

## DEVOURING HAMLET: CULTURAL ANTHROPOPHAGY AS AN ADAPTATION METHODOLOGY

Marcel Alvaro de Amorim<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on two film productions of the Shakespearean play *Hamlet* (1600-1601), both made in Brazil in the 1970s. It is my contention that *A herança* (*The Inheritance*), by Ozualdo Candeias (1970), and *O jogo da vida e da morte* (*The Game of Life and Death*), by Mario Kuperman (1971), constitute intertextual works which can be understood as transcultural, *anthropophagic* adaptations of the Shakespearean drama.

**Keywords:** Adaptation; Cultural anthropophagy; *Hamlet*; William Shakespeare

## DEVORANDO HAMLET: ANTROPOFAGIA CULTURAL COMO UMA METODOLOGIA DE ADAPTAÇÃO

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem como foco de análise duas produções fílmicas do drama Shakespeariano *Hamlet* (1600-1601), ambas produzidas no Brasil da década de 1970. É minha intenção afirmar que *A herança*, de Ozualdo Candeias (1970), e *O jogo da vida e da morte*, de Mario Kuperman (1971), constituem-se como trabalhos artísticos que podem ser compreendidos como adaptações transculturais, antropofágicas, da obra shakespeariana.

**Keywords:** Adaptação; Antropofagia cultural; *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare



## Introduction

*Cowards die many times before their deaths,  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.*  
(Shakespeare, 2003b, p. 112).

At some point in his nearly thirty years of imprisonment, Nelson Mandela, former South African president and prominent human rights activist, got hold of what is now known as *The Robben Island Bible*. The volume, a collection of William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) complete dramatic works camouflaged as a Bible, had been introduced into the prison by another convict, Sonny Venkatrathnam. Over time, as a number of inmates gained access to the copy, its pages became full of highlighted passages. Mandela himself highlighted the excerpt of *Julius Caesar* (1599) which precedes this introduction.

In choosing a passage which states that “Cowards die many times before their deaths: the valiant never taste of death but once” (Shakespeare, 2003b, p. 112), Mandela displays more than an appreciation for Shakespearean eloquence. In truth, the gesture seems to point to the construction of an *antiapartheid* hero, a figure strengthened by the lines of the Shakespearean play. The bravery-themed maxim strikes us an appropriately symbolic description of a man who, in years to come, would steer his nation through the troubled waters of a political and social upheaval. In particular, as we turn our attention to the play's storyline, we realize that the former president's reading focuses on the context of a political prisoner's ever-endangered existence amid hostile surroundings.

The episode illustrates the extraordinary reach of Shakespeare's work across different moments in time and space. Not only was Mandela celebrating the English writer's genius; he was also expressing, through the words of someone for whom he felt genuine

admiration, his own ideals regarding his country's revolutionary movement. Thus, the underlined and commented pages of *The Robben Island Bible* do not only offer us an assemblage of cherished passages, but present us with a particular Shakespeare – an author re-read, *devoured* and reconstructed from the viewpoint of someone bound to become one of the greatest symbols of the revolutionary fight on African soil.

The appropriation of others in the process of verbally exploring oneself is a far-reaching phenomenon, recognizable in myriad art forms and media products which contemplate, in Shakespeare, a means for the reconstruction of their own social history. Within that panorama, this paper focuses on two film productions of the Shakespearean play *Hamlet*<sup>1</sup> (1600-1601), both made in Brazil in the 1970s. It is my contention that *A herança (The inheritance)*, by Ozualdo Candeias (1970), and *O jogo da vida e da morte (The game of life and death)*, by Mario Kuperman (1971), constitute intertextual works which can be understood as transcultural, *anthropophagic* adaptations of the Shakespearean drama.

### ***Hamlet* in foreign lands: an anthropophagic take on adaptation**

Shakespeare's abiding status as a literary icon has ensured the continuous production, distribution and reception of his oeuvre across the globe. *Hamlet*, notably, has invited a number of different readings and interpretations since the birth of the so-called seventh art. In the 1960s and 1970s alone, we may find a Japanese *Hamlet* in Akira Kurosawa's *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960); a Russian one in Grigori Kozinsev's *Gamlet* (1964); and an African one in Terry Bishop's *The Tongo Hamlet* (1964). Around the same time, in the English-speaking world, John Gielgud introduces his *Hamlet*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper resorts to Philip Edward's conflated edition of *Hamlet* for *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* collection, published by Cambridge University Press.

(1964) in the United States; he is soon followed by British directors Tony Richardson (1969) and Peter Wood (1970).

In Brazil, there were two film productions of *Hamlet* in the 1970s alone: Ozualdo Candeias' *A herança* (1970) and Mario Kuperman's *O jogo da vida e da morte* (1971). Both films reimagine the play not only by relocating it geographically, but by *de-/re-contextualizing* the drama, propelling it into new contexts: the Brazilian 'sertão' (its northeastern dry lands, with their massive countryside estates), on the one hand, and the Brazilian metropolitan, drug-ridden suburbia, on the other. In that regard, given how thoroughly the Shakespearean text finds itself reconstructed in each case, I choose to investigate Candeias' and Kuperman's productions from an anthropophagic perspective, by illuminating what I call a process of *transcultural devouring* (Amorim, 2018).

