant aspects of childhood? Major family events in childhood?	Class of family? Education? How family was regarded? How character came across to others? What jobs? Hobbies? Political/ social beliefs? Shy or outgoing? Crucial events witnessed?	Personality flaws? What secrets? What did this person hate talking about? Emotional crises in childhood?	Family still alive? Contact, good or bad, with family? Has partner? Children? Where lives and lifestyle? Any personal crises at the moment?	Job? Financial state? How good at job? How happy in job? Enjoys workplace? Fits in socially and in workplace? Hobbies? Political beliefs? Passions? Pet hates? Ambitions? Shy or outgoing? People most loves, hates, pities, fears?	Problems at work or socially? Grudges? Secrets? Fears? Damage carried from past, if any? What does this person hate talking about? Optimist or pessimist?

Figure 1. Character chart.

Then, I proceeded to categorize each line of dialogue from each character in a table c

CATEGORIZATION OF DIALOGUE TYPES IN TERMS OF CHARACTER'S FEATURES AS DESCRIBED BY LINDA ARONSON.			
EPISODE.SCENE. BEGINING/ENDING.	ACTION OR ASIDES.	CHARACTER's FEATURE TYPES: PERSONAL, PUBLIC, INTERNAL.	COMMENTS

Table 1. Categorization of dialogues in terms of character's features by Linda Aronson (Aronson, 2010)

RESULTS.

I discovered that Frank Underwood Richard III psychologies are similar, power hungry and manipulating. However, their motivations are different, Richard uses dialogue to link his motivation to his physical deformity; while Frank doesn't mention any motivation behind his actions, except for a high sense of duty and pragmatism.

Frank as opposed of Richard doesn't use adjectives to explain his role in the story but acts upon a dubious moral personal code that would make him comparable to Richard in terms of "villain" behavior. His dramaturgical design is "cinematic" in the sense that he acts out his personality, rather than talking about it. Partially, at least.

The behavior of Richard III repeats constantly the tandem presented in these first scenes, of explaining his actions in terms of his role as a villain. This is the play uses dialogue to have Richard (named Gloucester still) introducing himself as a villain and explaining the reasons behind his actions. Paris (1990) presents a full study the connection between this first presentation, creating connection to the rest of the plays until the culmination of the play.

Having this introductory scene as basis of comparison between the introduction of both characters, we perceive in Richard III a tandem of presentation of who he is personally, his motivation for being like this, and the role he will have in the story.

DISCUSSION

In an era where many shows are based on characters with psychological disorders, and clinical psychology is used to makes characters believable, the idea of having a character like Frank is not strange. His actions and personality are not different from the murderous and conscious less actions delivered by serial killers in true crime stories in Netflix. In drama series, characters with callous actions are part of the most successful shows in recent times. E/g: Walter White from *Breaking Bad (AMC 2008-2013)*, Tony Soprano from *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999-2007) are important representatives of sociopathic characters.

Frank Underwood's characterization as a sociopath is not uncommon. But his sociopathy seems to cover his psychology in fully, which is not the case for Richard III. All the description that can derivate from this personality disorder are applicable to Frank: murderer, lack of conscience, manipulator and selfish. Arguably, the same applies to Richard III. The difference is that for Richard, there's an extra element of motivation that Frank lacks: his physical deformity. For Frank, his sociopathy seems to cover in full his characterization. For Richard, there is a second layer of characterizations that is engrained to a deeply engrained personal meaning behind the actions he takes. A personal motivation.

I add the word "personal" to motivation because "motivation" can mean many things. In this case, motivation is so personal that seems to be the main drive behind Richard. His physical deformity is mentioned in the first soliloquy making it part of his characterizations, along with the actions he describes will do that portray his callous psychology. The explanation behind this motivation is pain, just as Paris explains (1990). Curiously, pain is what drives Frank's actions, his personal philosophy revealed in the first scene of the series. He is aware of his callousness and the consequences his actions might have on other people. In the opening dialogue of the series, his actions and his own words depict him immediately as someone cold and calculated. This is the first time he breaks the 4th wall and describes himself as someone who is capable of tolerating pain if necessary. He then proceeds to kill a dog in order to stop "unnecessary" pain. He doesn't attribute his actions to a deeper pain caused by specific cause, like Richard III does when he mentions his physical deformity as the motivation behind his actions.

It could be argued that being sociopath is such a thing that someone who suffer from it doesn't necessarily has to acknowledge. That a dramatic character must act out such actions rather than speaking about them. This what cinematic rules of dramaturgy recommend. This is true but the character uses dialogue so heavily in describing himself and his actions that arguably,

However, the poetic license is already been more than bridged in the case of Frank, who is using dialogue more in a theatrical way than in a cinematic way. The over exposition of dialogue is similar in use as in Richard III, a play. But how Frank is overusing the dramatic tools of theatre, but neglecting the complexity of cinematic character, ==how he's a halfway through in both a cinematic and theatrical characters== can be addressed later.

