LANGUAGE AND MANIPULATION IN
HOUSE of CARDS

A Pragma-Stylistic Perspective

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Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Figures

1

Power & (Fictional) Politics

'You might very well think that, I could not possibly comment.'
Francis Urquhart, *House of Cards* (BBC, 1990)

This quotation[1] from the British BBC TV series *House of Cards* is one of Conservative Chief Whip Francis Urquhart's favourite replies to the young journalist Mattie Storin when she reaches a conclusion he has in fact led her to reach ('you might very well think that') without his taking responsibility for it ('I could not possibly comment'). This enables him to deny information he has indirectly led her to infer. The use of the second-person pronoun ('you') combined with the epistemic modal ('might') attests to Urquhart's disengagement from his own utterance, leaving it to Mattie to take responsibility for her own thoughts of which he has nothing to say, except that her reasoning might 'very well' be right. Aspiring to the most powerful political job in the UK (Prime Minister), Francis Urquhart (played by Ian Richardson) is ready to propagate false rumours or divulge true information about his party colleagues for his interlocutor to draw (true or false) implications that she can report in the

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[1] The quote has since been adopted in the British lexicon and was also used in the House of Commons (see Youngs, 2007).

press. Giving and gaining information thus becomes a game of pragmatic encoding and inference between the politician and the journalist.

In the American version of *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013–) to which this volume is devoted, the protagonist aspiring to the presidency of the United States, Francis J. Underwood (called 'Frank' by everyone except his wife and played by the actor Kevin Spacey), uses the cue only twice with the journalist Zoe Barnes—he will end up killing her just as Urquhart kills Mattie when she understands his illegal and immoral dealings. If the 1990 four-episode BBC TV series stops here,[2] the American version develops further (it counted three seasons at the time of writing; a fourth one was premiered on March 4, 2016).[3] Yet the struggle for power is as ferocious in Congress as it is in the House of Commons. Their political leanings as Chief Whips aside (Urquhart is a Conservative and Underwood a Democrat), the main difference between the two protagonists lies in their social origins. If one is an English aristocrat who has renounced working on his father's estate out of thirst for political power, the other is a rural boy from Gaffney, South Carolina, whose family had a hard time making both ends meet because of a depressed father: Frank's desire to get to the highest post in the USA is a revenge on a poor childhood. Besides, it is animated by the certitude that America can give access to success to anyone inclined to provide themselves with the right means. As the second chapter will show, the protagonist's language is underpinned by values informed by the American dream and predicated on ideological polarisation; hard work and strength of character are what drives a wedge between those willing to succeed and the others.

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[2] The UK series differs from the novel it is inspired from (see next section): Francis Urquhart commits suicide at the end of Dobbs's written piece. Dobbs wrote two sequels to the novel: *To Play the King* (1992) and *The Final Cut* (1994). The three novels were adapted by Andrew Davies for the BBC (1990–1995).

[3] Blending real with fictional politics, the announcement of the release on March 4, 2016 was made during the US fifth Republican presidential debate under the guise of a political ad aired on CNN, in which, sitting behind his desk in the Oval Office, Underwood declares: 'America, I'm only getting started'. The 'political ad' closes with the character's voice-over: 'I'm Frank Underwood and I approve this message.'

The Original Novel and the 'Fictionalization' of Politics

The BBC TV series took its title and inspiration from a novel written by Michael Dobbs in 1989. The world of British parliamentary politics depicted by the novelist could constitute a textbook case for pragmatics as what seems important is less what is said than what is not said, or rather what is said without being said. The exchanges during parliamentary 'debates', for instance, are not presented as exchanges of information but rather as exchanges of 'forces' in Austin's sense,[4] discourse performing a definite action by being endowed with a specific force through or beyond what is said. In the chamber of the House of Commons, politicians are more worried about the forceful impact of the Prime Minister's utterances and his ability to rhetorically bring the opponents down than about the content of his proposals. The House becomes an arena for exchanges of verbal blows, falling short of its original democratic ideals as the narrator indicates:

> Prime Ministers are called twice a week when Parliament is sitting through the time honoured institution of Prime Minister's Question Time. In principle it gives Members of Parliament the opportunity to seek information from the leader of Her Majesty's Government; in practice it is an exercise in survival which owed more to the Roman arena of Nero and Claudius than to the ideals of the constitutionalists who developed the system.
>
> The questions from Opposition Members usually do not seek information, they seek to criticise and to inflict damage. The answers rarely seek to give information, but to retaliate. Prime Ministers always have the last word, and it is that which gives them the advantage in combat, like the gladiator allowed the final thrust.

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[4] Austinian pragmatics has indeed brought to attention what has traditionally been left aside by semantics—that is, the force of a message conveyed not in the verbal element of the message itself but over or above it: 'Besides the question that has been very much studied in the past as to what a certain utterance *means*, there is a further question distinct from this as to what was the *force*, as we call it, of the utterance. We may be quite clear what "Shut the door" means, but not yet at all clear on the further point as to whether as uttered at a certain time it was an order, an entreaty or whatnot' (Austin, 1970: 251).

But Prime Ministers also know that they are expected to win, and it is the manner rather than the fact of their victory which will decide the level of vocal support and encouragement from the troops behind. (Dobbs, 1989: 77–8)

In the verbal combat of the House of Commons bringing government and opposition members face-to-face, power is demonstrated through the rhetorical blows inflicted on the other. The House is less a place where ideas are debated and information exchanged than a locus where politicians struggle for recognition. Although this is fiction, the author could yet be trusted for rendering the feel of political life from the inside as he himself participated in party politics. Michael Dobbs[5] has indeed exercised multiple political functions (at Margaret Thatcher's side, then as Norman Tebbit's Chief of Staff for the 1987 general election and finally as Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party during John Major's leadership). Thus endowed with first-hand knowledge, the writer cynically describes the workings of political performance, but his book also opens the door to the backstage of power politics the media and the public rarely have access to.[6]

The 1990 *House of Cards* BBC series was very successful when it aired after the end of Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the appetite for backstage political intrigues seems to have sharpened as many telefilms and TV series across countries have made politics their central plot. Among the recent political TV series feature *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999–2006), *Commander in Chief* (ABC, 2005–2006), *K Street* (HBO, 2003), *Jack & Bobby* (WB, 2004–2005), *Brothers & Sisters* (ABC, 2006–2011), *Boss* (Starz, 2011–2012), *Political Animals* (ABC, 2012), *Veep* (HBO, 2012), and *Scandal* (ABC, 2012–) in

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[5] Dobbs was looking back on his dismissal after the 1987 elections during some holidays in Malta where he decided to write a novel revolving around the political destruction of a Prime Minister. The two letters F.U. he writes on a piece of paper that were to become the initials of his main character tell much about his desire for revenge (see Dozol, 2015). Francis Underwood's desire for the presidency in *House of Cards* is similarly kindled by his being evicted from the job of Secretary of State that had been promised to him.

[6] Drawing on Goffman's metaphor of the political arena as a theatrical stage, Wodak (2011: 9) defines 'frontstage' politics as follows: 'frontstage is where the performance takes place and the performers and the audience are present.'

the USA and, in Europe, the German *Die Affäre Semmeling* (ZDF, 2002) and *Kanzleramt* (ZDF, 2005) or still the British parody *In the Thick of It* (BBC, 2005–2012)—after the famous twentieth-century *Yes Minister* (BBC, 1980–1988). Not all the American series met as much success as Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing*. Until 2011, with the release of the successful *Boss* series, they were all more or less in the same idealist vein as Sorkin's creation, which established itself as an unbeatable model. *Boss* initiated a change by portraying a cynical anti-hero—in the wake of other non political series featuring 'bad' guys like *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999–2007), *House*, *M.D.* (Fox, 2004–2012) or *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006–2013).

For Boutet (2015), the reason for this change in perspective in the depiction of backstage politics must be sought in the context of production of the series. *The West Wing* aired at the end of Bill Clinton's term and roughly all along George W. Bush's mandates at a time when, according to the author, 'Americans desperately needed to renew their trust in politicians' (Boutet, 2015, my translation). Released during Obama's second mandate, *House of Cards* features an ambitious politician who falls short of the positive image the African American candidate conveyed during his ascension to power. Disillusionment as regards the power of politics to turn the tide came with Obama's second term, which might account for the series's darker aspects. In the 15 years separating *The West Wing* from *House of Cards*, the representation of politics in series has progressively fallen into line with the popular perception of the political world as corrupted, power-hungry and self-interested.

The consequence of what Wodak (2011: 155) calls 'the fictionalization of politics' is a blurring of the demarcation between fiction and reality—Michael Dobbs and his book are a clear illustration of this blurred frontier. TV series (idealistically or cynically) describe politics as it supposedly is and (real) politicians refer to the series that they sometimes themselves watch. On her first official visit to France, for instance, the Danish Prime Minister handed President Hollande a copy of the Danish political series *Borgen* (DR1, 2010–2013) depicting the formalism-free political practices of the Scandinavian countries—François Hollande campaigned on a return to a 'normal' presidency in contrast to what he perceived as the 'abnormality' of Nicolas Sarkozy's (see Daniel, 2014: 291). President Obama, a fan of *House of Cards*, impersonated Francis

Underwood on April Fools' Day 2015 as part of the West Wing Week YouTube series. He jokingly revealed the source of Francis's habit of speaking at times directly to the camera in the series: 'Hello, everybody. This is not Frank Underwood. This is Barack Obama. Happy April Fools' Day. Frank learned it from me' (Brennan, 2015). The personalities of politicians attract the interest of the media (and the public), treating them like celebrities, and politicians capitalize on this to increase their popularity (see Daniel, 2014; Mayaffre, 2012). In an age of disillusionment with politics, where distrust of politicians is at its highest, the fictional intrusion into what is not shown in the front stage seems to find a real appeal among the public. As Wodak (2011: 21) ventures, 'th[e] growing disenchantment with politics, the exclusion from the backstage and the growing interest in celebrity politicians and their personalities, are probably some of the reasons explaining the rising popularity of fictional genres that depict the everyday lives of politicians and the intricacies of political decision-making.'

Indeed if *The West Wing* depicts politics as the citizens would probably like it to be, *House of Cards* stages politics as they more and more imagine it to be. In *The West Wing*, the smart and learned President Bartlet leads a country trying to make heroic and ethical choices for the common good of all Americans. Francis Underwood is the anti-hero ready to kill to secure power for himself. All his political decisions depend on how they will work for him (or against others) in the upcoming elections. Public opinion is usually prejudiced against 'spin doctors'—that is, those in charge of handling the front stage of politics through the management of communication. Whereas *The West Wing* succeeds in having them appear in an unusual positive light (Richardson, 2006), *House of Cards* exposes them as experts in lies and deception. The more recent series portrays politics as centred on the manipulative moves of a Congressman serving his own personal interest to get to the top of the nation. Machiavellian politics embodied by Francis Underwood seems indeed more faithful to the multiple scandalous lies and corruption cases that the press manages to bring in the public eye, feeding into the belief in amoral politics where politicians' sole obsession is to get (re)elected.

This book does not intend to compare *House of Cards* to the real world of politics (President Obama has recognized that life in Washington

is not as dramatic as that portrayed in the series [see Brennan, 2015], whereas President Hollande suspects reality is even harsher [see Mourgue, 2015]), but one of the series's contributions to the depiction of 'real' politics might lie in its unreserved staging of the inherent hypocrisy of political life, bringing to light what Machiavelli theorized in the Renaissance: hypocrisy and manipulation do not seem to be an option in politics, they are part and parcel of it. There seems to be no politics without them. In *Hypocrisy and Integrity: Machiavelli, Rousseau and the Ethics of Politics*, Grant indeed draws on Machiavelli to grasp the paradox of democracy; its egalitarian ideal can only perceive hypocrisy as a vice and yet it cannot but generate hypocrisy. Machiavelli explains why politics cannot be hypocrisy-free: dependence on others to form alliances and obtain power inevitably engenders manipulation as one must resort to flattery and deception to gain support. Grant (1997: 21) concludes:

> Rulers depend on the support of the people and must cultivate that support since it cannot be reliably secured on the basis of either force or friendship. The people must be persuaded that the ruler seeks to secure their interests as well as his own where the two are not coincident. And so, politicians must employ rhetoric, flattery, and deception in order to build alliances and gain support. Political relations are relations of dependence as much as they are power relations. And it is dependence that breeds manipulation and hypocrisy.

Then manipulative behaviour, according to Grant, is inevitably engendered by the very nature of political relationships that are relations of dependence among people with conflicting interests.

This is especially true in the US Congress as depicted in *House of Cards* where politicians (from both the Democratic and the Republican parties) need to be cajoled (or whipped) into voting in the right way. As Wodak (2011: 10) shows in her investigation of behind-the-scenes politics in the European Parliament, performances are at work in the backstage as well: 'when performers are in the back region, they are nonetheless engaged in another performance: that of a loyal team member, a member of the field of politics and—in this field—of a particular *community of practice* (the Social-Democratic MEPs for example).' In the US Congress's 'community

of practice' (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002: 7), multiple loyalties can be in conflict (loyalty to the party, respect for the electors of the congressional district, pressure from a particular interest group or lobby), thus a lot of whipping and persuasion need to be employed by the Chief Whip of the Democratic majority (Frank Underwood) to have them go in the direction chosen by the federal government of Washington. *The West Wing* also renders this coaxing and negotiating aspect of US politics very well. In *House of Cards*, however, the practice of coalition building and courting of supporters (from both parties) implies all the more flattering, persuading and manipulating as the Chief Whip has his own secret agenda—that is, to eliminate all potential rivals for the Oval Office.

Francis Underwood becomes the viewer's backstage 'metapragmatic' commentator explaining, in a teacher-like manner, a political world that few members of the audience have an intimate knowledge of. His asides to the viewers often serve as a commentary on the role of key figures in Congress (especially in the first season), offering an insight into how politics works there. The contrast between this admission into backstage politics and the more usual access to the front stage as reflected in the media can be experienced at the beginning of the third season when Francis Underwood has become president. The audience has only 'access' to him through one of the character's point of view, Doug Stamper, once his right-hand man, now in a hospital after a serious injury that has taken him away from politics. The viewers realize that they are as far removed from the president as he is, watching Underwood taking part in programmes of 'politicotainment' (Riegert, 2007) where jokes about the personality and action of the president seem to matter more than his political ideas. At the beginning of the third season, in sharp contrast to what they have been used to through the asides in the first two seasons, the viewers feel excluded from backstage politics and regain their place as consumers/spectators of the front stage performance. This serves to represent Frank Underwood, now President of the United States of America, as less accessible. However the viewers soon get back their privileged position as the president turns to the camera at some point to explain what has happened during Doug's absence.

The 'fictionalization' of politics also occurs within the TV series itself. Real TV journalists—such as CNN's John King and Candy Crowley,

NBC's Kelly O'Donnell, Morley Safer of *60 Minutes* and ABC's George Stephanopoulos—are shown commenting on fictional politics. Francis's speaking directly to the audience also contributes to the confusion of fiction and the real world. He himself frequently self-consciously refers to the camera frame (Chap. 6 delves into the unusual bursting of fictional frames in a TV series). The choice of the direct address originates from Francis Urquhart's mode of reaching to the audience in the UK version. According to Richardson (2010: 58), 'British television drama has not always sought to distance itself from theatre to the extent that film has.' Transferred to the American context, *House of Cards* does display many film aesthetic characteristics—in particular its play with the camera and its less closed setting than in the British version. Through the direct address however, it still keeps the theatricality of the British series. In the original novel, the author adopted the traditional third person to narrate the whip's formidable tricks. Nonetheless, on closer stylistic inspection, the second person comes up in the novel when the narrator makes Francis speak directly, or rather, make his thoughts known to the reader in a more direct manner. In the following extract, after an exchange between Francis Urquhart and Patrick Woolton, Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, aspiring to the highest office as well, the narrator relays Urquhart's thoughts more directly:

> (Woolton) 'Perceptions are crucial, Francis, and we shall need a little time to get them right.'
>
> **And you need a little time to prepare your own pitch for the job, thought Urquhart. You old fraud. You want the job just as badly as ever.**
>
> He knew Woolton would need the time to spend as many evenings as possible in the corridors and bars of the House of Commons strengthening relationships with his colleagues, increasing the number of his speaking engagements in the constituencies of influential MPs, broadening his reputation with newspaper editors and columnists, building up his credentials. (Dobbs: 138, emphasis added)

In an inconceivable way in real life that only fiction can make possible, the character's thoughts are revealed to the reader. The passage highlighted corresponds to the (Free) Direct Thought category described in

Leech and Short (2007: 255–70), as attested by the switch to the second-person pronoun and the present tense where the narrator lets the character express himself in the narrative as if directly—by contrast, the following paragraph is placed under the narrator's full authority again with the switch the third person and the preterite tense of narration. Only the interpolated clause ('thought Urquhart') in the passage in bold recalls the presence of the narrator presenting the character's thoughts. The use of the more informal terms 'fraud', 'pitch' and 'job' and the adverb 'badly' may constitute the very words the character addresses to himself, betraying his point of view on Woolton. This particular literary device finds an equivalent in (both) Francis' asides in the TV series by which they can instruct the audience of their thoughts and intentions. The viewers thus get direct access to what, in TV series and films (and drama), is necessarily guessed at through the characters' exchanges in the absence of a narrator. In the TV version of *House of Cards*, Frank's intentions and goals are explained to the viewer, conferring to the TV series recipients a peculiar status that Chap. 6 will investigate.

A Pragma-Stylistic Approach

Being informed of the protagonist's intentions, the viewer is in a favoured position to perceive how he proceeds to influence people. The study of dialogues is then of particular interest in *House of Cards*; it reveals Frank's pragmatic tricks to control the direction of exchanges. Yet, traditionally, dialogue has often been left aside from analysis in media and film studies because it has been considered 'transparent' and thus not worth looking at. As Kozloff (2000: 6) indeed indicates, film studies tend to focus on cinematographic technical aspects (like the editing process for instance) with little regard for dialogue. When dialogue receives attention in reviews, it takes the form of subjective comments lacking in scientific linguistic grounding: 'Film reviews fall back on vapid clichés—the dialogue is "witty" or "clumsy"—without specifying the grounds for such evaluations. The neglect of film dialogue by more recent film scholarship actually reflects the field's long-standing antipathy to speech in film.' It is true that films were originally speechless, which gave the art its specificity

as opposed to drama. The fear of losing this independence might be one reason for this enduring anti-dialogue bias: 'the fear that incorporating dialogue compromises film as an independent art form by bringing it too close to theatre has persisted' (Kozloff: 7). If Herman (1995) and more recently Mandala (2007) have brought theoretical linguistic knowledge to the analysis of dialogue in plays, few such linguistic studies have concentrated on TV series and films. Piazza (2011) is one of the rare linguistic contributions to cinema studies. As the author underlines, even after sound was integrated in filmmaking in 1927, the low esteem for dialogues has endured: to this day, 'the relevance of film dialogue has not yet been fully acknowledged' (Piazza, 2011: 12). TV drama studies have concentrated on form and content rather than on the linguistic aspects of dialogues (Marshall and Werndly's textbook, *The Language of Television* [2002], might be one of the rare exceptions).

If media and film studies have not made dialogues a primary field of study, linguistics has hardly considered the language of TV series worth looking at either, probably because scripted fictional talk does not constitute real authentic data. Much more linguistic light has been thrown on authentic media talk by both linguists and media specialists (Bell, 1991; Hutchby, 2005; Lorenzo-Dus, 2008; Lorenzo-Dus & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2013; Thornborrow, 2001, 2014; Tolson, 2005; van Dijk, 1985, among many others). Yet recently there has been a growing interest in fictional TV interactions (Bednarek, 2012; Bubel, 2008; Dynel, 2011; Quaglio, 2009; Richardson, 2010, for instance). However, apart from Quaglio's book on the American TV series *Friends*, there is no monograph-length study of language and dialogues in a single series. Quaglio's quantitative approach aims at comparing the fictional exchanges in *Friends* with ordinary talk in everyday life, which is not the point of the present study. Bednarek's monograph (2012) focuses on the frequencies of key linguistic features that could help grasp the emotional and attitudinal identity of certain characters in different series (and *Gilmore Girls* in particular) but she does not make her linguistic findings resonate at the scale of the whole plot and context of the diverse series she mentions. Neither does Richardson's volume (2010). Besides, Bednarek and Richardson respectively adopt a linguistic and sociolinguistic perspective

that differs from the approach chosen in the present book in a way that will now be spelt out.

In this first monograph to date on the American political TV series *House of Cards*, the point is not merely to extract a few scenes and see how linguistic and pragmatic theories can be applied to the fictional text but also to consider the series as an aesthetic whole within which dialogue should be contextualized. In this sense, the TV series corpus is not used as a pretext to linguistic theorization. The volume thus offers a twofold stylistic perspective. It first intends to account for the narratorial structure of the series—the condition of its birth is very specific as the first two seasons (26 episodes) were ordered by Netflix, so it gave the authors the liberty to think of the entire first two seasons in terms of a unity. It also brings to light what constitutes the style of the protagonist and reflects on an idiolect that betrays the way he perceives himself and others and also the world and his place in it.

If Bednarek's notion of 'expressive identity' (2012: 121) helps understand how language and dialogues contribute to characterization, it deals merely with speakers' emotions, attitudes and ideologies and does not take into account the dynamic negotiation of interpersonal places for self and other in the run of exchanges, as the author herself admits:

> In the analysis of such sequences, the main focus is on the construal of expressive identity rather than on the negotiation of face/image. That is, in contrast to image-related sequences they are not defined by reference to relational face/image-work, but according to whether or not they express a speaker's emotions, attitudes, ideologies etc.—although it is very likely that such sequences will have an impact on the negotiation of face/image. (Bednarek: 165)

As will be shown, Frank Underwood's 'expressive identity' cannot be dissociated from the relational 'face-work' (Goffman, 1967) involved in dialogic interactions. This is where a pragmatic dimension is added to the stylistic approach of *House of Cards*. Politicians often repress saying what they think so as not to offend their interlocutors as the latter might prove useful to them at some point; faces have to be protected, maintained or enhanced. Thus dialogues *per se* can hardly be said to be

'transparent' in the series. What is at stake is usually hidden from the verbal message and is played at the pragmatic level, if pragmatics is to be defined as the study of levels of meanings that are not directly retrievable from the surface of verbal messages but are inferred during the course of the exchange. Very generally, pragmatics, according to Chapman (2011: 177), is indeed 'concerned with questions of how speakers communicate and hearers interpret meanings that can't be explained simply in relation to the linguistic forms used.'

If a stylistic study aims at analysing the linguistic properties of a text, it also accounts for the reading process, that is to say, how readers arrive at the meaning that they do (see Culpeper, 2001: 11). Transferred to the TV medium, a stylistic study should deal with how viewers process what they hear but also what they see and how they make sense of it. This is where pragmatics meets stylistics again. Knowing the main protagonist's intentions, the viewer can measure the effects of his words on the other characters. But the book also aims at highlighting the impact of Francis's rhetorical choices on the viewers themselves. Thus combined with pragmatic theories, the stylistic analysis of language and dialogue in *House of Cards* offers a more complete investigation of the linguistic choices made by speakers (especially Underwood) with particular desired effects in mind, either on other participants (inside the story) or on the recipients of the TV series (in the asides in particular). As Hickey (1993: 578) puts it, 'pragmastylistics' studies the potential power of linguistic choices that are liable to produce diverse effects in the hearer's mind, depending on the extralinguistic conditions and the communicative abilities of the speaker:

> Pragmastylistics pays special attention to those features that a speaker may choose or has chosen, from a range of acceptable forms in the same language that would be semantically, or truth-conditionally, equivalent, but might perform or achieve different objectives or do so in different ways. In other words, the choices are seen as determined by the desired effects (expressive, affective, attitudinal etc.), by the communicative qualities aimed at (clarity, effectiveness etc.), and by the context or situation itself (what is already known and what is new, relationships between the speaker and hearer, the physical distances etc.).

Apart from Black's *Pragmatic Stylistics* (2005) and, more recently, Chapman & Clark's edited volume *Pragmatic Literary Stylistics* (Chapman & Clark, 2014) proposing pragma-stylistic analyses of literary texts, few analyses have yet adopted this approach. This is even truer of linguistic studies of TV series. Richardson's book (2010) comes close to it although hers is more sociolinguistic in perspective—that is to say, in Mey's words, its focus is more 'on the linguistic aspects of the social use' than on the (pragmatic) 'use of language in the users' (Mey, 2006: 1793).

Taking into account the specificity of the TV medium's architecture, the present book thus offers an encompassing pragma-stylistic perspective on language and exchanges in *House of Cards* within the socio-cultural context that informs them. If the main focus is on discourse and interactions, references will be made to the multimodality of TV series. Though the technical editing aspects will not be tackled, the link between the word and the image as well as the play with the camera movements will be analysed each time it serves the linguistic analysis of interactions. The study of language and dialogues in *House of Cards* would require more than a single monograph, however. One distinctive angle has been chosen to address them, that of power and manipulation. This book investigates both *dialogues* as the locus where power is exercised, obtained or lost, and *discourse* as power in itself, that it to say, both 'power over' (the other) and 'power to' (create or distort reality).

Manipulation: Definitions and Theories

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) specialists have been among the first to define the notion of *discursive* manipulation that this book is primarily concerned with. Fairclough (1989: 6), for example, defines linguistic manipulation as 'the conscious use of language in a devious way to control the others'. There are three important elements in his definition: the idea of an initial *intention* of seeing a plan through ('conscious'), the resort to discursive *distortion* ('use of language in a devious way') and the aim of having the others act in a way that is in line with the *interest* of the manipulator ('control'). In the social perspective of CDA, manipulation is perceived as the illegitimate domination of one powerful group over

others with the aim of maintaining social inequality: 'Socially, manipulation is defined as illegitimate domination confirming social inequality' (van Dijk, 2006: 359).

For specialists of argumentation and rhetoric, manipulation carries the same negative connotation as it plays on some intrinsic weakness in human rational thinking—a denunciation of the potential degeneration of language into an instrument of manipulation that goes all the way back to Plato who found fault with the sophistic practices (see Guérin, Siouffi, & Sorlin, 2013). In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, pragma-dialecticians like van Eemeren perceive manipulative discourse as fallacious discourse that 'derails'[7] from the ethical and rational means of persuasion. This is how van Eemeren (2005: xii) defines manipulation: 'manipulation in discourse boils down to intentionally deceiving one's addressees by persuading them of something that is foremost in one's interest through the covert use of communicative devices that are not in agreement with generally acknowledged critical standards of reasonableness'. Two new elements transpire in this definition. First the idea that manipulation is, like Claudia Mills (1995: 100) puts it, 'persuasion *manqué*', falling short of the ideal of 'reasonable' persuasion. Second, it highlights the hidden nature of manipulation ('covert'). If overt persuasion is admissible in the following question, 'can I persuade you to join us?', overt manipulation is not: 'can I manipulate you to join us?'. As Cholbi (2014: 202) indicates, the target needs to be left in the dark as to the intentions of the manipulator if manipulation is to work: 'Manipulation is by necessity subtle. This is why, for example, to utter "I am attempting to manipulate you" is to engage in a performative contradiction.'

Philosophers interested in manipulation have been particularly conscious of its amoral character. Gorin has even proposed to add a fifth maxim to the four that compose Grice's Cooperative Principle—namely, be sufficiently informative, be truthful, be relevant and be clear; see Chap. 4 for a more precise description—a 'Transparency Norm' that would require 'that an interactive partner not hide her intentions when these

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[7] 'All derailments of strategic maneuvering are fallacies in the sense that they violate one or more of the rules for critical discussion and all fallacies can be viewed as derailments of strategic maneuvering' (van Eemeren, 2010: 198).

intentions are relevant to the intentions or interests of the person with whom she is interacting' (Gorin, 2014: 78). If all people abided by this communicative rule, there would not be any manipulation. Occupied with the same ethical wish for transparent communication, Scanlon (1998: 298) puts forward 'a Principle M', a valid moral principle that constitutes 'What We Owe to Each Other'—to take up the title of his book—in which he develops the moral wrongness of misleading others about our true intentions. This is in line with the traditional perception of manipulation as failed persuasion that falls short of the ideal of truthful cooperation previously mentioned. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1987, 2006) could be said to belong to that tradition as his philosophical project indeed aims at extracting the conditions of possibilities of successful understanding/agreement between human beings. The 'universal reason' that is presupposed in ethical communication is predicated on several validity claims like truth, rightness and truthfulness (sincerity).

However, not only is Habermas's peaceful yearning for ethical and rational communication belied by historical and current wars but day-to-day practice also seems to give the lie to humans' aspiration to truth. In fact, as Galasiński shows in *The Language of Deception*, the claim to truth, which is also a claim to morality, does not stand the test of day-to-day practices: 'the truth bias does not hold firmly when it comes to language users' actions—we all lie—and neither does it feature prominently in our beliefs about ourselves. The need to be polite, attractive or finally, get someone to do something is greater than the need to speak the truth' (Galasiński, 2000: 8). Grice's theory of communicative cooperation is based on this very truth bias, presenting communication as an ideal exchange of information in a most irenic manner. Exchanges in general, however—and in *House of Cards* in particular—are very often more agonistic than irenic. Interactions, rather, consist in the assignment of places through the force of language. Chap. 4 aims at redefining Grice's maxims in order to account for manipulative discourse. In fact as will be demonstrated, manipulation is a 'parasitic act on normal language use' (Brisard, 2004: 6). It indeed clandestinely violates all the Gricean maxims; manipulators aim at appearing cooperative and play on the expectation that the 'manipulatee' will perceive their utterances as cooperative.

   The seeming cooperativeness of uncooperative manipulative discourse can be illustrated with 'lies', which are one of the most obvious ways of deception. The act of lying occupies a paradoxical position in speech act theory as, when lying, the deceiver pursues the same goal as in a statement except that she knows her statement is insincere. In fact, there is no such thing as a 'speech act of a lie' as Reboul (1994: 297) suggests:

> To lie successfully, it is necessary to perform a successful illocutionary act of assertion. To see this, let us come back to the two conditions in the definition of a lie: the speaker does not comply with the sincerity condition and he intends his hearer to believe he does comply with the sincerity condition. The only way that the hearer can believe that is that the act of assertion should be successful. Yet, as in a lie by definition the sincerity condition has not been complied with, the act of assertion associated to the lie cannot have been successfully performed. Thus, there is a paradox in the description of lies in speech acts theory.

For the perlocutionary act of lying to be successful (believing in and complying with what the lie is about), the illocutionary act of asserting needs to be unsuccessful (it does not comply with the sincerity condition). In other words, lying consists in seemingly abiding by cooperative speech acts. Making the addressee believe one is cooperative when one is not also pertains to other deceptive acts. Galasiński (2000: 71) shows that deception does not limit itself to the play with the truth—that is to say, tampering with extralinguistic reality—but is also at work in what he calls 'metadiscursive deception'. He gives the example of covert evasion (pretending to be relevant when one is not). Deceptive evasion is to be distinguished from Grice's strategy of 'opting out' of the Cooperative Principle, which takes place when one overtly evades answering a question (Grice [1991: 30] gives the following example: 'I cannot say more; my lips are sealed'). The difference between lying and deceptive evasion lies in the effect of the speech act it contains in terms of success. Indeed the liar's success depends on the belief of the addressee in the statement that the deceiver knows to be false. In the case of evasive utterance, the notion of success is of no interest as what counts is that the deceiver gives the appearance of being cooperative: 'the success of the speech act

is immaterial to the success of evasion because evasion is a faculty of a response, rather than a type of a speech act' (Galasiński: 103). There are no more identifiable speech acts of manipulation than there are formal linguistic properties for it. Manipulative discourse exploits the resource of normal language and the pragmatics of cooperative speech acts. As L. de Saussure (2005: 118) indicates, manipulation is not a discourse type: 'it is on the contrary a type of pragmatic usage of language.'

What is then the difference between persuasion and manipulation since both seem to aim at convincing the other of the merits of one's own viewpoint? Is persuading a fanatic to liberate her hostages not a way of manipulating her to the negotiator's advantage and in the hostages' interests? Incidentally, if persuasion can be reckoned to equate manipulation here, there is then such a thing as 'morally good' manipulation (see Baron, 2014). As Saussure and Schulz make clear in *Manipulation and Ideologies in the Twentieth Century* (2005: 3), the notion of manipulation has 'fuzzy borders'. Manipulation can be seen as sharing one external border with persuasion and another with coercion. It might be better still to perceive the three categories along a continuum allowing for some possible overlap. If there is some inherent manipulative move in all persuasive discourse as language cannot be in itself neutral—it is always 'perspectivated' (Danler, 2005: 46)—the difference between persuasion and manipulation lies in the fact that, in the former case, the addressee has the liberty to disagree with the arguments advanced by the addresser whereas, in the latter, the victim's free choice is circumscribed to a superior degree. If one goes still one step further towards coercion on the continuum, the limit exercised on freedom becomes more absolute. Comparing manipulation and coercion, Wood (2014) indeed underlines that coercion under all its species (moral coercion, physical coercion, coercion through threats) exerts a severe limit on freedom, 'the freedom to make choices for yourself, rather than having them made for you', whereas manipulation aims at 'influencing' free choice in a way that suits the manipulator's interest. Overlaps are, however, possible:

> Being manipulated into doing something is different from being coerced into doing it. The two seem to me to form a kind of continuum, with manipulation occupying the subtler end and coercion occupying the more

heavy-handed end. The cases where they might seem to coincide or overlap are really borderline cases, where we are not sure how most suitably to describe the kind of influence under which the agent does the thing. (Wood, 2014: 31)

As far as internal borders are concerned, the notions of deception and manipulation have been used so far as if they were synonymous. In fact, deception does not cover all cases of the broader notion of manipulation. After reviewing the whole literature on deception, Masip, Garrido, and Herrero (2004: 148) come up with their own definition: 'deception is the deliberate attempt, whether successful or not, to conceal, fabricate and/or manipulate in any other way factual and/or emotional information, by verbal and/or nonverbal means, in order to create or maintain in another or in others a belief that the communicator himself or herself considers false.' Deception has thus very much to do with the true/false dichotomy or what falls in between, such as half-truths, fabrications or cases of metadiscursive deception that makes the uncooperativeness invisible like masking, disguising, confusing, lying by omission, or deceptive evasion (Galasiński: 84). But manipulation can also consist in imposing some form of pressure[8] on the 'manipulatee' (it draws here closer to the coercive side of the continuum previously mentioned). In this case, manipulation is less covert than in the case of deceptive pragmatic acts. For example, threatening or intimidating somebody can be part of the more overt manipulative acts of getting the other to agree with or act in the manipulator's interest. Faden and Beauchamp (1986: 354–68) speak of 'manipulation of options'—that is to say, the increase or decline in the number of options available to the victim—as opposed to what they call 'manipulation of information' that could be equated with deception. Given the modification of options available in the environment, the target is more or less overtly induced to yield.

In addition to (covert) deception and (more or less overt) pressuring moves, there is a last category of manipulative acts that play on the targets' weaknesses, thus circumventing or undermining their rational capacities.

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[8] Wood (2014: 32), after Baron (2003), speaks of 'pressure to acquiesce' where the point is to 'wear down the other's resistance'.

This is part of what Baron (2003: 44) calls 'taking advantage of another's emotions or emotional needs'.[9] To address this category in pragmalinguistic terms, one needs to expand Gricean pragmatics. In his theory, Grice conceded that some maxims were probably missing in his general Principle of Cooperation as it is mainly concerned with the exchange of information. In particular, what he stated would require further attention is the way one exerts some influence on the other: 'the scheme needs to be generalized to allow for such general purposes as influencing or directing the actions of others' (Grice, 1975: 28). As Chapman (2011: 132) indicates, these other purposes have been taken up by politeness theory 'to try to explain the social motivations for speaking to each other as we do'. It could be argued that manipulative acts are also parasitic on politeness as they resort to strategies of politeness not as a means (or not solely) of maintaining social harmony but rather of controlling the other. As shall be studied in Chaps. 5 and 7, there is such a thing as 'polite' manipulation where politeness is exploited to surreptitiously win the other over. More generally, the concept of 'face-work' (Goffman, 1967) will be drawn upon to explain how manipulation takes advantage of weaknesses, images and emotions. Playing on the targets' vanity and sense of self-worth is indeed a way to lure them into believing that they are acting to their own benefits when they are not. Frank Underwood chooses from a wide palette of manipulative tactics the better to enhance his victims' (socio) psychological 'self-aspects' and personality traits.

There is one last side to manipulation that has not yet been tackled here and which will move the perspective from that of the manipulator to that of the target—that is, the question of the *cognitive* processes involved while interpreting manipulative discourse. This aspect goes beyond Gricean (and neo-Gricean) pragmatics—which seem to have shown no interest in it—and, as seen earlier, speech act theory has a hard time explaining lies and deception. Recently, some researchers in cognitive pragmatics (Herman & Oswald, 2014; Maillat, 2013, 2014; Maillat & Oswald, 2009; de Saussure, 2005, 2014, among others) have

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[9] This last kind of manipulation identified by Wood/Baron (besides 'deception' and 'pressure to acquiesce') appears commensurate with Faden and Beauchamp's third kind of manipulation, which they call 'psychological manipulation'. However, there are also some psychological aspects to the 'pressure to acquiesce' category, so Faden and Beauchamp's division may be too broad.

shown that discursive manipulation consists in tampering with human cognition. Manipulators render it cognitively difficult for the targets to get access to all the manipulator's knowledge. Chap. 4 will detail further how cognitive interpretative faculties are covertly altered when receiving a manipulative message in *House of Cards*. As Oswald and Lewiński (2014: 315) demonstrate, traditional fallacies 'can also be regarded from a cognitive perspective as bias-generated errors in inferential processes of reasoning and judgment.' This cognitive turn has also been taken by van Dijk (2006) in his analysis of manipulation within a triangular theoretical framework (discourse, society, cognition). Although he thinks, like (L. de) Saussure, that there is no distinctive linguistic properties of manipulation, he yet shows that some can be more effective than others in the manipulation of the human being's mind. However, van Dijk's valuable triangular analysis of manipulation inevitably leaves aside the more psychological aspects of manipulation previously mentioned, which play a crucial role in Underwood's manipulative use of 'face-work'.

Thus the broad notion of manipulation needs to be highlighted from multiple disciplinary angles: stylistics, rhetoric, social psychology, pragmatics and cognitive sciences. Francis Underwood exerts pressure on others, using ingratiating techniques and (im)polite means to restrict his victims' options. These multifarious approaches call for an interdisciplinary framework.

Theoretical Frameworks

Within the pragma-stylistic perspective described in A Pragma-Stylistic Approach, the second section in this chapter, several theoretical frameworks will be employed to shed light on discursive manipulation. If speech act theories (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1979), the Cooperative Principle (Gricean pragmatics) and linguistic politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983, 2014) are among the pragmatic disciplinary positions that will inform the pragma-stylistic analysis of *House of Cards*, it should also be at times completed by what Levinson (1983: 284) considers part of pragmatics: Conversation Analysis. Indeed, the latter has the merit to concentrate both on the producing and the receiv-

ing end of the interaction, explaining how conversations are structured in terms of turns and moves, which can be useful to determine how manipulation structurally operates within conversational sequences. The main protagonists' argumentative strategies and their covert 'fallacies' will also be examined from a rhetorical and cognitive point of view. Lastly, the study of indirect pragmatic devices like implicature and insinuation will be coupled with a fine-grained analysis of (socio)linguistic markers, such as pronouns, deixis, tense, types of process, metaphors, general truth statements and forms of address.

While taking power as one social variable, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory does not give it pride of place. Power in the workplace of Congress is of paramount importance as it determines what can be said to whom, depending on the amount of power the speakers are endowed with. Studying power relations at work, Holmes and Stubbe (2014) have analysed different forms of 'doing power', defining it from a sociological and psychological perspective: 'power is treated as a relative concept which includes both the ability to control others and the ability to accomplish one's goals. This is manifest in the degree to which one person or group can impose their plans and evaluations at the expense of others' (Holmes & Stubbe, 2014: 3). In a social constructionist approach, 'doing power' consists in using discourse to construct social roles during interaction. To account for the possibility of 'doing power' in and through discourse, this book will thus also appeal to theories that have gone beyond Brown and Levinson's framework (of positive and negative politeness, see Chap. 5 for more details) and include 'rapport management' theory (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) and the notion of 'relational identity' (Arundale, 2010; Spencer-Oatey, 2007, 2011) dealing with the discursive presentation and positioning of self and other in interactions.

The first two seasons of *House of Cards* describe Frank Underwood's rise to power. With the people he needs to befriend, he often uses deferential politeness to create collegiality. The contrast is sharp with the third season where he has become President of the United States; (fake) collaborative power gives way to a more coercive form of power. Set in the seat he perceives as the most powerful place in the world, he can dictate his plan of actions to the people he now sees as his subordinates without caring much about good workplace relationships. From the first

and second to the third season, there is a 'coming out' of the dictatorial desire of the president to make others perceive his status difference. Cautious and implicit discourse, off-record criticism and covert manipulation, most often give way to on-record impoliteness and overt orders under the form of direct imperatives. From Whip to President, Frank Underwood emphasizes his power and authority and lets it be known that the hierarchical relations they establish require deferential address and submission. This is why this book lays particular emphasis on the first two seasons as it is interested in the use of covert linguistic manipulation during the protagonist's ascension to power. However, theories of impoliteness (Bousfield, 2008a, b; Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Culpeper, 2011; Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003; Haugh, 2013) in which the notion of power is central, will be of help to cast light upon unsuccessful manipulation, verbal confrontation often reflecting or resulting from aborted manipulative acts.

The way dialogue has been approached so far could make the reader think that fictional dialogue entirely resembles real authentic conversation. This would be displaying what Richardson (2010: 84–5) calls the 'sociolinguist's naiveté': of course TV series dialogues are artificial, they lack the repetitions, hesitations and sometimes indistinctiveness that are characteristic of ordinary talk. Besides, characters are not responsible for what they say, actors performing the words of the script-writer (several authors most of the time) and the exchanges are primarily aimed at an audience that the series is supposed to appeal to. But this does not mean that dialogue is not rendered as plausible as possible in the series and made to come quite close to the ordinary functioning of language. As such it shares some qualities with both media and everyday talk, as Richardson underlines (2010: 61): 'TV dialogue shares with everyday talk the goal of mediating social relationships in a wide range of interactive situations, whereas it shares with media talk its public quality, its obligation to have regard for an audience'. Unlike Kozloff (2000: 19) who thinks that linguistics can be of use to throw light upon film dialogue but that the reverse cannot be true ('this cross-disciplinary poaching cannot proceed in the opposite direction'), I think, like Piazza (2011: 14), that the close study of fictional exchanges can 'provide useful insights into those mechanisms of real-life interactions that sociolinguists investigate'. This book

thus pursues two linguistic objectives: it aims at testing the pragmatic and stylistic theories mentioned earlier by applying them to the fictional dialogues of *House of Cards*, and it intends to elaborate on these theories by focusing on the less investigated aspect of manipulative discourse. It is thus hoped that the 'fictional' can in turn fashion new keys for the study of naturally occurring spontaneous interaction.

Book Structure

This introductory part is followed by six chapters whose content is detailed in this section. If Chaps. 2 and 3 respectively focus on plot structure and the use of the pragmatic force of language to create reality, the other chapters centre around linguistic and cognitive manipulation (Chap. 4) and manipulative (im)politeness (Chap. 5) before concentrating on the manipulation of the viewer (Chap. 6). In a final synthesis, Chap. 7 draws all the threads woven in these chapters, offering a correlation between definitions of manipulation and possible frameworks to apprehend the phenomenon.

In the wake of Propp's and Greimas's theories, Chap. 2 deals with the macrostructure of the narrative of *House of Cards* and the place the characters occupy in it as 'actants', before giving the characters a less structural and more pragmatic description. In this postmodern tale, if the classical schema of quests (the quest for power here) dysfunctions, it is because the hero is an anti-hero of the modern times, blurring the demarcations between 'good' and 'villain'. The chapter will also evince to what extent the characters' language and exchanges display their 'expressive identity' (Bednarek, 2012) and the ideological values that underlie it. The cognitive metaphors used by the anti-hero in particular—through whom most of the political world of Congress is perceived—will be qualitatively analysed as they foreground the way he construes the world and perceives his place in it. A last part offers a multimodal analysis of the balance of power in the Underwood couple's 'relational identity' until their breakup at the end of the third season.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the genre and context of the 'political' series. *House of Cards* reflects ultra-contemporaneous issues and times,

in particular the new relationship between politics and the media that the revolution of Internet and rolling news channels has engendered. The instantaneity of modern communicative outlets has brought about a new way of 'doing politics' that the postmodern series mirrors well. Linguistically, it will be shown how this impacts on language use. Not only is the politician Frank Underwood suitably adapted to this new age but he often uses and abuses the medium, sometimes getting ahead of it by manipulating news and journalists to further his own personal goals. In the *mise en abyme* it stages through TV within TV representations of political discourse and action, the show highlights how dependent politics and media have become in their common desire to make news. With the need to convince the public, politicians like Underwood also rely on the creation of forceful slogans and catchy phrases that, taken up by the media, control the public's reading of events. Through the media, Frank indeed exploits the performative force of language to conceal, distort and even create reality, trying to 'make the world fit the word', to speak like Searle. Fiction and reality become blurred on several levels that Chap. 3 will explore further.

Chapter 4 displays the full spectrum of Francis Underwood's strategies of manipulation along a continuum in between persuasion and coercion. First formulating specific maxims that would compose a 'Principle of Manipulation' alongside Grice's Cooperative Principle, I then go on to demonstrate why this Principle does not hold. One needs to go beyond Grice's incomplete and pragma-linguistically oriented Cooperative Principle to integrate socio-pragmatic aspects involving primary social goals and parameters. In a post-Gricean approach that I call 'pragma-rhetorical', this chapter delves into the covert 'fallacies' in manipulators' argumentative strategies and the interpretative effect that their cognitively controlled speech acts produce on their targets. The cognitive approach will indeed bring out what it is that renders the victim unable to detect manipulation.

Chapter 5 delves into a specific aspect of manipulative discourse that consists in winning the addressee over through cajoling and 'seductive' discourse. In promoting both self- and other-enhancement, this sub-type does not completely tally with Leech's Principle of Politeness. Only can the more integrative theory of rapport management account for

the mixed form of (im)politeness this peculiar category embodies. After analysing cases of failed attempts at manipulating and highlighting the discursive tools of 'counter-manipulation', the chapter concludes on the specificity of Claire and Francis's 'couple identity' that seems based on a competitive challenge of their respective self-worth.

Chapter 6 is centred on another level in the TV architecture, that of the actor-viewer relationship. The aim of this chapter is to bring into focus a different kind of manipulation that could be called 'aesthetic manipulation' (Mills, 2014[10]), as the viewer is not coerced into watching the show (she can stop watching it whenever she wishes) but is yet 'wooed' into following it through the creation of suspense and surprise. The theatrical overtones and Shakespearian echoes—redolent of the British origins of the series, might be one of the attention-getting devices of aesthetic manipulation. The anti-hero does not seek the viewers' love or sympathy, quite the opposite, he does not hesitate to challenge them, sometimes even treating them harshly. The use of the second-person pronoun might, in part, explain the fascination the character may (or may not) exert. Francis's asides are also marked by a 'rhetoric of certitude' through the use of specific linguistic markers that confer onto him some 'charismatic authority'. Drawing on findings in psychological and cognitive research, Chap. 6 thus tries to explain to what extent Frank Underwood may be said to exert a dark influence on viewers. It will be discussed whether the anti-hero's appeal still holds sway in the third season where the camera tends to leave him to put Claire at the centre of the frame.