Broadly speaking, the Brazilian writer Oswald de Andrade's concept of *cultural anthropophagy* refers to the act, performed by indigenous groups, of preying on parts of another human being's body. Such a practice is not to be regarded as a primitive eating habit, but rather as an act of *devouring*. Its proponents believed it allowed them to appropriate their victims' skills and strength. Unlike cannibalism, a form of dietary and predatory behavior, Anthropophagy is best understood as a ritual of incorporation of, admiration for, and revenge against something or somebody else. Within the Brazilian modernist literary agenda, it becomes an exercise in assimilating and subconsciously elaborating European trends so that something new, something *ours*, can emerge. This assimilation, according to Andrade (2009), is not driven by hatred, for *only do we eat what we deem to be superior*. The Brazilian author believes that a cultural Anthropophagic movement turns to a preternaturally gifted other in search of the substances one must devour: "[...] never has anyone heard of a man who devoured that which sickened him"<sup>2</sup> (Andrade, 2009, p. 66).

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<sup>2</sup> All the quotes from Brazilian authors have been translated into English from the original Portuguese by me.

Viveiros de Castro (2002), in turn, revisits Anthropophagy as a practice ascribed to Brazilian indigenous groups. According to the anthropologist, the Tupinambás cultivated a symbolic, potentially high affinity for the Europeans they devoured. Victims were viewed as expressions of an alluring otherness which must likewise be allured. In the author's words, the loss of such forms of alterity would condemn the world to prospects of indifference and paralysis. The other "[...] was not only conceivable – it was indispensable" (Viveiros de Castro, 2002, p. 195). Hence, Viveiros de Castro's (2002, p. 206) belief that "[...] exchange, and not identity, is the crucial value to be affirmed".

Viveiros de Castro (2002) sustains that universality and immortality were only achieved by the Tupinambás by means of their acts of revenge: by *devouring* the other so as to turn it into part of what I am, and, consequently, by making me part of it. According to Viveiros de Castro (2002, p. 241), the Tupinambá revenge was understood as a cornerstone of their own society, seen as radically incomplete: "[...] constancy and instability, openness and seclusion, were but two sides of one same truth: the indispensability of otherness, the inconceivableness of a world without others".

As he brought the indigenous ritual into the realm of culture, Oswald de Andrade inaugurated "[...] the myth of anthropophagy, catapulting the cannibal ritual into the world of international cultural relations" (Veloso, 2012, p. 54). Caetano Veloso (2012) argues that espousing anthropophagy as a cultural concept implies that we ought not to reproduce, but rather devour new information, whatever its origin, reinventing foreign experience by blending it with Brazilian influences. The idea of Anthropophagy, therefore, prescribes a creative routine which differs from mainstream forms of understanding cultural relations (Refskou, Amorim & Carvalho, 2019). Andrade's concept, sustains Veloso (2012), allows for the liberation of European avant-garde movements through the force of an originally native act.

As put by Bellei (1998), Haroldo de Campos made some of the first attempts to extend the Oswaldian concept beyond the

modernist sphere of influence, and thus to propagate it as an instrument for making sense of aesthetic dynamics. Campos believed that Anthropophagy would enable to us to understand the “[...] relationship between universal cultural patrimony and local singularities” (Campos, 2010, p. 231), in a context of “[...] universal relations, of a universal interdependence of nations” (Campos, 2010, p. 231). From that perspective, Campos (2010, p. 255) argues that “[...] to write, today, in Latin America as in Europe, must increasingly mean to rewrite, to re-chew”, or, yet, to *recreate, to create in parallel* (Campos, 2010).

Anthropophagy, if understood critically and dialogically, in the Bakhtinian sense of such words – as a form of intertextual rewriting (Luiz, 2023) –, can help us call into question the idea of passively receiving and copying an original work. It proposes changing “[...] the old into the new, the foreign into our own, the *déjà vu* into an original. By recognizing that originality is but a matter of rearrangement” (Perrone-Moisés, 1990, p. 98-99).

What I wish to argue is that looking at exercises in cultural adaptation through the lenses of Anthropophagy implies assuming that elements from the source text are not only taken into account, but creatively re-deployed, renovated, deconstructed, reconstructed and ultimately incorporated into a target culture and tradition while remaining in touch with their original milieu. I term that process *transcultural devouring*. Such an approach can help us map the interpretive reach of literary texts once they become inserted into a target language and culture. After all, the transposition of texts into a new sociocultural context can allow for the construction of new, and hitherto unavailable, meanings.