Frank is a sociopath. Franks achieves power as Richard did, but we don't see how his personal hate is attached to it.

Richard III is a villain but is not all mighty, and his psychological design exposes weaknesses. For Frank, the weaknesses are inexistent, his sociopathy makes him invincible, he doesn't care to suffer, to be the one who carries with the force of the responsibility, the one who does the necessary thing, right? So, he's a concept. There seems to be a connection between his current personality and his backstory, a connection with the brutality and disadvantages he suffered as a kid. Just as Richard III, he also has a paternal figure that created a huge impact on his life. At least that's what the people in the show seem to want to expose. However, it seems to be portrayed in order to expose Frank's enormous capacity for resilience, rather than making him weak. In the whos they, mention a lot that he is always left behind other more well connected and better-bred politicians. He's a thug. Not an ivy leaguer. This could have been a good angle of his psychology to exploit, rather than just his ruth less actions. He's benign constantly left behind, he's making up for that lack of advantage.

In order to have created a better adaptation, an analogue weakness as sources of his psychological state of mind a motivations, to the one suffered by Richard III and his physical deformity, an equal powerful weakness or deformity should have been used in Franks Underwood. Evidently, he's a sociopath, is that sociopathy the imaginary deformity an attempt to create a source of Frank's motivations? If it was, it needed to have been potentialized, being addresses by Frank, even. If It's not, then that sociopathy should have served him better for personal private feelings of inferiority, motivated by his turbulent, impoverished upbringing. In corporate America, coming from a unprivileged origins can make a sociopath to seek revenge, as well as power, but Frank's actions seem to come from sociopathy, an intangible personality disorder that make him act like Richard III, power hungry and schemist, but *impersonal.*

No motivations, impersonal.

I'm not saying Richard III is perfect, either, in fact there are many references arguing it far from perfect, but it faced the challenge of having to write based on historical character. He had to have certain features dictated by the historical events. The way Shakespeare linked that previously stablished personality to a complex psychology and motivations, was perhaps what makes him stand out in character Studies as a skillful psychology AND motivations writer.

In the case of Frank, surprisingly, his psychology is a strong, but his motivations are weak, as I mentioned before, the lack of a tangible source of his actions as it happens is Richard III, when we can see his physical deformity,

Shakespearean character help enriching the concept of motivation for screenwriting theory, literary theories of character construction from Shakespeare can enlighten the hidden motivations in Shakespearean characters,

My hypotheses is that dialogue, a tool that naturally flows in TV, that is accepted as a televisual dramaturgical tool, has been embraced as a televisual dramaturgical tool, has had in the composition of Frank Underwood, (heavily influenced by Shakespeare's Richard III in terms of characterization) has also borrowed the theatrical function of dialogue of presenting an underneath model of character design that covers psychological or motivational.

My Hypotheses is that by using dialogue in a theatrical mode, in which characters reveal about themselves rather than their actions, potentializes the creation of an underlying psychological journey. Traditionally, television dramaturgy uses dialogue in an expositional way, but in this second golden age of television, it is been used to create a theatrical effect rather than a televisual effect.

Screenwriters might be using screenwriting manuals advice of creating a biography and using the theatrical effect of dialogue to create a psychological journey.

Psychology of character as Shakespeare did, works for screenwriting dramaturgy or screenwriting theory because of it considers authorship.

Conclusion.

Motivation should occupy more importance in character construction theories, better explained, better conceptualized. This helps to build a character with enough psychological complexity because they have a motivation.

Character inspired by Shakespeare cannot remain a concept.

Integrate, interpret Shakespeare's theory of character, his authorial skill to develop psychology and show it through dialogue for today's screenwriting needs could be analyzed, could be a useful tool, could provide guidelines, could offer an insight in how to develop a character that covers the demands, dramatic demands in terms of psychological complexity for a dramatic series of contemporary television.

To have yet another Shakespearean interpretation that applies to screenwriting, especially in an area that has triggered many theoretical standpoints: character creation

House of Cards is not the perfect example, though. It lacks the extra element of vulnerability and weakness we are witnessing in all other characters in other series, that present a more layered character. Frank Underwood is a transference of characterization from Richard III, not un updated dramatic character. The Shakespearean effect remains in keeping Frank

theatrical, but not televisual dramatic, not in accordance to the television dynamics in which characters are flawed. It is a psychological portrait, but not a psychological journey.