The book ends with concluding remarks proposing a synthesis of the previous chapters from the peculiar angles of hypocrisy and interdependency.

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[10] The viewer knows that the piece of art is a construction that is overtly aimed at the recipients, so manipulation is here of a different kind from the forms of manipulation that has been broached so far: 'in cases of aesthetic manipulation, the person being manipulated generally accepts the manipulative experience voluntarily—indeed, often pays money for the privilege of being affected in this way. To the degree that violations of autonomy are taken to be at the heart of what is wrong with interpersonal manipulation, manipulation of a specific kind will not be wrong in cases where we autonomously sign up to be manipulated in that specific way. And this is typically what happens with manipulation in art' (Mills, 2014: 139). In this article, Mills deals with other aspects of manipulation that has been so far too narrowly restricted to rationalistic aspects (including in her own work, see Mills, 1995).

According to a principle of 'reciprocation' that research has shown to inhere in human culture, Chap. 7 highlights the system of debts and favours that is at the heart of US political 'influence'. Correlating manipulation with a politeness–impoliteness continuum, it also offers a theoretical means to deal with the specificity of manipulative 'seductive' discourse that plays on a hybrid form of (im)politeness based on both on-record and off-record moves.

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2

Macrostructure and Linguistic Characterization

House of Cards as a Modern Tale

Revisiting Greimas's Actantial Model

From a macrostructural perspective, the political series *House of Cards* could be construed as being supported by a very conventional narrative framework revolving around basic plot components that were highlighted long ago by the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp and then later the French-Lithuanian literary scientist Algirdas Julien Greimas. It basically relates the tale of a 'hero' on a quest to power. Frank Underwood has indeed chosen to devote his entire life to the achievement of one ultimate goal, the presidency of the United States of America. As underlined by Propp in his analysis of Russian folktales, fairy tales often begin with a lack that triggers the hero's desire and his willingness to fulfil it (Propp, 1965: 46). Born to a poor family, Francis is intent on providing himself with the means to get out of poverty and succeed where his alcoholic and depressed anti-model of a father failed. His regular trips to his home town in South Carolina remind him of the path already trodden on his way up to the highest office on the American political ladder: 'Everything
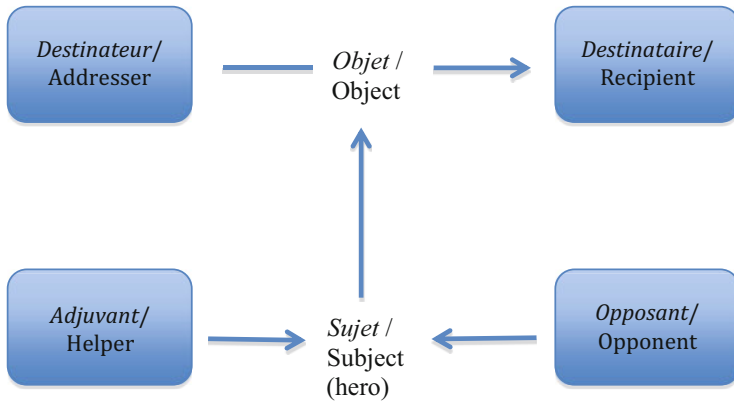
Fig. 2.1 Greimas's (1986: 180) mythical actantial model

gets just a little bit thicker this far south—the air, the blood, even me. I try to make it down here at least once a month. Every trip is a reminder of how far I've come' (1.3[1]). Shrewd and audacious, the 'hero' knows how to get allies ('the helper' and 'the donor'/'provider' in Propp's list of character types[2] or '*Adjuvant*' in Greimas's categorization) whose role is to facilitate his access to what Greimas calls the 'Object' of desire—which, in fairy tales, is often embodied by the princess (Greimas, 1986: 178–89). But the path to success is punctuated with obstacles standing in the way of the fulfilment of the hero's desire. These impediments are set up by Opponents ('the villain' in Propp's terms or '*Opposant*'[3] in Greimas's) ready to obstruct the hero's progression. Basing his own structural narrative framework on Propp's analysis and the work of Souriau (1950) completed with Lévi-Strauss (1955)'s theory on myth, Greimas puts forward the structural framework illustrated in Fig. 2.1.

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[1] Each reference indicates first the season (1, 2 or 3), then the precise chapter number of *House of Cards* it belongs to (1–39).

[2] Propp's ultimate stocklist of actants is made up of seven character types: the villain, the donor, the helper, the sought-for person, the dispatcher, the hero and the false hero.

[3] Greimas (1986: 179) borrows the term *Opposant* ('Opponent') from Souriau and *Adjuvant* ('Helper') from Guy Michaud (preferring the latter to Souriau's *Rescousse*).

It features three couples of 'actants'[4] (Addresser/Recipient, Helper/Opponent, Subject/Object) that are determined by the place they hold in the narrative model. The *Destinateur*/Addresser is 'the dispatcher' in Propp's list. It could be, for instance, the father of the princess who approaches the hero with a request or a command. As very often in tales, the Recipient is also the Subject/Hero as the Object is destined to him/her, which is the case in *House of Cards* as well; Francis Underwood is both the Subject and the Recipient of the quest. Like Propp's functions,[5] Greimas's actant places are stable and constant and can be fulfilled by various dramatis personae. In Francis Underwood's world, characters do change actantial functions over time; today's Helpers can become tomorrow's Opponents and vice versa. As the protagonist cynically points out, 'friends make the worst enemies' (1.5). There are indeed no such things as loyal human relationships in Congress. For the Underwoods, people are mere actants that can be used as Helpers or discarded when no longer needed.

As the couple (Subject/Object) clearly indicates, Greimas recalls that the actantial model is predicated on a syntactic structure. In grammatical terms, the actant is first of all the character or element that does something or is done something to, as it embodies 'the possibility of a process' (Greimas, 1986: 185). His narrative framework (Fig. 2.1) is organized along three axes: the Subject/Object vertical line constitutes the 'axis of desire', the Helpers/Opponents are located on the 'axis of power' and the first line of the figure embodies the 'axis of communication' (Greimas: 180).

I propose here to give pride of place again to the linguistic components from which Greimas's framework is extrapolated but to extract it from its structuralist origins and bring it into the pragmatic age. A pragma-linguistic version of the actantial model would indeed place language at the heart of the previously mentioned structure and not use it

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[4] In Greimas's literary semiotics, the concept of 'actant' replaces the term 'character' or even Propp's notion of 'dramatis persona', for it can also refer to animals, objects and concepts. Besides, an actant is an empty space that can be occupied by diverse characters/actors (see Greimas & Courtès, 1993: 3).

[5] 'Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale' (Propp, 1968: 21).

as a mere analogy for its functional components. To be fair, pragmatics seems to germinate in the semiotic spheres and narrative units isolated by Greimas. The basic narrative motifs are constituted by the hardships the hero goes through in his confrontation with antagonistic subjects, but at a higher level, the author shows, the relationships between actants are framed by a contractual structure that can be equated to relations between creditors and debtors (see Greimas & Courtès, 1993: 71). At a more abstract level still, the contractual structure fits the semiotic realm of what Greimas calls 'manipulation'. The term is, for him, devoid of any negative connotation as it gathers together specific configurations such as seducing, provoking or defying. The manipulator can commission other actants to act by promising, encouraging or flattering them (Greimas & Courtès, 1993: 220–2). Pragmatic speech acts (that presuppose intentions and effects sought after) are thus at the heart of the narrative structure. Discourse is the means through which the Subject intends to get to the Object by manipulating Helpers/Opponents along the route to power. In his subtle pragmatic and rhetorical use of language, Francis Underwood, as Subject–Manipulator, assigns people places as either Helpers or Opponents. This pragmatic assignment of roles requires that the direction of the horizontal arrows in Greimas's framework be reversed, as shown in Fig. 2.2. The outward pointing arrows illustrate the placement to which the components are pragma-linguistically subjected; they become actants through the effects of the speech acts and the type of contract these pragmatic acts establish:

In the asides to the viewer, Underwood indeed makes clear his intentions to trick people into accepting the roles that his promises, threats


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                          Object
                            ↑
                            |
    Helper  ←———  Language/discourse  ———→  Opponent
                            |
                            