Methodologically, I move from textual analysis to cultural analysis while also considering technical aspects of film-making. In that regard, despite my desire not to limit this study to clearly circumscribed analytical tools, factors such as the ones described by Rocha (2002) and Silva (2013) will inform my discussions. I choose to adopt the following ones and to adjust them to this paper’s specific objectives: 1) *Language*: technical procedures of translation

and adaptation used in the reconstruction of the Shakespearean text into Brazilian Portuguese; 2) *Plot Structure*: the way in which the central Shakespearean storyline is altered or rearranged; 3) *Genre Transformations*: the set of changes required for recreating a dramatic text as a film; 4) *Visual Characterization*: the way in which the drama is inserted into the visual and ideological project of its directors, as well as into the mainstream cinematic culture at the time of its production; and 5) *Social-Historical Insertion*: thematic, regional and atmospheric changes which, as a whole, affect the construction of filmic texts.

### **Ozualdo Candeias devours Shakespeare: reading *A herança***

*A herança* (1970), by Ozualdo Candeias, is a rather peculiar film. Released in 1970, it transports the story of the Danish prince whose father was murdered and whose mother remarried his uncle to the vast São Paulo countryside. Candeias' adaptation not only shifts the narrative's historical grounding by transferring it to twentieth-century Brazil; it also alters the very context of the story. The production reimagines the monarchic Danish kingdom as a rural setting. In Candeias' own words:

I took Hamlet, this European, sovereign, medieval character, and I placed him in a countryside São Paulo farm in the modern days. In Shakespeare, it's a king with a son. In my adaptation, it's a rich farmer with a son, Omeleto [...] (Candeias, 2010 *apud* Reis, 2010, p. 90).

Such considerations afford us some insight into the director's act of *transcultural devouring*. Candeias re-reads and recreates the Elizabethan play in an attempt to narratively address the Brazilian context by means of the tools offered by Shakespeare's legacy.

The story’s rural inflection is made evident in the film’s opening sequence: Gertrude’s (Bárbara Fazio) features emerge amid a sea of blurred faces, followed by a close-up of the farm’s head office, where most of the action takes place. Next, in the same scene, a local worker leads a bullock cart carrying King Hamlet’s body. The film thus configures itself as an *expansion* of the Shakespearean text, for it amplifies, or adds new information to, the source text (Amorim, 2013). Such an inclusion also contributes to the creation of a rural Brazilian setting: bullock carts were one of the primary means of cargo transportation within and across farms countrywide.

Still in the opening scenes, two of Candeias’ most recurring aesthetic choices are made visible: (1) the omission of dialogue; and (2) the employment of a vibrant, robust soundtrack, comprising almost exclusively *viola* chords mixed with quintessentially farm animal sounds, such as those produced by horses, hens, ducks etc. In place of conventional dialogue, a handful of captions scattered along the film present free translations of the Shakespearean text.

**Frame 1: “There’s something rotten in the big farm...”**

<i>A herança</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
“Tem alguma coisa podre no fazendão”.	“MARCELLUS Something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (I. v. 90).

Source: Author

**Frame 2: “To be, or not to be...”**

<i>A herança</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
“Ser ou não ser... Morrer p’ra dormir, Dormir p’ra sonhar... To be or not to be That is the...”	“HAMLET To be, or not to be, that is the question - Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep - No more; and by a sleep to say we end



	<p>The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to - 'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep - To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub, For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause. There's the respect That makes calamity of so long life, For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay, The insolence of office, and the spurns That patient merit of th'unworthy takes, When he himself might his quietus make 75 With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear, To grunt and sweat under a weary life, But that the dread of something after death, The undiscovered country from whose bourn No traveller returns, puzzles the will, 80 And makes us rather bear those ills we have Than fly to others that we know not of? Thus conscience does make cowards of us all, And thus the native hue of resolution Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, 85 And enterprises of great pitch and moment With this regard their currents turn awry And lose the name of action. Soft you now, The fair Ophelia. - Nymph, in thy orisons Be all my sins remembered" (III, i. 56-89).</p>
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Source: Author

Frame 1 underscores the film's effort to *culturally and situationally update* (Amorim, 2013) the Shakespearean text by recreating it in conversation with more locally familiar references – in this case, the focus is shifted from the kingdom of Denmark to the Big Farm. As regards the well-known *To be, or not to be* soliloquy, presented in Frame 2, it is worth mentioning that, while the Bard's original text goes on for 35 lines, the Brazilian film offers us a reduced 5-line version, which considerably softens the English text's self-questioning and introspective tone. As a scriptwriter, therefore, Candeias makes use of *omission* as a textual adaptation procedure (Amorim, 2013). However, a satirical visual element is added to the scene: the character who represents the Brazilian Hamlet, known as Omeleto, addresses his soliloquy to the skull of a dead ox – which also reinforces the *transcultural devouring* performed by the film. The element in question symbolically represents the deadly Brazilian droughts, common in rural landscapes.