                         Subject
```
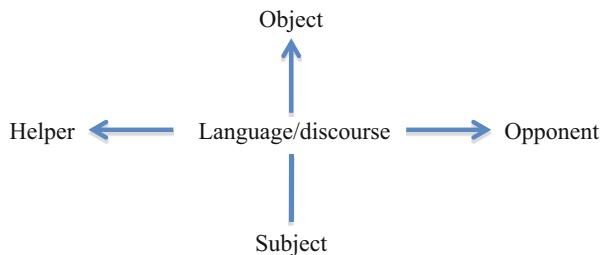
Fig. 2.2 Greimas's actantial model revised

or flattery place them in. Chaps. 4 and 5 will detail his manipulative and seductive moves. But a quick illustration will serve to better evince the sort of fiduciary contracts the protagonist establishes with the other actants. In the modern tale, Underwood promises gifts in return for favours and sometimes anticipates on the help that a character could provide at some point by offering him/her a strategical political position in advance. Hence the recurrent speech acts of promising and offering or the recalling of how much the other person 'owes him'. Having been himself a Helper in the past, the hero expects a return on investment. Such expressions as 'always good to be owed favours' (1.8), 'we've served each other's purpose' or 'I thought she owed us' (1.9) testify to the establishment of a creditor/debtor relationship with Helpers in the modern tale. Obtaining favours from members of Congress thus requires bait, but the most efficient 'whipping' consists in putting them in a position where they become entirely subservient. Congressman Peter Russo from Pennsylvania's first congressional district, for instance, will be the perfect target, as his personal file (consumption of drugs, frequentation of prostitutes) is enough to blackmail him into a subservient Helper. As a general rule, Francis is keen on getting profits from his political schemes and transactions. When Linda Vasquez, the US president's Chief of Staff, offers advice to the president that, in fact, came from Frank, he feels deprived of the dividends he was entitled to, as he confesses in an aside: 'That was her trying to take *credit* for my idea. Advice she wouldn't take from me. Unacceptable. I will not allow her to *sell my goods* when she cuts me out of the *profits*' (1.4, my emphasis).

One of Francis's greatest Helpers is his wife Claire Underwood who is set on achieving the same goal for her husband and herself (she is also the Recipient of the Object). A manifest contract between them has apparently been established before the first season starts. Having lovers is, for instance, permitted if they prove to be helpful actants in the quest. When Claire understands that Frank sleeps with Zoe Barnes, a reporter at *The Washington Herald*, she assesses this relationship in terms of investment and benefits:

Claire: The reporter?
Francis: Yes.

Claire:	Just this once?
Francis:	I'm not sure.
Claire:	What does she offer us?
Francis:	A mouthpiece when we need one. She's been very useful so far.
Claire:	What does she want?
Francis:	Access. A seat at the table.
Claire:	Sounds like she's getting the better side of the *bargain*.
Francis:	She can be controlled.
Claire:	Are you sure?
Francis:	She can. I promise you.
Claire:	OK, if you say so.
Francis:	The moment you want me to end it…
Claire:	I know, Francis. (1.5; emphasis added)[6]

In the one dispute they have in the first season, ending up in Claire's leaving home for a while, taking refuge in her lover's arms, the artist Adam Galloway, she feels that the contract they have established is being ruptured (1.10): 'then be honest about how you've been using me just like you use everybody else. That was never part of the bargain.' The same word 'bargain' recurs here, highlighting the financial contract that seems to underlie their partnership.

Pragmatics and Ideology

The modern TV tale did not occur 'once upon a time' but is very much a product of the financial times of the twenty-first century. The credit-debit 'contract' of Greimas's narrative configurations is here literally inscribed in the Underwood couple's language, as previously evidenced. The protagonist's quest is, in fact, informed by the foundational myth of American culture based on the historical belief that the land offers equal opportunity for all those willing to succeed through hard work and initiative no matter their lowly beginnings. In Greimas's initial model (Fig. 2.1), the American ideology of equal opportunities and free enterprise could

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[6] This and the subsequent quotations follow the transcription conventions that figure in the Appendix. All the transcriptions (from DVDs) are mine.

embody the Addresser (Propp's Dispatcher), the Object of desire becoming the reward for the Subject's hard work. The Addresser/Dispatcher (the actant of the American dream) has indeed endowed the hero with the certainty that, in the name of individual liberty, he could seize opportunities for prosperity beyond class and origin of birth. Repeatedly, Underwood recalls how far he has travelled on his journey of life, from the first elections in his home state to Congress and then to the White House. Having patiently learnt the twists and turns of Congress for 22 years working as a subordinate, he now thinks he deserves a seat at a bigger table:

> I keep things moving in a Congress choked by pettiness and lassitude. My job is to clear the pipes and keep the sludge moving. I won't have to be a plumber much longer. I've done my time. I backed the right man. Give and take. Welcome to Washington. (1.1)

In Greimas's framework, the arrow that leads from Subject to Object hardly takes into account the nature of the ideological forces that inform the relation between them. In fact, the direction of the arrow should be inversed here as the Object, underlain by ideological and cultural values, assigns a place to the Subject at the very same time as it constructs him/her as Subject. This is the power of ideology as defined by Althusser (1976: 12, my translation): 'ideology interpellates people into subjects.' The agency the Subject believes to be endowed with is also the product of an ideological construction. Where the Underwoods think themselves the freest in the objective they have set themselves, they are the most subservient to an encompassing ideology. Ideology both subjects individuals in the double sense that it gives them an existence as Subjects but, in so doing, ascribes a specific place to them. They become Subjects by being paradoxically 'subjectified'—*assujettis*, in Althusser's terms (1976: 108). The reversal of the arrow leading from Object to Subject in Fig. 2.3 represents the assigning force of ideology.

That both Recipients of the quest, Claire and Francis, are entirely subjected to the Object of desire can be measured in the amount of sacrifice they agreed to make to achieve their common goal. Not only has Claire relinquished the idea of being a mother (she aborted Frank's child during his early campaign years) for this aim ran counter to their political
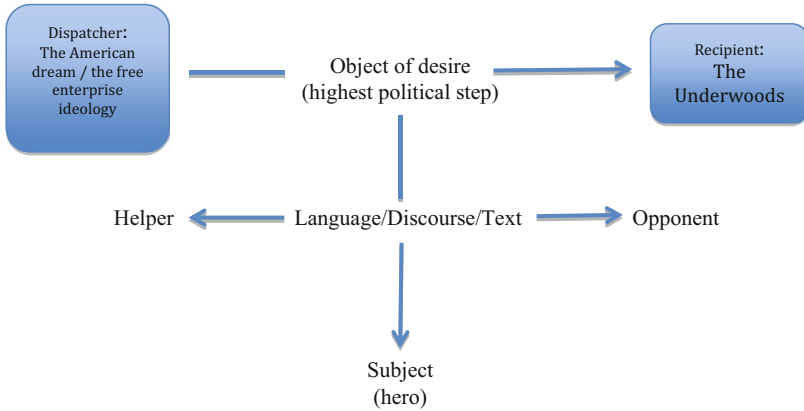
Fig. 2.3 Ideological and pragmatic ascription

aspiration, but the couple does not hesitate to do away with people they appreciate if they no longer serve as Helpers. Their quest determines their being in the world and their relation to other people; it affects them as Subjects. Freddy was one of the rare characters the hero has become truly friends with, Freddy's BBQ joint providing him with a haven from politics and serving him the best ribs in Washington. But when Freddy's past (he was incarcerated for a number of years before starting his BBQ business) is revealed to the press and exploited by one of Frank's Opponent, the businessman Raymond Tusk, the protagonist reluctantly needs to abandon Freddy as he now becomes an obstacle on the road to power. Claire makes it clear that emotions and attachment should not get in the way of their Object of desire. Everything must be sacrificed to it. Here is how Claire tries to dissuade Francis from helping Freddy out:

Claire:	Francis, you know I love Freddy.
Francis:	I'm going.
Claire:	Freddy is dangerous because you care too much. When we care too much, it blinds us.
Francis:	What Tusk did is cheap.
Claire:	And you're letting it get to you, which is exactly what he wants.
Francis:	If I ignore this, if I do nothing…
Claire:	It's not nothing. Staying focussed requires strength. (2.22)

The allegiance to their one goal has brought about the merging of the frontiers between the personal and the professional. Ruthlessness is of the essence in emotional matters. Emotions can be seen as a high value if and only if they can be turned into a helpful actant in the quest. To be of worth, they must 'accomplish' something. Season 2 reveals that during her freshman year in college, Claire was raped by a classmate, Dalton McGinnis, who has become a General in the army and that Francis—who has been promoted from Whip to Vice President at the end of the first season—happens to decorate for worthy military deeds. On learning about the rape, Francis goes mad and instantly wants to have a go at the rapist. Claire prevents him from giving vent to his anger on the assaulter and encourages her husband to divert the force of that anger towards their only goal instead: 'You'll still feel the hate in the morning. You'll use that. But not on him' (2.15). The only way that Claire has found to forget about the sexual assault is to dissociate herself from the girl that was raped by assigning her the place of an 'Opponent' to be controlled and isolated. The use of the third-person pronoun displays how she attempts to subdue this past version of herself in order not to be deterred from her present goal: 'Every time I think of her, pinned down like that, I strangle her, Francis, so she does not strangle me. I have to, we have to. The alternative is unliveable' (same episode). The use of 'have to' instead of the deontic modal 'must' in this utterance testifies to the force of the exterior power that guides her every move toward the Object the couple has its sights set on. The modal 'must' with a first-person subject would have clearly indicated the subjective deontic source from whom the obligation emanates. As Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 183–4) point out, *have*, *have got*, or *need* tend to report an 'objective' obligation 'imposed by someone else' rather than one 'I impose on myself, or voluntarily accept'. 'Have to' seems to highlight the Underwoods' total surrender, heart and soul, to an exterior Object of desire, presenting the obligation as if it were not 'voluntarily' accepted by the Subject.

Claire Underwood has developed around herself a suit of armour that keeps her from feeling hurtful emotions. This has given her a ruthlessness that shows in her rarely smiling face and is accentuated by the mostly uniform black-and-white clothes she wears. Her emotional sacrifices have also a physical counterpart in the new traditional minimalist aesthetics

of the Underwoods' dimly lit townhouse that expresses no colourful warmth. As said earlier, apart from being a potential Recipient of the quest, Claire is also a powerful Helper since she is often the one who 'acts in the direction of the desire or in facilitating communication' (Greimas, 1986: 178, my translation). She is the one who made Frank's political career possible in the first place; her father's wealth provided money for his first political campaigns. In the third season, the couple starts breaking up when Claire realizes that the contract she has established with her husband does not offer her a just return on investment as Recipient — there is indeed a seat for one person only in the Oval Office. The actant role of Subject cannot be shared.

From a Narrative Framework to a Model of Pragmatic Interaction

As different actants (Subject, Helper, Opponent, Addresser) can take the place of the addresser–manipulator in the tale of *House of Cards*, Greimas's three axes (communication, desire and power) could be merged into one horizontal line of communication. Indeed, the power relations are established pragmatically between actants, depending on their own personal desire as regards the coveted Object (political power). Figs. 2.1–2.3 could thus be simplified into one pragmatic structure that would better highlight the permanent interactive exchanges of places in dialogues. I find here my inspiration in the pragmatic model proposed by Lecercle in *Interpretation as Pragmatics*. Here is the ALTER structure the author puts forward: $[A] \leftarrow [L] \rightarrow [T] \leftarrow [E] \rightarrow [R]$ (Lecercle, 1999: 75). It brings to the fore the centrality of discourse (the Text [T] can be either written or oral in Lecercle's conception). It shows how the Text is itself informed by a specific language (L) and a specific E actant, standing for Encyclopaedia, a term the author borrows from Umberto Eco (1984) and that corresponds to Jakobson's context (1960), which inscribes the structure in a specific location and temporal frame. The Text pragmalinguistically captures the Recipient/Reader (R) at a place. Likewise, the Addresser/Author who speaks or writes a Text does not do so from anywhere or at any time. Her utterance testifies to her being allotted a certain

position, which is imposed by the L and E actants but also by the image she projects of who her Recipient is. In this sense, A is also an effect of the structure.

This interactional structure entails a dialogic negotiation between places. Based on Althusser's notion of 'interpellation' and the work of Grize (1990, 1996), Lecercle's model shows how the Text, through the game on E and L, interpellates A and R into subjects. Ideology is thus not absent from the ALTER structure, quite the opposite, it is 'what circulates in the structure, not as a neutral message but as the imposition of a force' (Lecercle, 1999: 199). Lecercle adds to Althusser's chain of interpellation the 'speech acts' element that he finds missing in Althusser's definition of ideology because, for Lecercle, ideology is linguistic[7]: 'the main function of the *L* actant is to interpellate individuals into subjects—a pragmatic version of Althusser' (Lecercle, 1999: 154). Ideology is linguistically carried: 'Since all this occurs in language (the illocutionary is dependent on, and co-occurent with the locutionary) and *through* language (language it is that exerts such performative action and produces such perlocutionary effect) […] I am suggesting that it *is* language, another name for the L actant' (Lecercle, 1999: 200).

Francis thinks he can entirely master language and use its pragmatic force in such a way that cannot be resisted by the actants he seeks to control. He is keen on removing any counterforces that could prevent him from getting to his Object. But people are not objects that can always easily be managed. Some Opponents or even initial Helpers sometimes prove to be resisting forces. In Lecercle's term, 'counter-interpellation' is possible when an actant refuses the place allotted to her by the Text. The arrows of interpellation are indeed reversible[8]: [L] → [T] ← [E] ⇄ [R]. Manipulation as practised by Francis Underwood sometimes misfires and

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[7] This conviction is shared by many proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough (1989: 36), for instance, sees political discourse as mediated by ideological institutions that assign people various 'positions of power and knowledge'—'discourse is dialogical, produced by and producing the social relations of addressors and addressees.'

[8] 'The interpellated reader, although subjected as much as subjectified, is not powerless. She sends back the force of interpellation as Perseus's shield, held as a mirror, sent back the Gorgon's gaze and petrified her' (Lecercle, 1999: 116).

the interpellated actant manages to thwart the pragmatic game played by the addresser (see Chap. 5).

When linguistic force proves ineffective to manipulate the others to act in the right direction, the protagonist does not hesitate to resort to physical force by killing or having Opponents killed. The use of literal force is bound to question the main protagonist's denomination as 'hero'. In the fairy tales of old, the 'dispatcher' (god, king, father) and the 'hero' have values that could be shared collectively in the cultural tradition of the time. In the American postmodern tale, Frank's amoral acts can hardly be collectively approved by all viewers—Chap. 6 will more precisely deal with the recipients' possible reaction to Underwood's unethical practice and the manipulative interpellation they are subjected to through the protagonist's asides. The 'anti-hero' of the modern times could fall into Propp's dramatis personae of the 'false hero' as Francis usurps traditional ethical values, exploiting them to his own benefit. The American dream he embodies is achieved through lies, deceit and murder. At the end of the third season, the modern tale leaves the question of the ultimate sanction open—will his power and legitimacy be questioned in the end?

In the world of politics, the image Frank projects of himself through his Text varies according to the image he thinks his interlocutor has of him. It is here that the rhetorical notion of 'ethos', that is to say, the image the author constructs of himself through his discourse, which is supposed to guarantee his credibility and inspire trust (Chiron, 2007: 72), crosses Goffman (1959)'s notion of 'presentation of self', which inscribes ethos within social interactions. For the American sociologist, somebody's identity is not registered in pre-existing data, it is co-constructed during an interaction (Chap. 4 will come back to Goffman's essential notion of face-work and its closeness to identity). As Amossy (2010) makes clear in her analysis, which brings up to date the ancient notion of ethos by making it part and parcel of the process of identity construction in all interactions, what the self is does not lie in:

> the way [the speaker] perceives herself (her personal identity) or the way society categorizes her (her social identity) but the image she projects in a precise situation, be it a spontaneous or concerted projection. Constructing such images is certainly not impervious to how the subject perceives herself

or the way she is categorized, but it is inherently changeable and multiple, forming a kaleidoscope that presents all identities as plural and constantly negotiable. (Amossy, 2010: 27, my translation)

Frank's 'presentation of self' in interactions depends on who his interlocutors are and the amount of power they are endowed with. For him, the self has an existence only in its relation to the other. In an aside to the reader, at Zoe's place, Francis shows that what one *is* depends on what one decides to show and to whom:

> There's a value in having secrets. Creatures like myself, like Claire, like Zoe, we wouldn't be ourselves without them. /.../ After all, *we are* nothing more or less than what we choose to reveal. What I am to Claire is not what I am to Zoe, just as Zoe is not to me what she is to her father. (1.7, my emphasis)

His perception of identity as inherently interpersonal echoes contemporary social and psychological definitions that construe identity as 'relational' (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006; Goffman, 1967; Olgivie & Ashmore, 1991; Simon, 2004; Spencer-Oatey, 2011; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998, among others). Olgivie & Ashmore (1991: 290), for instance, see the self as a 'mental representation that includes the set of personal qualities (traits, feelings and the like) that an individual believes characterizes his or her self when with a particular other person'. The self Francis discloses to the audience, either explicitly (through asides) or implicitly (requiring inferences from the viewers),[9] is different from what he shows to other inside participants—for instance, the viewer has access to the protagonist's private self that he is keen on concealing from the public eye, especially what revolves around the suggested topic of his homosexuality (see Chap. 5).

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[9] I'm here referring to the distinction put forward by Culpeper in *Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts* (2001). The author distinguishes between '*explicit* characterisation cues, where we find characters explicitly presenting themselves or others—that is, making character statements about themselves or others' and '*implicit* characterisation cues, where we have to infer (via causal schemas, for example) character information from linguistic behaviour' (Culpeper, 2001: 164).

This conception of identity as co-constructed in interaction does not preclude linguistic games. The anti-hero can indeed purposefully use linguistic formulations that do not suit the political ethos he tries to build up. In episode 3.28, for instance, faced with democratic Opponents refusing to endorse him for a potential re-election in 2016,[10] he accuses them of being too tentative in their vision for the future (Bob Birch in particular thinks that Frank's economic program will be thrown out by the Republicans in the House). In the following sequence, the markedly emphasized colloquial 'fucking' punctuates a series of questions uttered in a raised voice. This fall in register is designed to perform the emotion of 'anger' with the perlocutionary purpose of surprising the participants, jarring as it is with the language one commonly associates with a President of the United States:

Francis: Then let's not pretend to unite the party, let's unite the party behind this legislation.

Bob (Democratic minority leader of the House of Representatives):
             We'll never get it past the Republicans.

Francis: We are not here to negotiate! You want forward-thinking, Bob? Then think forward. You want a fresh face for 2016? You wanna work together? Then present my program to Congress. And if it dies there, so be it. But I want us to FUCKING try! ↓I am prepared to vacate this chair. Meet me halfway. (3.28)

The surprise can be seen on Bob's face as the force of the interpellation physically pushes him further back in his seat, leaving him speechless.

The image Francis projects of himself is constrained by the social rules of interaction (the context of the exchange and the identity of the interlocutors) and, as mentioned earlier, it is informed by ideological values that circulate through the L actant, but Francis has more than one pragma-linguistic trick up his sleeve. He knows how to subtly play with the rules and 'stylize' different selves. There is indeed room for constant renegotiation of his 'relational self' through what Coupland calls 'stylisation'. In *Style. Language Variation and Identity* (2007), the author shows

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[10] After President Garret A. Walker's resignation at the end of the second season, Vice President Underwood becomes president pro tempore. In the third season he seeks to be *elected* President.

that Labov's sociolinguistic correlations has played down the power of the individual to style-shift across diverse social situations or with different recipients. Finding fault with audience design and accommodation theory (Bell, 1984, 2001; Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975) that had the enormous advantage of highlighting 'the malleability of sociolinguistic identity' but put too much stress on 'recipiency' leaving aside the essential notion of 'self-identity', Coupland's concept of 'style' allows to treat both audience design and the question of identity together (Coupland, 2007: 80). Francis Underwood has a 'metalinguistic awareness' of the power of 'stylistic variability', with an eye on the effect he wishes to create and, simultaneously, on the image of himself he wants to produce. This is what Coupland calls 'enacting' or 'performing' identities:

> But once we recognise speakers' agentive role in constructing meanings in how they contextualise variation, and when we also recognise that speaking involves a degree of metalinguistic awareness […], it seems right to talk of speakers *performing* speech. What we are generally implying is that speakers design their talk in the awareness—at some level of consciousness and with some level of autonomous control—of alternative possibilities and of likely outcomes. Speakers perform identities, targeted at themselves or others, when they have some awareness of how the relevant *personas* constructed are likely to be perceived through their designs. (Coupland, 2007: 146)

The idea that linguistic resources can be more or less consciously exploited to perform *personas* makes 'counter-interpellation' possible. In Lecercle's terms, the force of linguistic interpellation can be countered by the Addresser and Addressee/Recipient alike. Hence Lecercle's final structure, with the two-way arrows on either sides (see Fig. 2.4).

The pragma-stylistic perspective adopted in this book aims at showing the way the protagonist stages his and others' identities by putting to work diverse pragmatic and stylistic resources. *House of Cards* is an
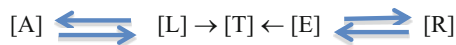
$$[A] \rightleftarrows \quad [L] \rightarrow [T] \leftarrow [E] \rightleftarrows \quad [R]$$

Fig. 2.4 Lecercle (1999)'s ALTER structure

illustration of how politicians constantly negotiate their image depending on the 'self' they want to enhance in interactions and what they think others expect (or do not expect). Before moving on to the exploration of Frank's speech performances in the next chapters, the following section of this chapter will more thoroughly explore to what extent the anti-hero's linguistic choices are constrained by the social and ideological structure he is rooted in and by the role he wants to play in it. The stylistic characteristics of his utterances, especially in his asides to the viewer, indeed bring to light how he structures the world.

The (Anti-)Hero's 'Expressive Identity'

Frank Underwood both speaks language and is spoken by a language that interpellates him at a certain ideological place. This section explores his 'verbal identity' through a cognitive analysis of the metaphors he uses. Based on natural ways of embodying experience, the metaphors also betray his ideological leanings. This aspect is part of what Bednarek calls a character's 'expressive identity':

> I use the term *expressive character identity* to refer to a kind of scripted identity that is related to the emotionality and the attitudes/values/ideologies of characters in fictional television genres. I call this type of identity 'expressive' (rather than calling it 'affective' or 'evaluative' identity) to capture the fact that it concerns various kinds of expressive aspects, including emotions, values and ideologies. In other words, expressive identity can be used as a cover term to include 'emotional identity', 'attitudinal identity', 'ideological identity' etc. (Bednarek, 2012: 118)

Power Relations in the Chain of Being

In the ruthless world of politics, exchanges are underpinned by struggle and competition. This is at least how Francis perceives interactions with his fellow community members. Arguing with a Helper or an Opponent is to fight for one's 'position', the point being to win ground by making the

other surrender some of hers. In cognitive terms, Frank's language can be said to be underlain by a structural metaphor of the type (RATIONAL) ARGUMENT IS WAR, as analysed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their well-known work on cognitive metaphors, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). This metaphor consists in structuring CONVERSATION by means of 'selected elements of the gestalt of WAR'. Francis, indeed, very often maps his relations with other actants in terms of military tactics on the exchequer of power. Verbal battles are metaphorically construed as physical fights. For Lakoff and Johnson, this metaphorical grounding has to do with the origin of the metaphor:

> In fights between two brute animals, scientists have observed the practices of issuing challenges for the sake of intimidation, of establishing and defending territory, attacking, defending, counterattacking, retreating, and surrendering. Human fighting involves the same practices.
>
> Part of being a rational animal, however, involves getting what you want without subjecting yourself to the dangers of actual physical world. As a result, we humans have evolved the social institution of verbal argument. We have arguments all the time in order to get what we want, and sometimes these 'degenerate' into physical violence. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 62)

In the protagonist's language, verbal arguments—used by humans in lieu of brute confrontation—still retain the warring instinct of original combats. Having Peter Russo believe he is apt to run for governor of Pennsylvania, Francis sets up a ferocious campaign team designed to transform the man he 'owns' into a winning fighter with 'an army': 'you start me off with funding from the DNC[11] and I'll raise an army around this guy' (1.6). Considering his past alcohol addiction and occasional use of drugs, Peter must prepare himself to counter-attack his voracious Republican Opponent's arguments if he does not want to be killed in action, as Francis warns him: 'We have to take this head-on, or the GOP will *crucify* you. We have to steal *ammunition* from them. Honesty is your best *defense* and *offense*' (1.7, my emphasis). In fact, Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor is refined by the protagonist through a slight semantic shift

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[11] The DNC is the Democratic National Committee.

whereby ARGUMENT IS KILLING. In episode 1.6, for instance, certain of the power of his verbal arguments to destroy his Opponents, Francis invites Claire to watch him give the last knock to one of them, Marty Spinella, a lobbyist for the teachers' union, in a television debate (where Frank will end up being humiliated): 'Watch me put the final nail in Spinella's coffin. It'll be fun' (1.6).

In Frank's conception, to give up on a plan is to lose ground, which may prove fatal in the battle he is leading. Discussing with Linda Vasquez the option of dropping the Education Bill that has angered the unions and sent teachers on strike, he uses spatial military metaphors to support his arguments:

Francis:	I admit, Linda. This got away from me. But we can't turn back time. We have to *hold our ground*. /…/ We took that stand. We let down now, we lose it all. There'll be no reform, just an empty bill.
Linda:	I understand the logic, Frank, but we're in damage control now. /…/
Francis:	*We've already crossed the Rubicon.* (1.6, my emphasis)

More generally, verbal and physical violence are two sides of the same coin. If the one fails in bringing about results, the other is never too far as an ultimate backup. The protagonist seems to have learnt doing his basic (military and political) training in his hometown: 'In Gaffney, we had our own brand of diplomacy: shake with your right hand, but hold a rock in your left' (2.18). In the jungle of Congress, metaphorical blows are dealt on all sides. At the end of the second season, Francis's moves have taken him on a haphazard path and the outcome of his war against his Opponents is uncertain: 'If a bullet comes my way tomorrow, it will not be an accident and I must be quick to duck' (2.18). As any military tactician knows, losing one battle though is not the same as surrendering: 'the first drops of blood have been spilt. The bullet has grazed my cheek but I haven't fallen' (same episode). Any move in the linguistic war must be carefully assessed as the linguistic force it conveys can have a detrimental boomerang effect: 'If we launch that missile, it could blow us up too' (2.23).

These metaphors reveal that, for Francis, life is a struggle where only the fittest can survive. The Darwinian values emerge through another

structural metaphor that informs his language, that is, the PEOPLE ARE FOOD metaphor. The character conceives humanity as evolving along a food chain where small preys are eaten by bigger predators. The higher up you are in the old metaphor of the Great Chain of Beings, the more likely you are to survive. If the power of Frank's target is bigger, the eating must be done step by step, as he tells Doug: 'That's how you devour a whale, Doug. One bite at a time' (1.1). Frank's victims are ruthlessly cleared from the table. Having got rid of the Secretary of State (Michael Kern) in order to replace him with somebody he can 'control' (Catherine Durant), he reflects on Kern's fall in the food chain: 'I haven't eaten since yesterday. I almost pity him. He didn't choose to be put on my platter. When I carve him up and toss him to the dogs, only then will he confront that brutal, inescapable truth "my God all I ever amounted to was chitlins"' (1.1). But in Francis's 'mindstyle',[12] the food chain is not determined by a divinely planned hierarchical order, it is a power chain that owes a lot to the agent's voracious willingness to swallow instead of being swallowed. The ratio of power is predicated on a simple rule: either you place yourself in the position of the hunter or you are sure to be devoured. 'When you're fresh meat, kill and throw them something fresher' (2.24). Season 2 starts with a reminder of Francis's binary categorization of the world:

> Francis: For those of us climbing to the top of the food chain, there can be no mercy. There is but one rule: hunt or be hunted. Welcome back. (2.14)

The polarization is based on a transitivity model that divides human beings between those who act/eat and those who are acted upon/eaten (the hunters versus the hunted). As seen in the previous section, people surrounding the Underwood couple are classified into two broad interchangeable categories (Helpers and Opponents), depending on whether

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[12] The stylistic notion of 'mindstyle' borrowed from Fowler (1977: 103) refers to 'any distinctive linguistic representation of an individual mental self'. The way a character linguistically constructs reality can betray underlying thought structures accounting for her moral values or prejudices, for instance. Although it concerns a character's *personal* mental perspective, the notion is not impervious to sets of values shared by a whole group. As Gregoriou (2014: 266) indicates, 'attitudes, beliefs, values and judgments' can be shared by similarly minded individuals and thus the notion of ideology is 'entangled' with that of mindstyle.

they help Francis in the hunt for power or take him as their target. Opponents have indeed the same appetite towards him, as he is fully aware: '[Spinella] wants to rip my head off and peel it like an orange' (1.5).

In the den of Congress, animal metaphors illustrate the Latin proverb *Homo homini lupus est*. Those who do not have the ability to be a wolf are condemned to sheep-like servility. Francis leaves Rasmussen, the Democrat majority leader, the possibility to enter the big court of wolves—before ruthlessly replacing him after observing his being too weak for a wolf role in his plan: 'David Rasmussen is the majority leader, which means he's one step above me and one below Birch,[13] which is akin to being between a hungry wolf and a very quarrelsome sheep. Let's see if he stays with the herd or joins the pack' (1.4). Letting some power-hungry men fight in the arena is the best way to know who is the fittest. Pretending to get some drinks, Francis purposefully leaves the two rivals he has adopted, Doug, the faithful lieutenant, and Seth, the newly arrived wolf ready to do anything to be accepted in the Underwood family. The confrontation is meant to turn the competitors into better Helpers to his cause or into Opponents/orphans to be expelled from the Underwoods' bosom, as Frank tells the viewer: 'a little sibling rivalry isn't such a bad thing, especially between adopted boys. They either push each other to be the best versions of themselves, or one of them gets booted back to the orphanage' (2.22). Genuine Helpers, like Doug, must give themselves up, heart and soul, to the Underwoods' vision. If they want to keep this actant position in Francis's scheme, they must indeed render themselves wholly submissive.

Spatiotemporal Metaphors

In addition to underlying structural metaphors, Frank Underwood's language also relies on what Lakoff and Johnson call 'orientational metaphors', the difference between the two types of cognitive metaphors being that 'orientational metaphors' do not 'structure one concept in terms of

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[13] Bob Birch is Speaker of the House in the Democratic controlled House of Representatives in the first season.

another' but 'instead organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 14). The food chain metaphor draws from an orientational metaphor that has to do with the spatial pair 'UP-DOWN'. In humans' physical representations of strength and power, 'physical size typically correlates with physical strength', hence the metaphors 'HAVING CONTROL or FORCE IS UP; BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL or FORCE IS DOWN' (Lakoff and Johnson: 15). Francis's discourse is deeply informed by this natural way of making sense of the world, to such a point that even the physical position of sleep, that is to say lying DOWN, is for him a sign of powerlessness. Commenting on the exhaustion of the president lying down for a while in order to catch up on sleepless nights, he reveals his hatred for the physical position and the diminution of power it implies: 'I've always loathed the necessity of sleep. Like death, it puts the most powerful men on their backs' (2.23). Combined with the metaphor of the LIFE JOURNEY as a PATH, the Underwoods' quest for power is represented as an upward movement in keeping with the metaphor HIGH STATUS IS UP, LOW STATUS IS DOWN (Lakoff and Johnson: 16). On this journey to the top, the higher up, the more difficult the fight, as Francis entrusts to the viewer: 'There can be no false steps now. The higher up the mountain, the more treacherous the path' (2.16).

The ascension to power is also expressed through the image of the frame, itself based on two orientational pairs: IN-OUT and CENTRAL-PERIPHERAL. Power is construed as the centre. Getting power is to move from the periphery to the focal point of the frame. Sitting behind President Walker during his first State of the Union address, Francis reminds the viewers of his getting near the line of force that leads to the president at the centre:

> Francis (turning to the camera on his right side): As for me, I used to be on the edge of the frame. Now (looking at the media camera filming the president's speech for TV) I'm only three feet away. (2.16)

Acquiring visibility inside the frame of media cameras is a sign of one's proximity to power. In some meta-reflexive manner, the protagonist recurrently shows the viewer his progress on his path from the outside to

the inside of the media field of vision. This conception of power in terms of space is at the heart of his conception of politics: he compares the acquisition of power to the acquisition of real estate. While the president-elect is taking oath of office in the first season, Francis comments on the scene, waving at the camera: 'Power is a lot like real estate. It's all about location, location, location. The closer you are to the source, the higher your property value. Centuries from now, when people watch this footage, who will they see smiling just at the edge of the frame?' (1.1). Space takes on value when you get closer to the power centre. At the end of the second season, Francis is drawing closer to his goal. Physical proximity is now expressed in terms of time and rhythm: 'one heartbeat away from the presidency' (2.15).

The upward movement of the Underwoods' quest is also a movement forward as the characters construe life in terms of space along a linear line oriented to the future. As Goatly (2007) demonstrates in *Washing the Brain: Metaphor and Hidden Ideology*, this conception of TIME ELAPSING as TRAVEL is not grounded in humans' physical experience, as are most of the conventional metaphors put forward by Lakoff and Johnson, but in their cultural and religious history: Judaism and later Islam and Christianity indeed 'introduced the idea of time's linearity—a beginning, a culmination and an eschatological end' (Harvey, 1996: 214, in Goatly, 2007: 60–1). Goatly (2007) shows that cognitive metaphor theorists have focussed on cognition, underestimating the power of ideological and cultural values to imperceptibly suffuse people's brains (and thus their speeches). Bringing together cognitive linguistics and Critical Discourse/Metaphor Analysis, he is able to bring to the fore the paramount importance of metaphors in both reflecting and constructing social practices (Goatly, 2007: 2). These metaphors are so conventional that their utterers cannot perceive how deeply they are affected by them. If TIME IS MOVEMENT FORWARD (see Goatly: 61), and the Underwoods' TRAVEL IS A BATTLE (see earlier in this chapter), the new metaphor that could consistently integrate these two is TIME IS A MARCH FORWARD. As Francis exclaims in the first episode, there is no reversing the linear temporal and spatial progress of his quest: 'Forward, this is the battle cry'. Abandoned by Claire who has found refuge in her lover's arms, he refuses to put on hold the march forward: 'Rebellion on

all fronts, Claire, Zoe, Russo. I must not lose my resolve. I will march forward, even if I have to do so alone' (1.10).

That the use of particular metaphors reflect cultural constructs becomes clear when confronted with people perceiving time differently. The quarrel between Claire and her artist lover, Adam, brings out their different views of time and space. Whereas Claire's perspective is oriented towards a goal in the future, Adam's conception is not construed in such linear terms:

Adam:	I can't be /…/ a top-up in whatever Francis can't provide.
Claire:	Oh, fuck off! He's my husband, Adam. We've gone through more than you could ever imagine. I envy your free spirit, and I'm attracted to it, but not all of us have that luxury.
Adam:	Which is what I find so frustrating about you, Claire. No, you had a choice, you chose not to be free.
Claire:	No, what I chose was a man I could love for more than a week. (Pause: 7 s) I shouldn't have said that. I…
Adam:	At least you're being honest.
Claire:	I can't live moment to moment like you, Adam. I have a history with Francis, I have a future with him, and it's bigger than a moment. (1.11)

Claire and Francis's bargain is inscribed in time along a path that has defined their journey from the past to the future (*we have gone through…*, *I have a history*, *I have a future with him*). Their relationship is based on a whole narrative blueprint that involves a beginning and an end (*it's bigger than a moment*). For Adam, Claire's perception of time has alienated her, making her prisoner of her own self.

Set upon one unique Object of desire, the Underwoods plan and prepare every coup carefully, patiently waiting for the right moment to act. Francis compares his fight to a sport game like boxing where what matters is the right hit at the right moment: 'Any pugilist worth his salt knows when someone's on the ropes, that's when you throw a combination to the gut and a left hook to the jaw' (2.19). LIFE is also construed as a GAMBLING GAME by the protagonist as he sometimes has to read into cards to know where to stand and act accordingly: 'She holds

her cards very close to her chest' (1.11), 'I know it's pointless to worry until I know what cards I'm holding' (1.12). Life may require gambling as a last resort: 'I must gamble everything I have right now' (1.11). The metaphors of gambling and fighting can also be interlaced: 'If he doesn't deliver, I'm an invader without an army. If he does, I've got a fighting chance' (1.13). The correlation between the two metaphors is expressed by the word 'game', which signifies both playing and being a target. The outcome of his plan depends on parameters that Francis cannot always entirely control: 'It's not beginning the story that I fear, it's not knowing how it will end. Everyone is fair *game* now, including me' (2.23, my emphasis). The title of the series 'house of cards' epitomises the duality between a tricky construction that implies patience and the element of luck that is involved in all games.

For both Claire and Francis, the future determines their acting in the present. Today's setbacks need to be quickly forgotten in view of tomorrow's goal, as the Helper, Claire, keeps reminding Francis when obstacles impede their progress: 'Put this behind you and think about what's next' (3.30). If TIME IS A MOVEMENT FORWARD for them, TIME needs to be equated with SUCCESS. As Goatly (2007: 61) exemplifies, through a metaphorical slippage the movement of 'time forward becomes associated with progress', which has given rise to a subcategory of metaphors like DEVELOPMENT/SUCCESS IS MOVEMENT FORWARD. As time goes by, the more power Francis is intent on acquiring. The TIME IS POWER metaphor that informs his mental representation is to be contrasted with the well-known metaphor TIME IS MONEY that sustains the businessman Raymond Tusk's conception of time; his own movement forward consists in making more and more money. Francis has the strongest hatred for those like his former employee Remy Danton who have given in to the lure of money. As opposed to power, money does not leave any lasting mark in history:

> Such a waste of talent. He chose money over power. In this town, a mistake nearly everyone makes. Money is the McMansion in Sarasota that starts falling apart after ten years. Power is the old stone building that stands for centuries. I cannot respect someone who doesn't see the difference. (1.2)

Yet what Frank does not perceive is that if his and Tusk's Objects are different, the metaphorical structuring that underlies their quest is the same, that is, SUCCESS IS MOVEMENT FORWARD. Besides, his hatred of money contradicts his own comparison of politics to real estate (see earlier in this chapter) that is itself soaked in financial values if only metaphorically ('Power is a lot like real estate. It's all about location, location, location. The closer you are to the source, the higher your property value'). Real estate does wear off after a while, which is what Remy Danton realizes at the end of the second season. As Jacky Sharp (the new majority whip who succeeded Francis when he became vice president) tries to persuade Remy to stay and work with them in Congress, he answers that '[Francis] was half right. Power is better than money, for as long as it lasts. But it never lasts' (2.26).

However, Francis and Claire's time perception is informed by a bigger time scale, as it reaches beyond their own time on Earth. They, indeed, intend to make their mark in history. Frank's desire to have his new job programme (America Works) approved by the House is shaped by his wish to be remembered in the historical narrative of the USA. Discussing with the writer (Tom Yates) he has asked to write a promoting piece about this economic plan, the president projects himself in the future, with fake modesty: 'at best I will be a footnote in history if I help those people, at worst it'll be a joke. I am those people, I want you to write that story' (3.31). Frank's spatial and temporal conception is built on periods of time that have far more length. In the following quote, for instance, he asks Doug, his right-hand man, to change scales: 'No, it's more than that. Take a step back. Look at the bigger picture' (1.1). At the end of the third season, Claire starts to have doubts about the purpose of their quest and the sacrifice their Object entails: 'I'm starting to question all of it, what any of this is worth. What are we doing all this for?' (3.12). When she refuses to be present on the political campaign with Francis, he reminds her that she is threatening their whole life goal, condemning them to amount to nothing in the end: 'When we lose because of you, there will be nothing, no plan, no future. We will only be has-beens' (3.39). The fear of being insignificant triggers Frank's anger as Claire is questioning the entire narrative they have built their very self-worth on. The use of the nominalized present perfect 'has-been' that links the process to the

present situation contrasts with Francis's bigger time scale, which involves anchorage in the future historical past of a nation ('I will leave a legacy', 3.27). If Remy is right in saying that 'power never lasts', the fourth season will decide whether the (anti-)hero's life narrative will leave the fairy tale structure and adopt that of the tragedy.

Visual and Textual Grammar

The dispute with Claire at the end of the third season reveals the anti-hero's self-centred mindset; that Claire has been a mere Helper on his personal quest is reflected in the use Francis makes of the first personal pronoun. When Claire asks him for a position as ambassador in the UN, he answers that this will tarnish what he is trying to achieve:

> Claire: I'm almost 50 years old. I've been in the passenger seat for decades. It's time for me to get behind the wheel. That needs to start now, before the election. Because who knows what will happen. What if you lose?
>
> Francis: I will NOT be a placeholder president, Claire. I will win, and I will leave a legacy.
>
> Claire: You mean WE will. (3.27)

Frank's use of the first person singular (I) rather than the first person plural (we) makes Claire realize that she is merely a collateral Recipient of the quest in which her husband is the only Subject. The contract that has linked the couple is ruptured at the end of the third season when Claire becomes aware that it was predicated on a lie. Unwilling to comply any more, she is threatened into obedience by Francis who violently grasps her face in his hand: 'you will get to New Hampshire, you will smile and shake hands and kiss babies. And you will stand with me on a stage. And you will be the First Lady. And you do all that. I don't give a damn if you vomit on your own time' (3.39). The dynamic modality of volition that WILL usually embodies gives way here to deontic modality. Claire's future actions are predicted according to what her husband decides for her. As Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 194) specify, 'the deontic use of will is a matter of implicature: If I predict your agentive actions (or

someone else's) in a context where I have the authority to require them, I will be understood as tacitly invoking that authority. The evidence for the prediction is that I am telling you to do something and you are required to do as I say.' The threat implied by the modal, invoking Francis's authority, is the last straw that encourages her to leave him. Pretending to pray in church, the anti-hero's mindset has already been made clear to the viewers in the first season, as he confesses to them his religious belief in himself only: 'There is no solace above or below, only us, small, solitary, striving, battling one another. I pray to myself, for myself' (1.13).

Previously, in the first and second season, the couple was construed as an indestructible unit based on a harmonious sharing out of power between them. This can be grasped through some visual vectors that establish an equal relationship between the two schemers. In their visual grammar, Kress and van Leeuwen indeed show that vectors are imaginary lines that tend to be followed by the viewers when they look at an image. In the first screenshot in this chapter (Fig. 2.5), the couple is connected by the vector—a cigarette—which is exchanged between the two participants. This narrative pattern can be called 'transactional' as the action has an Actor (the one who is doing something) and a 'Goal' who is 'done to' or 'aimed at', which is, linguistically speaking, the equivalent of the transitive verb in language (the verb takes an object) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 64–6). In the dynamic scene that the static shot cannot render, the vector operates in a narrative transactional pattern that is 'bidirectional', as each participant plays 'now the role of Actor, now the role of Goal' (Kress & van Leeuwen: 66). Here lies a difference between textual and visual grammar. Where, in English grammar, Francis could only be encoded as the Beneficiary (Claire gives *him* the cigarette), in visual grammar, the image is based on a 'transitive' pattern, as Kress and van Leeuwen underline: 'while in English many processes can take a third participant, the 'Beneficiary' (traditionally 'indirect object' in, e.g., *Mary gave him the book*), in images the possibility of such a third participant does not exist. What is a Beneficiary in English becomes a Goal in images ('she message-sends him' instead of 'she sends him a message')' (Kress & van Leeuwen: 76). The medium shot of Fig. 2.5 pictures the two protagonists on either side of the window that serves as a frame. The power vector represented by the cigarette is here in Claire's hand.

Fig. 2.5 A bidirectional narrative transactional pattern (*House of Cards*, 1.13)

In the last episode of the third season, Claire is looking for a cigarette in the Oval Office. As a sign of the impending separation between the two actants, Claire does not share the cigarette with Francis. This non-transactional pattern wherein Francis is no longer the goal of Claire's action is indeed a visual illustration of the ruptured contract. The viewer's eye is not led from wife to husband and back through the vector; the intransitivity of the process ('smoking') visually highlights the fracture of the bidirectional relation.

Basing their visual analyses on Halliday's approach to language, Kress and van Leeuwen match the Australian linguist's 'interpersonal metafunction'[14] with the relation of the viewer towards what is shown—a positioning of the viewer that involves the angle of interaction on the vertical line (angle of view from below, eye-level or from above) and on the horizontal line (frontal, oblique or from-behind-a-character angle). The shot in Fig. 2.6 shows Claire looking at Francis who is sitting exactly where the camera is, across the table from her. The viewer looks at Claire through Francis/the camera's eyes, which is the visual equivalent of a first-person point of view in narrative. In Kress and van Leeuwen's terms, the vector

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[14] In grammar, the interpersonal metafunction is concerned with language as 'enacting our personal and social relationships with the other people around us'. It deals with language as 'action' (informing, questioning, giving orders, making offers or expressing one's appraisal of the other), hence the interactive nature of the interpersonal metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 29).

is formed by the direction of Claire's look in what they call a 'reactional' process (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 67). She embodies here the Reactor (rather than the Actor) as she reacts to Francis, raising her glass with a facial expression of satisfaction. As she is looking at another participant, called the Phenomenon (that the viewer knows to be Francis), this visual narrative process is also 'transactional'. In terms of relations of power, Claire is at eye level, that is 'the point of view is one of equality and there is no power difference involved' (Kress & van Leeuwen: 140). This I/you reciprocal relationship in the interactional dyad visually places the couple on equal terms in the pursuit of their common goal. Compared with the first screenshot (Fig. 2.5) where the direction of the gaze goes from one Actor to the Goal and vice versa, the intimacy represented by the frontal shot in Fig. 2.6 is also 'forced' onto the viewers who are, albeit indirectly, 'looked at' since they are made to occupy Francis's position here.

In the third season, Claire's slow realisation of her inferior status in the couple is in part brought about by a change in perspective. As mentioned previously, the writer Tom Yates has been commissioned by the president to write a non-fictional book on the philosophy at the heart of the president's political programme 'America Works'. Yates eventually ends up writing about Francis Underwood's success from poverty to pres-
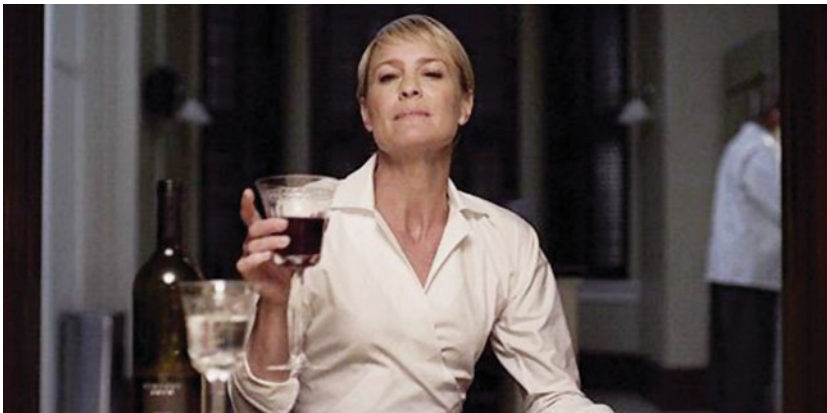

Fig. 2.6 A transactional reactional process (*House of Cards*, 2.16)

idency. He is more and more interested in the role played by Claire in her husband's life narrative. One line of the book reads: 'But truly, what more could she desire? Together, they rule an empire without heirs. Legacy is their only child' (3.38). As Claire would not reveal anything about herself, he speculates on the kind of couple they form. In the extract below, Claire is quoting from the book asking Francis about his own take on the writer's lines:

> Claire: Do you think he was right?
> Francis: About what?
> Claire: 'A cold fusion of two universal elements, identical in weight, equal in force. United they stand. A union like none other. The unsplittable atom of American politics.' (3.38)

As Francis agrees, the camera shows Claire silently staring into space. The novelist's third-person narrative makes Claire look at herself and her place in her union to her husband in a new light. It plants seeds of doubt in the strong belief she had placed in him. Equality was only a sham, all actions having been meant to make him look big, as she declares in the last episode: 'Look at us. We used to make each other stronger, at least I thought so but that was a lie. We were making you stronger.' The asymmetry between the plural pronoun 'we' and the singular pronoun 'you' ('we were making you stronger') reflects the power inequality between the unique object of the grammatical process ('you') and the two Helpers ('we'), narratologically speaking.

   In the third season, the camera eye leaves Frank's perspective to focus more and more on Claire's. In episode 3.38, she opens his campaign in Iowa before leaving him centre of stage, but instead of shooting Francis delivering his speech, the film camera follows Claire, expelling him from its field of vision. The candidate's speech can be heard as background sounds while the camera concentrates on Claire's disheartened face. The film camera leaves the media coverage of a campaigner to align with the female character's qualms, which tends to create some new intimacy with her. This has incidence on the relationship of the viewers with the anti-hero. As Chap. 6 will more thoroughly analyse, the visual and grammatical interpellation of the viewers through the asides and the use of the

second-person pronoun 'you' partakes of Frank's manipulative game to win them over to his cause. At the end of the third season, as he ceases to be the sole focalizer, the interpersonal positioning between protagonist and audience will need to be reassessed.

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3

Concealing, Distorting and Creating Reality

A Postmodern Political Series: The Era of (Meta)Communication

Creating News: Media and Politics

In opening the door to backstage politics, *House of Cards* reveals what is usually concealed from public view or only partially reflected through the media that try to get a glimpse of it. As alluded to in the first chapter, contrary to *The West Wing* series, which restores some prestige to politics by showing witty speech writers intent on avoiding deceit and manipulation as much as possible (see Richardson, 2006), in *House of Cards*, Frank Underwood epitomizes the cynical politician who does not hesitate to distort reality and deceive public opinion if it can help his political career. What the series aptly shows is the co-dependency between politics and the media, the one vitally needing the other and vice versa. As Wodak (2011: 19) describes in *The Discourse of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual*, if the media is 'heteroglossic' as it represents the voices of diverse groups and lobbies, it primarily depends on news it can grasp from politicians and the latter depend on the media to be seen and heard:

> To put it simply: journalists (*journalistic* field) want a 'good story', a story which attracts many readers due to the respective readership which the newspaper or broadcast or TV report is directed at (the criterion of *news-worthiness* plays a big role here). Politicians (*political* field) depend on reporting in the media—otherwise their political programmes would not be disseminated—and the media depend on the politicians for information/news stories.

Frank's relationship with the journalist Zoe Barnes is a good illustration of this co-dependency. Zoe is ready to do anything to get some breaking news that could boost her journalistic career, and Francis needs direct media access to launch true or false information that will further his personal goals. Their collaboration can go as far as 'creating' news—that is, disseminating false information with the hope that diffusion will make it true. The whip can let rumours gain ground until they are transformed into real news. In the first season for instance, he wants to push Catherine Durant as the new Secretary of State after Kern's withdrawal. His intention is to make believe that she is the president's choice. In the following extract, Francis advises Zoe against missing her chance of bringing news into being:

Frank:	Kern's out.
Zoe:	They're tossing him?
Frank:	Technically he withdrew himself, but yes.
Zoe:	Can I say 'a source close to the White House'?
Frank:	No, you let this story play out on its own time. They'll announce it in the morning.
Zoe:	I'm sorry. If not that, what story are we talking about?
Frank:	Catherine Durant. As soon as Kern withdraws, you say she'll be the replacement.
Zoe:	Is that true?
Frank:	It will be after you write it.
Zoe:	(pause: 1 s) Roy Kapeniak was you.
Frank:	You might very well think that, I couldn't possibly comment.
Zoe:	You found him. You had him [call me…
Frank:	Kapeniak and] Kern were appetizers, Miss Barnes. Catherine Durant is the meal. Say that name (.) Catherine Durant. Say it

over and over. Tomorrow afternoon, write it down, and then watch that name come out of the mouth of the President of the United States. THIS is where we get to create. (Metro approaching.) Don't miss your train, Miss Barnes. It's the last one tonight. (1.2)

Francis discredited Michael Kern by having a college mate of Kern's (Roy Kapeniak) reveal a compromising element on him, which forced the Secretary of State to resign. In response to Zoe's statement ('Roy Kapeniak was you'), Frank takes up Francis Urquhart's line for the second and last time of the three seasons, opting out of any possible implication of his in the distortion of facts: 'you might very well think that, I couldn't possibly comment' (see Chap. 1). Frank's cue ('it will be after you write it') highlights the performative force of language to conjure up reality. Through the media channel Zoe stands for, Frank becomes an Adam-like figure creating things by naming them. Once the rumour is spread and repeated over, there is no turning back. Indeed, after Zoe's writing, every television news broadcast takes up the piece of news, transforming a name into a potential candidate. From written to oral words (in the president's mouth), reality is carved out.

To convince Zoe to take the train, literally (they are at the metro station) and metaphorically speaking (the news train), he uses the food image that he correlates with time. What he implies here is that the same dish does not pass twice and that it will be savoured by less hesitant journalists. If Zoe takes time pondering over the appetizers, she might end up missing the main dish as others will lay hands on it. What Frank plays on here is the 'dictatorship of urgency' (Daniel, 2014: 367, my translation) that characterizes today's media. In this postmodern era, news circulates faster than ever. The advent of rolling 24-hour news demands a constant renewal of sources and refreshing of information. Zoe knows that if she wants to break through as a journalist, she must air news nobody has yet got hold of. Francis can thus manipulate her by playing on the reactivity that is required in the age of the instantaneous and forever changing news. The rapid change that the media world has undergone in the past decades can be measured if one reads the original novel (*House of Cards*)

written by Michael Dobbs in 1989. The greedy owner of numerous newspapers, Benjamin Landless, foresees a future where the printed press will have to compete with instant dematerialized information supplied on a day-and-night basis. He urges his teams to adjust to these budding new demands if they hope to survive:

> In ten years' time more and more people will be demanding information twenty-four hours a day, from all parts of the world. Fewer and fewer of them will be getting that information from newspapers which arrive hours after the news has occurred and which covers them in filthy printing ink. If we are to survive in business we must no longer think of ourselves as parochial newspaper men, but as suppliers of information on a worldwide basis. (Dobbs, 1989: 270)

Technology has facilitated access to news. Exploiting the individualized newsfeed to portable devices that inform people the second the news has been posted, Francis directly feeds news at the precise moment he wants it to be known. As Daniel (2014: 74) shows in a French context, there was a time when presidents/politicians were imposing their tempo to the press, the situation is now reversed; the overwhelming presence of the media requires that politicians adapt their speeches to the new communicative outlets. In *House of Cards*, rather than enduring the infernal media rhythm, Francis imposes his cadence by supplying it with his own created news. In a media age that requires brevity and simplified thought, he knows how to contract the news he dictates to Zoe to have it fit the 140-character Tweet, for instance (episode 1.6). In Congress as well as in the Underwoods' home, news channels are constantly on. These screens supplying the news that the characters are themselves making/creating bring to the fore the co-dependency between politics and the media. Not only are TV screens inside the viewer's screen supplying rolling news, but tweets or short text messages from mobile phones are also displayed directly on the viewer's screen. In other words, the viewers' television or computer set serves as a screen on which they can read messages at the very moment the characters read them on their own screens, reflecting the accelerated rhythm of news circulation.

If new media formats determine both the form and content of news, it has also challenged written press and other more classical sources of information. Zoe works for *The Washington Herald* whose executive editor, Tom Hammerschmidt, believes in solid, well-argued news as opposed to superficially treated pieces of news that are replaced with the speed of light. The newspaper facing a loss of readership, Tom ends up being fired by the editor and owner of the newspaper (Margaret Tilden) who approves of Zoe's audacity:

Tom: Now, I won't argue the business side of things. It's neither my place nor my area of expertise, but know this, Zoe Barnes, Twitter, blogs, enriched media, they're all surface. They're fads. They aren't what will keep it alive. We have a core readership that thirsts for hard news. Those are the people I work 80 hours a week for (.) and I won't be distracted by what's fashionable.

Margaret: (pause: 8 s) That's your resignation letter. Hand it to the lawyers on the way out. (1.5)

The verticality of news digging that Tom's traditional way of doing journalism represents contrasts with the horizontal dissemination of quick news that can reach more people. During a violent fight between Zoe and Tom where he gives vent to his disapproval of her method, the word 'cunt' escapes him. Zoe's answer underlines the instantaneous and far-reaching dissemination that new technology has brought about:

Zoe (after sending a message from her mobile phone): Call me whatever you want, but you should remember these days, when you're talking to one person, you're talking to a thousand. (1.4)

The postmodern political tale reflects the new conditions of enunciation that have challenged both traditional media and politicians' relation to it. Not only has Frank Underwood adapted to the new era of communication by contracting and selecting information for the media but he also exploits its very instantaneity and briefness to his own benefit.

Controlling Public Opinion

In his taxonomy of illocutionary acts, Searle (1979) uses the notion of 'direction of fit' in order to describe how words relate to the world. In the words-to-world direction, the point is for words to correspond accurately to the world whereas in the world-to-words direction of fit, the intention is to have the words bring about a change so that it is the world that fits the words: 'Some illocutions have as part of their illocutionary point to get the words (more strictly, their propositional content) to match the world, others to get the world to match the words. Assertions are in the former category, promises and requests are in the latter' (Searle, 1979: 3). In political communication, slogans are illocutionary acts that cause the hearer to think in a certain way. They belong to the latter category as they attempt to make the world fit the chosen words by directing public opinion down a particular conceptual path. Working with Doug on political communication, Francis needs a slogan that could put down Marty Spinella, the head of the teachers' union and leader of the teachers' strike against the education bill Francis is trying to push through. The strike has been going on for too long and the president wants it to end. A brick has been thrown through one of the Underwoods' home windows and that has been attributed to a teacher. Things are starting to get violent, and the whip wants to continue surfing on this insecurity wave to prove Spinella's incapacity to hold his troops. What they need is a catchy phrase that would be easily taken up by the media and would attract public attention:

> Doug: What about 'more school books, less bricks'.
> Frank: No, it's too broad. We need a better sound bite. Something (.) specific, something that points the finger directly at Spinella. /…/ We need something clear, something clean, something that sticks in your head.
> Doug: 'Teachers need a lesson in self-restraint.'
> Frank: No, you're not hearing me. People like teachers. No, we need something that makes Spinella the villain. His lack of control, his inability…

Claire   (on her way back inside after bringing them drinks):
          'Disorganized labour.'
          (Frank and Doug looking at each other with approval.) (1.6)

Frank needs a slogan that can put the blame on the teachers' union's head without antagonizing the teachers' body. Claire's addition of a negative prefix to the adjective in the set phrase 'organized labour' plays the trick. It is taken up by every Democrat on TV and ends up sticking in the head through repetition. Cognitively speaking, slogans benefit from what researchers have called the 'validity effect' according to which one is likely to confer more truth or validity to some piece of news one has already been exposed to before:

> The effect of repetition on enhancing the perceived validity of information has long been independently established by several researchers (e.g., Arkes, Hackett, & Boehm, 1989; Bacon, 1979; Begg, Armour, & Kerr, 1979; Gigerenzer, 1984; Gude & Zechmeister, 1975; Hasher, Goldstein, & Toppino, 1977; Schwartz, 1982). Taken together, these studies have all found that if information has been heard previously, people are likely to ascribe more truth or validity to it than if they are hearing it for the first time. (Renner, 2004: 201)

This 'cognitive illusion' is close to what is known as the 'mere exposure effect', which claims that familiarity comes with repetition: 'Without question, repeated exposure to a stimulus biases our attitude regarding that stimulus' (Bornstein & Craver-Lemley, 2004: 216). The repetition gives credibility to the slogan, making the world fit the words. Claire's easily memorisable phrase exploiting these cognitive effects indeed spreads like wild fire through cable TV. It is all the more effective as the expression echoes another set phrase structured along the same PAST PARTICIPLE + NOUN wording that the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus does not hesitate to evoke on TV: 'Whether Mr. Spinella is behind this or not, he might wanna tone down the rhetoric before disorganized labour turns into organized crime' (1.6). Through associative activation, Claire's negative expression is connected to the lexicalized phrase 'organized

crime'. The structural parallelism skilfully manages to associate Spinella's activity with criminality.

What is required from politicians and their communication advisers is to have a good command of the potential effects one particular linguistic choice may have on the audience. They, indeed, need to be experts at 'metacommunication', which means that they must learn to control how their own speech is likely to be interpreted by the audience/readers. As already alluded to in the previous chapter, in the first season, Peter Russo's candidacy for the position of governor in Pennsylvania is sullied by his past of drug-addiction, relations with whores and heavy drinking. Knowing how to turn a weakness into an asset when his interests are involved, Francis transforms Russo's errors into a positive scenario. Faced with the president and Linda Vasquez's doubts, he claims that Peter's personal story can make for a very good 'narrative':

President Walker:	What do you see in him?
Linda:	I was wondering the same thing. There's not (.) that much to see.
Frank:	What I see is a recovering alcoholic with a history of drug abuse.
Linda:	What?
Walker:	Excuse me, Frank?
Frank:	But he's clean now. Has been for a year. This is a redemption story, Mr. President. This is a bright young man who's put his life back on track. Now he wants to help us put Pennsylvania back on track.
Linda:	Drugs, Frank!
Frank:	People love an underdog, Linda, and people love someone who stands up after they've fallen. Combine the two, it's a very powerful narrative. All of our polling indicates this is gonna work.
Linda:	You want us to endorse someone with a history of substance abuse?
Frank:	Let us get his story out there and watch it connect with the voters. (1.7)

'Storytelling' (Salmon, 2010) is a powerful rhetorical device to convince an audience. Ronald Reagan seems to have been the president who made the most extensive use of it (see Wilson, 2015). In *Talking with the President: The Pragmatics of Presidential Language* (2015), Wilson demonstrates the power of narratives to organize events into intelligible units for the audience as they provide what Schank and Abelson (1977) call 'scripts' that 'the audience may use to infer specific forms of understandings' (Wilson, 2015: 182). The added value of 'narrative' as compared with mere 'description' is that it enables the audience to grasp an event into some comprehensible plot and sequencing that have some 'emotional' closure. Frank's *ad populum* argument[1] here ('people love an underdog') is based on the belief that people yearn for stories that end happily in spite of the multiple hardships the hero has had to go through. He bets on the fact that they will empathize with the hero's resilience and generously grant him (biblical) redemption. For Francis, public opinion must be metapragmatically guided into using the right script. This starts with the right choice of a slogan, which is what Russo's campaign staff is working on in the following extract:

Collaborator 1:	Our cross tabs show 81 % of likely voters are willing to consider a recovering alcoholic. Now, those numbers dip a little when you introduce cocaine, but not by much. /…/
Collaborator 2:	The narrative has to be redemption. A (.) phoenix from the ashes.
Francis:	Well, let's not focus on the ashes. We don't want people to think Peter was a disaster.
Collaborator 2:	No, no. We focus on the positive. A 'fresh start' and a 'clean start' both did well on focus groups.
Francis:	'Clean start' sounds too much like 'clean slate'. I like 'fresh start'.
Collaborator 3:	Yeah, I do too. (1.7)

[1] The *argumentum ad populum* consists in playing on 'emotion or prejudice to distract attention from the issue' (Cockcroft & Cockcroft, 2014: 172), often by appealing to the *vox populi* rather than developing a rational argumentation.

Opinion polls are useful guides for politicians since they may alert to the public's preferences. Peter's communication team is careful to avoid words that might lead to the wrong interpretation. Indeed, political communication needs to pay extra care to metalinguistic connotations (the term 'ashes' here foregrounds the idea of a fiasco to the detriment of the rising) and to their unlucky automatic associations with other words; 'clean' tends to collocate with 'clean slate', which goes against the script of the redemption story as it gives the impression that Peter got away with his past too easily. 'Fresh start' is a better choice for Francis as it emphasizes the idea of beginning anew while de-emphasizing the negativity of past errors.

Words chosen for campaigns are indeed of paramount importance: they must leave enough conceptual space for the audience to ascribe their own meaning to them. Rehearsing for the presidential debate among Democratic candidates in the third season, Frank anticipates one of his opponents' finding fault with his choice of words:

Frank:	My concern about focusing on the word 'action' is that she'll (Dunbar) just come back with (.) failed actions. America Works, the UN mission.
Seth:	'Action' performed well with key demos in our last poll.
Frank:	Yes, but doesn't this take us off message? We have been saying, 'A vote for Frank Underwood is a vote for America Works.' That's what we've been running on.
Vice President (Donald Blythe):	You need a word that goes beyond America Works. Something that can be used for anything. /…/
Seth:	What about 'vision'?
Frank:	Isn't that too generic?
Seth:	That's what we want. I mean, the more generic, the better. People can project anything they want on 'vision'.
Collaborator:	I'll get it polled before tomorrow. (3.37)

According to Francis's director of communications, a more specific term than 'vision' would put a leash on people's imagination. 'Metapragmatic skills', that is, the reflexive awareness of what is at play in communication besides the cognitive aspect of the message (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014: 242), are thus required from communicators who must know when to

guide people's interpretation through concrete scripts and when to choose abstract items that engage imaginary projection.

Impression Management

Following Schlenker's (1980) and Leary's[2] (1996) use of the term, I define 'impression management' as referring to the tricks used by some individuals to influence the image others have of them. In order to convince and give the best impression of oneself, one must first resort to strategies of accommodation to the audience, which is something that is acquired in practice according to Claire Underwood. After promoting her husband in front of a group of women, she comments on her ability to give the audience what it expects:

> Tom Yates: You're good at this. They loved you.
> Claire: Three decades of campaign, you learn how to read an
>   audience. (3.37)

Claire has learnt to control her performances, depending on the 'model' she forms of the recipients in front of her in diverse contexts. Van Dijk's notion of 'context model' (2008: 147) is here useful to account for the contextual constraints that always guide a performance: 'context models explain that in order to accommodate to recipients, speakers need to have a model of those recipients, namely as part of their model of the communicative situation.' Depending on what the audience knows and wants to know, Claire's interactional strategies are in part determined by 'contextual knowledge management': 'In order to be able to speak or write appropriately, language users need to have beliefs or knowledge about the knowledge of the recipients' (van Dijk, 2008: 83).

The metaphor of the political arena as a stage for actors finds its most cynical illustration in Francis's management of impressions. Preparing the debate with Jackie Sharp with whom he conspires to bring Dunbar to her knees, he distributes the theatrical roles for the show ahead:

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[2] Leary equates 'impression management' with 'self-presentation' (see Chap. 5 of this book), defining both as 'the process of controlling how one is perceived by other people' (Leary, 1996: 15).

Francis: I thought we had an understanding. You were gonna play pit bull while I play presidential. Will you get a little bloody? Yes, probably. But that's what people want in their debates. And then you and I together, we BURY her. (3.37)

To orientate the public's interpretations, Francis and Jackie agree on two impressions that must be generated about their Opponent and that can easily be processed by the audience: 'We have two things we want the American people to hear: she lacks experience and she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. /…/ She wants to trumpet an equal playing field? Then why does she send her own kids to private school? That is a clear and simple argument that everyone can get their heads around' (Frank, 3.37). Although she feels uncomfortable about this private life attack (Jackie's partner's kids, she confesses to Francis, are themselves sent to a similar school), she reluctantly agrees to criticize Dunbar on these terms. During the debate, Francis provokes an incident that leaves Jackie speechless as she was not expecting such a back-stabbing blow. He does not hesitate to make her lose face in front of the audience, so that he can emerge as a presidential figure above the other two:

Dunbar (to Jackie):   Aren't you trying to paint the picture that I'm a bad mother, shipping my kids off to some far-flung place, because you know if you can make me seem like a bad mother, then how could anyone possibly support me? (.) That's not hardball, that is just disgusting.
                       (applause)
Francis: Well, I have to say I do think Ms. Dunbar has a point. I mean, speaking of hypocrisy, don't you send your own kids to private school, Congresswoman?
Jackie: (pause: 5 s) Well, that wasn't my point. I…
Francis: What was your point?
Jackie: (pause: 3 s) Well, I was (.) um my-my point (pause: 9 s). Um John, I think I've said all I need to say on this subject. (3.37)

Bringing the kid issue, Jackie forges a certain image of the candidate Dunbar that Francis boomerangs on her. Playing one against the other, he enhances his own presidential self-presentation, showing himself above low punches and hypocrisy.

In *House of Cards*, the exposure of the backstage schemes and theatrical workings of politics serves to exemplify a tendency of the modern times. Yesterday's political debates have turned into shows where 'form' prevails over 'content' (see Mayaffre, 2012). Leaving the debate she was watching with supporters, Claire indicates to Tom Yates that she is not fooled by the theatrics: 'it's all spectacle, who can get the most points, right?' (3.37). This is part of what Mayaffre (2012: 153) calls 'postmodern discourse' in which what matters is merely the pragmatic performance. The political anecdote is turned into a spectacle where the audience is expected to get a feel of who the winner of the game is rather than select the advocate of the most convincing argumentation. The illocutionary force of utterances wins over their rational meaning; political shows become the locus where fighting is dramatized. Frank's ploy to protect his self-image by letting the two others scratch their eyes out in order to come out as the only one with presidential stature seems to have succeeded as the media's later comments on the debate distinguish him as the victorious candidate who has managed the best impression:

> George Stephanopoulos (*ABC News* chief anchor): But did he do enough to overtake Dunbar and become the front-runner?
> Matthew Boyd (*ABC News* political contributor): George, I don't think it's so much what Underwood did, but what he didn't do. He remained presidential. And when the attacks came his way, he held the high ground. Now, Dunbar and Sharp, they came out swinging, and I think it hurt them both. (3.37)

What is mainly drawn from the debate is less the concrete 'content' of discourse than the appeal of the 'form' and the image that the candidates have given off.

Fabricating Possible Worlds

Manipulating Pragmatic Inferences

Insinuating

The first section focussed on the manipulation of public opinion, this subsection is concerned with interpersonal relations in interaction. Playing on the clandestine force of language, the Underwoods succeed in having people make the right inferences without engaging their responsibility—this is the power of insinuating. Claire and Francis are indeed expert metapragmaticians who know all too well the power of what is implied but left unsaid. Drawing on Wierzbicka's distinctions, Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 149) tell the difference between the acts of hinting, implying and insinuating:

> What is common across all three glosses is that the speaker wants others to think one thing by saying something else. What differentiates *hinting* and *implying* is that the speaker expects others <u>will</u> understand what is *implied*, while others <u>may</u> only understand what is *hinted at* […]. *Insinuating*, on the other hand, involves the speaker wanting others to think something bad about the figure or target, as well as wanting to ensure he or she cannot be held accountable for meaning such a thing.

Obtaining what one wants without appearing to be asking is a manipulative strategy that enables one to get away with potential retaliation. The covertness of the innuendo lies in the fact that the addressee cannot be aware of the speaker's intention. For Bell (1997), this pragmatic act is marked by nonovertness and deniability. Since the intention of the speaker is nonovert, it can always be denied. In the following extract, this is an act of insinuating that Claire commits with the First Lady, Patricia Walker, in her attempt to raise doubts about a possible relationship between her husband and Christina (now working in the West Wing, Christina was Peter Russo's girlfriend and secretary until his death):

First Lady	(addressing Claire after an exchange about the president's schedule with Christina who just left): I know you want Garrett there, but with this energy crisis…
Claire:	No, it's (.) not that.
First Lady:	What?
Claire:	(pause: 2 s) I shouldn't say anything.
First Lady:	Well, now you have to tell me.
Claire:	I've just (.) never been fond of her. Christina.
First Lady:	Why not?
Claire:	Peter Russo? I just have a thing about women who sleep with their bosses. Anyway, I'm sure whatever they had was genuine. It's none of my business, cause if she's doing a good job, that's all that matters, right?
First Lady:	Garrett seems to think she is.
Claire:	Then I should just keep my feelings to myself. (2.19)

Claire attracts the First Lady's curiosity by delaying her revelation, making her want to know more. She finally expresses her doubts concerning Christina before recanting, pretending it is none of her business to meddle with the president's choice if it is acknowledged she is doing a good job. But, like Iago sowing the seeds of doubt in Othello's mind as regards the relationship between Cassio and Desdemona (Othello's wife), Claire manages to have the First Lady perceive Christina differently by classifying her among the 'women who sleep with their bosses'. Of course, Claire does not go as far as implying a relationship between Christina and her new boss, she merely recalls her history. In Culpeper and Haugh's words, she wants the First Lady 'to think something bad' about Christina, hoping the seed will grow into suspicion. Since the president's relation with his wife has been weakened lately, the doubt has found a fertile ground to grow. To ram home, Claire's machinations go further as she compels the young woman to go and see Patricia Walker to assure her of her complete devotion to her husband but also to herself:

| Claire: | Just let her know that you're there if there's anything she needs. |
| Christina: | I don't really know her that well. I mean we've met, but… |

Claire:	That's ok. Maybe just tell her that you enjoy working for the president, and you're there to be of help to her in any way you can.
Christina:	(.) You don't think that's a little, I don't know, brash…
Claire:	How?
Christina:	For me to approach her like that.
Claire:	No, not at all. (Same episode)

After planting seeds of suspicion in the First Lady's mind, Claire pushes Christina to commit an irreparable act of 'impoliteness' (see Chap. 5 for a theoretical definition of impolite acts). Stressing her willingness to serve the couple, the young woman adds grist to Patricia's newfound mistrust for her:

Christina:	Oh, Mrs. Walker? I just wanted to say how rewarding it's been working here in the West Wing. And I'm so proud to be working with your husband.
First Lady:	(.) Thank you. I know he appreciates all your hard work.
Christina:	Now that I'm working as closely with him, if there's anything I can do for you, anything that would make yours or his life easier.
First Lady:	(pause: 2 s) Just keep doing what you're doing.
Christina:	Truly anything. I want you to know you can rely on me. Both of you.
First Lady:	(.) I know that. (.) Thank you, Christina.
Christina:	Thanks Mrs. Walker. (Same episode)

The numerous pauses that mark Patricia's answers, combined with the distrustful expression on her face, indicate that Christina's move is interpreted as an unsolicited and over-zealous act invading the First Lady's territory—as Christina felt it would. Although remaining polite, the president's wife tells her simply to remain at her place, which implies that she has construed the young employee's intrusion as out of place. In a context of mistrust, Christina's act of generosity is received as an overstepping of her perimeter of action. Hence Mrs. Walker's answer, refusing to extend her space of influence: 'Just keep doing what you're doing.' Formulating what the First Lady already knows ('I want you to know you

can rely on me'), her insistent devotion contributes to raising Patricia's suspicion. Claire's manipulative acts will eventually work out—Christina will be fired.

Counterfactuality

The use of counterfactual arguments, creating other possible worlds of the kind 'if A was (or had been) the case, B would (have) follow(ed)', is one of Frank's manipulative strategies to bring his interlocutor to visualize alternative scenarios. In the exchange with Michael Kern, who was dismissed from Secretary of State by the president after the revelations of his anti-Israelian statements in the past, Francis's double game shows through the use of counterfactuals, which enables him to covertly convey a message:

Michael: I'd rather see what happens in the House before I get involved in any way.

Frank: But if you come out vigorously in defence of the president, it might convince the judiciary committee…

Michael: To be honest, I'm not particularly inclined to be doing Walker any favours.

Frank: Now, Michael, I know he revoked your nomination.

Michael: He didn't fight for me at all.

Frank: He had just been elected. He wasn't in a position…

Michael: Wrong, he had a clear mandate. He was in a strong position to defend me.

Frank: You're right. If I'd been president, I wouldn't have given in so easily. I would have stuck by you after that article came to light. In fact, if you'd been our Secretary of State instead of Durant, I don't think we'd be in the mess we are with China. The truth is I wouldn't have nominated you for Secretary of State in the first place. I would have nominated you for Secretary of Treasury. Because your expertise in economics is even better than your grasp on foreign affairs. Now, if I were president, you'd be Secretary of Treasury.

Michael: If YOU were president.

Frank: That's right. (2.26)

Francis has promised the president he will find support among members of Congress to prevent the impeachment he faces at the end of the second season. He tries to convince Michael Kern to offer support to Walker. Yet his use of counterfactual claims nonovertly goes in the opposite direction. While pretending to work for the president on the surface, he invokes a fictitious scenario that describes an alternative world in which Kern would have been treated differently. Rewriting history from the first-person pronoun perspective is not only a means to avoid any direct accusation of the president of the type 'he should have …' but also a means for Francis to place himself at the centre of this new possible world. The conditional clauses developing the hypothetical (If I'd been president) serve less to rewrite a thing of the past than fabricate an alternate possible world for the future. Indeed, surreptitiously, Frank switches from the past conditional (If I'd been president) to the preterit form ('If I were president'), converting a regret (I would have nominated you for Secretary of Treasury) into a wish (you'd be Secretary of Treasury). Kern's echoing Francis's tense-shifted if-clause ('If you were president') attests to his grasping Francis's hint. Kern is given clues as to what the future might look like should certain conditions be satisfied. If impeachment takes place, Vice President Underwood becomes the next President of the United States and Kern might be given the Treasury. He leaves it up to Kern to make the cognitive leap from preterit to present tense. Kern seems to understand the reasons why Frank cannot voice what this counterfactual scenario implies. Although Francis's answer ('that's right') seems to seal an understanding between the two men, he does not explicitly promise a future nomination for Kern in his cabinet, which leaves him leverage to deny Kern's inferences and retract himself should he change his mind, once president.

Counterfactual claims create what is referred to, in Text World Theory, as a 'subworld' (Werth, 1999) or a 'world switch' (Gavins, 2007). Within the Text World matrix it is related to, a subworld embodies a change in spatio-temporal parameters. More specifically, Francis fabricates what Werth (1999: 216) calls 'epistemic subworlds' that take the form of modalized statements referring to imaginary or hypothetical worlds. Building epistemic subworlds is a means for the protagonist to plant seeds of an alternative plan for the future in his addressee's mind. Bringing the others

to think of what they have not allowed themselves to think is a manipulative technique that enables Frank to divert the others' attention from his own personal motivation. Forced to confess his ambition for the vice presidency to Linda in the first season, Francis sets her mind to a more ambitious 'subworld':

> Frank: Yes, I want to be the vice president, and, yes, I helped your son get into college in the hopes that you would return the favour. But I can't force you to do so, Linda. But I also think that we could make a formidable team. Look what we've been able to accomplish even when we've been at odds with each other. Now put your mind to what we could accomplish if we weren't. (1.11)

The aspiring VP sows the seeds of a collaborative success story in the Chief of Staff's mind.

Misinformation

Forcing ambition on members of Congress having no intention of moving up falls into Frank's manipulative plots. His attempt to push David Rasmussen (the Democrats' majority leader) for the seat of Speaker of the House (instead of Bob Birch) is met with his unequivocal refusal. Ignoring the rebuff, Francis has the rumour of David's ambition circulate down the aisles of Congress. Here is the exchange between Francis and David who has received support from some members of the Black Caucus for a card that has been played behind his back:

> David: =I've=had=three=members=of=the=Black=Caucus=tell=me=they're
> =backing=my=play=for=the=speakership=
> Frank: Interesting.
> David: =I=have=a=sense=you've=been=disseminating=some=
> misinformation=
> Frank: No, I'm afraid it's you who are misinformed David. You don't have three members backing you. You have ten.
> David: =I=made=it=clear=I=didn't=want=any=part=of=this!=
> Frank: Yes, you made it crystal clear.

David: =Then=why=are=you=telling=people?=
Frank: Because they don't know you made it crystal clear.
David: I have to go to Bob with this.
Frank: He'll think you organized a coup, got cold feet, and are making me the scapegoat. David, if you pick up this phone right now and leak this story, Bob will have no choice but to drop you even if he believes your version of events. (1.4)

While David voices his outrage in a raised voiced and emotional tone, Francis remains calm. He fakes to misunderstand David's remark ('I have a sense you've been disseminating some misinformation') by shifting the meaning of 'misinformation' from 'false' information (Frank's lie about David's ambition presented as a fact) to 'inaccurate' information (David's being mistaken about the number of his supports). This episode reveals how disinformation can trap someone into an inextricable situation. Whatever David does (call or not the Speaker he supposedly wants to replace), the seed of discredit will have been planted through Frank's machinations, producing damaging effects—David will indeed be shown the way out in the end.

By faking a probable replacement for the current Speaker (Bob Birch), Francis wants to drive the latter into a corner where he has no other choice but to accept his deal. Rasmussen has support from the Black Caucus to be made Speaker (provided that the new Speaker nominates the African-American Terry Womack as majority leader). Frank makes it known to Birch that he has it in his power to tip the scales in either Rasmussen's or his direction. Should Birch rightly perceive what Francis's scheme implicates, he might keep his position:

Frank: This was David's plan executed by me. But there's an out for you, Bob. I can sway Womack either way as long as you make him the next majority leader (.) and…. (pointing his finger at Bob)
Bob: The education bill.
Frank: Now, we're on the same page.
Bob: I can't do that. You know I can't.
Frank: You're the Speaker, Bob. You can do anything you'd like. And I have to say appointing the first African-American leader, why, this isn't a bad legacy to have. (1.4)

Pretending to be the mere executioner of David's plan allows Francis to diffuse responsibility ('This was David's plan executed by me'). Bob's answer ('the education bill') makes it clear that he has correctly inferred what Frank's favouring him over Rasmussen would imply in return. Using his usual technique of 'subworld' fabrication that serves to enhance the other, he shows how his own wish can throw positive light on the other ('this isn't a bad legacy to have'). When Terry Womack asks him if David is fine with it, Francis advocates secrecy, which enables him to speak for the missing actor:

Terry:	David's on board with this?
Frank:	It was his idea.
Terry:	Then why isn't he here?
Frank:	Well, we have to be careful until it's a done deal.
Terry:	I don't know Frank.
Frank:	Think about it, Terry. You could become the first African-American majority leader in the United States Congress. (1.4)

Through a now-recognizable strategy, the whip presents self-interested moves as opportunities for others.

Metadiscursive Deception

Deceiving often consists in distorting the 'propositional content of the misrepresented contribution'—lying being the most obvious form of deception, but it can also concern the 'pragmatic function' of the contribution, that is to say, either its illocutionary force or what the utterer's more general objective might be (Galasiński, 2000: 38, see also Chap. 1 of this book). The deceptive speaker can display what Galasiński calls 'metadiscursive deception', which consists in 'mak[ing] the addressee believe that the utterance the speaker is issuing is cooperative whereas in fact it is not' (71). Metadiscursive deception recurs in politicians' answers to questions through what the author calls 'covert evasion'. It involves providing an irrelevant answer while making the avoidance of topic invisible. For Galasiński, covert evasion has a 'controlling function' in that

it serves to manage the flow of the conversation and 'how the exchange develops' (70).

Francis is an expert at manipulating the focus of questions and redirecting the flow of discourse in the way he desires it to take. After discussing urgent issues with Linda, he turns to the object of his preoccupation—making sure Catherine Durant is the one that the president chooses as Secretary of State. 'Now for the real meeting', he informs the viewer before turning to Linda:

Frank:	So, what is happening with Michael Kern?
Linda:	Oh, it's a total nightmare.
Frank:	You know who you're gonna tap next? /…/
Linda:	Somehow the rumour is flying around that we're gonna nominate Catherine Durant. I'm sure you've noticed.
Frank:	Is that rumour true?
Linda:	Well, we weren't considering her at first, but the president asked me to have her vetted in case we wanna go that route.
Frank	(opening the door, pretending to leave): Interesting.
Linda:	What do you think?
Frank	(closing the door again): Well, she wouldn't be my first choice.
Linda:	Who would be your first choice?
Frank:	She campaigned hard against us in the primaries.
Linda:	That's my reservation.
Frank:	But you'd show yourself above party politics, and I know she'd work all the harder for it. Decent experience, respect across the aisle.
Linda:	So, you think we can seriously consider her?
Frank	(turning towards the exit door): It's not the WORST idea in the world. (1.2)

Being himself at the origin of the rumour, Frank is here particularly manipulative. As the meeting is over and he is about to leave, he presents his first question as mere curiosity. His comment ('interesting') is meant to arouse Linda's interest and to bring her to solicit his opinion, which works perfectly ('What do you think?'). Frank begins with a negative answer, which enables him to hide his preference ('Well, she wouldn't be my first choice'). Instead of answering Linda's question ('Who would be

your first choice?'), he bypasses what would be a relevant answer through covert evasion. He answers a different question from the one Linda asks by keeping the focus on Durant ('She campaigned hard against us in the primaries'). Francis manages to conceal this noncooperative move through semantic cohesion (he elaborates on his previous remark about Durant not being the best first choice), thus making his evasion invisible, all the more so as he knows that Durant's opposition during the campaign constitutes Linda's very reservation against her. He feigns to align himself with Linda's doubts the better to cast them aside. He indeed fakes understanding and community of opinion before exposing what the advantages of this nomination would be to Linda, enhancing her 'face' as an open Chief of Staff going beyond party politics for the interest of the nation ('you'd show yourself above party politics') (see Chap. 5 for a more precise study of manipulation through face-enhancement). He then engages his knowledge and authority on Catherine's capacity to stand up to the trust that would be given her ('I know she'd work all the harder for it'). He finally recalls that she is respected by most in Congress ('Decent experience, respect across the aisle').

From the sound premises Frank puts forward, Linda brings him to conclude that she is a serious candidate ('So, you think we can seriously consider her'), which he does not do overtly. His answer is an emblem of manipulation. Pretending that alternative choices could be better but others could be worse, he conceals his true preference: 'It's not the worst idea in the world.' Through the choice of a negative sentence, Frank's apparently moderate support for Durant produces the opposite effect; it is in fact an understatement that aims at persuasively making his point. As Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2014: 235) underline, the rhetorical device of 'litotes' brings the audience 'to deduce that the speaker *could* put the point much more strongly, thus amplifying the persuasive effect'. Its stronger positive counterpart ('it is a very good idea') would overemphasize the utterer's opinion. Pronouncing these words as he leaves Linda's office, Francis makes her believe she is the sole decider in the end. In making his answer sound like an offhand, disinterested suggestion, he paradoxically grants it extra credibility.

Re-Naming and Euphemizing

Re-Labelling

The same reality can be approached with different labels that are endowed with various suggestive power. Re-labelling is a useful suggestive technique that can redirect original meanings and thereby people's attention. As Pohl (2004: 341) indicates, suggestive techniques 'encompass all techniques which attempt to influence a person in his/her appraisals, decisions and actions in line with the attempted (suggested) direction'. Renaming can steer the attribution of meaning in diverse ways; it can take the form of attenuation so that the impact of one word is diminished and the reality the new word conveys is alleviated. Seth Greyson, Frank's director of communications, is an expert at re-labelling when reporting to the press. Responding to a reporter's question at a press conference concerning known disagreement in the team that is supposed to work out the details of Francis's economic plan, he renames reality through a toning down of language that deemphasizes dissension: 'it is not so much a disagreement than it is debating the finer points of the plan' (3.1). Softening the language can sometimes go as far as reversing polarities altogether. Being an expert in political language boils down to wrapping a delicate reality in colourful linguistic clothing, as Seth gets his collaborator to understand:

Seth:	Let me see what you have so far. (pause: 6 s). Um no. This is no good. The language is too obtuse.
Collaborator:	Simpler, more direct.
Seth:	Look, here's the deal. If the Russians don't play ball, the Israelis will get nervous. If the Israelis send troops in, the Palestinians will go apeshit. If the Palestinians go apeshit, there could be mortar attacks. And if there are mortar attacks, the whole peacekeeping mission could go down the drain.
Collaborator:	You want me to actually say that?
Seth:	God, no. We need to say the opposite. Look, make it as clear as the doomsday scenario that I just described, but then flip it around and put a happy face on it. (3.35)

This attempt at euphemizing reality by resorting to what Hilgartner et al. (1983: 78) call 'palatable synonyms' is a typical political arm used by leaders to conceal some parts of reality from the people. Hilgartner et al. show that, in the 1950s and 1960s, the American Atomic Energy Commission was careful to choose terms that did not suggest any potential human catastrophe. Euphemistic phrases depriving language of its evocative power were used to withdraw any frightening connotation from the words. Neutral words like 'gadget' were privileged to qualify the reality of the bomb—an ordinary-looking superordinate that could be applied to any object and thus seemed harmless.[3] The linguistic veil can thus distort reality to influence perceptions.

Re-labelling can also consist in re-defining words. Frank Underwood is the new Humpty Dumpty of the twenty-first century who is willing to make words mean what he chooses them to mean, the question being 'which is to be master—that's all' (Carroll, 1934: 205). Trying to find money to fund his 'America Works' program, he decides to take funds reserved for disaster and emergencies and appropriate it for his plan. To justify this reappropriation, he advocates that 'unemployment' falls in the broad category of 'emergency' as he sees it. Conversing with his lawyers, he sees to it that there is nothing illegal in his stretching of the definition of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act):

Lawyer 1:	Title One of the Stafford Act: 'Emergency' means any occasion or instance for which, in the determination of the president…
Francis:	DeTERmined by the president. Any instance?
Lawyer 2:	As long as we can make the argument that this saves lives and protects health and safety.

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[3] The same attempt at manipulating perception through language is forcefully illustrated in a totalitarian context by Klemperer's notebooks, published as *The Language of the Third Reich*: *LTI, Lingua Tertii Imperii*, which thoroughly report how Hitler managed to manipulate language into denying reality (namely, the German defeats on the Eastern borders) by giving the preference to words that gave the illusion of dynamism and action over stalemate, for instance. As Klemperer (1996: 294) indicates, the words 'defeat', 'retreat' or 'escape' were never part of Hitler's language of defeat denial. The enemies never made breakthrough (*durchbrüche*) but only irruptions (*Einbrüche*) on the 'elastic' German front, for instance.

Francis:	Well, unemployment leads to crime, to malnutrition, to improper medical care.
Lawyer 1:	There's no doubt it'll be challenged in the courts.
Francis:	Well, even so, by the time that happens, people will see what America Works looks like. Tell me (.) in your legal opinion, is there enough leeway here?
Lawyer 2:	Yes, the language is sufficiently vague. But just to be clear, this is completely unorthodox. No president has ever tried to reappropriate funds this way.
Francis:	Thank you, gentlemen, that's all I need. (3.31)

Assured that he has full legal authority as president to define an emergency in a way that suits his purpose, he is ready to play on the vagueness of language. Whereas both the Senate majority leader (the Republican Hector Mandoza) and House minority leader (the Democrat Bob Birch) perceive the president's bold move as a distortion of the Act, Frank sees it as diverging interpretation:

Hector Mandoza:	It's a perversion of the Stafford Act and you know it.
Francis:	It's a reading of the Stafford Act. We read it differently.
Bob Birch:	You can't just raid funds that Congress appropriated for a specific use, then use them however you want.
Francis:	Clearly, I can. (Same episode)

Nowhere are attenuation and redefinition more important than in diplomatic language. *House of Cards* recurrently brings to light Secretary of State Catherine Durant's careful choice of words in her attempt at leaving the channel of communication open during difficult negotiations. In a backchanneling meeting with the newly appointed US ambassador for the United Nations (Claire Underwood) and the UN ambassadors of Israel and Palestine, Claire tries to make them understand President Underwood's goal in trying to convince the Russian President (Petrov) to get involved in the Middle East. She answers the ambassadors' doubts instead of letting the Secretary of State speak. Catherine Durant interrupts Claire, 'retranslating' her too explicit wording:

Claire:	Well, our goal is to soften Russia, to bring them in as a partner first…
Catherine:	If we can get the Russians to agree to a joint force, monitor the valley together, then they're invested. They won't be a thorn in our side when we [move forward.
Eliana Caspi	(the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations): How can we] count on the Russians? (To Claire) Does your husband truly believe he can trust Petrov?
(Claire looking at Catherine)	
Catherine:	The president is optimistic. All we ask is that you remain open-minded. (3.29)

Ascribing a positive label on what proves to be difficult negotiations between President Underwood and President Petrov ('The president is optimistic') enables Catherine to give an impression of progress. The adjective 'optimistic' focuses the attention on the positive potential outcome rather than the current difficulties. In repackaging Claire's utterance through a conditional sentence ('if we can get the Russians to…'), she masks the clarity of the American motivation openly disclosed by Claire in her assertive 'Our goal is to soften…'. The pronominal adjective 'our' makes it an American goal only whereas Cathy Durant's conditional contains an inclusive personal pronoun 'we' that seems to involve both the Israelis and Palestinians as partners in a common goal ('if *we* can get the Russians to agree…', italics mine). Besides, the Secretary of State's answer corrects Miss Caspi's form of address to Claire ('Does your husband truly believe…') by relocating personal relations on professional grounds ('The president…'). Although Cathy's reformulations are not clear cases of manipulation in Francis's manner (see next chapter for a continuum between persuasion and coercion), they pertain to the political necessity of influencing others' perception through a meticulous choice of words.

Words as Pragmatic Tools

In the third season of *House of Cards*, Frank Underwood is President of the United States of America, and as commander-in-chief, foreign policy

occupies a substantial part of his timetable. Several episodes deal with his relation with his Russian counterpart, President Petrov, and give a fictional glimpse of top-level cross-cultural relations. What has been foregrounded so far in this chapter is the power of the word to create a new form of reality. This subsection deals with the power of the word that has been cleared from its substance. Words thus become empty shells that serve as mere pragmatic tools. The propositional meanings of the terms are hollowed out as the main purpose of naming is elsewhere. In episode 3.32, Claire and Francis are planning on bringing home Petrov's prisoner, Michael Corrigan, an American gay activist, who led demonstrations in Moscow against Russian anti-gay laws. Petrov has agreed to the release on the condition that Corrigan makes the following statement:

> I, Michael Corrigan, apologize to the citizens of the Russian Federation for breaking your laws. I regret my part in exposing minors to nontraditional sexual attitudes. I am grateful to President Petrov for the clemency my release demonstrates, and for allowing me to return to the United States.

The prisoner adamantly refuses to give the statement. Claire tries to bring him to fasten on the pragmatic function of this declaration rather than on the meaning of the words. She urges him to separate the utterance *per se* from the engagement of the utterer's responsibility. What remains important is the existence of the discursive shell, that is, the external form rather than the internal content:

| Claire: | It's just words, words you can disown the moment you're back on US soil. |
| Claire (later on): | A statement for the Russian media that's all. You don't have to mean it, you just have to say it. (3.32) |

But this cleft attitude between what is said and what is truly meant is unknown to an activist ready to die for his cause. This 'doublethink' ability is the preserve of the Underwoods who have no difficulty sorting pragmatic function from propositional content. For Michael Corrigan, words matter and statements engage the one who makes them. The Underwoods have severed pragmatic acts from what Searle (1969: 57–60) calls 'felicity

conditions', as Francis cynically confesses about politicians: 'No writer worth his salt can resist a good story, just as no politician can resist making promises he can't keep' (3.31). Promises are often made in pure violation of Searle's condition of 'sincerity' that concerns the speaker's intentions, beliefs and feelings. What is asked from Michael Corrigan is to make a statement that appears to count as an apology even though the sincerity condition is not fulfilled. What matters is the *effect* of the illocutionary act as Petrov's discussion with Francis highlights:

Petrov: The words must come from him.
Francis: But no one will believe he means them anyway.
Petrov: Whether he means them doesn't matter. The fact that he says
           them shows respect for our laws. (3.32)

Petrov admits that he could not care less about the contents of the law (he himself has gay friends) but is concerned with the show of strength this statement would constitute towards his own people:

Petrov: But there is more than just our deal for me to consider. I need
           to show strength.
Francis: No one's going to see this as a weakness. On the contrary, you'll
           be applauded for letting him go.
Petrov: By who? Hm? The West? You don't understand Russia, Mr.
           President. If people don't like the job you're doing, they vote
           you out of office. If they don't like the job I'm doing, they
           topple statues. Blood is spilled. Chaos takes over. Is the gay
           propaganda law barbaric? Yes. Of course it is. But religion, tra-
           dition, for most of my people, it's in their bones. This law was
           passed for them. I have to represent my people the same way
           you do. (Same episode)

Frank's ethnocentric westernized apprehension of the event fails to take into account the Russian context and reception. What is of concern to Petrov is the perlocutionary effect of the utterance—the feeling of respect for the people.

   For Claire, Michael's stubbornness is a form of childishness that con-
tradicts what it takes to be a true politician working behind the scenes

and learning to compromise. The gay activist's answer demonstrates the extent of their divergent views as regards language and power:

Claire: It's not how politics works.
Michael: But it's how revolution works. (Same episode)

Claire's use of the word 'politics' in this exchange is one way in which the recurrent term is taken up in this political series. In fact, the word is most often preceded by a zero determiner that makes it akin to an abstract notion. It is usually used by the Underwoods as an ultimate justification for what they are doing. When a change in plan in Frank's objectives has consequence for Peter Russo in the first season (the latter is required to shut the shipyard in his district that he had promised his electorate to keep open), Frank justifies it by appealing to this higher entity:

Francis: I'm sure you've done splendid work, but unfortunately it can't come to fruition.
Peter: Why?
Francis: Politics. There's forces bigger than either of us at play here. (1.4)

'Politics' becomes a handy cover word that can wrap up realities that Francis does not wish to discuss. The use of this generic term as a label does not here fulfil the typical function of the labelling process if Pohl's definition is to be followed. A label 'gives meaning to an otherwise more or less obscure situation and this reduces or even eliminates ambiguity or uncertainty' (Pohl, 2004: 341). The word 'politics' on the opposite obscures its reference and adds up ambiguity as to the scope of its meaning. This reversed process that could be called 'de-labelling' diffuses the force of naming. The wavering reference of the term makes it particularly convenient a word to use when it flirts with the conceptual space of 'lying'. In the following extract, politics is presented by Frank as a 'palatable synonym' for lying:

Bob: Has Marty Spinella seen this?
Frank: Not the version I showed him.

Bob: So, you lied to his face.
Frank: No. I revised the parameters of my promise.
Bob: Which is lying.
Frank: Which is politics, the sort you're well versed in, Bob. (1.4)

In the specific community of practice in Congress, the concept of lying is ascribed a new obfuscating signifier that scoops it out of its negative connotation. As a matter of fact, the opposition between truth and lies does not hold in politics since lying is taken for granted, as Frank unashamedly reveals:

Claire: We've been lying for a long time.
Frank: Of course we have. Imagine what the voters would think if we started telling the truth. (3.39)

House of Cards indeed situates politics above the ethical line dividing lies from truth. Hypocrisy is presented as inherent to the political process in a democratic system that is predicated on persuasion and seduction of the masses. Far from exposing an ideal political system in which rational argumentation between parties takes place, the series cynically exposes the reason for the necessity of lying. It exhibits to what extent dependency on the others (be they the American people or members of Congress who need to remain or to be made Helpers) constrains the protagonists' speech, action and even feelings.

Politics is also an obscure label waved by Claire to justify a certain turn of events. As Second Lady, she tries to push for legislation supporting victims of military sexual assault. She manages to have a young victim, Marine Megan Hennessey, testify against General Dalton McGinnis (who also raped Claire). When Claire realizes the bill has no chance of getting past the reluctant former military woman, Jackie Sharp—Democratic Whip in Congress in the second season—and that it jeopardizes the couple's overall plan of winning the presidency, she ends up withdrawing her bill and agreeing to work on a new version with Jackie. When she explains this reversal of events to Megan Hennessey, already weakened by much media exposure, the latter does not understand how emotions can be left aside so suddenly in favour of political schemes:

Megan:	I don't understand.
Claire:	It wasn't going to pass.
Megan:	But you said we almost had the votes.
Claire:	We needed to be a 100 percent solid, and we weren't. If the bill failed, that would set us back. We need to accept incremental reform.
Megan:	You sound like Jackie Sharp.
Claire:	I'm actually working with her now. She is a powerful ally for us to have.
Megan:	After what she did to me? After what she said about you?
Claire:	If I let the things people say about me get under my skin, I wouldn't be able to leave my own home. /…/ I'm sorry. *There were political realities we couldn't ignore.*
Megan:	Do you ever wonder why so many people hate Washington? It's cause of people like you using phrases like that. (2.25, my emphasis)

Claire's sheltering behind existential predications 'there were political realities' and the plural personal pronoun ('*we* could not ignore') concealing the real subject accountable for such a sudden change of events is not lost on Megan who feels completely used in the process. The supposedly higher forces lurking behind 'political realities' whose meanings are purposefully blurred crush her to the point of becoming suicidal. Claire rushes to Megan's bedside after she was rescued from a lake. She ventures another attempt at justifying herself with a muddling phrase: 'I'm sorry that (.) you felt used. You weren't. I just, um (pause: 3 s) like I told you, *the* (.) *political landscape shifted* and we (.) found (pause: 4 s) Megan?' (2.26, my emphasis). The material process ('shifted') has an inanimate subject ('the political landscape') that cuts off the process from any human intervention as if politics was as capricious as nature and nothing could be done about it. The numerous pauses attest to Claire's uncertain belief in what she is saying. But it has no longer any effect on Megan, looking away through the window, lost in her mind.

Illusory Perceptions

Re-labelling and de-labelling are useful devices for the Underwoods to suggest a different reality to others but also to conceal the darkest aspects from themselves. At the end of the third season, for the first time, Claire can no longer reconcile the life goal the couple has set for themselves and the sacrifices it implies. Michael Corrigan commits suicide in his cell in Russia with her scarf, which triggers a deep emotion in Claire who publically holds Petrov responsible. On a political level, this emotional outburst has disastrous consequences for the American–Russian relations, but she can no longer put higher stakes before ethical consideration. Had she not said anything, Michael Corrigan's death would have been meaningless. For the first time, Claire uses a noneuphemistic expression to qualify what their goal has brought about in terms of collateral damage: 'We're murderers, Francis.' Her husband's linguistic preference shows to what extent he manages to conceal reality from himself:

Frank:	You want to know what takes real courage? Keeping your mouth shut no matter what you might be feeling, holding it altogether when the stakes are THIS high.
Claire (not listening):	We're murderers, Francis.
Frank:	(pause: 3 s) No, we're not, we're survivors.
Claire:	If we can't show more respect for some brave man and still accomplish what we set out to do, then I'm disappointed in both of us. (3.32)

Frank re-labels reality through a euphemistic expression that is predicated on a metonymy. He puts emphasis on the cause (the need to survive) where Claire highlights the effect of their action (murdering). He justifies his deeds through the metaphor of life as a struggle for the fittest. That there should be deaths along the way is kept hidden from his positive labelling ('we're survivors'), which emphasizes the vital fight over its deadly consequence. He only renders one aspect of the reality, thus euphemizing it to his advantage. Euphemisms deter language from its referential function by avoiding a confrontation between facts and words.

The noncoincidence between signs and referents enables to lighten up the weight of real facts. For Frank however, this label is no euphemistic expression, as he seems to have come to believe in the reality he has created for himself. He appears to have persuaded himself of the righteousness of his action. Manipulation is here turned towards himself in what could be construed as 'self-deception'. Indeed in Frank's (self-)deceptive world, euphemisms seem to have ceased being mere figures of speech[4]; they have become the sole reality he offers to others as well as to himself. In the episode just mentioned, his re-labeling has no grip on Claire who no longer seems to perceive reality as conveyed by the illusive power of his language. She appears to opt out of her husband's constructed delusion. For the first time, the word 'murderers' is applied to a reality they have tried hard to conceal from themselves by quickly forgetting about Frank's murders of Russo and Zoe in the preceding seasons. In the third season, the president's rhetoric undergoes unprecedented attacks. His contender in the Democratic nomination race, Dunbar, for instance, refuses to be lured by an effect of words. After an exchange with Frank trying to distort reality to his advantage, she incredulously concludes: 'Wow, is this how you live with yourself? By rationalizing the obscene into the palatable?' (3.30).

Still, Frank is an expert at conjuring up what Gheorghiu et al. (2004: 410) call 'illusive situations', the authors distinguishing between three types: 'perceiving illusion as reality, reality as illusion, and reality as nonreality.' The first and the last of these have some relevance in *House of Cards*. By commissioning the popular writer Tom Yates to write a book about his job program, Frank plans to use the imaginary power of fiction to create reality. Having read the writer's review of video games, which instantly made him feel like playing the game depicted, he informs his spin doctors that his political plan needs to be fleshed out with such imaginary food:

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[4] Euphemisms are figures of speech that usually leave the speakers in no doubt as to what the non-euphemised reality is: 'he is at peace', for instance, veils the brutality of death without denying it. Indeed, like any figure of speech, euphemisms require a 'critical' attitude ('*une pointe critique*') in Ricœur's terms that can pierce through the euphemistic veil. Although yielding to it, reality resists the euphemistic interpretation (Ricœur, 1975: 321, see also Sorlin, 2010a).

Frank: We need the philosophy behind it. We need something of sub-
stance. We need some(.)thing (pause: 11 s) (Frank's remembering Tom's
review of the Monument Valley video game and looking for it again on his
computer). We need something that will capture the imagination /…/ You
both read this and then tell me that you wouldn't want to play this. (3.31)

In fictionalizing Francis's life, Yates encodes it in such a way as to make
the protagonist appear like a persevering survivor, who fought his way
through a poor childhood all the way to the presidency. This use of fic-
tion falls in the category of what Mills calls 'aesthetic manipulation',
which differs from traditional manipulation in the sense that it is a more
'overt' manipulative practice. Indeed, readers/viewers autonomously and
willingly buy books or watch movies: 'When we engage in a work of art,
we usually do so knowing that it is an object that has been consciously
and deliberately constructed by the artist to elicit a desired response in
the audience' (Mills, 2014: 138, see also Chaps. 1 and 6 of this book).
The contrast between the writer's positive encoding of Frank's life and
the distrustful *Wall Street Telegraph* journalist's version of President
Underwood's political line can be seized in the third season where they
both speak as voiceovers while the video camera shows Francis and Claire
at a UN ceremony. The writer reads out loud what he has written about
an incident in Francis's life (his swimming to Fort Sumter where the
protagonist almost drowned) while the journalist, Kate Baldwin, warns
about President Underwood's anti-democratic behaviour in an article she
tries to get published. This simultaneous and interlaced encoding of the
same reality through different words exhibits by contrast the (potentially
dangerous) power of fiction to 'capture imagination':

Kate: When Congress refused to support a peacekeeping mission in the
Jordan Valley, the president deployed troops anyway, stating his
authority as commander-in-chief.

Tom: The ramparts of the fort were still a mile away. But he had reached
the point of no return. Turning back was no longer an option.

Kate: With the world's eyes upon him, he continues to ignore prece-
dent, convention, and some would say the law.

Tom: Why did he cross that invisible line? Why risk his life despite the
great odds stacked against him?

Kate:	Critics have been harsh. And yet most have stopped short of naming Underwood what he truly is: a tyrant.
Tom:	What drove Napoleon to keep marching toward Moscow? Or Hannibal to cross the Alps?
Kate:	The warning signs are there. It's our responsibility to heed them.
Tom:	What kept a young Frank Underwood swimming onward? And what kept him from drowning? (3.34)

One narrative compares Underwood to historical military commanders like Hannibal or Napoleon and the other to a tyrant of the modern times. One enhances the protagonist as a bold and brave survivor; the other depicts him as an immoderate and dangerous dictator.

In Frank's terms, fiction has the ability to transcend reality in order to give access to a superior 'truth'. As he confides in an aside, the power of the writer is indeed to make readers perceive lies/illusion as dazzling truth at some higher level:

Aside:	I never tried to swim to Fort Sumter. Thomas probably knows I made it up. But he wrote about it anyway because he understands the greater truths. (3.34)

Frank's urge to have his works fictionally transcribed in a book also ties in with his wish to leave a legacy to future generations (see Chap. 2). The whole plan will get out of his hands, though, as Tom Yates diverts from the initial contract with the president, focussing his writing on the Underwood couple instead. In comparing Yates to a salesman with the performative ability to seduce millions of people through his novels and reviews, Francis brings writing down to a form of manipulation. He uses the power of fiction to elicit emotions that could serve his cause as politician and get him votes, thus blurring the frontier between art and propaganda. Yates is fired when trying to make the piece something else than merely a device to bring readers to act in a certain way. In Mills's definition, Tom refuses to stop at propaganda: 'One key difference between art and propaganda seems to be the degree to which the latter is focused on getting someone else to act, to the exclusion of any other objective' (Mills, 2014: 137).

Deception crosses a line of no return when words are not used to conceal or invent reality but to erase it altogether. Buying Rachel Posner

(the prostitute that was with Peter Russo the day he was arrested) for her silence, Doug Stemper brainwashes her into forgetting an embarrassing reality for the congressman. The point is for her to 'perceive reality as non-reality':

Doug:	All I want for that money is your silence.
Rachel:	My what?
Doug:	The guy who was with you the other night, the one who was arrested, do you know who he was?
Rachel:	You mean the congressman?
Doug:	There was no congressman. There was no arrest. None of that exists. All that exists is the money sitting right there in front of you. (1.2)

Kept under Doug's constant watch for knowing too much about Russo—and because of his own infatuation with her, she literally becomes his prisoner. Rachel's every move and word are subjected to Doug's consent. She manages to escape his grip in the third season, but he tracks her down. She begs him to let her live in total invisibility. Her plea almost convinces Doug, but he finally decides to erase her completely this time by running over her with his van—or so it is implied—and burying her in the desert. Annihilating Opponents' existence is the surest means of gagging them for good.