Candeias' film features spoken dialogue in but two scenes: the aforementioned soliloquy one, and the one representing the play-within-the-play. In the soliloquy scene, soon after the captions show the words “Ser ou não ser... Morrer p'ra dormir, Dormir p'ra sonhar...” (“To be, or not to be / To die, to sleep / To sleep, perchance to dream...”), we hear Omeleto's voice, which enunciates “To be or not to be, that is the...” in English, with a strong regional accent. The choice of preserving the use of English in such a passage is rather curious: while it explicitly points to a conversation between the Brazilian production and the Shakespearean legacy, it also criticizes the *non-devoured* foreigner's presence in national territory, since the speech is soon interrupted by Omeleto's ironic smile.

The film's second spoken scene refers to the Elizabethan text's presentation of the play *The murder of Gonzago*, or *The Mousetrap*. Instead of including references to traditional theatrical modes of representation, the film shows viola players and *Repentistas*<sup>3</sup>, who

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<sup>3</sup> A poet/singer who sings his or her own improvised verses to the sound of the viola or acoustic guitar.

perform what is known as a *moda de vida*, with lyrics written by Omeleto, telling the story of the murder of the main character's father. The performance we witness, both in its musical language and in Omeleto's choice of words, represents the diversified Brazilian diction; it takes shape in a variant of Portuguese typically associated with rural regions from that time. The decision to feature a circus as a setting also integrates the overall process of *transcultural devouring*, since travelling circuses were quite popular in Brazil in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the time, circus arts were regarded as cheap forms of entertainment for the less well-off segments of the population.

Nonetheless, even more important than the captions or the sheer scarcity of dialogue is the use of an unconventional soundtrack, almost exclusively composed of viola chords interspersed with sounds described by Reis (2010, p. 18) as *brasileiríssimos* (i.e., "very Brazilian"): "[...] birdsongs, animal growling sounds [...]" etc. Abreu (2006) sustains that, while doubtless *brasileiríssima*, the viola is inserted amid a natural soundscape in a rather unrealistic fashion, which adds to the construction of specific meanings regarding the film. For instance, when Omeleto enacts a crisis of insanity, the mismatch between the soundtrack and the ongoing scenes, and the seemingly incoherent deployment of fast-changing *modas de viola*, may illustrate the inward conflicts textually constructed in the Shakespearean drama. In that regard, Silva (2013) argues that Candeias' complex architecture of sound ascribe the verbal component, in the form of captions, a secondary, virtually accessory role. The director himself declared in an interview that his original intention was to include a single caption, "[...] e o resto é silêncio" ("[...] and the rest is silence"), in the film's closing sequence. He chose, however, to "[...] include other captions so as to make the exhibition a bit smoother" (Reis, 2010, p. 97).

Ozualdo Candeias' freedom to experiment with the materiality of his film can be traced back to his non-affiliation to the so-called *cinemão* (i.e., "mainstream cinema"), with its large budgets, considerable state investment, and mainstream producers. In truth,

Candeias' work is best regarded as part of a broad, joint effort to consolidate a more alternative, more peripheral form of cinema, often referred to as the Brazilian *udigrudi* (i.e., "underground") (Xavier & Pontes, 1986). His unconventional aesthetic choices notwithstanding, the director does preserve the overall structure of the Shakespearean drama, with its plots and subplots, limiting his changes to occasional alterations in the order of narrative events.

Certain scenes are rearranged and the plot does include a few noteworthy differences in the chronological organization of facts. The ghost's first apparition, for instance, as described in Act I, scene i, of the Shakespearean drama, is delayed for almost half the film and happens at daylight. It occurs after a series of actions which, in the play, would only take place afterwards, such as Hamlet's first encounter with Ophelia. Furthermore, certain episodes to which the Shakespearean drama merely alludes are here presented in full form – such as King Hamlet's funeral, used as the film's opening scene in lieu of Barnardo and Francisco's nightly round of the castle.

Omeleto's meeting with his dead father takes place, as does the rest of the narrative, in the *fazendão* (i.e., "big farm"), a large conglomerate of rural lands which belonged to Omeleto's father, but were claimed by Cláudio after his marriage to Gertrudes. In the context of Candeias' film, the farm substitutes the Shakespearean Denmark, operating as a microcosm for the conflicting development of power/oppression relations. The farm, as a geographic setting, also places the Brazilian film's director within the genre of what I have elsewhere termed *rural films* (Amorim, 2015). These often include elements such as the struggle for land, the relentless exploitation of rural workers and inhabitants, the presence of foremen and colonels, the depiction of life in farms etc.

Many of the characteristics exhibited in *A herança* can also be found in Candeias' earlier and later productions. Reis (2010) notes that, despite earning general acclaim from both critics and the public for his originality, experimentation, creativity and critically informed perspective, Candeias frequently worked under

conditions of *no glamour*: his productions boasted little or no external investment. Ramos (1987, p. 87) describes such a way of making cinema, “[...] lacking financial resources and employing low-budget human, scenic material”, as emblematic of the non-hegemonic film-making circuit of the time. These constraints – which impinged directly on Candeias’ work – were often present in productions subsumed under the scope of a movement known as *Marginal Cinema*.

As sustained by Abreu (2006), however, Candeias is seen as an *outsider among outsiders*: his films, not easily appreciated by broader audiences, often had somewhat short-lived commercial careers. Teles (2012, p. 14) suggests that Candeias’ cinema must not be characterized as a product of the cultural industry, aimed at entertaining its spectators, but as a “[...] thought-provoking work of art”.

In spite of the subtle aspects in which it distinguishes itself from other so-called marginal productions, *A herança* aligns itself to its peers in other ways: for instance, in its tongue-in-cheek sense of humor. When Omeleto pretends to have lost his mind in order to confound his uncle and conceal his own intentions, the allegedly deranged character jumps and neighs like a horse, enacting an imaginary galloping, as he repeatedly shoots skywards. In that regard, Ramos (1987, p. 125) suggests that “[...] hysterical-aggressive mockery is generally taken as an insult to aesthetical paradigms, and, as it embeds the image of the abject, it greatly hinders the perception of a ‘beautiful object’”.

The characters in Candeias’ film, including Omeleto, are built upon a sense of greedy individualism, also common in *Marginal Cinema* productions (Ramos, 1987). They do not elicit compassion-born catharsis from viewers; instead, their use of irony and sarcasm, portrayed as key to the different forms of representation in the film, tend to push viewers away. The only occasions when Candeias’ film allows its audience to nourish feelings of compassion are when it comes to secondary, at times even background, characters: in particular, those representing farm workers.

Nevertheless, the feature of Marginal Cinema which is perhaps most keenly felt in Candeias' production is the attempt to call the status quo into question by challenging the then-hegemonic Brazilian ideological landscape (Ramos, 1987). Along its narrative arc, *A herança* consistently reinforces its own social critique. It does so (1) by critically grappling with the prevailing landowning system, based on the ceaseless exploitation of natural resources by a single individual, who employed locals under precarious labor conditions; and (2) by addressing the racial dimensions of Brazilian social life in the second half of the twentieth century.

As regards the first point, *A herança* engages with the discourses about the Agrarian Reform circulating in Brazil since the late 1950s and early 1960s, when it became part and parcel of everyday discussions. Segments of society demanded the extinction of the landowning system, which had been maintained since the days of colonization, and the improvement of life and labor conditions for rural workers. Ozualdo Candeias was probably acquainted with the discourses related to the Brazilian Agrarian Reform; he may have recognized, in *Hamlet*, a sufficiently strong political tone which allowed him to discuss, through a process of *transcultural devouring*, the Brazilian political scenario. Here is an example: at the end of the gunfight scene (a re-reading of the Shakespearean sword fight), a character arrives who represents the Shakespearean Fortinbras. Upon his arrival, he obtains and reads a letter in which Omeleto transfers ownership of the farm to those who were born and worked in it.

In addition to its re-circulation of discourses on land ownership and agrarian reform, Candeias' *A herança* also lays emphasis on another vigorous debate from twentieth-century Brazil: the racial issue. The film presents us with a black Ophelia, who, as well as some of those around her, such as her brother Laertes, allow Candeias to join the ongoing debate around Brazilian forms of racial segregation and discrimination. As in the Shakespearean play, Omeleto's romance with Ophelia seems not to come to fruition. In the film, however, Ophelia's race is singled out as an insurmountable

obstacle: as Laertes talks to his sister about her unlikely involvement with Omeleto, he points to and rubs her skin, in a clear allusion to her black ethnicity. His gesture is complemented by the words “... além do mais, é o patrão.../...gente assim não pode gostar de gente como a gente...” (“... and plus, he’s the boss... / ... people like him can’t like people like us”).

In the Shakespearean *Hamlet*, the separation between the monarchic and the non-monarchic inhibits the romance; here, the main obstruction is the difference in social position vis-à-vis the land-owning system, the opposition between employer and employee, aggravated by the racial discrepancy. Omeleto’s representation as a white man foregrounds the dynamics of segregation in the Brazilian context: yet another act of *transcultural devouring* committed by Candeias.

### ***Hamlet in the world of drugs, by Mario Kuperman***

*O jogo da vida e da morte* strikingly illustrates the potential of the adaptive work of *transcultural devouring*. In the film, *Hamlet* is relocated to the Brazilian drug-ridden suburbs of São Paulo. The Elizabethan play’s Denmark is, in that regard, transculturally re-signified as the director recreates the narrative’s within a typically Brazilian context. As he reconstructs the play as a film, Kuperman introduces a few key changes. Before long, it becomes clear that the director, despite his reliance on most of the names given by Shakespeare to the main characters, significantly alters the protagonist’s name: *Hamlet* becomes *João*, one of the most popular names for men in Brazil. Besides João, there are only two secondary characters whose names are changed: Hamlet’s friends Guildenstern and Rosencrantz become Tostão and Rosa.