Linguistic means can indeed be altogether bypassed in favour of a more direct tampering with reality. After Zoe's death, Lucas Godwin, Zoe's colleague at the *Herald* and boyfriend, continues investigating Underwood's potential involvement in Russo's murder. He tries to get in touch with hackers in order to acquire Zoe's cell phone records, which would give him proof of her relationship with Underwood. Doug asks a friend of his working at the FBI to foment a criminal charge for cyberterrorism against Lucas on the suspicion that he is about to commit a crime against the vice president. Doug indeed pretends that the man's cyberactivity represents a threat for Vice President Underwood's life. In the exchange that follows, the FBI agent expresses his reservation about Doug's order, which tends to confuse intention and action:

Doug:	The e-mail you sent, has anyone else seen it?

FBI agent:	Except for the agent that alerted me, no. Other agencies might have stumbled upon this. Even so, they probably ignored it.
Doug:	Any idea who's making the posts?
FBI agent:	Deep Web forums. Almost impossible to trace. Lone wolf, most likely.
Doug:	I want you to find him.
FBI agent:	We need a direct threat to life.
Doug:	The Vice President just assumed office. I can't have this conspiracy stuff going mainstream.
FBI agent:	This sort of thing usually fizzles out.
Doug:	I can't take the chance. I want you to find him and put him away.
FBI agent:	He hasn't committed a crime.
Doug:	But he wants to. So help him. (2.16)

The FBI sting operation set up by Doug lures Lucas into hacking an AT&T database. Caught in the act, he is sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Driving people to commit crimes is a form of manipulation that has dystopian overtones.[5] In *House of Cards*, when reality cannot be linguistically counterfeited, impediments on the path to power are physically disposed of. The next chapter focuses on pragma-linguistic manipulation, but the manipulative strategies used in the series sometimes draw near 'coercion' that bears a resemblance with the physical deprivation of liberty.

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[5] Dystopias like Burgess (1972)'s *A Clockwork Orange* (1st ed. 1962) or Dick (2009)'s *The Minority Report* (1956) have similar totalitarian aspects in that they feature attempts at restricting individual liberties by convicting people before they really commit a crime. In Dick's story, the 'Precrime division' kills murderous intentions in the bud by arresting people suspected of being future murderers (as foreseen by mutants called 'precogs'). The 'Ludovico treatment' that the protagonist Alex is submitted to in Burgess's novel produces unbearable feelings of sickness whenever the teenager has violent and lustful thoughts. Conviction thus takes place at the intentional level, which annihilates freedom of mere thoughts and desires. Orwell (1989)'s newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1st ed. 1949) similarly aims at linguistically rendering crime against Big Brother impossible (see Sorlin, 2010b).

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4

Manipulative Moves: Between Persuasion and Coercion

Towards a Pragma-Rhetorical Theory of Manipulation

A 'Manipulative Principle'?

In Grice's well-known study of the rules of conversation, interactions among human beings are seen as oriented towards one specific principle: cooperation. That is to say, in everyday interaction, each participant is normally willing to cooperate and sees to it that the exchange goes well. This unique principle that underlies all the communication rules, Grice calls the Cooperative Principle (CP). Abiding by it amounts to making one's conversation follow this general rule:

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE. (Grice, 1975: 45)

A. **The Maxim of Quantity**, concerning the quantity of information to be provided:
Submaxims: 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
B. **The Maxim of Quality**, related to the truthfulness of the contribution:
Submaxims: 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
C. **The Maxim of Relation** according to which contributors are supposed to contribute to the conversation in an appropriate and pertinent manner: Be relevant.
D. **The Maxim of Manner**, concerned with the way what is said is to be said (rather than what is said).
Submaxims: Be perspicuous, Avoid obscurity of expression, Be brief, Be orderly.

Fig. 4.1 The four maxims composing the Cooperative Principle (from Grice, 1991: 26–7)

While conversing with her co-speaker, the speaker expects her to conform to certain maxims of conversations, just as the co-speaker expects the speaker to go along with the same maxims that Grice, basing his categories on Kant, breaks down to four, as shown in Fig. 4.1.

Interlocutors expect these conversational norms to be respected. They indeed count on the fact that the other will give enough information, preferably true, in a direct and clear manner. Like any principle (as opposed to constitutive grammatical rules, for instance), the CP can be flouted without it losing its validity, as the flouting will require the addressee to operate what Grice calls an 'implicature'. Indeed the previous maxims are sometimes obviously infringed by the speaker on the principle that the interlocutor will perceive the voluntary flouting and imply the reason behind it. The co-speaker working on the assumption that the speaker abides by it at all times, the CP is then not called into question. On the contrary, the implicature takes place in the name of it. If a speaker says, for instance, 'I'm starving', she flouts the maxim of quality, but she brings the interlocutor to understand, in an implicature, that it is not to be taken at face value.

It is easy to perceive how inappropriate Grice's maxims are when applied to Frank Underwood's pragma-linguistic trickery. The ideal of transparent communication the CP relies on can hardly support the crafty moves of a manipulator intent on blurring the linguistic cards. Francis sees to it that his co-speaker does not see through his intentions. For the protagonist, conversation only succeeds when and if it satisfies his

Maxim of Quantity:
  - Make your contribution as (un)informative as you want (depending on your current purpose). Withhold information if need be.
  - Do make your contribution more/less informative than is required (if it helps you convince the other). Embellish or tone down reality (for the current purpose of the exchange).
Maxim of Quality:
  - Do not hesitate to use lies if it serves your argumentation better.
  - Do not hesitate to plant seeds of doubt or disseminate rumours you know to be false if it can help your goal.
Maxim of Relation:
  - Lead the conversation so that you're the one to impose what is relevant and what is not.
Maxim of Manner:
  - Be unclear and indirect if this helps you get away with accountability. Assign responsibility to others (indirect speech). Hint, imply, insinuate for that purpose.
  - Be ambiguous if required.

Fig. 4.2   The four maxims composing the Manipulative Principle

own personal motives, self-advancement and self-preservation. He seems to abide by a radically opposed general principle of conversation that could provisionally be called a Manipulative Principle, requiring serious alterations of Grice's Maxims, as evinced in Fig. 4.2.

These maxims compose the Principle of Manipulation that could be thus defined: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which you make it occur, by the purpose of direction of the talk exchange you are controlling, while hiding your real intentions so as not to be held accountable for what you say. One might label this THE MANIPULATIVE PRINCIPLE.

As evinced in the previous chapter, manipulation of information can take the form of concealment, distortion or invention of reality. Frank's own maxims imply that he is the one who leads the conversational dance making his interlocutors waltz in the way he wants them to. Lies, false rumours, insinuation, misinformation and evasion are among the general rules of his conversational principle. As pointed out in Chap. 3, the felicity conditions of the pragmatic act of promising are done away with in the name of the manipulative Maxim of Quality. If, for the sake of appearances, promises need to be seemingly kept, one can appear to break the promise 'unintentionally'—that is to say, by attributing the blame to someone else. In the following extract, Catherine Durant has made the promise to the president to be soft with the Chinese and cannot

bring herself to go back on her words. Francis provides her with a ruse to do both, break and keep her promise:

Catherine:	I promised the president a soft touch. I can't intentionally break my promise.
Francis:	What if it was unintentional? (pause: 2 s) Cathy, if you don't like how the table is set, turn over the table. (2.15)

In the Manipulative Principle, turning over Grice's Maxim of Manner, promises can be broken in an indirect and ambiguous way. Justifying herself to the president, she later says that her delegates misinterpreted her standpoint: 'Sometimes my delegates try to read between the lines. They know that I need plausible deniability for diplomatic purposes' (same episode). By attributing the blame to a plurality of anonymous delegates, she is able to assert that her promise was unintentionally broken and that she thus cannot be held accountable for the misreading of her team, which is paradoxically a consequence of a good knowledge of diplomatic work that always needs to maintain some leeway for 'deniability'.

The Manipulative Principle allows for a change in mind and words should the speaker's new purpose requires it. Once strongly opposed to China, Frank must now support the bridge project financed by Xander Feng—a Chinese businessman who makes business with Raymond Tusk—all the more so as Tusk threatens to provide money for the Republicans' campaigns instead of the Democrats'. An expert at the manipulative game, Francis voluntarily conceals information from the president, revealing him just enough for him to stop enquiring:

President:	Tell me why this bridge is so important to you.
Frank:	(pause: 2 s) I wanted to insulate you from this.
President:	From what?
Frank:	(pause: 3 s) You asked me to backchannel with the Chinese, and I have continued to do so.
President:	No, I told you to STOP backchannelling and you did anyway? Without informing me? Frank…
Frank:	I needed to distance you. There are issues that a president cannot be aware of.
President:	What issues?

Frank: But, what I can tell you is that the building of the bridge
              directly affects our ability to combat the Republicans in the
              mid-terms. (2.21)

To hide his own unsuccessful involvement with the Chinese (behind the president's back), Frank claims conventional practices according to which the president should not be kept informed about specific issues so as to protect him from potential judicial accusations. The combined use of the impersonal existential predication and the indefinite article in '*there are issues* that *a* president cannot be aware of' brings the issue up to a general, nondebatable level. Presenting it under the guise of a general truth applying to all presidents, Frank 'defocalizes' (Leech, 2014: 192) the attention away from the bone of contention. In Conversation Analysis's terms (see Sacks, 1967; Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973),[1] to the president's question ('What issues?'), Frank offers a 'dispreferred' response, as he fails to provide a real answer ('But, what I can tell you…'), redirecting the president's attention to an issue involving the political future of his majority in the upcoming mid-term elections. Thus filtering information through covert evasion, Frank strictly conforms to his Maxim of Manner, which stipulates that the manipulator should be able to lead the conversation in such a way as to impose what is relevant and what is not.

Another conversational move that abides by the Manipulative Principle, respectful of its Maxims of Quality and Manner, is the use of 'reported speech' whereby Francis conveys information for which he cannot be held accountable, since he draws it from some other source of authority. This is particularly helpful when he wants to manipulate people's intentions without uncovering his own. In the following sequence, he aims at convincing the president to have the vice president run for the Pennsylvania governor seat that was liberated by Russo's

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[1] Offering a 'preferred' answer in Conversation Analysis theory is pairing a first pair part with a relevant second pair part, such as greetings to greetings and answers to questions. What is called an 'adjacency pair' is formally composed of two turns and produced by two different speakers. These are placed immediately one after the other. The second pair in the *House of Cards* example does not offer a real answer to the president's question; it is thus an adjacency pair with a 'dispreferred' second turn.

death. He has previously made this proposal to the VP in a meeting during which the latter gives vent to his distrust for the president because of his lack of character. When the president asks Frank if he has already talked to the VP about this proposal, he emphatically lies, asserting he would never dare do such a thing: 'I wouldn't dream of speaking to the vice president without passing it by you first.' Since he cannot reveal the direct source of his information (unless he reveals the blatant lie just mentioned), Francis attributes it to another witness:

Francis: Well, I hesitate to bring this up, but when he was campaigning for Russo, (.) he (the VP) spoke quite (.) freely about you, sir.
President: Mm-hmm. Tell me.
Francis: Of course, I'm getting this secondhand from Peter, but the gist of it is (.) that you lack entirely in leadership, and that you have no sense of respect. (1.11)

Frank reports the VP's comments about the president by first situating it in a different spatiotemporal frame (when the VP was supporting Peter's campaign in Pennsylvania) and by presenting himself as a second-hand messenger, the first reporter of the talk being Peter (who very conveniently is dead). Indirect speech thus enables Frank to convey his message without taking responsibility for it.

The Parasitic Nature of Manipulation

The Manipulative Principle and its attendant four maxims presented previously (Fig. 4.2) as the exact counterparts to the well-known Gricean maxims (Fig. 4.1) cannot hold its principle status very long though. The reason for this is that for cooperation to work in Grice's model, both the speaker and co-speaker need to participate.[2] The participants must infer meaning and intention from what is said. In manipulation, the speaker's

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[2] Grice considers the possibility of non-participation when the interlocutor decides to 'opt out' of the conversation altogether. The participant 'may say, indicate, or allow it to become plain that he is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires' (Grice, 1991: 30).

real intentions are purposefully concealed from the addressee. To be more precise, manipulators wish their addressee to believe that they respect the CP. Thus the manipulators' maxims are theirs alone. They must see to it that the addressee does not perceive that they are not truthful to the CP. In other words, the manipulative maxims stated earlier constitute what Grice himself calls 'unostentatious violation' (Grice, 1991: 30) that presupposes that the co-speaker is unaware of the pragmatic transgression. Indeed, manipulation is effective when 'violations' of the CP stay undetected. Mooney (2004: 918) recalls, 'successful violations do not generate implications. The maxims of the CP *appear* to be intact. On the surface, violations look no different from other statements.' Remaining within a Gricean framework, this is precisely how McCornack's Information Manipulative Theory (IMT) perceives the deceptiveness of manipulation. The manipulator violates maxims, thus deviating from rational and cooperative behaviour but pretends to adhere to them, as she is careful not to make her violation apparent to the listener. The deception lies in the hearer thinking the speaker is conforming to the CP while she is not (McCornack, 1992: 5–6). Exploiting the CP, manipulation is thus 'parasitic' on the Gricean maxims.

Although the notion of manipulation is a 'combinatorily vague concept' that makes it hard to clearly determine sufficient and/or necessary conditions for it to occur (see Ackerman, 1995: 337[3]), there is indeed a sense in which covertness is one intrinsic aspect of it. As Hart (2013), after Maillat and Oswald (2009: 357), concedes, if covertness does not necessarily entail manipulation and manipulation can succeed even when the victim is in full knowledge of the facts,[4] manipulation does bear close relation to covertness:

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[3] Drawing on Alston (1967)'s definition of 'vagueness', Ackerman explains the difficulty in settling on necessary and sufficient conditions for manipulation to occur and, more specifically, in determining which definite combinations of conditions render them sufficient and/or necessary. The author adds: 'this imprecision is hardly surprising in view of the concept's roots in the casual discourse of daily life' (Ackerman, 1995: 337).

[4] If, for Baron, manipulation is 'the most effective when hidden' (Baron, 2003: 39), there are examples when manipulation works while being perceived as such. She gives the example of a victim who secretly knows he is being manipulated by his son but who does not want to express it clearly to himself: 'it can also happen that the "victim" has at least an inkling that he is being lied to—and yet the manipulation may nonetheless succeed. For example, your chronically ill forty-year-old son asks you for money to cover his medical expenses, claiming that the expenses are not covered by his

> Whilst many aspects of communication are covert without being manipulative, and whilst manipulation can still take place even when the audience is alerted to the manipulative nature of the utterance, without making explicit the precise nature of the manipulation, manipulation does intuitively at least seem to be dependent on covertness. (Hart, 2013: 202)

That covertness is crucial to manipulation can be read in the opposition between persuading and manipulating mentioned in the first chapter:

(a) Let me persuade you to come to the cinema with me.
(b) ?? Let me manipulate you to come to the cinema with me. (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 355)

Manipulation cannot be overtly communicated; it must remain hidden to be effective. As Francis underlines, the very talent of the manipulator is to make the other believe that butter wouldn't melt in one's mouth: 'The gift of a good liar is making people think you lack a talent for lying' (2.19). But the pleasure to be derived from deception can reach higher levels when manipulation stems from deliberately failed persuasion: 'The only thing more satisfying than convincing someone to do what I want is failing to persuade them on purpose. It's like a "Do not Enter" sign, it just begs you to walk through the door' (2.23). When Frank's interlocutors think themselves the freest to reject his arguments, they are the most manipulated, for poor persuasion also falls into his cunning stratagems.

   One needs to go beyond the CP to grasp the full scope of manipulation. For one thing, as mentioned in Chap. 1, Grice himself recognizes the incompleteness of his CP, admitting it should welcome other fundamental pragmatic acts, like that of 'influencing or directing the actions of others' (Grice, 1975: 28). In his own words, his scheme needs to be 'generalized' to make room for 'such general purposes'. In fact, as Thomas

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insurance. You have some doubts about this, but fork over the money anyway, wishing to avoid unpleasantness. There may be, on your part, an element of self-deception, as well: you prefer not to ponder the question of why your son might need money so badly that he would lie to you to get it. So you stifle your doubts and focus on how terrible insurance companies are, and maybe also on how unlucky your poor son has always been' (Baron, 2003: 40).

(1986) and Bousfield (2008) demonstrate, the CP operates purely on pragma-linguistic terms, as it is less interested (or not interested at all) in the social intentions of the speakers (be they good or bad) than it is in the transmission of information that the interlocutor can understand or infer. The 'social goals' (Thomas, 1986) that could animate cooperation are foreign to the CP that is purely concerned with linguistic transmission. Following Thomas, Bousfield (2008: 29) construes the 'linguistic goal sharing view' of the CP in these words: 'Use language in such a way that your interlocutor can understand what you are stating, presupposing or implying.' Applied to his own object of study, impoliteness, Bousfield avers that the lack of cooperation implied in impoliteness still involves the need for cooperation at the linguistic level: 'Indeed the point needs to be made that one needs to be cooperative, in a linguistic sense, in order to communicate a lack of cooperation in a social sense: i.e., when one is, for example, arguing with, or being impolite to, an interlocutor. After all, if one wants to be impolite, such impoliteness has to be communicated' (Bousfield, 2008: 29). The same reasoning can be transferred to manipulation: Underwood is linguistically cooperative so as to be socially uncooperative.

Pragma-linguistics (at the junction between pragmatics and the linguistic form) should thus be coupled with socio-pragmatics (studying the interface between pragmatics and society)[5] when dealing with the concept of manipulation, especially in an activity type[6]—political dealings—where power is of paramount importance (see further in this chapter). Frank Underwood's secret selfish agenda has an incidence on how all his interactions develop. The sole focus on communicative behaviour (the conveyance of meaning in accordance with the Gricean Principle) would

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[5] These definitions are based on Leech (2014: ix): 'pragmatics—the study of language and its meaning to speakers and hearers—can readily be seen in terms of two interfaces: the one between pragmatics and linguistic form (known as *pragmalinguistics*) and the other between pragmatics and society (known as *sociopragmatics*).'

[6] As Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 92–3) highlight, depending on the activity type the exchange is involved in, the expectations concerning the CP will inevitably vary: 'The notion of cooperation has to be fleshed out with reference to the activity type of the "talk exchange" in question (Mooney, 2004). An activity type is essentially a culturally recognised activity such as intimate talk, family dinner-table conversation, problem sharing, small talk, joke telling and so on.'

then fail to give credit to the socio-psychological motivations of manipulative discourse in *House of Cards*. As Gu indicates, one needs, in fact, to distinguish between two kinds of 'cooperation' that are in practice interconnected: a pragmatic one and a rhetorical one. Although the CP is still valid at what Gu calls 'the level of S-sending/H-interpreting' interaction, rhetorical cooperation 'is concerned with the attainment of rhetorical and extra-linguistic goals. It operates at the levels of the information-exchanging and the ultra-linguistic interaction' (Gu, 1993: 181). Gu's 'ultra-linguistic' goals correspond to Thomas's 'social' goals. Rhetorical cooperation aims at 'influencing' the cooperation between addressor and addressee. Performing diverse illocutionary acts, Frank attempts to reach extralinguistic 'perlocutionary purpose(s)',[7] thus bringing his victims to act the way he wants them to act. As (L. de) Saussure indicates in trying to delimit the fuzzy borders of the concept of manipulation, manipulative discourse cannot be spotted out on formal features that would be exclusive to it. It is rather a pragmatic game of influence: 'manipulation is not about using metaphors, or some particular syntactic structure, or some specific semantic feature of quantifiers, but about making them play a particular role at the pragmatic level' (de Saussure, 2005: 119).

The viewer is given an unusual place in *House of Cards* (see also Chap. 6). Unlike in novels where the characters' thoughts and intentions can be communicated to the reader by the narrator, Frank's intentions are here revealed to the viewer in the asides under the form of what Culpeper (2001: 164) calls 'explicit cues'[8]; the audience does not need to infer the speaker's aims from his conversations with or his attitudes vis-à-vis other characters, they are most often clearly stated in the asides. Being in the know of the manipulator's goals and intentions, the viewer has the preeminence on seeing what effects his rhetoric produces on others, assessing whether or not his illocutionary acts and perlocutionary purposes are met with success. As Gu underlines, 'perlocutionary act has been fundamentally misconceived since its very inception' as no perlocutionary act is merely the S/initiator's prerogative: 'Perlocution is in

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[7] Gu (1993: 188) defines a 'perlocutionary purpose' in these terms: 'the purpose(s) of the speaker s/he attempts to reach in performing an illocutionary act.'

[8] See also endnote 9 in Chap. 2 of this volume.

fact a transaction involving at least one speech act performed by S and one response-act performed by H' (Gu, 1993: 189). Thus the study of conversational rhetoric in *House of Cards* makes it possible to adopt a post-Gricean approach where the pragmatic focus is not solely on the speaker's intentions but also on how hearers get to figure out meanings. This monograph adopts what Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 266) call an 'integrative pragmatics', which lays particular emphasis on 'the critical role that interaction plays in shaping pragmatic phenomena and the perspectives of both users and observers on these'. In line with Gu's designation of the two kinds of cooperation (pragmatic and rhetorical) previously mentioned, I would personally call my integrative perspective a 'pragma-rhetorical' approach.

Manipulating Persuasion: Argumentative and Cognitive Views

Negotiating

As part of his job as the Majority Whip for the US House of Representatives in the first season, Frank Underwood has developed a capacity to convince his own political side as well as some members of the other to vote in certain ways. He has acquired recognized skills of persuasion. Rarely, though, does he strictly abide by what in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004)'s pragma-dialectical approach of argumentation is called a 'code of conduct',[9] which presupposes the

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[9] Van Eemeren & Grootendorst's pragma-dialectic 'code of conduct' is composed of the following rules: '(1) Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question (Freedom Rule); (2) discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this standpoint when requested to do so (Obligation-to-Defend Rule); (3) Attacks on standpoints may not bear on a standpoint that has not actually been put forward by the other party (Standpoint Rule); (4) Standpoints may not be defended by non-argumentation or argumentation that is not relevant to the standpoint (Relevance Rule); (5) Discussants may not falsely attribute unexpressed premises to the other party, nor disown responsibility for their own unexpressed premises (Unexpressed Premise Rule); (6) Discussants may not falsely present something as an accepted starting point or falsely deny that something is an accepted starting point (Starting Point Rule); (7) Reasoning that in an argumentation is presented as an explicit and complete way may not be invalid in a logical sense (Validity Rule); (8) Standpoints may not be regarded as con-

presence of 'rational discussants' engaged in an intellectual exchange between two parties with a difference of opinion. Francis's rhetorical skills consist in winning over the other to consent to his own views for his Party's benefit and/or for his own. Yet he knows how to negotiate in a way that blurs the line between persuasion and manipulation, especially with members of the Republican Party. Indeed, as van Eemeren (2010) discusses in _Strategic Maneuvering in Argumentative Discourse_, negotiation always starts from an initial situation in which there is some 'conflict of interests' opposing two parties (unlike what takes place in adjudication and mediation involving a third party), which is likely to be the case in Congress between two different ideologies (the Democrats and the Republicans). The aim of negotiation is to reach some form of compromise that can only be arrived at through concessions from both parties, a compromise in which 'the interests of both sides are met to the maximum extent of what is mutually acceptable' (van Eemeren, 2010: 149). To reach this compromise, argumentation will fall into different 'offers' and 'counteroffers' taking the form of commissives (such as promises) or even 'conditional threats' ('No Y before you do X', for instance) (van Eemeren, 2010: 150). The concessions made by both parties can be negotiated and thus changed slightly during the course of the argumentation depending on the diverse participants' reactions. One good way to proceed is to satisfy interests that are not part of the conflict. This adaptation to the audience's perspective can indeed constitute 'a steppingstone to an agreement':

> The fact that there is a conflict of interests does not mean that all interests the parties have are incompatible. Apart from the interests that are conflicting, each party always also has certain interests that are unrelated to the other party's interests. These other interests might be compatible, and the

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clusively defended if the defence does not take place by means of appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly (Argument Scheme Rule); (9) Inconclusive defences of standpoints may not lead to maintaining expressions of doubt concerning these standpoints (Concluding Rule); (10) Discussants may not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they may not deliberately misinterpret the other party's formulations (Language Use Rule)' (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004: 190–6, van Eemeren, 2010: 7–8).

two parties may also have certain interests that they share. (van Eemeren, 2010: 157)

The following communicative situation in *House of Cards* seems to be a textbook exercise in negotiation, as Vice President Underwood, assisted by Republican Senate Majority Leader Hector Mandoza, is trying to negotiate with a more radical Tea Party Senator, Curtis Haas, who is unwilling to agree to a bi-partisan vote on retirement age. Frank is ready to seek a compromise with Curtis to make sure the legislation passes through the Senate and thus avoid a government shutdown:

Frank: We know that you have an obligation to take a firm stance, but entitlement reform is something you ran on, and now it's within your grasp. So, tell us your fears.

Curtis: That the Democrats get another win. We suffer in the mid-terms and the next Congress dismantles the agreement.

Frank: You think we're being disingenuous.

First, Francis tries to understand what the other party's state of mind is and what exactly refrains Curtis from voting yes to the bill: 'So, tell us your fears'. Curtis's fear lies in the fact that the next Congress might want to dismantle the agreement. Frank infers the implicit cause of the other's reluctance and overtly expresses it: 'You think we're being disingenuous'. Having anticipated on the other party's fear, he lets Hector make the offer they had in mind that aims at reassuring Curtis:

Frank: As I suspected. Hector?

Hector: Frank and I propose this: we include a super majority point of order against revisiting the issue for ten years. /…/

Frank: You get your win, Curtis. We just avoid disaster.

Curtis: Maybe the country needs to see what disaster looks like.

Frank: The Tea Party is a strong voice, and you're its bullhorn. Show your people that voice can translate into law and not just add to the noise.

Curtis: (pause: 3 s) Fifteen years before revisitation, not ten.

Frank: OK.

Curtis: And if the House fails to pass the bill after we do, you go on record blaming your own party for the gridlock.

Frank
(smiling):   (pause: 3 s) I believe we have a deal. (2.16)

Francis points out the mutual compatible interests of the two parties in the passing of this bill. This is to the advantage of both, as the parallelism between 'you' and 'we' reflects in his cue: '*You* get your win, Curtis. *We* just avoid disaster' (my emphasis). The hedge ('just') is meant to enhance the other's victory and tone down the Democrats' who rather than being winners are merely not losers. Frank also here appeals to interests that are not part of the conflict, that is the possibility for the Tea Party to transform 'noise' into 'law' should the bill be passed. In order to obtain compliance, he does not hesitate to use a technique of ingratiation that García Gómez (2008: 71) calls 'Complimentary Other Enhancement'[10] (see also next chapter of the present book) consisting in flattering the other: 'the Tea Party is a strong voice and you're its bullhorn.' This works on the addressee who finally concedes to the offer but demands that the Democrats' concession be extended so that it can be made acceptable to the Tea Party representative (fifteen years instead of ten). Francis's answer indicates that the terms proposed are mutually acceptable: 'I believe we have a deal'. The deal is then sealed by a shaking of hands.

This passage seems indeed to be an instance of what van Eemeren calls 'strategic maneuvering' consisting in establishing a balance between 'reasonableness' (following a rigorous code of conduct) and 'effectiveness' (oriented towards a tangible result). Pragma-dialecticians consider maneuvering to mean 'moving toward the best position in view of the

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[10] García Gómez's corpus is made of verbal conflicts as portrayed in the British TV talk show *Kilroy* in which the author examines the persuasive techniques for enhancing compliance. One such technique is the Ingratiation or Complimentary Other Enhancement: 'This tactic comes down to flattery. One guest focuses and exaggerates the positive side and ignores the negative side. In doing so, the ingratiator communicates the idea that he or she thinks highly of the opponent (See Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). This persuasive strategy correlates with Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategies in so far as guests attempt to influence the opponents by agreeing with them and getting to like them' (García Gómez, 2008: 71). See also Chap. 5 for a thorough exploitation of politeness theories.

argumentative circumstances' (see van Eemeren, 2010: 40).[11] If Frank's persuasion technique is oriented towards effectiveness (the bi-partisan vote), it falls short of van Eemeren's dialectical ideal though. The VP does not really care about the other party's interest as long as the outcome of the negotiation satisfies his own. That it might also satisfy the other is a collateral positive effect that is sought after only as part of a more general vested plan. Besides, his disingenuous praising of the Tea Party's strength sounds more manipulative than 'reasonable'. Frank's real motivations for negotiation are elsewhere; putting a deal with the Republicans to his credit will buy him 'influence' in the eyes of the president he tries to ingratiate (not as a good soldier to the cause but to take his seat, of course). Thus, Francis's 'ultra-linguistic' goals blur the demarcation between persuasion and manipulation.

Constraining Interpretative Effects

What distinguishes most surely persuasion (from manipulation) is the addressees' freedom in responding to the attempt at convincing them. In persuasion, counter-reacting to the other's arguments on equal terms is a priori always possible.[12] In manipulative discourse, such reaction is inhibited by the fact that it operates in more undetectable ways. The finesse of fallacious argumentative discourse can be best measured from a cognitive perspective that displaces the focus from the manipulator's misleading usage of language to the addressee's 'interpretative process'. What interests pragma-cognitivists like Maillat and Oswald (2009) is indeed not what manipulation is but how it works on the addressee unawares. Although the interpretative process involved in understanding

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[11] The term 'strategy' refers to the need in argumentation to exert verbal skills that are appropriate: 'The term *strategic* we have added to maneuvering because the goal aimed for in the maneuvering taking place at the operational level had to be reached by clever and skilful planning, doing optimal justice to both reasonableness and effectiveness. In our terminology, *strategic maneuvering* in argumentative discourse refers to the efforts that are made in the discourse to move about between effectiveness and reasonableness in such a way that the balance—the equilibrium—between the two is maintained' (van Eemeren, 2010: 41).

[12] As a matter of fact, the supposedly convinced senator will not follow what he conceded at the negotiation table and will attempt to filibuster the bill.

a manipulative discourse is the same as the one involved for any utterance, it differs from the latter in one specific aspect: the interpretative effect is cognitively controlled by the manipulator (Maillat, 2014: 74). Manipulation consists in misleading the cognitive system by playing on its selection mechanisms. Indeed, it taxes mental processing in imposing 'constraints' on interpretation (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 361). The manipulator tends to render more accessible some 'contextual assumptions' so that they become more easily selectable by the addressee than others: 'Manipulation, therefore, constitutes a form of cognitive constraint on the selection of contextual assumptions' (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 361). When interpreting an utterance, the addressee constructs an appropriate context within which the utterance can be interpreted, and this procedure of context construction or selection is governed by a principle that Sperber and Wilson (1995) call 'optimal relevance' according to which what is sought is maximum cognitive effects for minimum cognitive efforts. Optimal relevance is indeed reached when there is an 'optimal ratio between the cognitive efforts required to process the utterance, and the cognitive effects yielded by such an interpretative process' (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 362). In the case of manipulation, the point is to reach a degree of maximal relevance through the constrained contextual assumptions 'before an extended context is constructed' (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 368). It thus consists in limiting a context, that is to say, blocking access to certain contextual assumptions:

> a manipulative speaker will be taken to increase the accessibility of a certain subset of contextual assumptions, C, within which the target utterance will be almost inevitably processed (from a cognitive perspective), so as to ensure that the addressee does not process the target utterance within a larger context, C', in which it might appear inconsistent or contradictory with some prior background knowledge he upholds. The crucial element in this analysis of manipulative discourse lies in the manipulator's attempt to prevent the addressee from assessing some other less accessible contextual assumptions. (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 365)

Frank's manipulative moves thus involve covertly concealing alternative contextual assumptions by making some of them more 'salient' than others, preventing the construction of an extended or alternative context.

Manipulation indeed operates in making a certain context more accessible, thereby blocking access to *C'*. By so doing, it plays on people's natural cognitive tendency to look for the most relevant interpretation with the fewest cognitive efforts (Maillat, 2014: 78). Since, according to Sperber & Wilson's Relevance Theory mentioned earlier (1995: 142), more effort is required in accessing a context rendered less accessible (and conversely), manipulators see to it that they make more accessible a context they desire to be easily processed and, conversely, make less accessible a context they wish their addressee not to access. Maillat and Oswald (2009) give the example of the manipulative discourse of the American government pushing for a war on Iraq in 2003 on the premises of the presence of mass destruction weapons. The US administration of the time tried to systematically associate the 9/11 terrorist attack and Iraq, thus limiting the context to this association, establishing it as the only relevant one in which Iraq could be envisaged:

> The US government needed a case to go to war against Iraq and they manipulated the American public into interpreting the relevance of a war against Iraq within a very specific limited context: that of terrorist attacks against America. In this instance, the strategy used consisted in constraining the set of contextual assumptions summoned for the interpretation of the target utterance [...]: We must wage war against Iraq. (Maillat & Oswald, 2009: 367)

Constraining the contextual assumptions needed for the interpretation of utterances is also a game recurrently played by Frank Underwood. This is most extremely reflected, linguistically, in the protagonist's either/or rhetoric, consisting in presenting binary, exclusive contexts that cannot be reconciled (see also Chap. 6). One path needs to be chosen at the expense of the other, without the addressee being allowed to consider the other path. The latter is blocked from access by the manipulator's presentational devices. Francis's answer to Peter as to the reason for the closing of the shipyard already mentioned in the previous chapter can be analysed from this cognitive perspective. The sudden change of direction is manipulatively presented as an overpowering context crushing any qualms Peter may have:

Frank:	I'm sure you've done splendid work, but unfortunately it can't come to fruition.
Peter:	Why?
Frank:	Politics. There's forces bigger than either of us at play here. (1.4)

Peter is manipulated into believing that his shipyard promise supposed to generate work for his constituents needs to be interpreted in a broader context (politics) whereas it only serves, as usual, Frank's own personal and unilateral goal. The whip's victim is left in the dark as to what hides behind the abstract cover-noun that is repeatedly brandished when explanations need to be blurred (see Chap. 3). In episode 1.10, Francis is guilty of the same oppositional fallacy, in his either/or argument, letting Peter think that the only relevant context to be considered is that of the irrevocable political mistake he will make should he not comply: 'This is politics. There are seized opportunities and missed opportunities. Seize this one, Peter.'

Providing the addressee with a different contextual frame within which to interpret a situation is one of Frank's sharpest manipulative moves. As defined in Goffman (1986), one apprehends particular facets of an event by applying a specific 'frame' to it.[13] I use the concept of 're-framing' as meaning a deliberate attempt to modify the context of selecting and interpreting of reality. In the following exchange between Francis and the president concerning Linda Vasquez's letter of resignation (after a disagreement with the VP over his dealings with China), Frank tries to bring the president to another level of interpretation, 'reframing' as it were the issue:

President Walker:	Linda submitted her resignation. I was furious with her. That was a very manipulative move.
Francis:	I can speculate as to why she made it.
President:	Are her complaints valid?
Francis:	I have a very biased view on the subject.
President:	Well, I've heard hers. Give me yours.

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[13] 'We can hardly glance at anything without applying a primary framework, thereby forming conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now' (Goffman, 1986: 38).

Francis:	Linda and I don't always agree. But she's been very loyal to you, and a more than competent Chief of Staff.
President:	So you think I should keep her.
Francis (a glance at the camera, pause: 2 s):	Do I think she oversteps sometimes? Yes. Does she wrongly equate her advice with mine? Often. But (.) the question that occurs to me is not about Linda. Let's say you refuse her resignation, if this gets out, and it could, won't you be (.) sending a signal to anybody who works for you that (.) you can be leveraged? She offered her resignation. She is already gone even if she stays. (2.21)

The manipulator is not the one the president thinks it is ('I was furious with her. That was a very manipulative move'). Asked for advice as to what to do, Francis first begins by paying tribute to Linda's work and loyalty (as if she were already gone), thus avoiding an easy diatribe against the one he wants to be rid of. He uses no direct ad hominem argument incriminating the person to the point that he misleads the president into thinking he should call her back ('so you think I should keep her'). This garden-path reasoning aims at preparing the ground for what follows. Although clearly stating Linda's tendency to step over the line, he quickly dismisses his own point of view on the person's work by shifting the issue to a question of image and function. He changes the lens through which the resignation should be appreciated by widening the political scale. Within the new extended political framework, reasoning can but function along the hypothetical syllogism (if … then…); if this leaks out, the president will build the ethos of the easily manipulated one (which is quite ironical here). Framing the issue within such logical reasoning blocks any other alternative context in which the effect of Linda's resignation letter could be interpreted.

By shifting the context of interpretation from a personal fight with Linda to a problem that concerns the president's own image, Francis makes sure that the president does not interpret his words within another context C' in which Garret might perceive that letting go of Linda will conveniently get the VP free reign with the Chinese.

Cognitively speaking, Frank here prevents the president from reaching 'less accessible contextual assumptions'. To do so, he reformulates what he thinks is the right question by reframing the context in which it should be answered. From his previous cognitively controlled premises, he finally draws the implacable conclusion: 'She is already gone even if she stays.' Once more in this exchange Frank fails to answer the president's question ('So you think I should keep her') by illicitly[14] responding here with other questions: 'Do I think she oversteps sometimes? Yes. Does she wrongly equate her advice with mine? Often.' He plays the manipulative game of questions and answers that enables him to hold all the communicative cards. Dodging the question is a common strategy that he uses with nosy journalists who want to uncover what he tries to keep them from accessing. As he says about Janine Skorsky's prying into Russo's death: 'She knows the right questions to ask. I want to make sure she doesn't get the right answers' (1.12).

Throughout the first two seasons, Frank's manipulative moves must be understood as part of a broader self-interested goal: isolating the president from any other influential Opponents. Having got rid of parasitic elements, he progressively imposes himself on the president as his only friend. In parallel, Claire has been playing the same befriending card with the president's wife. In the following exchange, he places the president in a position where it is difficult for him to turn down Francis's request:

President: Sometimes I feel like I'm losing control over my goddamn administration.

Francis: You're under pressure, but you're not losing control. You have people who are looking out for you: me, Linda, your wife.

President: I might be losing control of her too. (.) I shouldn't have said that. (.) Of course she wants the best for me. (.) Has Claire said anything? I know they talk.

Francis: Not much, just that things have been a little rocky.

President: Well, that's an understatement.

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[14] In argumentative theory, changes of topics are referred to as 'illicit shifts' thus defined by van Eemeren (2010: 135): 'covert and unilateral attempts to change the type of dialogue that is going on into one that is wrongly presented as being in line with the exchange in the original dialogue.'

Francis:	You have the most difficult job on earth. It would take a toll on any marriage. Which is why I'm urging you to reconsider your decision on the bridge, and I'd say that *NOT* as your vice president but as your friend, because I care about you.
President:	(pause: 6 s) All right, I (.) I'll have another look into it.
Francis:	Thank you, Mr.…(pause: 3 s) (patting the president on the shoulder) Thank you, Garrett. (2.21)

Francis subtly brings the president to a different plane, the personal one, with the hope of blurring the frontiers between public and private space. Knowing that Garret and his wife are going through difficult marital times, he purposefully brings her in the conversation: 'You have people who are looking out for you: me, Linda, your wife.' By mentioning his wife's support while knowing perfectly it is not the strongest at the moment, he elicits a confession from the president. This right hint at the right moment displaces the issue from the political to the personal level. Francis is here playing on the president's emotional vulnerability. For Baron (2003: 44), this is one of the forms manipulation can take (see Chap. 1)—'manipulation can also operate by taking advantage of another's emotions or emotional needs, sometimes first eliciting the emotion in order to capitalize on it'—which is exactly what Frank has set up. He wishes to capitalize on the emotion he has elicited in order to soften the president's resistance to the bridge issue. In one single sentence, indeed, he jumps back to politics using what Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2014: 172) call 'accidental connection'[15]: 'You have the most difficult job on earth. It would take a toll on any marriage. *Which is why* I'm urging you to reconsider your decision on the bridge' (my emphasis). In this utterance, there is no logical connection between a rocky marriage due to a lot of stress and a reconsideration of the bridge project. The connector 'which is why' proposes a rationally misleading causal relation between two unconnected events.

In fact, Francis takes advantage of the president's emotional state by implying that he might be too emotionally affected to see what is right

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[15] The authors give the following example of accidental connection: 'I spent ages over this: how can you say it's no good?' and comment: 'The time someone spends on a task has no logical connection with the quality of the performance.'
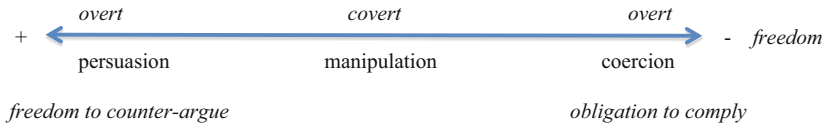
Fig. 4.3 The manipulative spectrum

for the country. But, luckily, he has a friend who watches over him. Frank boldly reconceptualizes his own demand as a friend's offer: 'And I'd say that not as your vice president but as your friend. Because I care about you.' He presents his request as friendly advice, making it 'socially very clumsy [for Garret] to refuse the offer' (Baron, 2003: 42). His friendly devotion can indeed be only very awkwardly declined, which is precisely where manipulation lies—Garret is being 'pressured' to accept this gift of caring friendship like a present that cannot be refused. This manipulative insistence succeeds in wearing the president down: 'All right, I'll have another look into it.' The last line is the final act of Frank's pre-meditated plan. He starts referring to the president with the respectful conventional form of address 'Mr. [President]' as he has done at the beginning of the extract, before breaking off and calling him by his first name, the better to emphasize the new footing they are now both in. This switch is an audacious linguistic act that forces (disingenuous) intimacy on the president: 'Thank you, Mr. … Thank you, Garrett.'

A Continuum Between Manipulation and Coercion

Just as manipulation is a form of persuasion, on the other side of the spectrum, it can also be apprehended in terms of coercion. It occupies an in-between position on the continuum from persuasion to coercion, as illustrated in Fig. 4.3—the more the cursor moves to the right, the less freedom the victim has to argue back. Whereas overtness characterizes both practices on either side (persuasion and coercion cannot be hidden), the more one gets towards the centre of the continuum, the more undetectable the practice is.

In the last extract of the previous section, Frank pressures the president into acquiescing to his request: this form of manipulation leans towards the coercive end of the spectrum, though the pressure remains implicit and concealed. In 'doing friendly' with the president, he renders him vulnerable to manipulation. In the extracts that follow, the curser moves further and further away to the right hand side of the continuum.

Paternalistic Manipulativeness

Claire Underwood's persuasive techniques can be as manipulative as her husband's. In the following extract from the first season, she puts undue pressure on Gillian Cole to convince her to come and work with her at Clear Water Initiative (CWI), the charitable organization Claire owns. To overcome Gillian's reluctance, not only does Claire invade her personal space (as she directly goes to see her at her place without being invited) but the pressure she exerts on Gillian takes the form of an offer that the CEO of CWI won't see turned down. Gillian has Giardia and no medical insurance; Claire forces her to accept seeing her own doctor to cure it. In Baron's terms (2003: 47), Claire 'arrogat[es] to [her] self decisions that are not [hers] to make'. Claire's move can fall in the category of 'paternalistic manipulativeness'; she seems to know better than Gillian herself what she needs and what she must do. But, of course, Claire's generous offer is completely 'self-serving' as it is aimed at incurring a debt that Gillian will feel compelled to repay (by accepting the job):

> Claire: You don't have health insurance, do you?
>
> Gillian: No.
>
> Claire: I'll make an appointment for you to see my personal GP tomorrow.
>
> Gillian: Medicine doesn't really do much. You have to let it (.) run its course.
>
> Claire: Well, let it run its course under proper supervision. I won't take no for an answer.
>
> Gillian: Claire…

Claire: I'll drag you to the hospital myself if I have to. You're going to the doctor, no argument.

Gillian: (.) Thanks. (1.3)

Pushy in her willingness to take care of Gillian's health, Claire leaves her with no option but to accept the offer, thus implicitly establishing a patronizing ratio of power. Indeed the following exchange between the two women indicates that Claire has succeeded in creating an imbalance in their relationship that Gillian feels obliged to make up for by agreeing to consider working for Claire.

Claire: I'm not trying to acquisition you. What I see in you is a woman I admire, which doesn't happen often. I want to enable you. I want to clear the way for you so that you can achieve what you want to achieve, on your own terms. (.) Thanks for the tea. And I will send a car to pick you up for the doctor tomorrow. When you're back on your feet, do you think maybe we can work something out?

Gillian: (pause: 3 s) Yes, I think we could. (1.3)

In her picture of the future she has in mind for Gillian, Claire's speech acts fall within an ambiguous category between offers and commands. The sentence 'I want to enable you', for example, is borderline between a commissive (an offer) and a directive ('you' is object in this 'want sentence' with the agent 'I' as subject who has active power/agency over the object). It could be said that Claire is here adopting the 'foot in the door tactic' that is a well-known persuasive strategy (see Hogg & Vaughan, 2002 and García Gómez, 2008: 71). It consists in making a small and unimportant first request that functions 'as a setup for the second real request'. The first serves merely to pave the way for the real upcoming one: 'the foot in the door (FID) is a multiple request technique which aims to gain compliance, in which the focal request is preceded by a smaller request that is bound to be accepted' (García Gómez, 2008: 71). Although Claire's preparatory speech act is an offer (an appointment at the doctor's) rather than a small request, it still paves the way for the focal request to be considered in the positive context of a caring helper. The foot in the door tactic can here be taken literally as Claire

invites herself to Gillian's place. Feeling under the weather, wearing home clothes, the hair undone, Gillian was obviously not expecting such intrusion.

Coercive Power and Degree of Optionality

Claire and Francis know the price there is to pay in accepting somebody's help (see the creditor/debtor contracts highlighted in Chap. 2). So they make a point of trying to never be in a position where they will be in debt towards the other, since this would put them in a position of inferiority. For a relationship between two powerful participants to work, there must be some kind of balance or reciprocity, (relative) autonomy being the key to success. But establishing a ratio of submission with Helpers is the surest way to assign them the roles the Underwoods want them to take. For Francis or his wife, many an interaction serves to remind their interlocutors of their social power over them. 'Indirect directives' is a good way to convey strength and obtain compliance.

In their cognitive study of indirect directives as 'idealised cognitive models' (ICMs),[16] Pérez Hernández and Ruiz de Mendoza distinguish three important parameters:

1. Cost-benefit: an assessment of the cost and/or benefit that the action A involves for the speaker and/or the hearer.

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[16] For the authors, indirect directives cannot be exclusively apprehended within 'illocutionary scenarios' (Pérez Hernández & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002: 263). They see directives as based on a cognitive process, embodying 'propositional idealised cognitive models (ICMs)' that should not be studied solely for the information contained in them but also following parameters (power/cost-benefit/optionality), which, for the authors, constitute other ICMs (264). As far as the 'power' parameter is concerned for instance, they give the following example among many others: '*Can you get me a cup of coffee*? may be regarded as either an order or a request, depending on the power relationship that holds between the speakers' (261). They perceive illocutionary acts as metaphorical cognitive forces grounded on the force image-schema, which more or less constrains the addressee. Like physical forces, depending on the strength of their speech acts—and the other parameters mentioned above, the 'Force Agents/agonists' can overcome the force of the obstacles or barriers that the 'Force Targets/antagonists' can sometimes metaphorically embody (272).

2. Optionality: an assessment of the degree of optionality conveyed by a speech act (that is the degree to which the speech act restricts the addressee's freedom to decide whether or not to carry out the requested action).
3. Power: an assessment of the power relationship that needs to hold between the speakers in order to be able to perform a speech act. (Pérez Hernández & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002: 264).

In the case of covert manipulation, directive speech acts need to be indirectly formulated. It takes the form of polite requests rather than of authoritative orders, as the latter possess too much pragmatic force: 'The force of a request […] is not as strong and inexorable as that of an order. On the contrary, the force of a request is more tentative, as it takes into account the possible existence of an obstacle' (Pérez Hernández & Ruiz de Mendoza, 2002: 276). As a matter of fact, manipulation often consists in ordering under the guise of requesting, 'making a show of asking for [the others'] consent', only faking to 'make sure they do not mind' (Baron, 2003: 43). This is what happens in this second extract drawn from episode 1.10. Gillian has been hired by Claire. Francis would like her to put in a good word for Linda Vasquez's son who has been refused at Stanford:

Francis:	In fact, I also came here to ask you a favour. You went to Stanford, correct? Valedictorian?
Gillian:	Yeah.
Francis:	Do you know the provost?
Gillian:	Warren Tynsdale. He (.) flies me out to do fund-raising events. Supposedly I'm the poster child for alumni. Making the world a better place.
Francis:	Well, that is good because this is important. Linda Vasquez, the president's Chief of Staff, her son, Ruben, applied. I'd love for you to get on the phone with Tynsdale and tell him that they should accept him.
Gillian:	I don't (.) know. I (.) I've never recommended anyone.
Francis:	All the better. It'll carry more weight. (Francis makes a show of leaving.)
Gillian:	Can I meet Ruben first?

Francis
(sighing):   I would prefer that Linda not know. In fact, it would be better
             if both she and Ruben believed he got it on merit alone. Will
             you PLEASE do this favour for Claire and me, (.) and for the
             president.
Gillian (not knowing what to answer).
Francis (pointing his finger at her, smiling): Thank you. (1.10)

In terms of cost/benefit, the favour that is asked from Gillian is clearly
to Frank's benefit—he wants to be owed something by Linda—Claire's
employee has nothing to gain from it. After several moves that Blum-
Kulka et al. (1989: 287–9) call 'mitigating supportive moves' consisting
here in 'Getting a precommitment' ('I also came here to ask a favour'),
'Preparators' (You went to Stanford, correct?, Do you know the provost?')
and a Grounder ('Linda Vasquez, the President's Chief of Staff, her son,
Ruben, applied'), comes the Head-act of the request: 'I'd love for you
to….' Francis presents his request as a personal preference. Gillian is at
first reluctant to carry out the action that is imposed on her, as it amounts
to forcing access for somebody who does not merit admission, which is
of high cost to her conception of fairness and equity. He turns Gillian's
hesitation ('I don't know. I've never recommended anyone') into a posi-
tive argument that adds grist to his mill ('All the better. It'll carry more
weight'), which shows that he does not care about Gillian's mixed feelings.

If Francis offers no 'promise of reward', it is because in his mind there
is no way Gillian can refuse to grant such a favour given the unbalanced
degree of power between them. His manipulative move approaches the
coercion border since it leaves Gillian very little choice to turn down
the request, to which her dumbfounded face at the end of the sequence
testifies. He indeed plays on the social power he has on Gillian (through
his wife who is her boss), thereby considerably reducing her options. He
exerts here what, in their classic categorisation of the five bases of power,
French and Raven (1959: 263)[17] call 'coercive power', that is, when a per-

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[17] The other categories being reward power, expert power, legitimate power and referent power:
'These five bases of O's power are: (a) reward power, based on P's perception that O has the ability
to mediate rewards for him; (b) coercive power, based on P's perception that O has the ability to
mediate punishments for him; (c) legitimate power, based on the perception by P that O has a

son has power of punishment over another or can allocate negative tasks that this other does not wish to carry out. To further his strategy of intimidation, he does not hesitate to involve not only her employer but also the most powerful man in the USA: 'Will you PLEASE do this favour for Claire and me, (.) and for the president.' By manipulatively indicating who the favour is indirectly for, Francis makes it rather impossible for Gillian to refuse. The polite downtoner 'please' hardly conceals the restriction of her freedom to contest. Manipulation here tips the scales on the coercive side; the pressure to comply exerted on Gillian is such that her options are highly confined. She will indeed carry out the request.

Manipulative Threats

As president (season 3), Francis does not hesitate to use direct orders with people over which he has 'legitimate' power. Most often he does not need to persuade anymore, he merely dictates what he wishes. In an extremely brief meeting, he feigns to consult his cabinet on his project of rechannelling funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to his America Works project. Having fired the head of the Department of Homeland Security for his opposition to the plan, he later asks for other dissenting voices among his cabinet:

> Francis (entering): Good morning. Please sit. I know Remy has just briefed you all. Apart from the Secretary of Homeland Security who is (.) (showing the empty seat with his hand) no longer with us, does anyone else object to this plan? (pause: 1 s) Good. Until a new secretary is confirmed, FEMA will report directly to me. Thank you all. (Leaving the room) (3.31)

Given the power he is endowed with (he is the one who has appointed the people sitting in his cabinet), potential resistance on their part is very limited, all the more so as they are all implicitly reminded of what this will cost them. From Frank's indirect formulation ('who is no longer with us'), the staff can infer that the same fate awaits them should

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legitimate right to prescribe behaviour for him; (d) referent power, based on P's identification with O; (e) expert power, based on the perception that O has some special knowledge or expertness' (French & Raven, 1959: 263). See also (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 34–5).

they also try to impede the plan. This is an implicit threat[18] that verges on the side of the coercive threat. Baron differentiates between manipulative and coercive threats in the degree of resistibility they respectively allow for:

> Manipulation may involve a threat that does not rise to the level of being coercive but differs mainly just in the degree of resistibility. Whereas the coercive threat does not leave one a reasonable alternative to doing the coercer's bidding, the manipulative threat does. To say 'I'll kill your children unless you help me rob a bank' is coercive, at least if the threat is credible; to say 'I won't be your friend anymore/marry you/play in your band unless you help me rob a bank' is not coercive, but is (without a special story, such as that the speaker is obviously jesting) generally manipulative. (Baron, 2003: 40–1)

Although Frank's manipulative threat does not 'rise to the level of being coercive' in Baron's sense, it still flirts with the coercion border.

In the second season, Vice President Underwood thinks he has the upper hand on people he has helped obtain prestigious positions. Jackie Sharp is one of them as she succeeded him as whip with his support. Unlike Peter Russo, however, Jackie has never agreed to repay her debt by doing as she is told, so she feels entitled to resist the force of the VP's request in the following sequence. As an ex-servicewoman, she refuses to offer support to Claire's military sexual assault bill:

Jackie:	I assume you're here to talk about Claire's bill.
Francis:	It's not a pet project. There are three dozen co-sponsors on either side of the aisle. It's a serious bill.
Jackie:	I don't disagree.
Francis:	Except with the language.
Jackie:	I can explain my thinking, but I doubt I'll convince you any [more than…
Francis:	Putting aside] the military's honour, chain of command, all the things that you hold dear, let's consider one (.) simple fact. You wouldn't have this office if it weren't for me.

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[18] An explicit threat would contain the prototypical conditional implicative 'if-then' (see Limberg, 2009: 1378–9).

Jackie:	I made it clear that I wouldn't be a puppet.
Francis:	I'm not trying to pull strings, but you could show a little gratitude.
Jackie:	If it were anything else, Mr. Vice President, but not this.
Francis:	All you're doing is making the inevitable more difficult.
Jackie:	It's not inevitable. Claire doesn't have the votes yet.
Francis:	You really want to fight us on this.
Jackie:	I don't want to fight you at all. Which is why I suggested to Claire that we sit down…
Francis (raising his voice):	I neither have the time nor the inclination to negotiate with you! Cosponsor the bill! Whip the damn votes! I'm no longer asking!
Jackie:	↓Then I'm no longer listening. (2.23)

The contrast is sharp between Frank's overt negotiation with the Tea Party member (see section 'Negotiating') and his refusal here to listen to Jackie's arguments and feelings about Claire's bill. Interrupting her, he overtly coerces her into complying: 'I neither have the time nor the inclination to negotiate with you! Cosponsor the bill! Whip the damn votes! I'm no longer asking!' The threat contained in the imperative orders is also phonologically conveyed. His loud voice constitutes what Culpeper et al. call 'an invasion of auditory space' whose aim is to let the hearer clearly know about one's state of mind: 'a person who shouts in anger is not only invading the space of the hearer, but making sure that the hearer is aware of his or her anger' (Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003: 1573, based on Jay, 1992: 97, 108). Through this phonological intrusion, Frank intends to intimidate her into complying. He leaves the room pretending to have the last word. But Jackie remains firm on her battleground and responds in a parallel structure that reimposes a force balance. She calmly answers that she won't obey, grammatically opposing tit for tat to Frank's offensive attack[19]: 'Then I'm no longer listening.' In this unmitigated offensive counter-attack, she also dissociates herself from him, as her tone of voice is much softer than his: she indeed does

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[19] 'With OFFENSIVE-OFFENSIVE pairs, presumably the objective is to at least match the other in kind—a "tit for tat" strategy' (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1564).

not 'accommodate prosodically' to him. Her controlled voice signals command as she strategically denies him what Culpeper et al. (2003: 1575) call 'pitch concord'.[20]

The perlocutionary purpose of the imperative illocutionary force having failed on Jackie, Francis then plays his last card. Implicitly revealing he has been spying on her (he has learnt that she and Remy Danton are lovers through his former secretary over whom he has coercive power as VP), he opts for the manipulative threat:

Francis: You don't have just the office to thank me for. If you win reelection, you can thank me for that, too. Those attack ads didn't just disappear on their own.
Jackie: What do you mean?
Francis: Why don't you ask Remy Danton? And ask him about Raymond Tusk while you're at it. That ought to make for some very interesting pillow talk. (Frank leaving the whip's office) (Sequel to the same episode)

Francis is here doing what he does best, hinting at the amount of power he possesses over his Opponent. His threat is indeed sustained by a reminder of the 'reward power' he has over her not for past but for future prospects. In Spencer-Oatey's terms, reward power is effective 'if a person, A, has control over positive outcomes (such as bonus payments, improved job conditions) that another person, B, desires' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 34). Remy, Tusk's employee, did not mention anything to Jackie about money that Tusk had a hand in going to the Republicans—who thus could afford launching ad attacks against the

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[20] If repetition of somebody else's words on relatively the same pitch is claimed by researchers to be 'supportive' whereas complete pitch matching is a case of distancing mimicry, the authors indicate a third case where obvious denial of pitch concord is a sign of noncompliance: 'We would like to suggest that not only mimicry (hyper-accommodation), but also a simple failure to accommodate can be a feature of non-compliant behaviour. Pitch concord is a signal of prosodic "common ground", and by denying that concord a speaker is denying common ground or disassociating from the interlocutor' (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1574).

Democrats. Rudely[21] unveiling her personal life, Frank's counter-attack aims at re-ascertaining his superiority, which has been questioned by Jackie. Basing his synthesis on Beebe (1995), Culpeper (2011: 226) indicates that 'coercive impoliteness'[22] is indeed a way to get power for the following purposes:

1. to appear superior
2. to get power over actions
3. to get power in conversation

In leaving the floor on this last note, Francis lets Jackie wonder about the social implications of what he has not said but that he wants her to find out. Having inside his hands her private and professional cards, he threateningly reminds her of his power, with the hope of browbeating her into complying.[23]

In the last instances, the Underwoods' manipulativeness aims at more or less overtly controlling people. The following chapter deals with a sub-category of manipulative tactics that have been touched upon in this chapter (through the ingratiating techniques) and in Chap. 3 (through the creation of other positive possible worlds). Chap. 5 indeed digs deeper into the art of winning over through face enhancement.

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[21] 'Impoliteness' (Culpeper, 1996; Culpeper et al., 2003: 1554) consists in using strategies whose goal is to damage the addressee's face wants (see Chap. 5 for a precise definition of positive and negative face), such as frighten, condescend, scorn or ridicule, invade the other's space, explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect, put the other's indebtedness on record, hinder or block the other—physically or linguistically.

[22] 'Coercive impoliteness is impoliteness that seeks a realignment of values between the producer and the target such that the producer benefits or has their current benefits reinforced or protected (the labels producer and target need not refer to individuals, but could refer to groups or institutions). It involves coercive action that is not in the interest of the target, and hence involves both the restriction of a person's action-environment and a clash of interests' (Culpeper, 2011: 226).

[23] Jackie will not comply and will break up with Remy instead.

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5

The Art of Winning Over through Face-Work: Success and Failure

Hybrid Face Acts: The Polite Impoliteness of Cajoling Discourse

In the specific context of the Victorian literature of nonsense as studied by Lecercle (1994), ARGUMENT is WAR. Rather than seeking cooperation, conversations in nonsense texts are marked by verbal struggle, as speakers are keen on defeating their opponents and 'drive [them] off the verbal battlefield' in the pursuit of their own goals (Lecercle, 1994: 79).[1] Protagonists in nonsense literature can abide by the Gricean maxim of Quality or not, providing that what is said 'hurts' the other and gains the speaker a status in the verbal hierarchy. Leech's Principle of Politeness (1983), presented as a supplement to the Cooperative Principle, is put through the mill in the nonsense world of constant verbal battles. Fig. 5.1 represents Leech's strategies of politeness, in his 2014 extended version (the label of the maxims is in brackets).

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[1] Lecercle (1994: 79) speaks of a general Principle of Struggle composed of agonistic maxims like: 'adapt your verbal production to your strategy and tactics. Speak as much, or as little, as is necessary to make your opponent uncomfortable. Sometimes logorrhoea, sometimes silence will do the trick. Since this is an agonistic, not a cooperative, account, we might expect profusion (of threats or insults) to win the day. But not always so; far from it.'

(M1) give a high value to O's wants (*generosity*)
(M2) give a low value to S's wants (*tact*)
(M3) give a high value to O's qualities (*approbation*)
(M4) give a low value to S's qualities (*modesty*)
(M5) give a high value to S's obligation to O (*obligation of S to O*)
(M6) give a low value to O's obligation to S (*obligation of O to S*)
(M7) give a high value to O's opinions (*agreement*)
(M8) give a low value to S's opinions (*opinion reticence*)
(M9) give a high value to O's feelings (*sympathy*)
(M10) give a low value to S's feelings (*feeling reticence*)

Fig. 5.1 From Leech (2014: 91), 'the component maxims of the General Strategy of Politeness'

To be polite is to be generous and tactful with the Other by minimizing one's own wants, qualities, opinions and feelings and maximizing those of the Other (while diminishing O's obligation to S). In the literature of nonsense mentioned previously, Leech's maxims can only be maintained through a reversal of the Self's and Other's position in each line, the point being to maximize damage to the Other while minimizing that to the Self. Whereas Leech's maxims are predicated on 'the basis of a linguistic and pragmatic You-first Orientation' (Lecercle, 1994: 108), self-centredness and impoliteness are of the essence in Alice's wonderland imagined by Lewis Carroll: 'Characters hardly even conform to the maxims of politeness. They seem to follow a Selfishness Principle which is the mirror image of its polite counterpart' (Lecercle, 1994: 108).

Between these two theoretical ideal positions, the 'I-first orientation' (in the agonistic nonsense land of selfishness) on the one hand and the 'You-first orientation' (in the irenic world of cooperative politeness) on the other, there seems to be room for a third intermediate position taken up by what I will call (manipulative) cajoling discourse. Just as (prototypical) manipulation is parasitic on the Cooperative Principle, in that it adopts its collaborative maxims while being motivated by a higher-level selfish intention (see Chap. 4), manipulative cajoling is parasitic on the General Strategy of Politeness. It feigns to adopt the inherent altruism of the Principle of Politeness[2] while serving S's selfish goals. It thus adopts

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[2] Leech (2014: 4) defines politeness as 'communicative altruism'. The author makes clear though that communicative altruism needs not be genuine in politeness: 'The "altruistic meaning" conveyed via

surface (non-genuine) politeness and is underlain by a deep structure of struggle and its attendant Selfishness Principle. Charming the other indeed consists in using verbal weapons to come to terms with her resistance. The pragmatic art of beguiling seems to be lodged in between Grice's irenic principle and Lecercle's agonistic one, as it borrows the appearance of the former and, covertly, the techniques of the latter. Active coaxing indeed requires discursive strategies that can be assimilated to military tactics in its desire to force access into the other's territory through bold moves or slow detours, the point being to take possession of the other. In the field of amorous seduction, the affinity of seductive moves with war tactics has been brought to the fore: Choderlos de Laclos (2007)'s famous novel for instance, *Dangerous liaisons* (1st ed. 1782), is clearly built on the pattern of a military guidebook (see Harrus-Révidi, 2010: 169).

Flattery, which is a basic technique of (manipulative) cajoling, involves what Kerbrat-Orecchioni calls 'face-flattering acts' (FFA) in that it aims at enhancing the other's 'positive' face[3] that is, according to Brown and Levinson (1987: 61), 'the positive consistent self-image or "personality" (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.' Kerbrat-Orecchioni's FFA would correspond to Leech's 'pos-politeness' whose goal is to maintain but also heighten a person's self-esteem in the eyes of others.[4] Cajoling discourse

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communication should not be equated with genuine altruism, where someone does or says something unselfishly, for the sake of some other person(s)—to extend a helping hand to them. Often communicative altruism and genuine altruism do coincide, but it is not difficult to imagine or recall cases where they do not.'

[3] For Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Brown and Levinson's account of positive and negative politeness is too 'paranoid' as it merely aims at defusing potential threats that hover over people's heads. She shows that politeness also consists in performing 'anti-threatening' acts by increasing face-want. She mentions face-enhancing acts like compliments, wishes or thanks that, in Brown and Levinson's conception, are construed as face-threatening acts for the other's negative face. She shows that the model must make room for those acts that are often present in utterances alongside FTAs (see Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 37).

[4] Leech redefines the demarcation lines between Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness, using new labels to avoid confusion: pos-politeness and neg-politeness. In Leech's model, pos-politeness (face-enhancement) is one side of the politeness coin, the other being neg-politeness (face-mitigation), rather than being all means of redressing FTAs: 'Unlike Brown & Levinson, I see face-threat mitigation as the function of neg-politeness only, whereas face enhancement is the function of pos-politeness. For Brown & Levinson, positive politeness is simply an additional set of strategies for avoiding face threat. Thus for the two sides of face, Brown & Levinson perceive an imbalance, whereas for me the two sides are mirror images of one another' (Leech, 2014: 25).

indeed uses Leech's strategies of politeness that aim at placing the other in favourable conditions to receive the speaker's message. But the art of winning over is also a covert verbal battle that consists in making the other surrender to one's viewpoint. The aim is to force access into the other's 'negative face' defined by Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) as 'the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction—i.e. freedom of action and freedom from imposition.' Hence the hybridity of cajoling discourse that is inherently offensive, the addressee's 'claim to territories' being infringed, but that is at the same time overtly face-enhancing. For Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1998: 270–2), this inheres in the pragmatic act of 'complimenting'. It is both a 'territorial invasion' violating 'intimacy'—as it places the addressee in the position of a debtor that she may not wish to occupy, and an 'anti-FTA' that flatters her 'narcissism' (positive face).

Manipulative coaxing consists in concealing an underlying violence (the military tactics) by using surface soft language (inauthentic/strategic politeness). To be more precise, the polite impoliteness of manipulative cajoling lies in its adoption of pos-politeness on the one hand and its rejection of some of the maxims appertaining to neg-politeness on the other, like those of opinion reticence and feeling reticence (M8 'give a low value to S's opinions' and M10 'give a low value to S's feelings' in Fig. 5.1); pushing one's Self forward can indeed be part of the cajoling act. In Brown and Levinson's terms, 'negative politeness' consists in redressing the Hearer's 'negative face', that is her want to maintain claim of territory. But in manipulative flattery, negative face can be threatened without redress,[5] as the Speaker refuses 'self-effacement' and transgresses the Other's space without clearly apologizing. Indeed 'negative politeness' in Brown and Levinson's view usually consists in giving options to the Hearers (H) in order to give them the impression that they are not coerced at all:

> negative politeness is characterized by self-effacement, formality and restraint, with attention to very restricted aspects of H's self-image, centring on his want to be unimpeded. Face-threatening acts are redressed

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[5] Given the 'violation' of territory it represents, the speaker usually takes precautions before paying a compliment, using (pre- or post-)minimizers, such as asking for permission in this instance before the actual complimenting, 'May I compliment you on…' (see Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 1998: 272, my translation).

with apologies for interfering or transgressing, with linguistic and non-linguistic deference, with hedges on the illocutionary force of the act, with impersonalizing mechanisms that give the addressee an 'out', a face-saving line of escape, permitting him to feel that his response is not coerced. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 70)

In brief, cajoling the Other into acting in a way or holding a viewpoint as desired by the manipulator feeds on 'pos-politeness' in order to mitigate the infringement the underlying manipulative battle entails. Even so, complimenting/flattering inherently remains an encroachment upon the target's negative face: as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, it claims a balance between self and other enhancement that is foreign to Leech's General Strategy of Politeness (GSP). Cajoling discourse is thus 'polite'—in a theoretical sense—in the way it flatters the other's ego but it is also 'impolite' since the verbal battle sometimes leads the speaker to enhance her own self-image, which is at odds with the 'You-first orientation' of the GSP.

Indeed the attention to 'face' is central to interactions in power-politics: it determines how speakers choose to present themselves, the image of themselves they try to create in the other and how they themselves choose to treat others. For Domenici and Littlejohn (2006: 10–1) who define face-work as 'a set of coordinated practices in which communicators build, maintain, protect, or threaten personal dignity, honour, and respect', it is of paramount importance, involved as it is in all speech acts: 'facework is not an incidental or ancillary goal of communication. It is central to all human social interaction' (Domenici and Littlejohn, 2006: 204). It may then be fair to go back to the one who theorized face-work and inspired Brown and Levinson's seminal politeness theory: Erving Goffman. The American sociologist shows that 'the positive social value' that is involved in 'face' and claimed by a speaker is always dependent on the other's perception[6]; interpreting a speaker's utterance always involves an evaluation of the impression she has made, so that, in the response (to her addressees) the speaker cannot not 'take into consider-

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[6] Goffman's definition of 'face' is well-known: 'The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' (Goffman, 1967: 5).

ation the impression they have possibly formed of him' (Goffman, 1967: 5). In fact, a good face-worker is someone who is able to protect both the other's face and her own, by paying constant attention to how her words impact on the addressee's face during the interaction and to how they impact the addressee's perception of the speaker's own face. Depending on the image of themselves the speakers want the others to have and on the esteem in which they hold the others, they will attempt to prevent loss of face for all participants:

> He may want to save his own face because of his emotional attachment to the image of self which it expresses, because of his pride and honor, because of the power his presumed status allows him to exert over the other participants, and so on. He may want to save the others' face because of his emotional attachment to an image of them, because he feels that his coparticipants have a moral right to this protection, or because he wants to avoid the hostility that may be directed toward him if they lose their face. He may feel that an assumption has been made that he is the sort of person who shows compassion and sympathy toward others, so that to retain his own face, he may feel obliged to be considerate of the line taken by the other participants. (Goffman, 1967: 12)

Underwood is highly preoccupied by the self-image his words or attitude might produce. Perception being everything in politics, he recurrently shows that he anticipates on how he might be perceived by others. After a phone exchange with Tusk, he confides in an aside the need to save his face by not telling Walker about Raymond Tusk's role in funnelling money to the Republicans, for telling him may lower the president's estimation of his self-worth:

> Francis: Do I tell the president? No, he'll wonder why I didn't know, which makes me look uninformed. Or he'll blame the messenger for involving him, which makes me look careless. (2.20)

As a skilled metapragmatic communicator, Frank Underwood knows the 'traffic rules of social interaction' put forward by Goffman (1967: 12). Endowed with 'metarepresentational' and 'metacommunicative awareness'

(Culpeper and Haugh, 2014: 242),[7] he is able to decipher and assess his addressees' needs and goals, and to interpret and evaluate their response. Both involve what Goffman (1967: 13) calls 'perceptiveness': 'if a person is to employ his repertoire of face-saving practices, obviously he must first become aware of the interpretations that others may have placed upon his acts and the interpretations that he ought perhaps to place upon theirs. In other words he must exercise perceptiveness.' Monitoring the addressee's reaction to one's utterances and adapting accordingly is essential in face-maintenance. Indeed to be a good communicative driver one must possess two essential qualities: considerateness (for the other's face in order to maintain it) and perceptiveness (of the effect one's speech may have on the other person).

What Francis's social interactions indeed reveal is that face-work implies not only a concern for the other's face but also, simultaneously, a concern for the self and self-presentation. In that respect, Spencer-Oatey's notion of 'rapport management', expanding both Brown & Levinson's and Leech's theories, is more integrative as it does incorporate both self and other presentation.[8] Drawing on Watzlawick et al., Spencer-Oatey (2008: 1–2) shows how communication implies not merely the transmission of information but also 'the management of social relations':

Watzlawick et al. (1967), for example, propose that all language has a *content* component and a *relationship* component. If two people have a disagreement, for instance, there will be a *content* aspect to their disagreement, which concerns the '*what*' of the disagreement, such as disagreement over the accuracy of a piece of information, or the suitability of a course of action. However, there will also be a *relationship* aspect to their disagree-

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[7] Metarepresentational awareness 'refers to reflexive *representations* of the intentional states of self and other (as in their beliefs, thoughts, desires, attitudes, intentions, etc.)'. Metacommunicative awareness involves the way self and other speak and interpret what they say. It 'refers to reflexive *interpretations* and *evaluations* of talk, which arise as a consequence of our awareness of self and other as social beings' (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014: 242).

[8] Although he concedes that his theory may be too 'other'-concerned and fail to integrate self-presentation, Leech states that concern for the other inevitably rebounds on self-presentation: '[Spencer-Oatey's 'rapport management'] does not invalidate the Leech politeness framework. However, I will also argue that my account of politeness will reflect positively on self-presentation, which I see here as S's face maintenance and enhancement, rather than maintenance and enhancement of O's face' (Leech, 2014: 86).

ment, for example, whether the expression of disagreement conveys lack of respect for the other person, whether it is interpreted as a bid for one-upmanship or whether it leads to feelings of resentment or dislike.

Francis is an expert at playing on the 'relationship component' by seeing through the other's sense of self-worth, what Spencer-Oatey calls 'quality face' that is 'a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities; e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance, etc. *Quality face* is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of such personal qualities as these, and so is closely associated with our sense of personal self-esteem' (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540). This is what he tries to teach Peter who finds it hard to campaign in Pennsylvania with a vice president (Jim Matthews) who steals the show from him instead of promoting his candidacy. Frank suggests that Peter play on the 'relationship component' rather than the 'content component':

Peter: We have fundamentally different views.
Francis: Well, look, you're not going to be able to change his ideology, but dig deeper. Jim is a proud man. Tap into that pride.
Peter: I just wish he was gone.
Francis: Well, you do whatever you think best. But whatever it is you decide, be firm and stand up for yourself. He'll respond to that at least. (1.9)

Since rational arguments will find no echo in the VP, Francis advises Peter to focus on Matthews's 'quality face'. What the whip pushes for is firm self-presentation that will have an impact on Jim's own self-image. This is here that the polite impoliteness of manipulative cajoling operates. Peter confronts the vice president in what amounts to a face-threatening act (FTA) but the very boldness of the move is meant to give Russo the image of a determined man that, by extension, reverberates on the VP's positive face. Russo presents himself as a candidate who is apt to fill in Jim's shoes as Pennsylvania governor, fighting his way through to success just as Matthews did in his time:

Peter: (in a raised voice) My point is you kept going. You hit and you proved everyone wrong. Like it or not, it's my

	name on the ticket this time, and I got the shot, and I'm gonna prove everyone wrong. Just like you did. Including you, sir. ↓I would like your support, but if you won't give it, fine (.) it won't stop me.
Vice President Matthews:	(pause: 2 s) You think it's easy for me to be here? I left the Governor's mansion right in my prime. To be what? Vice president. I thought that was a step up. But you know what? I don't have a fucking shred of real influence. I'm trotted around like a goddamn mascot, this is my home state.
Peter:	I'm offering you influence, sir. I'd like your guidance and your expertise. (.) But if that's not on the table, then, (.) with all due respect, Mr. Vice President, you should head back to Washington. (Peter leaving the room) (1.9)

Peter makes use of face-enhancing acts with the aim of finding a community of face needs and wants with his co-speaker: 'I'm gonna prove everyone wrong. Just like you did.' He both praises the ex-governor ('I'd like your guidance and expertise') and commits on-record face-threatening acts ('if you won't give it, fine' or 'you should head back to Washington') that are hardly mitigated ('with all due respect, Mr. Vice-President'). This hybrid use of face-flattering strategies with tactics that on the face of it imply a cost to O is designed to cajole-manipulate the VP into doing the right thing. By giving high value to O's feelings and opinion, Peter manages to enhance the VP's 'quality face' but he simultaneously infringes his right to be 'free from imposition' (Brown and Levinson's 'negative face'). The commissive ('I'm offering you influence') is indeed boldly associated with a threat ('But if that's not on the table, then, well with all due respect, Mr. Vice President, you should head back to Washington') and this boldness is part of the coaxing process here. Peter knew from Francis that the VP respected conviction and assertion of will. With this metapragmatic knowledge, he makes the bold move of asking the VP to leave if his wish is not satisfied in the covert hope that this serves to coax him into campaigning for him. The aim is not merely to grant the addressee high value but also to place one's self in order to generate an

image that can be attractive to the VP. In her broader conception of rapport management, Spencer-Oatey speaks of 'sociality rights', corresponding to what a person claims she is entitled to in her interactions with others, which she breaks down into two subsets:

> *Equity rights*: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about, that we are not taken advantage of or exploited, and that we receive the benefits to which we are entitled.

> *Association rights*: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them. These association rights relate partly to *interactional association/dissociation* (the type and extent of our involvement with others), so that we feel, for example, that we are entitled to an appropriate amount of conversational interaction and social chit-chat with others (e.g. not ignored on the one hand, but not overwhelmed on the other). They also relate to *affective association/dissociation* (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests). (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540)

In the White House, the VP considers that he is treated unfairly, that his self-worth is under-recognized and that he is excluded from association with the inner power circle of decision ('I don't have a fucking shred of real influence. I'm trotted around like a goddamn mascot'). Peter is here indulging the VP's sociality rights to be recognized and valued ('I'm offering you influence'). The manipulative cajoling will work on Matthews who does take the bold/impolite threat as a compliment to his proud ego through his potential successor's self-assertion. If Peter is giving a high value to Jim's wants, qualities and feelings (Leech's maxims of generosity, approbation and sympathy), he is also giving a high value to Jim's obligation to him (in contradisctinction to Leech's M6: 'give a low value to O's obligation to S') and a high value to his own (Peter's) opinion (in contradiction with the 'opinion reticence' maxim). Peter implicitly presents himself as self-assured, courageous and bold, which reflects positively on the VP's image. In a full reversal of the General Strategy of Politeness's concern for the other (that can positively reflects on the self), manipulative ingratiation implies some self-presentation that positively rebounds on the other.

Provoking *vs* Seducing

Provocation: Crushing Face Claims and 'Sociality Rights'

In Greimas's narrative configurations (see Chap. 2), manipulation is construed as an essential component. The overarching structure of manipulation indeed organizes the contractual relations between actants that according to Greimas can affect the Addressee's modal competence in two ways: what is imposed on to her is either a 'have-to' (*un devoir-faire*) or a 'want-to' (*un vouloir-faire*). In the first case, the Addresser proposes 'negative objects and judgments', which amounts to what Greimas calls 'provocation and intimidation'. In the second, she offers to the manipulated subject 'positive objects' and confers positive judgements on her modal competence; this is what Greimas calls '*séduction* or temptation' (see Greimas & Courtès, 1993: 220). In Greimas's views, *séduction* and intimidation are thus subcategories of manipulation. Taking up the manipulation continuum elaborated in the previous chapter (see Fig. 4.3, Chap. 4), *séduction* may be situated to its left and intimidation on the opposite side, as shown in Fig. 5.2. Intimidation clearly leans towards the coercive end, the ultimate goal sought after by the intimidator being to place the victim in a position where she cannot not do what is asked of her.

As a phenomenon is often best grasped through the analysis of its opposite, before dealing with *séduction*, let's first focus on its negative counterpart involving the imposition of a 'have-to' on the addressee. Compared
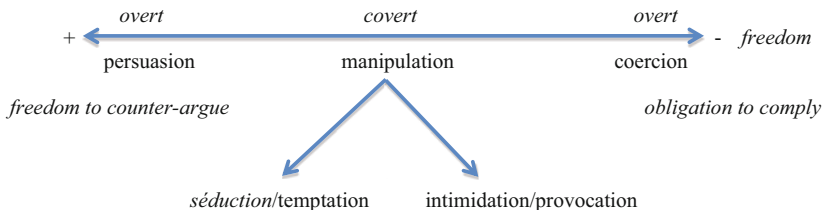
Fig. 5.2   Greimas's narrative subtypes on the manipulation continuum

with the cases of more or less covert/implicit coercive manipulation studied in the last part of Chap. 4, the next scene—in which Marty Spinella is summoned by the whip, supposedly for negotiations over the teachers' strike that has lasted for too long—reveals clearly overt, explicit provocation. The goal is here for Francis not to win over an Opponent through pos-politeness tactics but, quite the reverse, to crush him down. The setting of the scene is important as it contributes to creating an atmosphere of intimidation, the whip putting all the apparatus of power on his side: in a huge official room, he is sitting at the far end of a long rectangular table with empty seats, tapping his hands on the table at regular speed, looking ahead and refusing to acknowledge Marty's presence when he enters the room. Losing patience, Marty goes for the door as he realizes that his interlocutor has no intention of working out a compromise. Frank goes on:

Francis:	You know the difference between you and me? /…/ I've made something of myself. I have the keys to the capitol. People respect me. But you, you're still nothing. You're just an uppity dago in an expensive suit turning bricks for the union. Nobody respects the unions anymore, Marty. They're dying and no one respects (.) you. The most you'll ever make of yourself is blowing men like me, men with real power. Yes, I can smell the cock on your breath from here.
Marty:	You think you can get under my skin.
Francis:	I know I can.
Marty (walking for the door):	Kiss my ass, Frank.
Francis:	You can't afford to walk out.
Marty:	Watch me.
Francis:	I've a dead, underprivileged kid in my pocket.[9] What do you have?
Marty:	I have two million honourable teachers.
Francis:	Fair enough. But I've got something even better. (Frank slides a briefcase down the table) /…/ Open it.

[9] The balance of power is clearly in Frank's favour, as a kid (Tyler Davis) was killed while his teachers were on strike (of course, Francis spent a whole night with Doug in his office listening to police station radio in order to find one and use it against Spinella by claiming that this murder would not have happened, had this kid been in school).

Marty:	Okay, I'll play your game (he opens the briefcase, finds it contains only a brick). You're an idiot. /.../ (Marty makes for the door.)
Francis:	Stamper threw the brick, and I made sure Claire distracted my security.
Marty (turning around):	Are you kidding me? /.../ You would do something that low, Frank? (1.6)

In a preparatory phase to making him lose his cool, Francis first attacks Marty's face head-on, using what Culpeper et al. call 'on-record' impoliteness: 'bald on record impoliteness is typically deployed where there is much face at stake, and where there is an intention on the part of the speaker to attack the face of the other' (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1554).[10] Frank's goal is not here to maintain faces in 'mutual considerateness' but to enter a 'match' leading to the antagonist's 'humiliation' (Goffman, 1967: 37). Insults ('you're just an uppity dago') play the trick of demolishing Marty's quality face as a human being ('I've made something of myself. I have the keys to the capitol. People respect me. But you're still nothing') but also what Spencer-Oatey, elaborating on Brown and Levinson's positive face, calls his 'social identity face': '*Social identity face* is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of social or group roles, and is closely associated with our sense of public worth' (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540). Francis questions Marty's leadership capacity and his public worth, as he is the head of a union that is 'dying'. He deprives him of a meaningful place in society, by erasing his potential contribution to it as a union leader. In a social-psychological perspective, 'identity' is indeed to be construed in terms of meaningful and respected place in society:

> Identity thus serves to indicate that one has found a place or fits in the social world and that one has achieved a meaningful conceptual elaboration or understanding of oneself in the social world. In short, identity is an indicator of meaningful social existence. (Simon, 2004: 67–8)

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[10] As the authors specify, 'This is distinct from Brown and Levinson's bald on record strategy which is developed for *polite* purposes in fairly specific circumstances, namely, where there is little face at stake, an emergency situation, or no intention of damaging the face of the hearer' (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1554). Instances of 'off record' impoliteness are given in the next section. See also footnote 16.

The whip is trying to minimize his target's meaningful existence by reducing his contribution to the community to nothingness. The only 'place' possible for him, is on his knees, caressing powerful people in the hope of obtaining favours. Frank's use of taboo words defaces Marty even more: 'The most you'll ever make of yourself is blowing men like me, men with real power. Yes, I can smell the cock on your breath from here'.

This denial of face claims is merely the first phase in Frank's scenario. The second stage begins when he reveals to Marty (and to the viewer as well) that he had Doug throw the brick through his house window so that Spinella could be blamed for his 'disorganized labour' (see Chap. 3), which is bound to increase the union leader's anger, as the sequel to the previous extract attests:

Francis (getting closer to Marty):	I arranged the brick, Marty, just like I arranged this meeting this afternoon. (Francis getting still closer)
Marty:	Back off, Frank.
Francis	(putting his hand on the door on either side of Marty's head): Why don't you just get down on your knees where you really belong?
Marty:	Back off, Frank.
Francis:	Because the only thing you're gonna get from me is cum on your…
Marty (punching Frank):	Fuck you! (Frank on the floor, bleeding)
(Knock on the door from outside):	Everything okay in there, sir?
Marty (upset):	Look, I-I-I'll tell them you provoked me. I'll tell them you threw the brick yourself.
Francis (getting up, calmly):	And who's going to believe you? You just assaulted a United States congressman, which is a felony. But I'm not gonna press charges, Marty. Because <the strike (.) ends (.) now>. (1.6)

Frank literally impinges on Marty's self-territory, as he physically backs him up against the door, and breaches linguistic decency through the use of transgressive taboo words ('the only thing you're gonna get from me is cum on your…'). The infringement of his manhood is the last straw for Marty. He counter-attacks by pushing the intruder away with a punch in the face. Tapping into his interlocutor's male pride and self-esteem, Francis coerces him into engaging physical force. Having attacked Spinella's face all along, he turns the table in having him literally face-attack him. Body language (Martin's punch into Frank's face) leaves some tangible evidence and lays the assaulter open to sanction: 'You just assaulted a United States congressman, which is a felony.' Failing to see through Underwood's manipulative provocation and unable to rise above face sensitivities, Marty has fallen into his trap. The union leader has in the end no other choice but to comply with the whip's implicit performative: 'But I'm not gonna press charges, Marty. Because the strike ends now.' The strike is over because the assaulted congressman says so.

'Seduce Him. Give Him Your Heart. Cut It Out and Put It in His Fucking Hands'

Following Greimas's distinction, *séduction* seems to be the polar opposite of intimidation: it indeed aims at enhancing face claims and ensuring 'sociality rights'. This opposition needs to be qualified right away though, as there can be an ounce of deliberate provocation in *séduction* the better to get the other's attention (see Peter's face-enhancing and bold moves in section 'Hybrid Face Acts'). The reverse can also be true, provocation can be linked with *séduction* (see President Petrov's flirting attitude with Claire in section 'Dismissed Seduction and Fake Teasing' further in this chapter). Moreover, winning over in *House of Cards* implies being overtly persuasive but covertly coercive. Manipulative 'seducing' is thus a more paradoxical pragmatic act than its placement on the left-hand side of the continuum (Fig. 5.2) can do justice to. Besides, 'seductive' manipulation stands out from prototypical manipulation (see Chap. 4) in that it cannot be as covert. As Parret (1993:

230–1) puts it, if manipulation 'mutilates communication' because of the unavowability of its intentionality, *séduction* 'can mostly be avowable'.

At the end of the second season, facing potential charges for linking the White House to illegal financial dealings with China, Francis is close to losing everything. Tusk could name him to the prosecutor, which would send him straight to custody, shattering his dream of becoming the next president. Claire has renounced a lot (the sexual assault bill) to make the last move towards absolute power. In the following extract, she is urging Frank to do his part of the job. President Walker has discovered his deceptive VP's manipulative moves and has cut him off. Francis must regain Garret's trust at all means and use it against Tusk:

Claire: You promised me I wasn't going to have to prepare for the worst.
Francis: And I intend to keep that promise.
Claire: Well I want to be sure. I want both of us to be sure.
Francis: The only surefire way is for Walker to call him off personally.
Claire: Then make that happen.
Francis: I cannot force a man who thinks I'm his enemy to suddenly call me his friend!
Claire: I've done what I had to do. (.) Now you do what you have to do. (.) Seduce him. Give him your heart. Cut it out and put it in his FUCKING hands. (2.26)

Unlike with Marty over whom he could prevail through provocation, Francis has no such possibility with the president. Being no more in his good books, he is at a loss to re-conquer his friendship. Manipulation is of no use here as the suspicious president will see right through it. When covert manipulation has failed and outright face attack or physical attack proper (murder) are not conceivable, 'winning the heart', as suggested by Claire, seems to be the last resort. The objective is to win Walker over through seductive strategies that involve emotions and feelings in order to turn Garret from enemy to a potentially respecting friend: 'give him your heart.' The disingenuousness of the seduction (Frank cannot care less about the president's friendship as he covets not the man but the

function) transpires in Claire's shift in register: 'Give him your heart. Cut it out and put it in his FUCKING hands.'

 Francis decides to write Garret a letter—he has no access to him any more—not through the usual email or conventional letter. He intends to surprise him by using an old family typewriter. In its Latin origin (*se-ducere*[11]), 'to seduce' means to 'separate' from the rest of the group so that seducer and seduced are in a one-on-one conversation. He wants here to create an unusual intimate relationship with the president through this unmodern means of communication. Here is the first part of the letter:

> I'm writing you on an Underwood portable my father gave me when I left for the Sentinel. /…/ I've only written one other letter with these keys. It did not fail me then. I hope it will not fail me now.
>   You said I wanted to diminish you. The truth is, I don't.
>   You said I wanted to challenge you in 2016. The truth is, I don't.
>   You said I wanted the presidency for myself. The truth is (pause: 1 s, looking at the camera) I do.
>   What politician hasn't dreamed about what it would be like to take the oath of the highest office of our land. I've stared at your desk in the Oval and coveted it. The power. The prestige. Those things have a strong pull on someone like me, who came from a small South Carolina town with nothing.
>   But since you assumed office, my only aim has been to fight (.) for you. /…/ Maybe one day I'll (.) have my chance to serve as president, but not while you're the nation's leader.
>   And in you, Sir, I see a brave man. A president whom I would follow anywhere, no matter how strong the wind blows against us.
>   (pause: 3 s, sitting back, thinking over) (2.26)

On the surface, this manipulative letter seems to violate some of the precepts of manipulation (see Chap. 4), such as 'Be unclear and indirect if this helps you get away with accountability. Assign responsibility to others (indirect speech). Hint, imply, insinuate for that purpose'. Francis

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[11] 'Latin *sēdūcĕre* to lead aside or away: To lead (a person) astray in conduct or belief; to draw away *from* the right or intended course of action *to* or *into* a wrong one; to tempt, entice, or beguile *to do* something wrong, foolish, or unintended' (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

indeed decides to assume responsibility for what he has said ('I said') and clearly answer the other's criticism ('you said') and to be frank about his intention (his desire to be some day president):

> You said I wanted to diminish you. The truth is, I don't.
> You said I wanted to challenge you in 2016. The truth is, I don't.
> You said I wanted the presidency for myself. The truth is, I do.

The unexpected third confession ('the truth is, I do') disrupts the anaphoric structure and thus lays emphasis on the truthfulness of his desire. This true revelation comes all the more as a surprise (to the viewers) as he pronounces 'I do' while looking at the camera. By admitting to that bit, that is to say by selecting the truth he can admit to, he makes the other 'truths' (which are lies) appear as truth. The admission of one truth indeed makes the other preceding ones credible by association. But not to scare the president off, he quickly states that this ambition concerns the far future.

Setting the dramatic scene—a poor child with a sad story, he blends it in with the allure for the highest office: 'What politician hasn't dreamed about what it would be like to take the oath of the highest office of our land? I've stared at your desk in the Oval and coveted it. The power. The prestige. Those things have a strong pull on someone like me, who came from a small South Carolina town with nothing.' Hiding behind what constitutes the nature of 'any' politician, Frank puts forward an *Argumentum ad populum* that displays his ambition as shared by all politicians and hence as only natural. But for now, the VP presents himself as a mere disciple to a prophet, ready to follow the president on the trail of power 'wherever he is going': 'in you, Sir, I see a brave man. A president whom I would follow anywhere, no matter how strong the wind blows against us,' the metaphor of the wind as counterforce adding to the strength of his loyalty. In this passage, Francis uses pos-politeness consisting in maximizing praise of the other—the president is a charismatic leader that one would support till the end, and minimizing praise of the self—Francis will wait in line for his time, if it comes.

 Interestingly, Francis chooses to focus on the past in the second part of his letter, lingering on an episode that happened in his childhood, thus invoking emotional personal value that situates the 'seduction' within the sphere of the intimate:

> I want to tell you something I have never told anyone. When I was 13, I walked in on my father in the barn. There was a shotgun in his mouth. He waved me over. 'Come here, Francis,' he said, 'Pull the trigger for me.' /…/ I said, 'No, Pop,' and walked out. /…/ The next seven years were hell for my father, but even more hell for my mother and me. /…/ My only regret in life is that I didn't pull that trigger. He would have been better off in the grave, and we would have been better off without him.
>
>   I'm not going to put you in the same position as my father put me in. You will find enclosed, on a separate sheet, a confession to the crimes you have been accused of. They're false words but my signature will make them true. Use them if you must.
>
>   /…/ I said I would take the fall for you, and now I give you the means to make that happen. I am pulling the trigger myself.
>
>   /…/ Sometimes we must sacrifice ourselves for the greater good. It is my honour to make such a sacrifice now. (2.26)

He confides in the president a secret 'he has never told anyone' to make the addressee feel special. As Parret (1993: 225) indicates in his study, seduction 'presupposes the staging and dramatization of the secret'. His confession constitutes a negative face-threatening act—an infringement of the addressee's 'territory'—as it can be construed as an imposed 'gift' the president is now encumbered with. Frank's direct and shameless revelation of inner feelings amounts here to no short than confessing a regret of not having killed his father: 'My only regret in life is that I didn't pull that trigger.' The effect of this revelation on the president can be perceived on screen as he is shown reading the letter while Francis is typing it: the sentence brings Garret to stop reading and look in vacant space as if taken aback by such plain-spokenness. If covert manipulation requires to conceal inner feelings, here Francis purposely opens up, adopting the reverse of one of Leech's polite maxims according to which one is supposed to 'give a high value to O's feelings' and 'a low value' to one's own (Leech, 2014: 91). By recalling this sad episode of a father asking his own child

to kill him, Francis is asking for sympathy. He has no reticence in confessing his 'feelings'—feelings that sound true because they are so guilty: 'He would've been better off in the grave, and we would have been better off without him.' He offers a face to the president he has never offered before, as he never allows himself to express feelings and get personal. Through the strategic confession, he accepts to appear vulnerable in the hope that, according to the 'reciprocity principle' (Regan, 1971), Walker will find himself indebted and somehow give back. The reciprocity principle is indeed a tactic that consists in eliciting 'a sense of obligation'. Working on violent aggression in the UK TV talk show *Kilroy*, here is how García Gómez defines this principle:

> This principle is based on the social norm that we should treat others the way they treat us; that is to say, the tactic consists in creating a sense of obligation in someone. In talk show verbal conflict sequences, guests seem to induce reciprocity persuasion technique by sharing information. They tend to disclose some piece of personal information that the opponent does not have and would find valuable. Linguistically speaking, elicitations and informatives are connected with the reciprocity persuasion technique and are used to share a secret with those guests that held an opposing point of view. (García Gómez, 2008: 75)

Offering pieces of personal history constitutes 'a form of giving and can create a strong desire on the part of the [other] to share information, open up, or give back in some other way' (García Gómez, 2008: 75). Francis is betting on Garret's potential 'desire to reciprocate'.

This is a bold move the VP adopts here as he puts it in Garret's hand the possibility to politically 'kill' him. Indeed Francis is hyperbolically giving himself up, body and soul, to save the president's: he offers Garret the opportunity to execute the sacrifice by using the accompanying letter (which takes the blame off the president's shoulders). Frank wants to appear as the sincere one who carries out his promise ('I said I would take the fall for you, and now I give you the means to make that happen'), holding himself accountable for what he said. Usually depersonalizing the debate to escape responsibility through 'defocalization', he by contrast keeps using the personal pronoun 'I' in the letter. In the conclusion,

after seeming to present his act as part of a larger attitude 'we' should all have, he uses the possessive adjective 'my' to show his personal implication and loyalty: 'sometimes we must sacrifice ourselves for the greater good. It is *my* honor to make such a sacrifice now' (my emphasis).

However the martyr-like sacrifice Francis is faking is both risky (the president could well use the other letter against him to save himself) and without risks (the sacrifice is so substantial that it may create an obligation of clemency in the addressee). This echoes the scene of the incredible wooing of Lady Anne by Richard III—of whom he has just killed the husband (and father-in-law), in which the murderer offers his sword for Lady Anne to carry out what she said she wanted all along: his death. Of course Richard only presents his chest after having attenuated her rage by shameless flattery:

> Lo here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword
> Which if thou please to hide in this true breast,
> And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
> I lay naked to the deadly stroke,
> And humbly beg the death upon my knee.
> [*Kneels*;] *he lays his breast open*, *she offers*
> *at* [*it*] *with his sword.*
> Nay, do not pause, for I did kill King Henry—
> But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.
> Nay, now dispatch: 'twas I that stabb'd young
> Edward—
> But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.
> *She falls the sword.*
> Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act I, scene II, v. 178–86

Frank's homoerotic seduction of the president is, of course, a political seduction, in the same way as Richard's seduction is both erotic and political as he aims at seducing not only a woman but political power.[12] Acts and words are thus generously offered on Frank's part. Nevertheless,

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[12]Basing his analysis on Bene and Deleuze (1979)'s comment on the scene, Lecercle (forthcoming, 2017) shows that Richard has made up a war machine to which Lady Anne succumbs, instead of obediently remaining under the domination of a State Apparatus that the coffin of the king nearby embodies.

this act of devotion does not constitute immediate sacrifice—the VP did not send the letter himself directly to the press for instance—just like Richard, he leaves it instead to the addressee's responsibility whether to perform the act. It thus falls in the category of 'soliciting' that Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 243) define thus:

> where another social action, such as inviting, complimenting, complaining or accounting, is embedded within a frame where the speaker is trying to get the recipient to undertake responsibility for the act in question. We all know that there is a big difference between inviting someone and, for instance, getting them to invite us somewhere.

So Frank's assuming responsibility is here to be qualified. 'I'm pulling the trigger myself' is anything but truthful: his self-sacrifice is 'solicited' more than real.

After reading the letter, Tricia Walker gives a look at her husband that suggests she has been troubled by it. The letter brings them to reconsider the condemnation of their former friend. Although they are well aware that it could be one more covert manipulative move from the one who has become a deceptive manipulator in their eyes, the letter manages to sow a doubt: someone could not possibly take the risk of stating in black and white he is ready to take all the blame *and* be manipulative. Just as Lady Anne cannot bring herself to kill somebody that praises her to the skies, the president finds it hard to push back somebody that has made such a confession and is ready to sacrifice himself in his place. Garret calls Francis and asks for proof in Congress and 'not just falling on the sword' (2.26). The VP manages to reconquer lost ground in the enemy's territory, imposing himself again as a faithful 'friend'. In the phone conversation below, he tells the president that the private letter has shown who he truly is:

Francis: I meant every syllable. I wanted you to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that I'm willing to do whatever is necessary.
President: Then why can't I shake the shadow?
Francis: Because I'm a LIAR, sir. Because I lack scruples and some would even say compassion. But that's just the image that I

> present to the world because it elicits fear and respect. But it is NOT who I am. My hope was that my letter (.) would prove that to you. (2.26)

Pretending to reveal at last his 'true self' to the president that he goes to great pains to hide on the scene of politics, Francis goes on with the truth-revealing confession mode: 'Because I'm a liar', 'Because I lack scruples and some would even say compassion'. In revealing that lying and lack of compassion are for him a protective mechanism that only aims at producing some perlocutionary effects, he pretends to remove the mask of deception: 'that's just the image that I present to the world because it elicits fear and respect.' Although it is hard to see how lies can generate respect, the VP's unexpected confession (of his being a liar) seems to numb the president's 'cognitive vigilance' (see Sperber et al., 2014). Again by uncovering some of his manipulative moves (and metapragmatic skills), Frank attempts to clear up the president's last doubts, inducing false beliefs about his outspokenness. The self Frank presents to his interlocutor is just one more image that he specifically constructs here to win the president over. Garret eventually yields to the manipulator's falsely honest words, which will send him careening towards his own ruin.

Manipulation Seen Through

Fake Pos-Politeness Exposed

Frank's formidable manipulative strategies do not engender automatic success. They sometimes fail in their endeavour to have the others do or think what he intends them to do or think. The perlocutionary effect they produce is not always the one expected. In the two scenes proposed in the following paragraphs, manipulation backfires. In the first, Frank's flattery is met with point-blank rejection. In the second, the victim has already fallen prey to the VP's manipulation in the past and refuses to be taken in again.

In the first exchange, Frank has invited over the Indian tribe descendent Dan Lanagin whom he wants to persuade to re-fund the Democrats' camp as he always did. He lets him know that he will forget about Dan's malfeasance (money laundering in his casino, in association with Feng and Tusk) if he rechannels money to the right camp:

Francis:	Dan! How are you?
Dan Lanagin:	Good.
Francis:	Care for a drink?
Dan:	I'm good.
Francis:	Well, let's go into the living room. It's more cozy.
Dan:	I'm just fine where I am.
Francis:	All right. /…/ I'm sure you've told Raymond that I asked you here.
Dan:	Raymond who?
Francis:	Oh, you don't have to pretend, Dan. Feng confirmed what you're up to.
Dan:	Name doesn't ring a bell.
Francis:	I have flight records. One of his planes to Kansas City on multiple occasions. Do we really have to play this game?
Dan:	I came here because I thought you might have something to offer. Why don't we just skip to that part?
Francis:	(pause: 1 s) You've been a loyal contributor, Dan. You've thrown us fund-raisers, there are pictures of you and I shaking hands. So whatever you've done this quarter (.) can be forgotten. But I need the money to stop flowing in the wrong direction.
Dan:	I'm still waiting for the offer. (2.20)

Inviting Dan Lanagin to his own place, offering him a drink and a cosy place to discuss what needs to be discussed is part of Frank's usual way of instituting 'rapport management' (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 543). He establishes the right conditions of social norms so that the request that is the object of the conversation (stop giving money to the Republicans) can have a better chance of being received positively. Lanagin's refusal to accept the polite offers ('Care for a drink', 'let's go into the living-room') is the first breach of what Spencer-Oatey (2008: 13) calls 'sociality rights

and obligations' that is to say what Frank is socially entitled to and what he can expect from a host that he has invited over. I am here referring to one of the three main components that Spencer-Oatey identifies as interconnected in any 'rapport management': the 'management of sociality rights and obligations', the 'management of face' and the 'management of interactional goals'. As far as the first is concerned, Dan Lanagin has obviously no intention of maintaining harmonious social relations. As for the management of interactional goals, he is the one who directs the conversation, choosing when to interrupt it and when to re-channel the topic in order to manage his own goals. In Burton (1980: 103)'s terms, he uses 'challenging moves' as he purposefully fails to fulfil the expectations raised by Frank's initiations: 'I'm still waiting for the offer.' He ignores 'turn-taking rules' by stealing the floor from Francis (Sacks et al., 1974): 'Why don't we just skip to that part.' As for 'the management of face', he could not care less about what his interlocutor thinks of him or the effect of his impolite remarks on the vice president. His goal is overtly to damage his face by adopting 'a rapport-neglect orientation' that shows poor concern 'for the quality of the relationship' between them (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 32–3). Lanagin's self-interest flagrantly outweighs any concern for face needs.

Indeed the VP's preparatory phase—first mentioning Feng and Tusk to let him know that he is aware of what goes on behind the scenes—is cut right through by Lanagin who wishes to impose his own agenda: 'I came here because I thought you might have something to offer.' He is ignoring Frank's questions by overtly 'opting out' in Grice's terms. In doing so he can manage to control the topic of the conversation. His 'communication style' is blunt, cold and assertive and sometimes elliptic ('name doesn't ring a bell'). He turns a deaf ear to Francis's compliment as mitigating 'preparator' to his request ('You've been a loyal contributor'). Lanagin sees right through the VP's attempt at winning him over and opposes dispreferred answers (disagreement, denial or rejection) to Frank's implications and offers, such as the non-cooperative answer 'Raymond who?' for instance.

As the conversation is not going well, Frank must relinquish his threatening tone and the implication of disloyalty ('there are pictures of you and I shaking hands') in favour of more polite strategies:

Francis: You're a business man, Dan, so I know your primary concern is profits.

Dan: That's right.

Francis: But I'm offering you something that's far more valuable than money, a direct line to the White House.

Dan: That sounds vague to me.

Francis: I have influence over the BIA[13], over federal gambling legislation.

Dan: The sort of influence that my contributions have already bought.

Francis: Not with my direct involvement and the president's (.) ea:r.

Dan: You know what I like about money? I can stack it (.) on a table, like this one. I can measure it (.) with a yardstick. I can see it (.) smell it (.) buy things with it. /.../ Unless you can offer more money than Tusk, and I don't think that you can, there's little left for us to talk about.

Francis: I'm offering you an alliance with a man who goes to work every day ↑at 600 Pennsylvania Avenue!

Dan: I don't place my faith in any white man. Especially when they work for the federal government. (2.20)

The use of strategic politeness on Frank's part is to be conceived, in Brown and Levinson's terms, as a 'social accelerator', designed to try to 'befriend' Lanagin: 'positive-politeness techniques are usable not only for FTA redress, but in general as a kind of social accelerator, where S, in using them, indicates that he wants to "come closer" to H' (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 103). This tactic recurrently used by Frank is here systematically met with 'marked rudeness'[14] (Terkourafi, 2008: 70). Trying to win the day, Francis attempts a final strategy:

Francis: I am just like you, Dan. I know what it means to start from nothing, to have to fight [your way to…

Dan: You know nothing] about what it means to be me. Your version of nothing was light years ahead of where I started.

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[13] BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs.