As regards aspects of translation, some of the technical procedures adopted by the director include *omission*, the elimination of parts of the text; *equivalence*, the substitution of specific uses from the source text for slang and dialectal forms

from the target language; and *cultural or situational adaptation*, that is, “[...] the recreation of a more reader-appropriate or culturally familiar context for the target text” (Amorim, 2013, p. 267). Broadly speaking, despite the fact that it preserves most of the chronological arrangement of facts and episodes narrated in *Hamlet*, Kuperman’s script – written in cooperation with Mario Alberto Prata – reconstructs the Shakespearean text through a process of *transcultural devouring*. It does so through (a) the omission of passages and even characters from the original text who bear little relevance to the new story being told; (b) the prolific insertion of slang words and other context-specific uses of language; and (c) the adjustment of textual parameters to the target culture and situation, in an attempt to *Brazilianize* passages and episodes from the original Shakespearean text.

**Frame 3: “You’ll know better than to call me a liar”**

<i>O jogo da vida e da morte</i>	<i>Hamlet</i>
<p>Horácio: Você vai aprender a não me chamar de mentiroso. ‘Guenta mão aí... Marcelo: Vai me dizer que ele apareceu hoje outra vez. Horácio: Hoje, não, ainda não apareceu, né. Marcelo: Você está imaginando coisas. Você está me gozando. Horácio: Calma, né Marcelo. Pensa que é assim de cara? Calma pô.</p>	<p>Marcellus: What, has this thing appeared again tonight? Barnardo: I have seen nothing. Marcellus: Horatio says ’tis but our fantasy, And will not let belief take hold of him Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us. Therefore I have entreated him along With us to watch the minutes of this night, That if again this apparition come He may approve our eyes, and speak to it. Horatio: Tush, tush, ’twill not appear. Barnardo: Sit down awhile,</p>



	And let us once again assail your ears, That are so fortified against our story, What we two nights have seen (I. i. 21-33).
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Source: Author

**Frame 4: “Oh, Marcelo. Talk to him”**

<i>O jogo da vida e da morte</i>	Texto apresentado em Inglês
Horácio: Oh, Marcelo. Fala com ele. Qualquer coisa, vâmo. Marcelo: Eu não. Por quê eu? Horácio: ‘Cê tem ginásio.	Marcellus: Thou art a scholar, speak to it Horatio (I. i. 42).

Source: Author

The first excerpt, taken from one of the film’s opening scenes, shows us Horácio as he takes Marcelo to witness the incorporation of the spirit of João’s father into Mãe Chiquinha’s body — a fact I shall discuss presently. The scene includes the *omission* of the character Barnado; the use of *equivalences* in the form of phrases regionally associated with variants of Brazilian Portuguese, such as ‘*Guenta mão aí..., de cara*’ and interjections such as *né* and *pô*; and the adoption of a *situational adaptation* strategy: here, unlike what happens in the Shakespearean text, Marcelo is the one to question the apparition’s veracity, leaving Horácio to bear the burden of proof. The second excerpt, from the same scene, includes not only a translational *expansion* (Amorim, 2013), but also a form of *situational and cultural adaptation*. In the film, it is Marcelo, and not Horácio, who must talk to the ghost: as signaled by Horácio, Marcelo is the only one to have completed the Brazilian *ginásio* – the second half of elementary school –, an educational accomplishment more in keeping with the national

context of the time than the Higher Education diploma ascribed to Horace in the Shakespearean play.

Despite the linguistic modifications introduced by Kuperman to the Shakespearean play, his film reproduces *Hamlet*'s essential plotline. In addition, *O jogo da vida e da morte* preserves the drama's chain of events, which underscores its director's choice not to make any changes such as the ones introduced by Candeias in *A herança*. However, in placing the drama in the Brazilian suburbs, Kuperman distances himself from the *tragedy of revenge* genre and draws closer to the stylistic repertoire of Hollywood's 1940s *police films*, habitually referred to as *noir* forms of cinema. What's more, as argued by Silva (2013), Kuperman follows the expressionist tradition of 1920s German cinema. He does so through the "[...] expressive use of black and white photography, emphasis on light and darkness, which adds volume to each frame's composition, besides, of course, the murder-themed investigative plot" (Silva, 2013, p. 309) – in this case, the murder of João's father. Such techniques are illustrated, for instance, in Kuperman's particular use of high-contrast black and white in a scene of dialogue between Cláudio, Gertrudes and Polônio, and of light-dark divergence, which builds a suspenseful aura around João's encounter with Mãe Chiquinha, a *mãe de santo* (i.e., "a clairvoyant").

The latter scene features another noteworthy example of *transcultural devouring*. In Kuperman's film, the ghost of João's father is not embodied, but communicates with others with the assistance of a medium – Mãe Chiquinha. Accounts of spiritual incorporations are widespread in certain regions of the Brazilian cultural, social and historical landscape. The country is not only home to spiritualist religious manifestations, but also to a number of African-originated religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé.