[14] The author defines it thus: '*Marked rudeness* or *rudeness proper* occurs when the expression used is not conventionalized relative to the context of occurrence; following recognition of the speaker's face-threatening intention by the hearer, marked rudeness threatens the addressee's face.'

Francis: I respect you, Dan. I take you [seriously…
Dan: I'll let] you know when I give a fuck about your respect.
Francis: (pause: 2 s) ↑Holliday? =Show=Lanagin=out=.
Dan: I know where the (.) back door is. (2.20)

Not perceiving the image his interlocutor may have of him as something relevant to him, Lanagin opposes ultimate rudeness to Francis's last attempt at befriending him, which brings the VP to send off his visitor.

To be theoretically more specific, in the final two quotes, the VP's persuasive tactics partake of the following 'positive politeness'[15] substrategies (detailed in Brown & Gilman, 1989: 165):

- 'assert knowledge of the hearer's wants and indicate you are taking account of them': 'You're a business man, Dan. I know your primary concern is profits', which seems to be working since Dan answers positively.
- 'intensify the interest of the hearer in the speaker's contribution.' Here Francis opts for 'a degree model of argument' (Cockcroft & Cockroft, 2014: 118) by comparing two forms of offer: 'But I'm offering you something that's far more valuable than money, a direct line to the White House.'
- 'give something desired: gifts, position, sympathy, understanding'. Frank is reasserting his argument by indicating that nobody can give him a closer position to power ('with my direct involvement and the president's ear', 'I'm offering you an alliance with someone who goes to work every day at 600 Pennsylvania Avenue').
- 'assert common ground.' As the VP sees the conversation is not going well, he adopts yet another strategy that consists in finding some similar face wants with Dan in order to reduce the distance between them and warm up the icy atmosphere: 'I am just like you, Dan. I know what it means to start from nothing, to have to fight….'

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[15] I'm referring here to Brown and Levinson's definition of 'positive politeness': 'Positive politeness is redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought as desirable. Redress consists in partially satisfying that desire by communicating that one's own wants (or some of them) are in some respects similar to the addressee's wants' (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 101).

 – 'exaggerate sympathy, approval, etc.' Francis is trying to indulge the co-speaker's face needs by enhancing his positive face: 'I respect you, Dan. I take you seriously.'

All these strategies are lost on Lanagin who is reversing the ratio of power. Indeed, he consistently counters Frank's positive politeness strategies with 'on record impoliteness'[16] aiming at attacking the other's face or denying him his face wants and rights. Among the impolite blows thrown to Francis are the following realisations (drawn or adapted from Culpeper, 1996 and Culpeper et al., 2003):

 – Ignore the other's offer. For Lanagin, the virtual offer Francis is giving him cannot be compared with concrete money that can be piled up on a table: 'You know what I like about money? I can stack it on a table, like this one. I can measure it with a yardstick. I can see it, smell it, buy things with it.'
 – Dissociate yourself from the other/deny in-group status. Whilst Francis is trying to decrease the social distance between them by assuming common ground, Dan is re-establishing this distance, indicating that Frank's life has nothing that can be likened to his: 'You know nothing about what it means to be me. Your version of nothing was light years ahead of where I started.' In Spencer-Oatey's terms, Lanagin perceives the intimacy and proximity that Francis is trying to create between them as infringing his 'sociality rights'. He does not appreciate the 'unwarranted level of assumed intimacy', which constitutes an infringement of his 'association rights' that is 'sociality entitlements regarding appropriate degree of affective

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[16] I'm here using Bousfield's simplified two-fold 'overarching tactics' that transcend the model of superstrategies Culpeper (1996, 2005) and Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichman (2003) have put forward, by combining positive and negative face-oriented strategies: '(1) On-record impoliteness: The use of strategies designed to *explicitly* (a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant, or some combination thereof. The attack is made in an unambiguous way given the context in which it occurs. (2) off-record impoliteness: The use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant's face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature […] and can be cancelled' (Bousfield, 2008: 138). Spencer-Oatey's (2002) categories (see section 'Hybrid Face Acts') have overlaps with both positive and negative impoliteness, which renders their distinction 'superfluous' according to Bousfield (2008: 137).

involvement' (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 20). Frank's polite strategy turns out to be more rapport threatening than enhancing.

– Dispraise the other or some entity in which he has invested face: 'I don't place my faith in any white man. Especially one that works for the federal government.' What Francis had not anticipated is Dan's distrust for the federal government and the power it embodies, which is precisely where the VP has 'invested face'. So what the latter can offer does not represent anything for Lanagin and cannot be seen as a good negotiation gift. The characters differ in their placement of power and money on their respective scale of values. The rudeness that ensues on Lanagin's part results from this 'clash of expectations' that proceeds from Frank's 'misidentification' of Lanagin's cultural identity and value system (see Bousfield, 2008: 133). Dan here tramples all that is dear to the VP's 'sociality face'.

– Make the other feel uncomfortable/ridicule his opinion. Dan exercises power over his interlocutor by challenging the power that Frank thinks he has over him.[17] Indifferent to his interpersonal considerateness, Lanagin offends him by overtly stating how poorly he thinks of his opinion: 'I'll let you know when I give a fuck about your respect.' Dan's familiarity ('give a fuck'), decreasing the formality of the exchange, affects the image the VP has of himself as a respected man whose institutional power can exert an influence over others. Dan's rude language brings the conversation to a close. Compared with the friendly ('Dan!') of the beginning, in the closing sequence Francis abruptly and indirectly dismisses his guest through an address to his security man with the distancing last name 'Show Lanagin out.'

After his host's departure, Francis breaks his miniature civil war battlefield, which shows he has been affected by this failure at cajoling his Opponent. This emotional outburst may indeed come as a surprise to

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[17] Power indeed inheres in impoliteness, as Bousfield (2008: 150) makes clear: 'when we are (sincerely) impolite, we are either (a) creating/activating/re-activating some aspect of our own *relative power*, or (b) we are *challenging someone over their* (*assumption of*) *power* (or [c] a combination of both).'

the viewer who has been accustomed to a protagonist making it a duty to keep a cool head under all circumstances.

What this exchange brings out is the difference between what Fairclough (1989: 43) calls power *in* language and power *behind* language. At the beginning of the conversation, Francis is confident in his ability to exert and embody power (the presidential institutional power *behind* discourse) and thinks it will contribute to winning his co-speaker over. He has not anticipated Lanagin's counter-interpellation through the power of language (see Chap. 2). The latter's resistance gives an illustration to Arundale's 'Conjoint Co-constituting Model of Communication'. As Lanagin does not interpret his utterances the way he wishes him to, Francis must adapt his strategies, thus evincing that interpreting in interaction is 'a dynamic evolving cognitive process' that can hardly be preempted (Arundale, 2010: 2081).[18] In this exchange with Lanagin who is indifferent to federal power, power relations are constituted *in* language through interactional and relational face-work. The Indian descendent redefines and renegotiates the position that Frank wants to assign him. As it turns out, the VP has got it all wrong about his interlocutor's face wants, which brings the latter to introduce social distance and turn power hierarchy upside down. Arundale (2010: 2094) asserts, 'power and social distance are conceptualized instead as conjointly co-constituted in specific relationships, and as matters of contextual face interpreting brought into play by the participants.'

However, contrary to what Arundale's model[19] can let think, and as Spencer-Oatey (2011: 3575) rightly indicates, face is not merely endogenous to talk-in-interaction. It can be 'planned or reflected upon' outside talk-in-interaction and it can involve 'person-centred attributes'. Face

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[18] Arundale's model highlights 'the ever present potential that the next adjacent utterance will engender retroactive modifying of the meanings and actions of prior utterances that neither participants could have anticipated' (Arundale, 2010: 2085). Kádár and Haugh (2013: 112) speak of incrementality ('the way in which speakers adjust or modify their talk in the light of how the progressive uttering of units of talk is received by other participants') and sequentiality ('the way in which current turns or utterances are always understood relative to prior or subsequent talk, particularly talk that is contiguous').

[19] Arundale's Face Constituting Theory conceptualizes face 'as a social phenomenon arising in the conjoint co-constituting of human relationships, rather than as an individual phenomenon involving person-centered attributes' (Arundale, 2010: 2085).

indeed also exists independently of conversation under the form of what Maingueneau (1999: 78) calls 'pre-discursive ethos', that is to say, the image one has of other people prior to their speech/utterances—and that the speech/utterances will confirm or disconfirm. In other words, the co-speaker or reader will approach a Text with pre-notions of how to read it given the ethos the author/speaker is endowed with (see also Amossy, 2000). If face could be constituted totally anew through each interaction, it would mean that prior interactions and interpersonal history had no influence whatsoever. In reality, as Graham (2007: 758) indicates in his study of computer-mediated exchanges, interpretation is based on previous behaviour and reactions that produce certain expectations: 'all interactions are contextualized and interpreted within the frame of previous interactions and the expectations that grow out of them.'

In fact, in order to achieve conviction and persuasion,[20] the speaker must inspire trust. A message cannot in itself inspire trust. It is always correlated to an evaluation of the sincerity and the competence of its source (see Paglieri et al., 2014: 177). Although Francis has hardened trust-building skills, he sometimes forgets that a prior break of trust can forever leave a scar on any possible further interaction with the victim. Indeed in the following scene, he tries to convince Donald Blythe—whom he betrayed on a previous occasion (the education bill)—to vote in favour of his entitlement bill. Donald sees through Frank's overused strategies. The prior breach of trust with him cannot be erased as easily as Francis would like it to be. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998: 206) interpret trust as a 'cooperative dance' where the two players need to waltz 'in synchronicity', otherwise they will distance each other.[21] Here Donald refuses to dance along:

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[20] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2008: 36) make a fine distinction between persuading and convincing: persuasive argumentation merely works on a particular audience whereas a convincing argument is supposed to obtain consent from every reasonable human being. Guilbert (2015: 86) distinguishes between 'argumentation-conviction' on one pole of the argumentative continuum, consisting in using refutable rational arguments and 'argumentation-persuasion' on another aiming at making the audience believe something through general truths and self-evidence. Breton (1999) calls this second pole 'manipulation' whereas, for Guilbert, manipulation is at the most extreme end of the 'argumentation-persuasion' pole.

[21] 'Facework management skills is a cooperative dance that needs both players to tango smoothly together. To dance in synchronicity, conflict disputants need to master trust-building skills. If dis-

| Francis: | Now I can understand if you (.) might hold a grudge. |
| Donald: | I don't hold grudges, Frank. I just don't negotiate with people who are fundamentally deceptive. (2.17) |

Even before Francis puts forward his arguments, Donald confers onto him a pre-discursive ethos of deceptiveness and untrustworthiness. Despite the VP's willingness to erase the slate, trust can hardly be 'repaired'. The former victim is turning off his 'listening devices' (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998: 206):

Francis:	Can we start over? (.) May I offer you an apology?
Donald:	Deaf ears, Frank. /…/ I will be damned if I will make the same mistake twice.
Francis:	This sort of stubbornness makes you no better than the Tea Party. (Same episode)

Seeing his strategy does not work, Francis switches to personal matters: Donald is going through hard times with his wife suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The protagonist confesses to the viewer he forgot that pathos often prevailed over logos:

Francis:	(aside) I should have thought of this before. Appeal to the heart, not the brain.
	(To Donald) Forgive my ignorance, but (.) has there been any progress with research?
Donald:	Some, genetic testing, vascular manipulation. But it's slow. They won't come up with anything in time for Marjory. We're focusing on quality of life. /…/
Francis:	I admire your convictions, Donald. You're a rare breed nowadays.
Donald:	It didn't sound that way when you were comparing us to the Tea Party.
Francis:	I was being unfair. You're not a reactionary. You're a progressive.
Donald:	(.) I see where this is going.

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putants do not trust each other, they tend to move away (cognitively, affectively and physically) from each other rather than struggle-along with each other' (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998: 206).

Francis:	How do you mean?
Donald:	When you've been in the wasteland as long as I have, you become immune to flattery.
Francis:	I know you think I'm fundamentally deceptive, but I am capable of a genuine compliment.
Donald:	Then I will take it as one, but it won't soften my resolve. (Same episode)

Donald sees through Frank's strategic positive and negative politeness substrategies[22] that consist in 'seeking agreement in safe topics' (the research on Alzheimer's) and 'noticing admirable qualities' ('I admire your convictions, Donald. You're a rare breed nowadays') or offering an apology ('Admit the impingement, express reluctance and ask forgiveness'): 'I was being unfair. You're not a reactionary. You're a progressive.' He cannot believe Frank is capable of genuine compliments. Having been deceived in the past, he construes face-enhancing acts as part of his interlocutor's selfish goals masquerading as 'You-First' concerns. Indeed Underwood will never get what he wants from Blythe in the end, the trust line having been crossed to a point of no return.

This bold attempt at trust repair is part of the Underwoods' capacity to erase a slate easily and to turn enemies into friends with an off-putting rapidity (see Chap. 2). Unlike Donald, they do not let past misdeeds affect them in any way and are ready to forget if those who damaged them in the past can be of help today. Seeing that her sexual assault bill cannot be passed because of Jackie's resistance for instance, Claire decides to go and see her and offer an apology. In pragmatic Austinian theory, this act could be said to be infelicitous because of Claire's insincerity. The viewer understands later that the Underwoods need Jackie to whip the Democratic congresspeople in favour of the president's impeachment so that Francis can become president. So this (pseudo)apology is in fact a trust restoring strategy that is disconnected from any affect for the Underwoods. Higher-level goals impel the couple not to be affected too much by temporary emotions stemming from damage to their faces. Apologizing to Jackie is a costly price worth paying for Claire in prepa-

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[22] See (Brown & Gilman, 1989: 165).

ration for a greater ulterior benefit. Manipulative apologies thus do not ensue from a deeply heart-felt belief that some wrong has been done to the other. They are simply designed to re-establish some equilibrium in a relationship.

Dismissed Seduction and Fake Teasing

In the third season, the President of the United States of America, Frank Underwood, invites Russian President Viktor Petrov to the White House to engage negotiations about a joint peacekeeping operation in the Jordan Valley. After setting a foot on the American soil, Petrov makes clear that he cannot agree to a proposal that would be detrimental to Russia's sphere of influence in the Middle East. Despite this blunt refusal, Francis does not despair of negotiating a deal. Just before the official dinner at the White House, he lets Claire know that persuasion on his part will not be enough and he will need her to use seductive strategies in order to rub him up the right way:

> Francis: He said no. First word out of his mouth.
> Claire: No to everything?
> Francis: Oh he might just be playing mind games, trying to throw me off balance, but this is a guy who was brought up through the KGB after all. We're gonna have to have you and Cathy use the light touch. We need to massage this. (3.29)

Francis is clearly asking his wife and the Secretary of State, who is also a woman, to use the 'soft touch' of seduction to cajole Petrov into agreeing to a joint force with the USA. Sitting next to him at the dinner in honour of the host's state visit, Claire tries to create some form of intimacy with Petrov by approaching private matters: 'Viktor, tell me, are you in love?'. However the covert reason for Claire's 'light touch' is pierced through by Petrov:

> Viktor: So, this is what he does? He leaves the seduction to you. Isn't there a (.) a word for that in English?
> Claire: For what?

Viktor: 'Pimping,' yes? He's pimping you out.

Claire: (pause: 1 s) How charming you are.

Viktor: Thank you. And you make a much better First Lady than ambassador, from what my people tell me. (pause: 2 s) Only teasing. (to the waiter) More wine (.) for the ambassador, (.) please. (Same episode)

Petrov overtly indicates that he has perceived the hidden goal. Directness even turns into utter rudeness when he suggests that Claire is being used as a prostitute by her husband. In the specific activity type of a diplomatic conversation within the international context of the cold American–Russian relations, Petrov knows that Claire's hands are tied. She cannot make a scene or exhibit the same level of impoliteness, as any such affront on her part could endanger the whole Jordan Valley plan. Petrov exploits his position of strength by pushing Claire to the edge. Keeping on smiling for appearances' sake, she chooses irony ('How charming you are') as the surest way to convey her negative evaluation of Petrov's attitude in a polite way. Following Leech's definition indeed, 'irony maintains courtesy on the surface level of *what is said*, but at a deeper level is calculated to imply a negative evaluation' (Leech, 2014: 100). In this little game of mock politeness, Viktor fakes not to perceive the irony and pretends to take the overt untruthfulness of Claire's remark (Viktor is certainly not charming) as a true compliment: 'Thank you.'

Petrov's cruel manipulation goes further. Claire has been named UN ambassador for the USA by her own husband, a job she eagerly desired to occupy but for which she knows she has to prove her worth vis-à-vis those who deem her illegitimate. Viktor's next remark thus presses right where it hurts: 'And you make a much better First Lady than ambassador, from what my people tell me.' As he knows he has gone beyond the bounds of politeness with this face-damaging remark, he tries to repair it by showing he meant it as a joke: 'only teasing.' However this impolite blow to Claire's positive face can hardly be reframed within a humorous context. Petrov's biting remark does 'convey relevant meaning outside the humorous frame' (Dynel, 2014: 626–7). Although it presents itself 'under the "only joking" pretence', it is seriously meant to hurt Claire. If 'real' teasing aims at fostering solidarity (this unaggressive discursive practice is then quite close

to banter), the metalinguistic use of the phrase ('only teasing') constitutes here a fake disengagement from his previous utterance. There is indeed a total mismatch between the face-damaging remark and the joke interpretation: the slate cannot be so easily erased as the scathing remark does affect a part of who Claire is. To speak like Culpeper (2011: 208), 'the contextual conditions that sustain [mock] impoliteness do not apply.' Teasing (or mock impoliteness) fails here to cancel the underlying violence of Petrov's genuine impoliteness. He obviously enjoys what I will call mock mock impoliteness since his teasing (mock impoliteness) is clearly mock teasing: he does aim at face-damaging because he takes a perverse pleasure in it. He thus feigns feigned impoliteness.[23] His remarks are not 'obviously untrue' and impoliteness that he presents as fake must be in fact taken at face value.

Claire does not offer a tit-for-tat response to this face-damaging form of teasing[24] right away. Later on however, Petrov is making a vodka toast in the Russian tradition, leading all the guests to follow his lead, by first drinking, then sniffing bread, whistling, sniffing one's sleeve and finally eating a pickle. Apparently enjoying holding the floor, he is the one who 'selects' (Sacks et al., 1974) the next speakers to make a toast. He first interpellates the vice president (Donald Blythe) who stammers a few words, and then calls upon Claire:

Petrov: Now, you, Mr. Vice President. A toast.
Donald: Oh! Uh-um-uh, to-uh further cooperation between our two
            countries and, uh continued-uh-uh. (laughs) Oh, hell. Here is
            how! (lifting his glass and drinking) (laughs)
Petrov: Again (refill). Now, you, (pause: 1 s) Mrs. Underwood.
Claire: To President Petrov and his (.) little pickle. (laughs) (3.29)

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[23] This is close to what, in his analysis of Dr. House's cues, Richardson (2010: 178–9) calls 'fake banter': 'Fake banter, a form of speech that could, like real banter, be asking a hearer to discount the impoliteness and hear it instead as solidarity or intimacy, but which, on the other hand, and unlike real banter, bases itself on beliefs that are *not* obviously untrue, but about which there is some doubt or some problem.' Except that House's provocative remarks are not always supposed to be taken seriously (this is part of the character's self-attributes). By contrast in *House of Cards*, Petrov means to be hurtful while pretending to perform the communicative function of joking intimacy, that is why I'd rather speak of mock mock impoliteness, as he feigns to adopt feigned impoliteness.

[24] As Dynel (2008) points out, 'teasing' has the capacity to be either face-damaging or face-supportive.

Claire's annoyance with Petrov shows through the use of off-record impoliteness in her response[25]. The damage she inflicts on Petrov's face is indirectly carried in an implicature which has the immense advantage of being deniable (the pickle is indeed part of the Russian toasting tradition just evoked by Petrov), but the use of the adjective 'little' does convey that Claire's intention is to get at Petrov's face. This attack on his manly attribute symbolically redounds on his stature as a powerful statesman. As this potentially humiliating face-attack is metaphorically conveyed, it allows Petrov to save face. He pretends not to be affected by it by continuing on the joking mode, although his face reveals that he has perfectly understood the implicature. The complicit, yet disapproving look Francis is giving Claire attests to the fact that her face-damage intention is clearly outweighing the joking interpretation. Petrov's teasing/flirting game with Claire, which is soft on the surface and violent just underneath, reaches its pinnacle when he forces a kiss on her mouth after inviting her for a dance at the White House Residence, showing he is the one in charge of seduction. Although Francis is not impressed by this infringement of her wife's intimate 'territory', he keeps his mouth shut for political and diplomatic reasons. In a private conversation with Petrov later on, he indeed evinces that his function constrains him to conceal his true feelings behind diplomatic politeness and laughter:

Francis:	Do you kiss the wife of every president you meet?
Petrov:	Oh. Not every president's wife looks like yours. (laughs)
Francis	(turning around, looking up at the camera): I'd push him down the stairs and light his broken body on fire just to watch it burn, if it wouldn't start a world war.
Petrov:	May I? (walk down the stairs)
Francis (smiling):	Of course!

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[25] 'Off-record impoliteness: the use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant's face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature and can be cancelled (e.g. denied, or an account/post-modification/elaboration offered, etc.) but where "one attributable intention clearly outweighs the others" (Culpeper, 2005: 44), given the context in which it occurs' (Bousfield, 2008: 138, see also footnote 16).

The contrast between Frank's surface talk and his deep wishes is enhanced by the aside mechanism that the next chapter will delve into.

This section has displayed the social, cultural and political parameters that constrain the success of manipulative and seductive discourse and the pragmatic tools that aim at thwarting its workings through face-work. Face-work is also at work within the private sphere of the Underwood couple.

Face Sensitivities in the Underwood Couple

In the first two seasons, at least, the Underwood couple forms a 'unit of identity' (Hecht et al., 2005: 263) in that they have literally established a 'couple's identity'. Indeed Frank's and Claire's 'individual self' needs also to be apprehended through the relationship they entertain with each other, as husband and wife, which would constitute what psycho-sociologists call their 'relational selves' (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001). Strongly united by a shared life goal, Claire's and Francis's 'self-concept' is partly[26] derived from the connection they have established between themselves as 'significant other' for each other. As Chen et al. (2006: 160) indicate, the 'relational self', which implies a connection with the other (unlike the 'individual self' that defines the uniqueness of a self) 'evolves out of dyadic interactions with significant others whereas individual self-aspects may or may not'. What is striking in the Underwoods' interactions is that the tough and uncompromising attitude they assume with others also prevails inside the couple. Their relationship is marked by an underlying violence that shows in the metaphor Francis uses to reveal the nature of his attachment to his wife:

> Frank: We'll have a lot of nights like this, making plans, very little sleep.

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[26]Typically, psychosociologists distinguish three levels of 'self-representation': the individual self (referring to the self as a unique and distinct self from others), the relational self (what the self is in relation to others) and the collective self (referring to aspects of the self in connection with social identities, that is its belonging to diverse social groups) (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Chen et al., 2006; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001).

Claire:	I expected that. It doesn't worry me.
Frank:	I'd better get to work.
Claire:	I laid a suit out for you upstairs. The navy-blue one.
Frank (in an aside):	I love that woman. I love her more than sharks love blood. (1.1)

Extremely complicit (they tell each other everything), they celebrate each other's achievements, helping one another out towards the attainment of their life goal. However, unlike what could be expected within a couple, no vulnerability is allowed; pessimistic beliefs, feelings and negative self-attributes are banned from their interactions. Face, which is according to Goffman (1967) 'public property', is also at work in the private relationship of the Underwood couple. What they are is partly shaped by the self they present to each other, which implies a specific way of managing their relationship. The similarities and differences that Spencer-Oatey highlights between 'identity' and 'face' are interesting to understand the protagonists' self-(re)presentations. Unlike the notion of 'identity' that involves both negative, neutral and positive attributes—self-aspects that the individual likes or does not like about herself or is indifferent to, 'face' tends to be only associated with positively assessed attributes:

> I propose that in cognitive terms, face and identity are similar in that both relate to the notion of 'self'-image (including individual, relational and collective construals of self), and both comprise multiple self-aspects or attributes. However face is only associated with attributes that are affectively sensitive to the claimant. It is associated with positively evaluated attributes that the claimant wants others to acknowledge (explicitly or implicitly), and with negatively evaluated attributes that the claimant wants others NOT to ascribe to him/her. (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 644)

The self-image that Francis projects on her is ruthlessly assessed by Claire who allows him no show of weakness or discouragement. Self-worth must be constantly maintained and enhanced. She mercilessly refuses her husband to admit negative attributes or actions. In the first episode, when Francis learns he has been ruled out as Secretary of State, he spends

the afternoon alone without warning Claire, which she deeply resents, for as a couple, they (should) share everything. He later offers an apology:

Francis: Well, I'm sorry Claire. I am sorry.
Claire: No, that I won't accept.
Francis: What?
Claire: Apologies. My husband does not apologize, even to me. (1.1)

In Brown and Levinson's conception, the humbling act of apologizing impacts the offender's positive face. So apologies are pragmatic acts that must be excluded from the couple's 'relational face.'[27] Inside the 'we-identity' the couple constitutes, Claire and Francis have a fundamental desire to have their respective self-worth appreciated by the other. Therefore not showing the best of oneself is not an option. Self-flagellation can only bring on detrimental negativity. In the following exchange, as Francis keeps harping on his mistake of not announcing Dunbar's nomination as Justice of the Supreme Court before asking her (she is now a candidate for the presidency), Claire reminds him of his combatant 'self-aspect':

Claire: Francis, it does not sound like you. Put this behind you and
            think about what's next. /.../ Stop it. This is not doing you any
            good. I will talk about this if you want, but if you're doubting
            yourself I cannot indulge that.
Francis: No, you're right, of course. (3.30)

In the system of values and self-discipline that sustains their life objective, failure is unthinkable. Boosting each other's ego can involve outdaring the other when necessary. At the end of the second season—before the seduction letter (see earlier in this chapter)—President Walker promises Tusk a presidential pardon if he testifies that Frank has been involved in the illegal activity of channelling in campaign contributions from

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[27] Spencer-Oatey (2007: 647) specifies what she calls 'relational': 'my use of the term "relational" refers to the relationships between the participants (e.g. distance-closeness, equality-inequality, perceptions of role rights and obligations), and the ways in which this relationship is managed or negotiated. I thus take it to be narrower in scope than rapport, which I define as (dis)harmony or smoothness-turbulence in relationships.' In the close unit of the couple, Claire ascribes face obligations to Francis.

Chinese businessmen. Claire harshly points at some shortcomings in her husband's plan and challenges his face wants:

Claire: So, he could still name you.
Francis: He could. Anything's possible.
Claire: You have to stop him
Francis: I'm trying.
Claire: Trying's not enough, Francis.
Francis: Well, I can't sit next to him in the hearing room with a gun to his head.
Claire: That sounds like an excuse. (2.26)

Involved in the money scandal through a photo of his assistant, Doug, taken at Lanagin (Tusk's partner)'s casino, Francis risks losing everything the couple has worked for. Claire straightforwardly tells him what she perceives in his behaviour:

Claire   (stopping working out on the rowing machine):   How bad is it?
Francis: (pause: 3 s) Bad. They have evidence of Doug being where he shouldn't have been.
Claire: What are you going to do?
Francis: (pause: 2 s) Tell the truth.
Claire: You're not actually gonna…
Francis: Selectively. Don't worry. It's a stumble, not a fall.
Claire: You aren't like this when it's just a stumble.
Francis: Like how?
Claire: You're scared. I can tell.
Francis
(bluntly): (pause: 4 s) Five hundred meters at 139. That was my best. Shoot for that. (2.24)

He interprets her remark as an offensive attack to his self-esteem. For him, fear is a belittling feeling that only affects the weak. His response is an off-record counterattack that throws a physical challenge to Claire who is on the rowing-machine she bought for him so that he stays fit—as part of the ascetic discipline that characterizes their lives. Instead

of overtly counter-attacking, he flouts the maxim of relevance. As an implicit rebuke to her face-challenging remark, he dares her to measure herself up to his own record on the machine. Instead of a fight, he brings forward the competitive nature of their relation as they always try to be up to the other's perception of their self-worth. Claire's cue constitutes a threat to his face that he perceives as a mismatch with what he regards as his self-worth. The discrepancy between self's and other's perception is indeed where face sensitivities are visible according to Spencer-Oatey (2007: 644):

> I propose that interactionally, face threat/loss/gain will only be perceived where there is a mismatch between an attribute claimed (or denied in the case of negatively evaluated traits) and an attribute perceived as being ascribed by others.

Here challenging Frank's 'quality face' does not aim at attacking his 'equity rights' within the couple (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540, see also section 'Hybrid Face Acts'). It is a means to drive him to offer the best of himself. Claire goads her husband into giving more than he has already given. This is a form of 'relational manipulation' that is aimed at benefiting the couple in the medium and long run. Like sharks loving blood, the couple's ruthless interactions are thus sustained by an underlying violence. Likewise, after Tusk reveals Claire's affair with Adam Galloway to the press, Claire's answer ('make him suffer') elicits Frank's following reaction: 'I don't know whether to be proud or to be terrified. Perhaps both' (2.22). The aside testifies to the fierceness of their seductive relation.

Both Claire and Francis seem to have repressed some of their 'self-aspects' in order to enhance their relational and collective selves in the community of politicians and public figures they evolve in. The public self-image they are supposed to maintain can be in contradiction with their intimate self. Frank's homosexuality is shown as repressed. The life he has chosen for himself condemns him to a relational and collective self that can never reveal what his individual self really is. As he confesses to

the writer, Tom Yates, who tries to have access to his intimate self, some self-aspects have to be suppressed from public view in a world where image is a determining factor:

Tom: There is no book without you at the centre of it. (pause: 1 s) Do you trust me (.) or don't you. Cause if you don't, get someone else to write it, or write it yourself.

Frank: You don't know what it's like to go through life looking over your shoulder, having secrets no one would understand. (3.33)

In fact, Francis has become a prisoner of his public self-image. In his yearning for presidential power, he has alienated himself from some of his self-attributes. In Goffman's words, paying constant attention to one's social face in order to exist condemns one to a self-inflicted prison sentence:

> In any case, while his social face can be his most personal possession and the centre of his security and pleasure, it is only on loan to him from society; it will be withdrawn unless he conducts himself in a way that is worthy of it. Approved attributes and their relation to face make of every man *his own jailer*; this is a fundamental social constraint even though each man may like his *cell*. (Goffman: 1967, 10, my emphasis)

The series shows how the choice of a political life assigns politicians a place where they both exercise power and are coerced by it. When he becomes the most powerful man in the USA, Frank reflects on the constraints of power: 'Sometimes I think the presidency is the illusion of choice' (3.36).

In the third season, Claire first starts to realize that the price of this life choice may be too high. It begins when she publicly blames Petrov for Michael Corrigan's suicide (see Chap. 3). Although this was a political mistake, for the first time Claire expresses what she thinks not for her own benefit or her couple's, but in memory of a worthy other: 'I said what I said for him, not for myself, not for us' (3.32). She resorts

to a logic that is foreign to that of politics. For Francis, politics implies a form of repression of what one feels. This logic pertains to what O'Keefe (1988) calls 'rhetorical logic' as opposed to the 'expressive logic' adopted by Claire in that episode. Drawing on O'Keefe's three forms of logic designs, Domenici and Littlejohn indeed show that the logic that is employed in framing one's message is influenced by the kind of person one is. A 'person-centered' individual who is highly 'face conscious' will pay attention to face sensitivities in a way a less person-centered individual will not:

> People who are not very oriented to others make use of an *expressive logic*, which guides them to say what's on their mind without thinking about how others might receive the information. Just say it, get it off your chest, and express yourself honestly. Others are a little more person centered, but rely mostly on general rules of etiquette and social norms rather than thinking specifically about the person in front of them. These folks make use of *conventional logic*, which is guided by social rules. A third group of people, highly person centered, follows a *rhetorical logic* that views rules as constantly changing, depending upon the context and persons involved. These individuals will think about how to integrate facework with other communication goals. (Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006: 66)

The 'rhetorical logic'—adopted by Francis most of the time—implies a form of control that Claire is unwilling to uphold in Russia after Michael's suicide.

Besides, she progressively realizes that the identity unit she has formed with her husband is predicated on a form of manipulation of which she has been the consenting victim all along. What prompted this new perception of her place in their 'we-identity' is the writer's third-person point of view. As touched on in Chap. 2, for the first time she perceives herself from a third-person perspective that allows her to take some distance from herself, the better to observe the mismatch between the objective and the reality. She thought she was participating in success on a par with her husband when in fact his ambition has been put forward at the expense of her own, which tends to belittle her sense of self-worth and her right to receive the benefits to which she feels she is 'entitled': 'Look

at us. We used to make each other stronger, at least that's what I thought so but that was a lie. We were making you stronger. Now, I'm just weak and small and I can't stand it anymore' (3.39). The Underwoods' identity unit was predicated on a lie that the last episode of the third season brings out: Frank's physical threatening of his wife reveals the hitherto covert manipulative aspects in their relationship. He has been selfishly using her to achieve his own ambition and now coerces her into furthering their enterprise:

> Francis: And you want to amount to something? Well, here is the brutal fucking truth. And you can hate me, you can be disgusted, you can feel whatEVER it is you wanna feel because, frankly, I'm beyond caring. But without me, you are nothing. (3.39)

Using one of his overworked strategy, he exerts coercive power to intimidate her into submission, showing her that her decision not to take part in the campaign will end up in the annihilation of her social identity ('without me you're nothing'). Season 4 will have to confirm this but as Claire seems to have been the real driving force behind Frank's political achievements (to which the latter confesses with Tom: 'there would be no White House without Claire. I was half the man before I met her. But still, I've been selfish feeding off her the way I have', 3.33), there is a possibility that Francis's assertion ('without me you're nothing') be turned around. Manipulation can in fact be construed as reciprocal in this couple whose love for each other appears to pertain to competitive face-work rather than genuine disinterested feelings. The deep structure of violence underlying the couple's unit has risen to the surface.

Instead of trying to re-conquer/re-seduce her, Francis reminds her of her duty as First Lady, clutching his hand around her neck. As she is relinquishing her role as Helper, Claire ends up being treated like any other recalcitrant Opponent. In the morning, with a face uncommonly showing gloom, she brings herself to do away with a relationship on which she has become dependent ('What I hate is how much I need us', she confesses to the writer in 3.37) and that has become less self-fulfilling than she had thought. The couple's 'unit of identity' is dissolved:

Claire: I'm not going to New Hampshire.
Francis: Yes, you are. I'll see you in the car. (Going back to where he came
            from)
Claire: I'm leaving you. (Claire walks down the corridor towards the
            camera, leaving the stage)
Francis: Claire
                            (End of the third season)

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6

Aesthetic Manipulation

Keys to the Success of *House of Cards*

Suspense, Surprises and Shakespearian Echoes

The series plays on two of the most important emotions for plot identified by Sternberg (1978): suspense and surprise.[1] As Hogan (2014: 523) specifies, two axis need to be separated: that of the story knowledge and that of predictability. The first axis is about the reader/viewer's knowledge of the causal sequences that lead from one action to another. Incomplete knowledge (of the story development and outcome) is bound to elicit suspense as it creates the conditions of fear and hope. The other axis (predictability) concerns the ability to surprise the reader/viewer. If anticipated developments generate no surprise, 'unanticipated but retrospectively comprehensible, and unanticipated but anomalous developments' do (Hogan: 523). In *House of Cards*, surprise can come about when the viewer learns something that has been hidden from her. For example, in the scene in which Marty Spinella is intimidated into compliance by

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[1] The third one being curiosity, when the outcome is known to the reader but the latter does not know what led to the outcome and is curious to find out.

Francis (see Chap. 5), the viewer learns—at the same time as the character—that the brick that was thrown into the Underwoods' house was Doug's doing and not a teacher's as Frank tried to make believe. This works all the more as a surprise as the viewers are usually in the know of the protagonist's manipulative schemes. Nothing in this false home intrusion scene could let them perceive it was part of an orchestrated game. Frank's pushing Zoe under the metro certainly comes as another surprise for most viewers. Unlike the brick episode, this act seems not to have been premeditated as the protagonist could not know how the interview with the journalist was going to turn out. Yet he may have envisaged this possibility since he made sure the interview occurred in a place out of the video cameras' bounds. A quantitative analysis should be carried out to register the viewers' specific emotional reaction to Zoe's murder, but it seems likely to generate 'expressive' or 'actional outcomes' (see Hogan, 2014: 517), such as 'facial expressions', 'pupil dilation', hands on faces, or even some 'vocalisation'—like my own French onomatopoeia of disbelief 'haaannnnnn!'—or something like that—revealing I did not anticipate what, on viewing the scene, I considered an 'anomalous' development.

As for suspense, the narrative schema of the political plot described in Chap. 2 is likely to create the sustained emotions of hope and fear. Research has shown that when comprehending a text, a reader creates a situation model, that is to say 'mental representations of the state of affairs described in a text rather than of the text itself' (Zwaan, 1999: 15). In other words, readers place themselves in the fictional situation as though they were vicariously taking part in the narrative to the point that they move in the environment and narrative space, following the deictic centre (Duchan, Bruder, & Hewitt, 1995) usually represented by a protagonist: 'When we place ourselves in a situation, we have a certain spatial, temporal, and psychological "vantage" point from which we vicariously experience the events' (Zwaan, 1999: 15). Filtered through this vantage point, happiness or danger, as experienced by the protagonist, is shared by the viewers. They feel happy when happy things happen to her and scared when she is in danger. That is what Allbritton and Gerrig (1991) have called 'participatory responses' (p-responses), depicting reader reactions such as happiness, hopes for the character that she achieves what she has undertaken, or fear when obstacles come her way.

As Rapp and Gerrig (2006: 55) point out, 'Without any special prompting from the text, readers are likely to prefer what it is "normal" to desire (e.g., that characters succeed rather than fail)'. The same 'participatory responses' can be said to be at work in the viewing process. In the first two seasons of *House of Cards* at least, the interpretative filter through which the viewer perceives the plot is mostly Francis Underwood. He thus constitutes the main deictic centre. The viewers evolve in his space, updating their representations depending on where he is or what goal he is currently trying to achieve. This is done all the more easily in the series since the asides reveal the protagonist's intentions and the reasons why he acts the way he does with whom. However, as will be delved into further down (section 'Rooting for the Anti-Hero'), the viewers' 'normal preference' for Frank's success is here complicated by the fact that it implies the condoning of his crimes. The anti-hero's pragma-stylistic manipulation lies in his capacity to keep the viewer on his side while committing unlawful acts that should elicit emotional resistance.

Although the series' close-ups, medium or wide angle shots have the high aesthetic quality of films, the uncommon presence of asides in the TV series gives it a theatrical specificity. The asides contribute to creating suspense in a way reminiscent of asides in dramatic tragedies. This tale of the modern times indeed relies on very old tricks. As was pointed out in several newspapers after the release of the first season,[2] the Shakespearian theatricality of Frank's quest to power cannot be missed. Not only does the Underwood couple embody the modern version of the power-hungry Macbeth and Lady Macbeth—scheming together to take the king down—but Francis's character himself has something of a Iago at the beginning of the first season when he is deprived of the function he was promised during the presidential campaign, that of Secretary of State, because the president-elect needed him to stay in Congress as the Democratic whip. In *Othello*, Cassio is similarly preferred to Iago for a promotion, for which the latter will nurture resentment that will lead him to take revenge on Othello. In addition, Iago like Frank Underwood

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[2] See, for instance, "9 Things 'House Of Cards' Took From Shakespeare". *The Huffington Post* (21 February 2014). "Yes, 'House of Cards' is our Shakespeare: Comparing the show to Shakespeare isn't pretentious; it's appropriate". *Salon* (14 February 2014). "To figure out House of Cards, read a lot of Shakespeare". *The Star* (12 February 2014). Date accessed 14 March 2014.

breaks the fourth wall by talking directly to his audience, making him akin to those Shakespearian villains that become likable because the reader/spectator/viewer gets so close to their mind through asides and soliloquies. The 1990 BBC British TV series and its original source of inspiration, Michael Dobbs's novel *House of Cards*, was impregnated with the same Shakespearian undertones, as Kevin Spacey reminds in an interview for *The Baltimore Sun*, paying a tribute to Richardson' amazing performance (as Francis Urquhardt) in the British series: 'The great thing about the original series and Michael Dobbs's book is that they were based on Shakespeare' (Zurawick, 2014). As an old member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Richardson had a distinctive 'Shakespearian background' (Youngs, 2007). The link with the British playwright was ensured, in the American version, through Kevin Spacey who himself played *Richard III* under Sam Mendes's direction before playing Frank Underwood.

What makes the protagonist's asides particularly dramatic is the hyperbolic nature of his language. His depiction of his life battle in the jungle of Congress is indeed full of imagery. The path to power might be fraught with pitfalls but the hero will stand upright in spite of wounds: 'The first drops of blood have been spilt. The bullet grazed my cheek, but I haven't fallen' (2.18). On learning Linda's move behind his back, Frank flings abuse at her with hyperbolic compound adjectives:

President: Linda mentioned that you seemed obsessed with this bridge.
              I'm beginning to think she's right.
Francis
(aside):   The backstabbing, vomit-inducing bitch. (2.21)

Frank often betrays Helpers by failing to fulfil promises but he will not tolerate reciprocity. When two of the congressmen he has whipped to vote the right way disobey him, the protagonist cries 'treason'—a capital crime that deserves exemplary punishment: 'There may be a way to turn Linda's bad luck into my good fortune. But first I must deal with treason within the ranks, the two renegades who voted against the bill. I have zero tolerance for betrayal, which they will soon indelibly learn' (1.10). Francis often uses words without determiners ('treason'), high-

lighting their purely notional content as if detached from his situation of enunciation. Similarly, in the two following quotations, the use of the signifier 'exile' hyperbolically dramatizes the absence of alternative that is left in store for him:

> Francis (aside): Exile. I have managed to isolate the president from everyone including myself. (2.25)

This aside is pronounced after the president's breaking off all ties with his VP (Garret: 'From this moment forward, I don't want to hear your voice. I don't want to see your face. And if I do, I will put you on your goddamn back'). The signifier 'Ø exile' stands out from the next utterance, like a 'figure', in cognitive terms (see Stockwell, 2002), taking on the tragic feel of fate. The second aside is an extract from the first season before the eventual success of Frank's education bill:

> Francis (aside): This is the worst position to be in. If I water down the bill, the president will see me as a failure. If the strike doesn't end in a week, I force myself into a corner. Only *total victory* will put me back in his good graces. The alternative is *exile*, which would mean the last five months were for nothing. I cannot abide falling back to square one. (1.6; my emphasis)

The generic use of the terms 'Ø total victory' and 'Ø exile' as unaccountable nouns (with the Ø determiner) also contributes to conveying a sense of urgency. Frank repeatedly keeps the viewer in suspense as to the outcome of his scheming, especially when he has his back to the wall.

Like in Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth* or *Othello*, scheming is the spring of the American political TV series as it moves from pre-planned plots to unforeseen obstacles that sometimes compel the actant to speed up his step-by-step plan:

> Francis (aside, after a meeting with the president): I didn't plan on telling him so much so soon, but if I didn't, Linda would have swayed him. There's no better way to overpower a trickle of doubt than with a flood of naked truth. This is why the education bill was so important. It bought me influence precisely when I needed it most. (1.7)

This is an after-the-event explanation to the viewer of why he was so intent on passing the education bill. In a very Shakespearian aside, the villain exposes the reasons why he acts in a specific way, given the cards he has got in his hand, or why he prefers to delay his attack if the timing is not right, such as the assault against the natural gas company, SanCorp, and its Washington lobbyist Remy Danton in the following aside:

> Francis: I can't compete with SanCorp's war chest. My only option is asymmetrical, to pick off the opposition one by one like a sniper in the woods. There will come a time to put Remy in my crosshairs, but not right now. As we used to say in Gaffney, never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco. (1.9)

The suspense generated by Frank's patient and careful scheming is conveyed, linguistically, through the recurrent structure 'if…then…', which makes his fate dependent on hypotheses that he cannot fully control:

> Francis (aside in a middle of a conversation with Linda about his wish to be VP): I must gamble everything I have right now. If I'm honest, she may use it against me. If I'm not, she won't lift a finger. (1.11)

Indeed the very dramatic hypothesis formulation tends to keep the viewers on tenterhooks, making them fear that the goal set forth might well not be achieved. What is likely to make them anxiously follow the protagonist is Frank's recurrent recall of how much hard work he has put into his whole life plan. As failure will bring all his efforts down to nothing, the viewers might be led to want what the protagonist wants as 'normal preference' (Rapp & Gerrig, see earlier in this chapter), given their proximity to the vantage point he embodies. The urgency of the moment is indeed explicitly expressed through the meta-discursive nature of the asides:

> Francis
> (aside):   Everything hinges on the next few minutes. All my months of
>   planning, every move I've made. (1.11)
> Francis
> (aside):   I've worked too hard to get within arm's reach of the prize only
>   to have my hand cut off just before I seize it. (1.12)

Viewers are encouraged to vicariously share Frank's hopes and doubts on the path to the highest office. Likewise, the following cue, pronounced at a moment of unbearable wait, constitutes a direct address to the inanimate being that Time is. The aside is here again a means of sustaining suspense—the president and Raymond Tusk are meeting to determine who the next vice president will be. As he is looking at the clock above the desk, Frank's address to Time is a striking apostrophe that makes a performance of his political fate:

> Francis (aside): Thirteen minutes from now, Tusk will meet with the president, if he isn't there already. You've never been an ally, have you? Pressing on with your slow, incessant march. Time would have killed Russo, if I hadn't, just as it will kill me some day. Kill us all. (1.13)

Other Shakespearian echoes resonate in *House of Cards*. One of these is a literal echo as Francis thinks he hears the voice of Russo he has had to kill because he was getting in his way. He feels Peter has come back to retaliate. He thus dares the ghost to speak out: 'Peter is that you? Stop hiding in my thoughts and come out. Have the courage in death that you never had in life. (Looking at the camera) Come out, look me in the eye and say what you need to say' (1.13). The American protagonist is less terrified than Macbeth is when the Shakespearian character faces the ghost of his friend (Banquo) whose murder he ordered, but there is a Macbethian key to the TV series scene that unexpectedly reflects Frank's (rarely) troubled mind. Asides indeed often serve to expose characters' inner contradictions. Although set on achieving his quest for power at all costs, Frank yet seems to be perfectly aware of the vanities of things. In an episode entirely dedicated to his old school pals that he meets up with for the inauguration of a library in his name, he has no illusion about the vanity of the whole thing, pointing at the artificiality and irony of the homage:

> Francis (aside): The Sentinel, South Carolina's Premiere Military College. They taught me the values of honour, duty and respect. They also hazed me, tried to break me, and senior year, nearly expelled me when I volunteered for a Senate race and my studies suffered. But it did not stop them from soliciting a hefty sum for their new library 30 years later. How quickly poor grades are forgotten in the shadow of power and wealth. (1.8)

Burying the fake honor under the umbrella term 'politics', he also confesses the meaninglessness of such distinction to his school ex-boyfriend at the Sentinel: 'The library is a sham. Higgins asked me a favour. I asked someone else. They slapped my name on it. Politics. Like everything else. /…/ In 50 years they'll just replace it with something else, just like they're doing with this for mine' (same episode). The scene does not have the intensity of Hamlet's lines generated by the exhumation of Yorick's skull in *Hamlet*, but it shares something of its comments on the transient nature of things, which is all the more surprising in *House of Cards* as it sharply contrasts with the incessant movement forward of the political series where time is an ally or an enemy that must be reckoned with if anything of value is to be accomplished. Yet this cynical reflection on the sham of politics does not stop the protagonist from taking up business as usual at the end of the episode.

For Francis, the political arena is a stage to which he invites the viewer for entertainment. This shows through the vocabulary he uses. In episode 1.10, for instance, he reveals a long thought-out plan designed to have the vice president (Jim Matthews) race for governorship in Pennsylvania (Russo was just a temporary cog in the machinery), with the ultimate goal of taking Matthews's place as VP. Like Richard III, Francis has power over people's lives and ambitions: 'And now Jim Matthews comes to the floor, though he doesn't know it yet. He will find solace in his beloved Pennsylvania, though Peter Russo will find solace nowhere. It only takes ten seconds to crush a man's ambitions. I need to take care that I protect mine' (1.10). The anti-hero sounds like a theatre manager using the simple present of stage directions ('And now Jim Matthews comes to the floor') ascribing roles to actants. What may render Frank's political game attractive is his play with its rules. In episode 1.16, the compromise over entitlements he tried to set up does not work out in the Senate, he then finds a way to bend the rules ('We have to get medieval. When it comes to parliamentary procedure, there's not a rule I don't know. Find me the ones we can bend', he tells Doug): he uses one prerogative of his to empower the Capital Police to arrest the absent members and constrain them to sit in the Senate. He needs six Republicans to obtain the quorum as he tells Mendoza: 'pick your six best actors', which attests to the theatricality of his political show (2.16). The viewer can then see six

members of the Republican party being carried to the Senate against their will by policemen, giving a humorous look of democracy in the United States of America. The world's a stage indeed.

The Power of the Second-Person Address

Not only might the viewers wish the protagonist to achieve his goal as a normal 'p-response' but they are also prompted to do so through the participation status they are assigned via the direct address. One of the distinguishing features of the series is indeed the choice of the second-person pronoun in asides. Just as there is an inherent 'conative solicitude' (Bonheim, 1982) in second-person narratives—Fludernik (1994: 286) speaks of the 'involving quality' of the pronoun that elicits 'empathy'— the conative function of the second-person address in *House of Cards* is likely to trigger accrued involvement. If the reference of the second person in fiction can be versatile or ambiguous (see Clarkson, 2005; DelConte, 2003; Fludernik, 1993, 1994, 1996; Hantzis, 1988; Herman, 1994; Hopkins & Perkins, 1981; Kacandes, 1990, 1993; Margolin, 1990; Morrissette, 1965; Prince, 1985, 1987; Richardson, 1991, 2006; Sorlin, 2015a), the reference in *House of Cards* seems clear. When Frank turns towards the video camera, the viewers are clearly invited to occupy the position of the 'you' address. Yet, the very use of the second person in the TV series shares some of the artificial intricacies that have been noted by narratologists and stylisticians as it tends to conflate worlds that are usually kept separate. It indeed disrupts the traditional fictional contract that institutes a clear separation between what Text World Theory calls 'Text World' (the situation depicted by the Text) and 'Discourse World' (the 'situational context' surrounding the Text, including the interaction between Discourse participants like writers-readers for instance) (see Werth, 1999: 83). As Herman (1994: 406) makes clear, through the direct address, the reader is turned into a 'fellow player' who is 'simultaneously inside and outside fiction'. In projecting herself in the second-person deictic centre, the reader transcends the 'ontological boundaries between text-world and discourse-world' (Gavins, 2007).

The aside has indeed the double contradictory effect of bringing the viewers in the series and of making them aware of their being outside what constitutes fiction. This dual effect is best understood if one has a look at the specificity of the TV producing/viewing process. Following Goffman, some film study specialists (Kozloff, 2000; Bubel, 2008 among others) regard the audience as 'overhearers' listening to a talk that is 'sealed off' from them (Bubel, 2008: 62). Even in soliloquies where the presence of the audience might be acknowledged by the actor on stage, the audience is perceived, in Goffman's terms, as 'out-of-frame eavesdroppers' separated from the words uttered that pertain to 'a self-enclosed, make-believe realm' (Goffman, 1981a: 139). However, the 'words uttered' are addressed for an audience that cannot be ignored. For Dynel (2011a), indeed, viewers can hardly be perceived as 'overhearers' since the characters' utterances are precisely meant for them to interpret.[3] She thus prefers to adopt the term of 'ratified recipients' to account for the specific design of the production crew. As she underlines, 'characters' interactions interpreted by recipients are the products of the whole film production team, who are aware of recipients, and convey meanings especially for their benefit' (Dynel, 2011a: 50). She distinguishes between two communicative levels as shown in Fig. 6.1.

Level 1 involves the inner participants conversing, which does not preclude the presence of an overhearer listening to or eavesdropping the interaction between two participants (possibly involving a third party). Level 2 concerns the recipients that are the ratified viewers although they are not interlocutors. Indeed like readers they cannot contribute to the interaction. The collective sender's level is distinct from the recipient's because 'while the collective sender's intention is that recipients should let themselves be absorbed in the story and in characters' world, it can hardly be argued that the recipient consciously interacts with the collective sender' (Dynel, 2011c: 1635). By 'collective sender', Dynel means the whole film production crew and the various tasks that are assigned to the scriptwriter, the director, actors, camera operator, film editor, sound editor, and so on.

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[3] As Dynel (2011b: 463) underlines, Goffman mistakenly combines the fictional characters' layer and the 'underlying layer rendered by the production crew'.
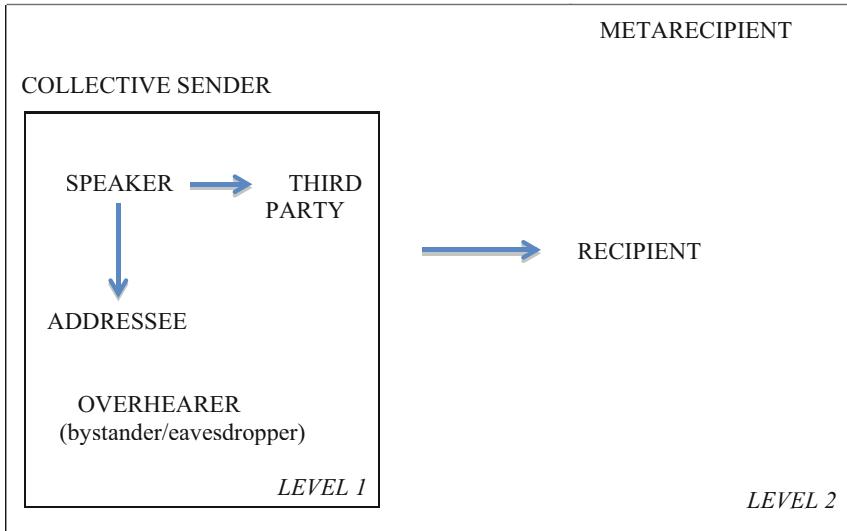
Fig. 6.1 From Dynel (2011c: 1663): 'Participants in a film interaction (in one turn) on two levels of communication'