Besides the religious debate, another aspect which characterizes *O jogo da vida e da morte* – as it does *A herança* – is the presence of a black Ophelia. In Kuperman's film, the character is portrayed as a highly sexualized, chemically dependent black woman. Her drug addiction has been fueled by Cláudio, who acts as her supplier.

Despite introducing Ophelia as black, Kuperman does not, on the other hand, address the racial controversy in vogue at the time, nor does he confront the dilemmas of substance abuse. The film contains no direct allusion to Ophelia's racial status or to traits which might distinguish her from other characters; likewise, no attention is devoted to the intricate relationship between drugs and black communities.

As regards the technical aspects of his production, Kuperman cannot be described as a traditional, mainstream director. *O jogo da vida e da morte* was his only feature film. Yet, even as he does not subscribe to any ongoing movement or school, Kuperman includes important aesthetic choices into the film which position it in alignment with, or in opposition to, different instances of film-making from that time. One of such characteristics involves the choice of inviting a cast of well-known celebrities from the worlds of TV, cinema, and music.

Kuperman relies heavily on the film's visual dimension to create meanings around certain aspects of the Shakespearean play. The idea of rotteness, famously associated with the state of Denmark in the Shakespearean drama – “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.” (*Hamlet* I. v. 90) –, is here communicated through a set of visual signs. The crumbling residential area where the story takes place is enclosed by a massive landfill in which manifestations of the abject abound. The very idea of a deteriorating context is figuratively represented by columns of smoke which rise from piles of decomposing garbage.

The scene with the famous *To be, or not to be* soliloquy also attests to the director's engagement with visual dimensions. The first part of the soliloquy, “Ser ou não...” (“To be, or not...”), is found by João as he scavenges through piles of garbage with an old stick. Resende (2015) suggests that the scene creates a form of visual meditation on human misery amid a world governed by tight and authoritative power structures. The film also shows a debilitated cat being attacked by a horde of rats; as he witnesses the

merciless assault, João finds himself pondering on the possibility of struggle. The scene, full of fast-paced cuts, is built upon two seemingly unrelated, overlapping planes, in *faux raccord*; it skillfully suggests a sense of bewilderment on João's part.

For the construction of the Shakespearean play-within-the-play, Kuperman once again *transculturally devoured* the Shakespearean text, substituting the enactment of *The Murder of Gonzago* or *The Mousetrap* for a musical performance, as done by Candeias in *A herança*. In *O jogo da vida e da morte*, the story of the king's murder is told in the form of a samba piece. Thus, the director not only introduces a quintessentially Brazilian musical rhythm – one particularly popular in the country's southeastern region –, but one inherited from Africa. It is worth bearing in mind that samba was originally born out of the so-called *semba*, a form of Angolan *umbigada*, which accentuates the film's overall transcultural inflection.

The film also introduces us to the scene of Ofélia's funeral. It is worth mentioning that, while Kuperman does not by and large directly address class stratification dynamics, the funeral scene features a conversation between gravediggers which, as maintained by Kiernan (1996), evokes discourses connected to the Marxist class struggle: the gravediggers' sense of puzzlement at Ofélia's burial in Christian grounds, made possible by her status as a well-off (*gráuda*) citizen, is preserved. Besides, halfway through the funeral, Laertes asks the priest to chant a requiem for his sister; the request is promptly turned down, on the grounds that Ofélia's suicide has denied her access to such Christian rituals. Ringing the bells remains the only considerable option – extended to the family on account of Cláudio's financial donations to the church.

As in the Shakespearean play, after a moment of tension between João and Laertes in the cemetery, Cláudio demands that João be summoned for the final duel. In the Brazilian film, João is summoned by Osrico, a homosexual character who exhibits markedly effeminate traits – yet another resignifying gesture performed by Kuperman in his process of *transcultural devouring*.

Osrico's portrayal as an effeminate character must be understood within a long-established, persistent media tradition of constructing homosexual figures as stereotypically flamboyant; as individuals who theatrically display so-called feminine attributes. Once again, Kuperman fails to problematize the debatable correlation. His clear addition of a new character to the Shakespearean text simply repeats a problematic stereotype without so much as interrogating it. The representation of non-heterosexual figures is an important issue for the LGBT movement, whose Brazilian branch gained momentum in the 1970s (Quinalha, 2022). The director, it is implied, may as well have been aware of the equality-oriented discourses taking shape and circulating in Brazilian society.

The final duel is also constituted as part of the director's *transcultural devouring*. Unwilling to draw swords, Cláudio suggests that matters be settled *na porrada* – that is, in the form of a fistfight. However, the duel becomes more than an ordinary, confusing street melee: Kuperman adds berimbau chords and dance movements pertaining to Capoeira, an African-Brazilian dancelike form of fight, and substitutes the Shakespearean's text poisoned wine for beer, a highly popular drink in Brazil. The beer, it is worth noting, is served in an equally popular receptacle: an American cup. Just as conspicuous is the fact that, after the main characters die, the local community is not invaded by Fortimbrás – who, in the film, is mentioned *en passant* as a delegate who, upon Cláudio's request, has been transferred to another region on account of his jeopardizing local businesses.

All things considered, Mário Kuperman's main contribution to the *transcultural devouring* of the Shakespearean text is the inclusion of the world of drug trafficking in the narrative. In the film, João's father's former position as the region's chief dealer is usurped by Cláudio after the murder. The financial income which allows João's family to rise above other local characters is, therefore, obtained via the commercialization of drugs. In that context, Ofélia is perhaps the character whose life is most adversely

affected by the influence of drugs: she is the only character in the film openly constructed as chemically dependent.

The choice of addressing the subject may have been due to the circulation of drug-related discourses across the globe. In Brazil, drugs are explicitly mentioned in the legislation in the form of Decree-Law 159, from 1967, which ruled over “substances likely to induce physical or psychic dependency...”. The Institutional Act 5, the now infamous AI-5, which had been promulgated three years before the film, in the apex of the military dictatorship, significantly strengthened drug repression policies. It is likely that Mário Kuperman, as a Brazilian citizen, may have been influenced by the then-circulating discourses on drug dealing and substance abuse. Nevertheless, the director does not approach the issue directly; instead, he merely makes use of it as a tone-setting, atmosphere-defining element. Still, the very inclusion of the theme allows us to regard *O jogo da vida e da morte* as a film which places the Shakespearean *Hamlet* in conversation with “[...] the problem of social structures in Brazil [...] implying that there is no way out for continuously overruled poor populations” (Resende, 2015, p. 7).

In that regard, even as it does not espouse an interventionist approach vis-à-vis the Brazilian social reality, by choosing to feature topics such as race, sexuality, social stratification and drug trafficking in its composition, *O jogo da vida e da morte* draws closer to political themes in its adaptation of the Shakespearean tragedy. At the end of the film, it is the garbage-ridden skyline of São Paulo that the viewer last contemplates.

### **Final remarks**

Shakespeare’s astounding potential for being adapted across various historical, ideological and geographical contexts motivated the construction of this paper. In a world in which Shakespeare’s words and lines are propagated in the form of discourses which

continuously reach us – which constitute us –, understanding the ways in which such discourses are culturally re-signified as they enter new discursive realms, new territories, is a task of paramount importance for any Shakespearean scholar.

In that regard, I have presented an interpretation of the films *A herança*, by Ozualdo Candeias, and *O jogo da vida e da morte*, by Mario Kuperman. In order to do so, I have embraced a theoretical framework hinging upon the notion of *transcultural devouring*, which, in turn, is based on Oswald de Andrade's Anthropophagy. In fact, both Candeias' and Kuperman's productions can be taken as violent re-readings of *Hamlet* to the extent that they relocate the drama historically, geographically and culturally towards Brazil – first within the panorama of struggles for land ownership, and then in the context of the commercial circulation of drugs within poverty-stricken neighborhoods.

Candeias, in his reading of the Shakespearean work, attempts to shed light on the antagonistic land-owning system by discussing some of its elements – in particular, the Agrarian Reform and the racial question, both heated discussions in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The director presents an aesthetically daring production which, by virtually doing away with all spoken dialogue, relying on occasional captions and employing a heterogeneous, unconventional soundtrack composed of viola chords and countryside sounds, displays a sense of bravery as it delves into a series of social issues. That goal is accomplished through the lenses offered by one of the English playwright's most celebrated texts: *Hamlet*.

Kuperman's film, on the other hand, as it transfers the Danish prince's story to a low-income neighborhood on the outskirts of São Paulo, attempts to set the Shakespearean play in conversation with discourses related to drugs, race, sexuality, social stratification etc. – all part of lively debates in the Brazilian society of the time. Furthermore, the film, which does not openly subscribe to any film-making tradition or school, also performs its own *transcultural devouring* as it reconstructs a number of passages from the Shakespearean play in the light of Brazil's social and

cultural map of references. The play-within-the-play, for instance, is reimagined as a *samba-enredo*, a traditional musical genre from the country's southeastern regions.

Lastly, a disclaimer: I do not purport to present the anthropophagic perspective, based on the practice *devouring*, as a universal, one-size-fits-all methodology for the reading of Shakespearean texts, or for the critical apprehension of any artistic texts adapted to the screen. My approach constitutes but one possible way of approaching filmic texts which draw on Shakespeare's oeuvre. There are still countless doors left ajar – perhaps there will always be – in our efforts to conceive of adaptation as a transcultural, anthropophagic phenomenon.

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Marcel Alvaro de Amorim. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. E-mail: [marceldeamorim@yahoo.com.br](mailto:marceldeamorim@yahoo.com.br). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8840-8371>.