   In *House of Cards*, the diagram is complicated because of the protagonist's direct address to the viewer, breaking the fourth wall and rendering porous the tight separation between the two levels. In a footnote, Dynel (2011c: 1634) acknowledges the potential porosity but for all that does not call into question the existence of the two separate levels: 'Nevertheless, there are films e.g. "High fidelity", "Funny Games" or "Whatever works", in which characters seem to acknowledge the presence of the audience, when speaking directly to them. However this type of address is still a matter of the fictional layer designed by the collective sender. Although the two communicative levels appear to merge, the distinction between the two layers still obtains.' In *House of Cards*, not only is the presence of the viewer acknowledged but it is also sought after (if only rhetorically), the protagonist sometimes soliciting the viewer's reaction: 'Did you smell that? The smugness, the false deference. She thinks I can be bought with a pair of tickets' (1.1). Viewers are addressed as co-participants at level 1 without their being real interacting addressees—they indeed remain recipients, although acknowledged recipients, at level 2. Through the direct address and the even more unusual use of the second-person pronoun 'you', viewers are interpellated at their place as viewers,

which metafictionally makes them perceive the two communicative levels at once.

What is likely to strike the viewer on Francis's first address to her is the unusual proximity such mode imposes. She is turned, whether she likes it or not, into a confidant and thereby a 'forced' accomplice. Given secret information on a confiding mode, the audience is allotted a privileged position compared with the other characters who are lied to and manipulated. As Culpeper and McIntyre underline, this is the property of asides to state shameful truths (as the protagonist sees them):

> The main purpose of the soliloquy is to provide an outlet for self-expression on the part of the speaking character. This self-expression comes about partly because of the absence of other characters from the communicative act. The result of this is that characters are able to speak freely (without discounting effects), and this means that we can make a strong assumption that what characters say within a soliloquy is the truth as they believe it to be. In other words, most soliloquisers uphold Grice's (1975) maxim of quality. (Culpeper & McIntyre, 2006: 784)

Witnesses to Frank's shameless lies to inside participants, the viewers may think themselves assured of his honesty with them, the character's real intentions being reserved to them, as the following quotes ostentatiously exemplify:

Francis
[aside]:   He's worried about his marriage counselling, as he should be.
[to the
president]:   If you're worried about your marriage counselling, you shouldn't be.

These cues reveal the extent of his duplicity that he unashamedly reveals to the audience.

Thinking themselves immune to manipulation due to this privileged position, the viewers can hardly perceive that they have become easy prey as well. Their paradoxical position as Level 2 recipients *and* (fake) co-participants at level 1 makes them particularly vulnerable to manipulation. The possibility to co-participate in the interaction being denied

them, the recipients are maintained in an unequal ratio of power. As non conversationalists indeed, recipients are kept in a subordinate position that allows Francis to manipulate them at will. First, the viewer is made to believe she has privileged access to Claire and Frank's inner circle, which is not the case since she is excluded from some crucial elements (see the brick episode previously mentioned, for instance). This would tend to make Bubel (2008: 63) right when she insists that recipients remain 'overhearers' even if they are let in the know of some essential information/knowledge as they are 'unlikely to have taken part in all of the participants' shared experiences'. Second, the viewers may think that Frank's confiding in them clearly initiates a split between them and the inside participants who are victims of his manipulation but in fact the same kind of manipulation operates at level 1 and 2, albeit in a more covert way. In TV addresses to the nation (or with other participants), the viewer behind her screen watches Frank manipulating other viewers: this frame within the frame address to TV viewers is in fact a mise en abyme of a similar form of (aesthetic) manipulation at level 2 (collective sender via the protagonist—recipient).

The dialogue the direct address seems to instigate is indeed a fake one. Anticipating on the viewer's reaction, the aside gives an impression of proximity that is an illusion. After an exchange already alluded to (see Chap. 3) between Frank and Jackie, who has scruples about bringing up the family issue in the upcoming Democratic presidential TV debate with Dunbar (she herself got married for the presidential campaign with the cardiovascular surgeon Alan Cooke whose kids go to the same private schools as Dunbar's), Francis anticipates the viewer's probable reaction:

> Frank (aside): Such a pity how much ruthless pragmatism gets weighed down by family values. Without her doctor and his pimply-faced brood, she could soar as high as this plane. Oh, I know, the marriage was my idea. Don't remind me. (3.37)

He thinks he knows what conclusion the audience may arrive at, thus giving the illusion of taking her remarks into account whilst he is orchestrating the whole question and answer pseudo-conversation. He is simulating a conversation with a recipient who, structurally, is mute. As the

last line spoken in a terse tone indicates 'don't remind me', Frank is not particularly soft with his audience. In *House of Cards* the direct address does not really elicit 'empathy' as Fludernik (1994: 286) notes it can in novels. Rather, the protagonist practises with viewers what he does in Congress: divide and conquer. At the beginning of the second season, coming back on Zoe's murder for the first time, he addresses the audience in these words:

> Francis: Did you think I'd forgotten you? Perhaps you hoped I had. /…/ For those of us climbing to the top of the food chain, there can be no mercy. There is but one rule: hunt or be hunted. Welcome back. (2.14)

In his division of humanity between those who can and those who can't ('hunt or be hunted'), he is also driving a wedge between viewers, daring them as (fake) addressees: 'Did you think I'd forgotten you? Perhaps you hoped I had'. Yet Francis only pretends to leave the viewer the option of opting out of their roles as recipients, for in his dual way of seeing the world, refusing to be part of the 'winners' would inevitably assign them the part of the losers like Peter Russo. The distinction between those who are brave enough to take part and the others was hinted at in the last episode of the first season when Francis is in a church addressing a God that he has never believed in:

> Francis: Every time I've spoken to you, you've never spoken back. Although given our mutual disdain, I can't blame you for the silent treatment. (Looking at the camera) Perhaps I'm speaking to the wrong audience. Can you hear me? Are you even capable of language, or do you only understand depravity? (1.13)

Through the look at the camera while saying, 'Perhaps I'm speaking to the wrong audience,' he seems to allude to the possibility that some may be unfit to carry on as fellow players in his show.

If, as Spencer-Oatey (2007: 653[4]) suggests, one extends the concept of 'face' to face-to-screen interactions rather than merely 'face-to-face', one

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[4] The concept of 'face' needs to be extended as Spencer-Oatey (2007: 653) indicates: 'face is always interactionally constituted. It will be necessary to interpret the concept "interaction" very broadly,

could construe Frank's confessions to the viewers as a face-threatening act impinging on their territory. The 'you' address forces interaction, albeit a false one, as it initiates an interactive dyad that constructs viewers as explicit addressees at Level 1 where they should be 'concealed' recipients at Level 2. Their right to be 'free from imposition' as fictional recipients behind their screens is here infringed. They are, willy nilly, brought into interaction via the second-person address, breaking the illusion that they are merely eavesdroppers 'listening in' on actors delivering their lines 'in accordance with a script' (Goffman, 1981b: 83). The 'you' direct address exerts a 'demanding' function similar to the direct gaze in still pictures: as Kress & van Leeuwen (2006: 119)[5] show, the distinction that Halliday makes between 'offers' and 'demands' concerning speech acts can be applied to images. When the participant gazes directly at the viewers, the latter are not mere observers of information 'offered' to them: some engagement is 'demanded' from them.

In *House of Cards*, the viewers are placed in the same position as Frank's seductive letter places President Walker (see section 'Seduce Him' in Chap. 5). The protagonist's confessions to the viewers 'demand' reciprocation. How can they indeed refuse to follow a protagonist who forces alliance with them? How to abandon someone who considers them as a constant ally? The recurrent complicit look addressed at the viewers is meant to gratify them as co-partners. Following is all the more 'imposed' as it is presupposed by Frank; he takes the viewers for granted. Associating them in his plotting against the president through the inclusive personal pronoun 'we', he does not doubt their 'participatory response' for a second: 'He's in darkness now. And I'm the only beacon of light. Now we gently guide him towards the rocks' (2.26). By aligning the viewer's expectations with his own goal, Francis tends to fashion her in his own image. The subsection 'Rooting for the Anti-Hero' will further delve into the specular relationship between the audience and the protagonist, especially in the third season which initiates a change orchestrated by the 'collective

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so that it includes not only synchronous, face-to-face interaction but also asynchronous communication and general public awareness.'

[5] 'We have called this kind of image a "demand", the participant's gaze (and the gesture, if present) demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 119).

sender', but first the stylistic characteristics of Frank's appealing rhetoric require further investigation.

The Cognitive and Stylistic Manipulation of the Viewer

A Rhetoric of Certainty

The manipulation of the audience by the protagonist is both linguistic and cognitive. It takes the form of a seductive 'rhetoric of certainty'. Asides are indeed quite often marked by unmodalized assertions devoid of any attenuators, hesitators, pragmatic particles (I think, suppose) or modal expressions. Hammered in an assertive way, Frank's asides thus display no epistemic modalization that would imply some doubt on the part of the protagonist or reveal the existence of another possible point of view. Linguistically, his rhetoric is distinguished by generalization, which confers onto his utterances what Herman (2014: 177) calls an 'effect of authority'. The wide use of what appears like aphorisms in the present tense and starting with the zero article is indeed characteristic of Francis's rhetoric of absolute self-confidence. Here are a few examples:

> Ø Time is precious. Ø Powerful people don't have the luxury of Ø foreplay. (1.1)
> Ø Friends make the worst enemies. (1.5)
> Ø Proximity to Ø power deludes some into believing they wield it. (1.9)

Taking up the appearance of a saying offering some piece of wisdom, these utterances seem to be independent from any local application. This is part of Frank's strategy to hoist up his personal situation to the level of a generic one. Indeed as Herman (2014: 179) emphasizes, generalisation induces some de-subjectivation that transforms a particular proposition into some universal utterance. More specifically, generalizing utterances hinge on a paradox identified by Ali Bouacha (1993). It both expresses some 'engagement' in that it voices some state of affairs that reacts to some pre-existing utterance and allows some enunciative 'disengagement' insofar as it presents the opinion expressed as if it were shared by

everybody—whilst it is a matter of personal opinion.[6] Generalized utterances thus concurrently hold two characteristics that seem contradictory. These self-contained utterances are in fact, as Anscombre (1994: 106) puts it, 'discursive frames' that do not in themselves contain any new information but serves as a framework to the argumentation developed elsewhere. Not only do they tend to present arguments as advice to be treasured but through the condensed form of thought they embody, they also tend to force the recipient into the frame of thought imposed by the speaker: 'Placing oneself in a certain discourse frame boils down to asking the co-speaker to do likewise—or to break up discussion. Hence the reinforcement of the stereotypical aspect of the proverb' (Anscombre, 1994: 105, my translation).[7] The recipient is asked to get inside the frame of reference and accept it without having too much time to think, given the pithy, sharp, lapidary aspect of the enunciation. The aphorism in the neutral degree zero indicative mode presents itself as an indisputable argument of authority. Offering a framework to his reasoning, it displays its contents as some evident truth that cannot be counteracted or denied. As Guilbert (2015: 88) indicates in his study of journalists' self-evident utterances, presenting an opinion as 'doxic discourse' has a high persuasive effectiveness precisely because it makes the opinion appear as 'already shared' whereas it is not. It both implicitly calls for consent and overtly imposes itself through the performative force it conveys.

The generic indefinite determiner ('a') also serves to classify people into definition-like scientific categories:

> Francis (aside): What is the face of *a* coward? The back of his face when he runs away from a battle. (3.28, emphasis added)

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[6] 'L'énoncé généralisant cumule cette propriété double et à première vue contradictoire d'exprimer un engagement et de permettre un désengagement. Engagement, puisque l'on cherche à imposer une proposition contre une autre proposition qui lui préexiste d'une manière ou d'une autre. Désengagement, puisque l'on fait comme si on n'énonçait pas son opinion personnelle, mais celle de tout le monde ou mieux encore une vérité fondée sur […] ce qui "oblige à penser d'accord" (Bachelard)' (Ali Bouacha, 1993: 285, quoted in Herman, 2014: 177).

[7] 'Se placer dans un certain cadre discursif revient à demander à l'interlocuteur d'en faire de même—ou alors de rompre le dialogue. D'où un renforcement de l'aspect stéréotypique. Présenter *Qui aime bien châtie bien* comme cadre discursif, et demander à l'interlocuteur de s'y enfermer, c'est, au moins *hic et nunc*, définir la valeur sémantique de "aimer" comme comportant "châtier"' (Anscombre, 1994: 105).

Francis seems to enunciate a generic definition originating from some witty authority where it is, in fact, an ad hoc statement on a specific situation. He tries to convince Bob Birch to help him implement his America Works program, but the latter shies away from it. The generic formulation imposes some apodeictic certitude by transposing judgements of value (a personal opinion) into a judgment of facts (an objective statement). Besides, Frank's own definition of a coward implicitly defines by contrast what he is himself: a bold and courageous fighter. Rhetorical questions play the same role of arrogantly enhancing the character's ego by falsely eliciting obvious answers from the audience: 'There are two types of vice presidents: doormats and matadors. Which do you think I intend to be?' (2.16). Through general sayings, Francis 'authors himself', transforming a local meaning into a universal truth for all times. This exposes what Barthes calls the 'arbitrary order of the one who speaks' (Barthes, 1957: 267). Conversing with the president, the VP's statement takes the appearance of a quotation from somebody else—some other source of recognized authority:

Francis: Presidents who obsess over history obsess over their place in it, instead of forging it.
Garrett: Who said that?
Francis: I did just now. (2.20)

Frank's use of an aphoristic-like statement carries sufficient authority for the president to ask for its source. Pseudo-sayings are a means for the protagonist to dilute his subjective thinking into a linguistic form endowed with moral status and prestige.

The proverb-like structure of the protagonist's utterances is indeed very convenient for the concealment of petty details. In cognitive terms, it could be said that the condensed formula takes the form of 'everybody says U…' whereas it only partakes of Frank's opinion. In fact, it embodies some *ad populum* fallacy which exploits what Maillat (2013: 217) calls 'the cognitive effect of repetition in mention'. The proverb-like statement may not be repeated over and over but it is repeated in 'mention' in that it has the form of a saying that could be repeated by anybody (and therefore is true), increasing the strength of the utterance (U) in the Cognitive Environment of the hearer (CE^H). Although not speaking of proverbs,

Maillat explains the discursive shortcuts created in *ad populum* fallacy in these terms:

> It should first be pointed out that *Everybody says U so U is true* is a summary of what would effectively happen on a cognitive level if *U* were to be repeated by everybody in the hearer's environment. As we saw above the repetition of *U* strengthens *U* in CE^H. Therefore, *everybody says U so U must be true* can be regarded as a discursive shortcut for strengthening-by-repetition. Such an argumentative move relies on a cognitive effect whereby a contextual assumption is reinforced through the mere mention of the corresponding cognitive process. In that sense, the *ad populum* only mentions repetition without actually realising it, but the cognitive effect on CE^H remains. (Maillat, 2013: 196)

The proverb-like structure cognitively functions like an *argumentum ad populum* that is strengthened through the potential repetition the saying embodies, as it indeed looks as if it could be taken up by a great number of people (everybody says *U* so *U* is true). Besides, it confers on to the utterer the authoritative status of the expert who knows: such a formulation is indeed also guilty of an *ad verecundiam* fallacy of the type 'an expert says that *U* so *U* must be true', the expert being in *House of Cards* none other than the inventor of the sayings.

What also reinforces the 'expert' authority of Frank's utterances is the use of the second-person pronoun when the latter is not clearly a direct address to the reader but belongs to the generic 'you' category. Indeed the reference of the personal pronoun is not as monolithic as one could think at first sight (for a precise distinction between the different degrees of genericity of 'you' in *House of Cards*, see Sorlin, 2015b). Francis's expert knowledge of political life is indeed explained in generic statements to the viewer who can hardly (or only potentially) be a member of the class defined by generic you:

> Francis: Power is a lot like real estate. It's all about location, location, location. The closer *you* are to the source, the higher the property value. (1.1, my emphasis)

As a member of the political community, the protagonist's credibility is enhanced. Claiming knowledge in the area, he is entitled to give advice

to the viewer. As Stirling and Manderson highlight (although working on different data, that is the narrative of patients who are recovering from breast cancer), 'generic you' statements institute a didactic dimension given the fact the utterer possesses a higher degree of knowledge than the addressee:

> Where the addressee is only potentially a member of the category (breast cancer patient/survivor), the nature of the involvement is as a learner to a teacher. […] A corollary of this point is that these passages inevitably have the effect of positioning the speaker as one with authority. (Stirling & Manderson, 2011: 1599)

The teaching role Francis gives himself shows through the pieces of advice he recurrently grants the viewer via generalizing pseudo-aphorisms, like in the following utterance already quoted (see Chap. 2):

> Any pugilist worth his salt knows when someone's on the ropes, that's when you (.) throw a combination to the gut and (making the gesture) a left hook to the jaw. (2.19)

The character is here explaining to the viewer how to deal the final blows to a helpless Raymond Tusk whose relationship with the president has been broken and who is asking Francis to re-establish contact. There is a teacher-like quality to this statement that tends to bestow authority on the utterer. In the next example, the VP is not in the same position of strength as he is investigated by special prosecutor Dunbar. Nervously leaving the tribunal, he resolutely asserts, looking at the camera:

> From the lion's den to a pack of wolves, when you're fresh meat, kill and throw them something fresher. (2.24)

The piece of advice full of animal imagery (see Chap. 2) contributes to showing the viewer he is still fully in charge and determined to survive. Besides, according to Stirling and Manderson (2011: 1600), generic you statements have the immense advantage of displaying authority while somehow exonerating the speaker from accountability: 'Generalized *you* is a sophisticated interactive device with the potential to allow the

speaker to display her credentials as witness while at the same time diffusing the responsibility for accountability concerning what is witnessed to the audience and beyond.' Involving the audience as a potential member of the generic class of 'you' is a way of 'shift[ing] away from the personal accountability' that holding certain views would entail (Stirling & Manderson, 2011: 1586). In *House of Cards*, the second-person pronoun (either with a specific or a generic reference) is manipulatively used to force complicity with the viewers by making them share some of the responsibility of Frank's claims in the asides.

Lastly, the protagonist's rhetoric of certainty tends to numb the viewer's critical thinking. Indeed, in relevance theory terms, the authoritative mode is economically 'energy sparing' for the viewer who is most likely to rely on Frank's opinion without questioning it. The proverb-like structure bestows certainty and truth upon the utterances that dispense the viewers from making efforts at getting behind the apparent truth, which renders them vulnerable to manipulation: 'The more costly it is for the hearer to retrieve correctly the information communicated, and to evaluate the truth, the likeliness or the ethical acceptability of it, the less likely the hearer is to resist manipulation' (de Saussure, 2005: 139). In fact, Francis tends to 'bury' relevant information in his asides and foreground others in order to distract the viewers' attention. At the end of the first episode of the second season already alluded to, looking at the viewer through the mirror, like Richard III in Ian McKellen's film (see McIntyre, 2008), he goes back on Zoe's murder, guiding the viewer's reaction in a most manipulative manner:

> Francis: Did you think I'd forgotten you? Perhaps you hoped I had. Don't waste a breath mourning Miss Barnes. Every kitten grows up to be a cat. They seem so harmless at first, small, quiet, lapping up their saucer of milk. But once their claws get long enough, they draw blood, sometimes from the hand that feeds them. For those of us climbing to the top of the food chain, there can be no mercy. There is but one rule: hunt or be hunted. Welcome back. (2.14)

His imperative mood ('don't waste a breath') as well as the use of figurative language that immediately speaks to the eyes influence the recipient's

interpretation. Francis backgrounds his own part in the killing by bringing to the fore[8] Zoe's responsibility. Basing their work on psychological research (Sanford, 2002; Sanford & Emmott, 2012; Sanford & Sturt, 2002), Emmott and Alexander (2014: 330) show that 'foregrounding affects *depth of* (*semantic*) *processing*, the extent to which a reader fully engages with the semantic content of the information presented.' Here Francis discredits the character by downplaying her reliability. The viewer takes time processing the foregrounded elements about Zoe's manipulative moves from an innocent kitten to an ungrateful power-hungry cat. While doing so, the audience is bound to shallow process other significant elements that Francis conveniently leaves in the shadow. Zoe was killed precisely at the moment when she felt a line had been crossed in Underwood's activities. She started digging into Frank's murders, as she was not ready to condone them. She might have wanted his help to promote herself—she was even ready to prostitute herself with him for these tips—but could never go as far as turning a blind eye on collateral victims and accepting murders that she might even have indirectly facilitated. So as far as Zoe is concerned, she was killed at the moment when she decided to return to 'innocence' or at least to ethical journalism that does not think that the end justifies the means. Besides, Francis's use of figurative language (the cat image) is here manipulative in that, according to Blass (2005: 186) the recipient 'may not be able to counter [it] as easily as more literal language.' Downplaying Zoe's credibility and distancing the viewers from her through the formal 'Miss Barnes', the manipulator tries to operate some 'mood repair' with the audience (Forgas, 2000: 258). In order to alter potential negative feelings the murder may have generated, he recalls the higher superior goal that is his and that is bound to imply sacrifices ('For those of us climbing to the top of the food chain, there can be no mercy').

Sometimes, on the contrary, the protagonist does not even try to 'repair' the viewer's probable 'mood'. In the following aside, the modal 'should' is used in its deontic value to guide the viewer's interpretation

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[8] As Emmott and Alexander (2014: 330) underline, 'the term "foregrounding" has a degree of ambiguity because it can apply either to the linguistic devices used to create prominence or to the effect of bringing parts of a mental representation to the forefront of attention.'

after Frank's abandoning his long-time 'friend', Freddy, whose restaurant he very regularly went to for the best ribs of Washington:

> Francis: (Looking on and off at the camera) Do you think I'm a hypocrite? Well, you should. I wouldn't disagree with you. The road to power is paved with hypocrisy and (pause: 1 s) casualties. (Looking firmly at the camera) <Never (.) regret>. (2.22)

This extract summarizes all the manipulative strategies that have been detailed so far. Francis spells out for his viewers what they perhaps inwardly think. This honesty ('Do you think I'm a hypocrite? Well, you should') gives prominence to his assumed truthfulness with the audience. Then he justifies his hypocritical course of action by hiding behind what sounds like an authoritative aphoristic-like statement whose general truth cannot be denied: 'the road to power is paved with hypocrisy and casualties.' The simple present associated with the notions 'Ø hypocrisy' and 'Ø casualties' is used to characterize the unique path to success ('*the* road to power', my emphasis). The final two words pronounced through his car window in an emotionless mid-level tone laying equal and heavy stress on each word authoritatively bring an end to the debate. The viewer is left with no time to ponder over her emotions as the show has already gone on. Francis treats the casualties left on the side of the road as a less important matter than his superior goal. This manipulative way of presenting collateral damage is, *mutatis mutandis*, reminiscent of Nazi rhetoric 'assuming that a superior good justifies prevailing over a supposed less important good': 'This was the case when the killing of disabled persons by the Nazis was intended to achieve the alleged superior good of a pure and healthy society' (de Saussure, 2005: 125). The aesthetic manipulation the viewer is subjected to in *House of Cards* is of course willingly consented.[9] Yet, some viewers seem to be 'enticed' by the anti-hero's 'dark charisma' as the next section will demonstrate.

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[9] 'The individuals undergoing aesthetic manipulation sign up for the experience voluntarily' (Mills, 2014: 150).

Rooting for the Anti-Hero

If one has a look at Internet forums and reviews, one finds mostly lovers of the series (at least the first two seasons), but even among these fans, there is a certain degree of ambivalence in their evaluation of the main character. Frank Underwood both charms and chills in the very same breath. By looking at the language used by some Internet fans, one might understand how the protagonist's pull works on the viewer. For most of the remarks[10] betray a fascination for him, knowing that, given the murders he has ruthlessly committed for his own interest, they should not really. Indeed concessions are made to the immorality of the character but the overall attraction seems to be stronger: 'I find it somewhat scary how much I was rooting for the Underwoods throughout the entire season. The show does a fantastic job of making you root for the bad guy.' Another blogger indicates that the attraction finds its source in the very fact that the hero is the villain: 'love the show simply because the villan [sic] is the protagonist. It's such a unique perspective.'

What seems to work as part of the series's magic and the hero's seduction is his taking the viewer behind the scenes of politics, showing them the raw machinations behind any Congress vote. As Baudrillard underlines in his work on seduction, what seduces is what is concealed: the secret, the invisible, what can only be imagined (Baudrillard, 1980: 199–202). The protagonist indeed takes his audience down the hidden roads of dirty politics. Besides, for some giving their opinion on the Internet, the appeal of the series has much to do with the direct address whose involvement power is bond creating (see section 'The Power of the Second-Person Address'). The expressions they use reveal this ambivalent attraction that seems to be beyond their control: 'even if Frank is a villain, I feel like I'm supposed to be on his side […] I dunno, I kind of love that the show isn't just interested in showing you the story but actively involving you in it.' The complex impression based on a passive form 'I feel like I'm supposed to' betrays some inescapable surrender to the protagonist's power. Another post indicates: 'I have a hard time disliking him', which implies an inter-

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[10] Unless indicated otherwise, the following quotations from discussion threads are retrieved from http://www.giantbomb.com/forums/off-topic-31/house-of-cards-season-2-discussion-thread-spoilers-1472254/, date accessed 2 February 2015.

nal fight in the viewer, vainly struggling against liking the villain. These viewers' ambivalent emotional responses reflect the power of manipulation that can be partly conscious, as Mills (2014: 141) points out:

> Now sometimes it will be the case that attempted manipulation is successful on some audience members but not on others; it works on me, but it fails on you. Here *you* can see how clumsily obvious the attempted manipulation was, but I cannot. But in some cases, the most psychologically and philosophically interesting ones, aesthetic manipulation can work on me even as I realize I am being manipulated.

The Internet commentators in the previous quotes testify to the fact that they know they should not be attracted but that they nonetheless are.

Humour is also a tension-releasing device that Francis uses to distract the viewers from his questionable schemes. Like most of the likable villains, he is not without detachment as regards the world around him and though he is engrossed in his only aim, he can be at times humorous and ironical. When the Congress is quarantined because of the discovery of some anthrax in a letter, he is hoping that anthrax will be confirmed so he does not have to face the bill he has a hard time convincing some of his fellow congressmen to vote for: 'If we're lucky, it'll be anthrax. I won't live long enough to see the bill fail' (2.17). It is common knowledge for the viewer that Francis would not surrender so easily but this ability to distance himself from reality by commenting on it is likely to trigger a smile, thus ensuring some form of complicity with his fellow player. This capacity for derision at the most tense moments tends to place him in the superior position of the one who both acts in and comments on the world in which he plays. Seeking the support of the chairman of the Iowa Democratic Party, Harlan Traub, Frank invites him on Air Force One but confides to the viewer how boring his addressee is:

Traub	
(eating free food):	Sir, I know you have a million things on your mind, but I would just love to talk to you about how to modernize the food-processing industry in Iowa.
Francis (turning to the camera):	Please slit my wrists with his butter knife. (3.35)

The audience may indeed take pleasure in Frank's detached and humorous comments that cultivate proximity and offer some comic relief.

If the protagonist can be described as 'addictive'—to take up an adjective used on forums, it is for the 'expressive identity' he incarnates. For Bednarek (2012: 118), the 'expressive identity' of a character conditions the viewer's potential identification or affiliation with him/her:

> It can be argued that the expressive identity of characters plays a big part in […] contributing to identification with characters (e.g. on the basis of similar opinions/attitudes), and in developing affinity towards characters (e.g. on the basis of their emotional reactions). (Bednarek, 2012: 121)

In *House of Cards*, however, identification and affinity with a murderous hero are far from self-evident.[11] There are aspects of Francis's and Claire's expressive identities that the viewer may hardly identify with, such as the cruelty and ruthlessness, for instance. As noted in Chap. 2, expressions of emotions are particularly rare. Their words as well as their facial expressions hardly ever betray their (possible) inner feelings: their neutralisation of verbal and non-verbal expressions of joy, love, or empathy for others[12] for instance is reflected in the setting of their townhouse marked by subdued fabrics and neutral colours. The black figures they display when they go running is another illustration of their concealed and self-disciplined lives that allow for no entertainment and folly. Anger and anxiety are also emotions that Frank does not allow himself to show—except when he loses his nerves with Dan Lanagin and is particularly anxious to lose everything at the end of the second season (see Chap. 5). Such neutral emotional identity *per se* can hardly foster affinities.

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[11] Something that Bednarek (2012: 221) later on concedes: 'First, I suggested earlier on that we are invited to share the ideologies or values of likeable characters. However, there may be many ideologies/values that a certain character stands for—are we invited to share each and every one of them? I would argue that characters are more complex than that, and that television characters often have flaws and values that the target audience will not share.'

[12] Smiling seems to be part of the public image they want to give (at ceremonial gatherings, for instance) and thus cannot be said to be entirely genuine. Claire's few tears that were shed after wrecking Megan's life are very short-lived; she soon regains her no-emotion mask. The cover to the integral seasons 1 & 2 in DVD in France features the Underwoods with their head slightly up, and the shadow of a smile expressing their feeling of superiority over whoever may dare impede their way to success and power.

Nevertheless, attraction plays on another level. As a supercompetent, uncommonly skilled politician, Francis becomes some kind of super-hero who, like a character in a video-game, annihilates one Opponent after the other, pursuing his course towards success, adding victory over victory, one step/game at a time. The thrill of transgression that Frank Underwood embodies is not lost on those who feel empowered by his capacity to annihilate all the obstacles that come his way, as one Internet reviewer indicates: 'I'll definitely watch Kevin Spacey screw everyone over and brand them with his initials F.U.' In the first two seasons indeed, working his way out of tricky situations and unexpected drawbacks, he gives an impression of invincibility. This extraordinary capacity endows him with what Weber calls 'authoritative charisma' that is the preserve of 'supernatural' beings who display exceptional qualities that are out of reach of the ordinary person (Weber, 1922: § 10). Hitler was one of those superhumans endowed with charismatic authority. In his study of the 'dark charisma' of the dictator, Rees (2013) indeed shows that Hitler was depicted as a 'superman' by his faithful followers. What impressed most of them was his unwavering optimism even in the face of adversity:

> Nicolaus von Below, Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant, recalls that Hitler "never betrayed a sign of weakness nor indicated that he saw any situation as hopeless….It fascinated me to see how he contrived to put a positive value on setbacks and even succeeded in convincing those who worked closely with him" (Rees, 2013: 376).

Indeed Hitler's certitude and 'force of will, his refusal to admit defeat, his faith in his own destiny' (Rees: 329) came from the conviction that only the fittest will survive. Similarly, in *House of Cards*, the optimistic, re-enchanting message Frank Underwood transmits may account for the audience's rooting for him. The anti-hero's self-confidence indeed incarnates a positive pole of 'security' that can be thrilling for the viewers whether they share his obsession with success or not—one can be fascinated by someone one is not. Francis makes us live here the thrill of success by proxy. Even when his future is in Tusk's hands, he manages to convey a feeling of cool-blooded unreachability. In the backstage of an opera with Tusk, he dares make a personal comment on Puccini's universally acclaimed music:

Francis:	Now let's work together as we always intended to do.
Raymond:	(music playing) (pause: 10 s) When they put you in that box barely bigger than a coffin (pause: 3 s) remember how beautiful the music was tonight. (pause: 3 s) It might give you some small degree of comfort.
Francis:	(pause: 2 s, listening to the music and shaking his head) Puccini's a downer. I prefer something much more optimistic. (Francis leaving, singing a lively tune) (2.26)

Speaking of Puccini's music in terms of psychological polarity, he opts for the optimistic pole that is likely to be equated with positivity in the viewer's mind.

Fascination comes from success and certitude. Frank's charismatic authority may stem from his 'rhetoric of certainty' (see previous section). As already pointed out, his vision of the world is predicated on a binary either/or logic: his reductive categorisations of situations and people into polar opposites (Helpers/Opponents, right audience/wrong audience, the hunters/the hunted, matadors/mat of doors, the strong/the weak, the useful/the useless) creates a simplified image of humanity inviting the viewer to choose either the side of the winners (the Underwoods' side) or the losers. That everything should be reduced to binary divisions (instead of a scalar structure) has been made clear from Frank's very first aside at the opening of the first season, as he puts to death the neighbour's dog that has just been run over by a car: 'There are two kinds of pain. The sort of pain that makes you strong, or useless pain, the sort of pain that's only suffering. I have no patience for useless things' (1.1). The assertiveness of such 'absolute alternatives'[13] may account for the anti-hero's charismatic appeal.

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[13] This ideological dividing up of people/situations into two reductive categories with no nuances that informs Francis's 'either/or' rhetoric is reminiscent of the kind of vision that Adolph Hitler had of humanity and of his place in history; either win or die, there was no alternative: 'This kind of logic, of course, is an application of Hitler's own way of looking at the world in "either/or" terms— "either we annihilate the enemy or we are annihilated instead." This simple, emotion-based way of reducing complex questions to absolute alternatives had been a key component of Hitler's charismatic leadership from his earliest beer ball speeches' (Rees, 2013: 309).

In the first two seasons of *House of Cards* both success and certainty legitimize Frank's magnetism. Some fans testify to this 'intoxication' and the idea that the hero is invincible, such as in the following extract[14]:

> Just my thought but at this point Frank is a superhero. Hes written to be smarter than anyone else. Hes smarter than a fifth grader, the President felt like a fifth grader always hemming and hawing about things, everyone felt normal, except Frank. I wasnt scared for the Underwoods. Its like the walking Dead, the producers say no one is safe, but we know thats not true, they will never kill Daryl and the Underwoods will never be in danger.

However 'charisma' is not something one possesses or is deprived of: it operates in the interpersonal relation between a speaker and a 'receptive' audience and needs to be 'constantly […] proved' (Weber, 1998: 248, quoted in Rees: 325). With Hitler, it started to crackle when some weaknesses on the dictator's side were perceived by his followers (Rees: 329). The third season of *House of Cards* seems to inspire less enthusiasm than the two previous ones as far as the 'superhero' is concerned: President Underwood appears less 'addictive' than the manipulative power-aspirant of the first two seasons. The two following posts, for instance, regret that Frank has turned from a cunning manipulator into a tyrannical, yet ineffectual ruler who no longer engages in manipulative games:

> First 2 seasons he was cunning and made people do what he wanted by out smarting or in rare cases intimidating them. He had his temper but never just yelled at people. Now […] it's not worth tricking you because I'm the president and you have to do what I say. That's really not as fun to watch.

> First two seasons, it was like this guy is […] ruthless and super manipulative, I love him. This season it was like this guy is super ineffective and very controlling.[15]

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[14] Extracted from http://www.giantbomb.com/forums/off-topic-31/house-of-cards-season-2-discussion-thread-spoilers-1472254/, date accessed 3 February 2016.

[15] Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/HouseOfCards/comments/2xf4m2/season_3_discussion_thread/, date accessed 2 December 2015.

In fact, the crackling of Frank's charismatic image in the third season is orchestrated by a deliberate choice of the 'collective sender' of *House of Cards*. The latter has indeed decided on altering the viewers' potential bonding with Frank by drastically reducing the number of asides in the third season. Episode 3.33 and 3.39 are even devoid of any asides. They correspond to violent tension or dispute with Claire. Francis confides to the writer Tom Yates instead (in 3.33 especially). The involving quality of the aside evaporates as the protagonist fails to acknowledge the audience's presence more and more, which is underlined by some Internet commentators:

> I don't think we got enough of Frank breaking the 4th wall in this season. I felt a little *neglected* towards the last few episodes. (my emphasis)

> There was almost no memorable quotes or classic Frank Underwood sayings. Not a lot of Frank breaking the 4th wall, and when he does, it mostly just feels like the writers forgot to do it and sort of went 'oh shit! We haven't done that in a while, let's have Frank say a comment to the audience here'.[16]

The transcendent authoritative dogmas that he professes in his asides (see section 'A Rhetoric of Certainty') disappear alongside the direct address. The (simulated) conversation Frank has entertained with his audience is thus severely reduced, which inevitably affects the character and the viewer's previously established complicity and proximity. What is more, at the very end of episode 3.32 which contains only one aside, the direct address engenders a shift in the viewer's position as ratified recipient. Indeed after a violent dispute with Claire over Corrigan's lot in the Russian episode, he looks down at the camera and bluntly asks:

> Francis (aside): What're YOU looking at? (3.32)

This is not so much the tone that may sound surprising—after all, Frank does not always give the audience an easy ride—as the change in status the semantics of this remark implies: the viewer is for the first time

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[16] Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/HouseOfCards/comments/2xf4m2/season_3_discussion_thread/, date accessed 2 December 2015.

assigned the place of the bystander caught in the act of eavesdropping, the emphasis on 'you' reinforcing the new positioning. This slight change of participation status goes hand in hand with the deictic shift that the 'collective sender' operates at the end of the season by switching from Frank to Claire as 'deictic centre'. Through the camera's change of focus, the viewer is brought to leave Frank's mind and eyes to register Claire's reactions and emotions (see Chap. 2). Frank's visible tyrant-like attitude (with his partner as well) may cross a line of trust and wear out the 'referent power' (French & Raven, 1959)[17]—or, as I would call it, the 'charismatic power'—he exercises over the audience. The confiding relationship seems to have been dealt a blow as the 'what are you looking at' address testifies—although the viewer may still enjoy the surprising effect of the aside.

Not only does the camera 'abandon' him but other points of view besides his own are revealed to the audience. If his unmodalized assertive dogmas imposed onto the viewers may have so far endowed him with charismatic authority, negative viewpoints in the third season tend to tarnish this reputation, which is likely to surreptitiously distance the audience further away from him. Other voices are heard like that of his old-time friend 'Freddy'—who has been hired by Francis as a White House Groundskeeper through the America Works program. Left alone with Remy Danton after Francis has left to take a call, Freddy confesses feelings he has so far kept to himself:

Freddy:	Could you do me a favour?
Remy:	What's that?
Freddy:	Cover for me. I got work to do and he needs company. Back at the ribs joint, I could just walk back in the kitchen when I got tired of hearing him talk.
Remy:	Yeah. I'll tell him your boss came over.
Freddy:	Thank you, brother. (3.37)

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[17] 'Referent power' is the result of P's perception of O's attractiveness and respectful worthiness, where P is a Person (a social agent) and O either another person or a role, a norm or a group: 'If O is a person toward whom P is highly attracted, P will have a desire to become closely associated with O. If O is an attractive group, P will have a feeling of membership or a desire to join. If P is already closely associated with O he will want to maintain this relationship' (French & Raven, 1959: 266).

For the first time, the audience gets Freddy's point of view on the president. From super-competent hero, Frank Underwood falls into the less appealing category of the annoying chatterbox. The 'collective sender' indeed chooses to foreground new aspects of the president's personality. Is this new polyphonic perspective a harbinger of the upcoming character's fall in the fourth season? Will Frank end up alone asking for a horse instead of a kingdom like Richard III? Will Greimas's fairy-tale structure (see Chap. 2) turn into a Shakespearian tragedy in which the villain will in the end have to pay for his crimes? In this fast-moving digital world, the moment my reader reads this, Netflix will have already given the viewers the answer.

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7

Concluding Remarks: Reciprocation and (Im)Politeness

I'm a powerful friend to have right now,
perhaps your only friend, so don't defy me.

Frank Underwood (1.4)

Now tell me, am I really the sort of enemy you want to make?

Claire Underwood (1.14)

Behind-the-Scenes Politics: Interdependency and Constraints

The Debt/Credit Equation

Psychologists, sociologists, archaeologists and anthropologists have evinced that there is a rule of 'reciprocation' at the heart of human society. Human beings owe their survival to a bonding capacity that engenders a network of 'indebtedness'. The need to repay debts stems from a 'sense of obligation' that has been shown to be typically human:

The impressive aspect of reciprocation with its accompanying sense of obligation is its pervasiveness in human culture. It is so widespread that, after intensive study, Alvin Gouldner (1960), along with other sociologists, report that all human societies subscribe to the rule. Within each society it seems pervasive also; it permeates exchanges of every kind. Indeed, it may well be that a developed system of indebtedness flowing from the rule of reciprocation is a unique property of human culture. The noted archaeologist Richard Leakey ascribes the essence of what makes us human to the reciprocity system. He claims that we are human because our ancestors learned to share food and skills 'in an honoured network of obligation' (Leakey & Lewin, 1978). Cultural anthropologists view the 'web of indebtedness' as a unique adaptive mechanism of human beings, allowing for the division of labour, the exchange of diverse forms of goods and different services, and the creation of interdependencies that bond individuals together into highly efficient units (Ridley, 1997; Tiger & Fox, 1989). (Cialdini, 2014: 24–5)

In the specific world of politics, 'reciprocation' and 'interdependency' receive a very concrete illustration. As Whip of the Democratic Party, Francis is seen offering promises, gifts and rewards in exchange for votes in the right directions. He even explicitly formulates the reciprocity principle: 'Give and take. Welcome to Washington' (1.1). Commenting on US political history, Cialdini shows that if Lyndon Johnson was so successful in passing legislation, this is precisely because he had done a high number of favours to legislators during his time in the House and in the Senate. On the opposite, Jimmy Carter prided himself on owing nothing to anyone—this also meant he was owed nothing, which partly explains the difficulty he met in convincing Congress to vote for his proposals:

Carter came to the presidency from outside the Capitol Hill establishment. He campaigned in his outside-Washington identity, saying that he was indebted to no one. Much of his legislative difficulty upon arriving may be traced to the fact that no one there was indebted to *him*. Much the same may be said about the first-term legislation record of Washington outsider Bill Clinton. (Cialdini, 2014: 31)

House of Cards exposes the mutual dependency that is at work between US congressmen and women from both parties. As shown in Chap. 2, the financial metaphor of 'owing' informs the whole series: the debit/

credit scale determines power relations and actants' ultimate success. In the following quote for instance, Francis claims that the nomination of Catherine Durant as Secretary of State has ensured permanent submissiveness:

Claire:	Does Catherine Durant still owe us?
Francis:	When you make someone Secretary of State, they owe you for life. (1.6)

The same reciprocation of favours in a 'give-and-take' game takes place between politics and the media: while Frank makes strategic use of the media outlet Zoe gives him, Zoe acquires fame in the news world by being the first to release exclusive stories (see Chap. 3).

On the exchequer of power depicted in *House of Cards*, the position of the different political pawns depends on the amount of (temporary) power each is endowed with (Chap. 2). Powerful pieces ascribe places to the less powerful ones who must either become allies or find other alliances elsewhere. The quotations in epigraph to this final chapter reveal the use and abuse of the protagonists' position of power in order to secure cooperation. Francis tells Peter that he has to relinquish his shipyard project:

Francis:	The base <will close>. The only question is, will you make it a swift death or a painful one.
Peter:	No way. I won't sit on my hands.
Francis (getting up):	I sympathize that this is gonna be difficult for you. And I don't know how yet, but I WILL make it up to you, Peter. I'm a powerful friend to have right now (.) perhaps your ONLY friend, so don't defy me. (1.4)

Reminding Peter on which side power is on at the moment, Frank hints at the consequences the congressman might face should the favour not be granted. As shown in the pragmatic narratorial structure in Chap. 2, people are assigned places or rather forced into actant positions by the Underwood couple. Wishing the reluctant Gillian to take over from her as CEO of Clean Water Initiative, Claire exerts the same overt threat, showing her ex-employee she has no other choice but to be a Helper

if she wants to afford the medicine she needs for her foetus (her health insurance having been terminated):

> Claire: You're expecting in four, no? That's four months without the medicine you need. (pause: 3 s) I'm willing to let your child wither and die inside you if that's what's required. But neither of us wants that. (.) Now tell me, am I really the sort of enemy you want to make? But here's the alternative, this office, this staff, 22 million a year could be yours. (1.14)

In *House of Cards*, alongside overtly coercive moves (via threats or, more radically, the use of outright force that can result in murder), another more covert weapon is recurrently used by the Underwoods to bring into compliance, that is, hypocrisy or the art of concealing one's real intentions through pretence and duplicity. What the series unashamedly brings to light is the inherent hypocrisy that lives in the world of politics. Mendacity and obligation seem to structurally inhabit a democratic system supposed to promote honesty and freedom: based on winning over people who have conflicting interests (be they the American public or political Opponents/Helpers), democracy appears to inevitably foster dissimulation. In a most Machiavellian manner, rather than portraying hypocrisy as a collateral negative aspect of political activity, the series brings forth its centrality. Machiavelli indeed made the claim of the inevitability of hypocrisy in politics a long time ago, as Grant (1997: 18) recalls:

> This is a claim concerning the nature of politics rather than the moral status of hypocrisy. If it can be shown that political aims cannot be met honestly, then no further moral justification for hypocritical behaviour is needed. To condemn hypocrisy would be to condemn politics altogether.

Hypocrisy is shown as endemic to politics. The ethos built by politicians in order to inspire trust do not always correspond to their real beliefs and feelings. For Machiavelli, they do not have the choice between hypocrisy and honesty but with different 'forms of hypocrisy' (see Grant: 30). Using constant manipulation and deception, Frank Underwood simply embodies an extreme version of the hypocrite.

Unhappy with the constraints of democracy, the anti-hero does not hesitate to break its rules. In the middle of taking the oath of office as vice president, he confides to the viewers: 'One heartbeat away from the presidency, and not a single vote cast in my name. Democracy is so overrated' (2.15). His aspiration to the highest office in the USA seems to be part of his desire to be totally free from indebtedness. He yearns for absolute power and utter freedom that would make it possible to make the decisions he wishes to make. Once president (season 3), he does not use hypocrisy so much as he orders people about with more explicit threats. He seems to forget that such treatment can backfire on him in a democratic system where power depends on relations of reciprocation. Not ready to be sentenced to compliance for life, his staff member, Remy Danton, asks for fair treatment in the following exchange in which Underwood asserts presidential power:

Remy:	When I worked for you in Congress, you always told me to be straight up with you.
Francis:	I wasn't the president then.
Remy:	So you (.) just want me to apologize and be a yes-man?
Francis:	I want you to treat this office with respect.
Remy:	You owe your staff that same respect.
Francis:	I gave you a position in the White House when no one would touch you. I don't owe you a <damn thing>.
Remy:	How long you gonna hang that over my head?
Francis:	Oh, it's like you want me to fire you.
Remy:	You couldn't, and you know it. (Pause: 2 seconds) Not right now. Seth and I are the only two soldiers you have. (3.34)

Although Francis seems to think that occupying the highest position is enough to receive allegiance from all around, Remy reminds him of interdependency: his present dedicated work should erase part of his debt to the president, especially as the latter cannot afford losing him as ally/ Helper at the moment. Rather than 'collaborative power' (Holmes & Stubbe, 2014: 6), Underwood exerts 'coercive power' with his employee, without taking care any longer to redress it through cunning face work. The unfair treatment will lead Remy to resign. As shown in Chap. 5 of this book, his conduct with Claire at the end of the third season will trigger

the same contractual rupture. She no longer wishes to occupy the place of the Helper. Francis progressively reveals himself to be a selfish, power-obsessed monster who has forgotten the basic human reciprocity rule that he has learnt to play with so well in the political game of Congress.

Media Influence

The object of the book was not to discuss the political realism of the series. For one thing, the series has more of the (political) 'thriller' than the 'political series'. For political scientists interested in series (see Taieb, 2015, for instance), the narratorial 'political coups' that are the most important for the plot in *House of Cards* are those which are, politically speaking, the less credible. This narrative depoliticization shows that politics is only the backdrop against which is played out the desire of a man aspiring to the most powerful position. Frank Underwood has internalized all the rules of the political game, adopting hypocrisy as a necessary mask to obtain and maintain power. Cynically pretending to care about others, he merely cares about himself. He reveals to public view the side of politics that politicians would rather leave uncovered. In doing so, he offers the viewers, who may have turned away from politics out of distrust for politicians, a confirmation of what they suspected politics was all about. If in *The West Wing* series, spin doctors were presented as working for 'the greater good' (K. Richardson, 2006), *House of Cards* offers a vision of politics that 'is congruent with the cynical view of political communication' (K. Richardson, 2006: 66). Discussing the impact of *The West Wing* on people's relation to politics (see Chap. 1), Wodak (2011: 186) concludes that the utopian vision of the series can only drive people further away from politics as it 'leads to even more disappointment' with our own political world. Can the dystopian streak of *House of Cards* engender the reverse effect? Or is it likely to produce further disenchantment? The answers to these questions that would necessitate a quantitative analysis of viewers' reactions lie beyond the scope of this book.

   What the series makes visible is the extent to which politicians are prisoners to the image they put on show: Francis confides in Tom Yates

about the obligation that is his to perpetually 'watch over his shoulder' (see Chap. 5). As studied in Chap. 2, Frank Underwood both assigns places through language and is assigned a place by the L and E actants that ideologically interpellate him into a subject. His whole 'lifescript'[1] is informed by his ideological beliefs and the political constraints of his job. Becoming subject through a free manipulation of language (see the ALTER structure in Chap. 2), he is also 'subjectified' by an image imposed by the rules of social exchanges. With full knowledge of the constraints of a public life, Frank has agreed to be locked in a 'cell' (Goffman, 1967) that requires constant attention to 'self-presentation' and the repression of part of his private self. If the ALTER structure allows for a multiplicity of interpellations—a woman can, for instance, be interpellated at different places given the diverse roles she can assume as a mother, a wife, a church-goer, a trade unionist or a member of an association and so on, Francis Underwood seems to have reduced his entire life to one single possible role. Politics seems the only field that can define his identity—he is not a father, he is a husband but even this role is subjected to politics, his homosexual self is repressed and he is a non believer. With Claire's departure at the end of the third season, he seems even deprived of part of his political 'relational self'. It might be wondered at this point whether he will end up tragically alone as this ending forebodes or whether the 'superhero' will start over in the fourth season.

If *House of Cards* may not reflect entirely plausible 'political coups', it does take the temperature of a time, mirroring a postmodern communicative era marked by urgency. Francis has grasped the power and influence of the media in political communication. As shown in Chap. 3, instead of enduring it, he makes the most of it. Both conforming to its exigency and playing with it, he chooses to create reality before somebody else carves a different story. Using indirect pragmatic devices (like insinu-

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[1] I borrow the term from Domenici and Littlejohn (2006: 6–7), linking one's life narrative to the notion of identity: 'Each of us possesses a dynamic and changing lifescript that guides our personal, relational, and community identities. The lifescript is a roadmap for how to live a life and how to respond to the constantly changing landscapes in which we exist.'

ation, counterfactuality, misinformation and metadiscursive deception), he manipulates versions of the facts and make illusion pose as reality. The close relationship between media and politics is highlighted through frame within the frame scenes in *House of Cards*, making a good show of reflecting the immediacy of media time. As the new communicative means impose constraints on the political circulation of ideas, public relations coups have become more effective than thorough discussions of issues. If the viewers take one step further back, they might even see another frame within the frame, one that would embrace the 'Netflix—audience' interdependence. For the 'collective sender' itself is caught in the web of postmodern urgency that compels it to be faster and better than other production and distribution teams in the competing world of TV series. Delivering whole seasons in one row,[2] Netflix, the on-demand Internet streaming media, may 'seduce' a wider audience, generating millions of dollars in the process. Just as roll on news channels are competing for exclusive pieces of news for the sake of audience ratings (see Bourdieu's critic of television[3]), series producers and distributors are enmeshed in the same competing pressure to attract more viewers. Netflix is both subjected to commercial urgency and contributes to producing it. Although itself a product of its time, this book has attempted to make the different controlling frames visible and to provide some analytic tools to penetrate the inner workings of aesthetic and non-aesthetic manipulation.

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[2] In a commercial coup to reposition itself as an Internet TV network, Netflix indeed releases entire seasons at once, allowing for 'binge watching'. In addition to differentiating itself from other networks that are still constrained to a broadcast schedule, it also changes the producer's relation to creation: where traditional series are dependent on the creation of cliff-hangers at the end of each episode to seduce the viewer into watching it one week later, the *House of Cards* creators have no such constraints any more, which implies more creative freedom for them. Furthermore, from the metarecipient's point of view, the whole season can be seen and studied as a real aesthetic unit.

[3] For Bourdieu (2008: 20), the competition between channels paradoxically contributes to some 'homogenization' of information—every channel feeling obliged to treat what the other competing channels have treated. This is not the same though with TV series, which must be all the more creative as the competition is ferocious (numerous series have taken politics as backdrop for instance, see Chap. 1).

Manipulative (Im)Politeness

A Cross-Disciplinary Approach

This work has adopted a stylistic and pragmatic approach to the study of language and of the dynamic process of interaction in *House of Cards*. It has indeed paid close attention to the style of the main character by focusing both on the linguistic choices in his speeches and asides (as far as syntax, typology of sentence, figurative language are concerned) and on his management of interpersonal relations (convening face-work, politeness/impoliteness theories, rapport management theory, including issues of identity). The book has thus sought to link the specificities of Underwood's language, internally speaking (syntactico-semantic structures) and externally speaking—in terms of interpersonal relationships that can be pragmatically defined. Combined with pragmatic questions going beyond purely linguistic issues, the book has also given pride of place to cognitive considerations investigating how internal participants interpret Francis's utterances (and vice versa) and how recipients comprehend film dialogues and asides that are both specifically designed for them.

More specifically, I have chosen to focus on manipulative discourse. Demonstrating that, in pragmatic terms, manipulation is parasitic on the Principle of Cooperation as the manipulator pretends to be cooperative while hiding other intentions, Chap. 4 evinced how the way information is presented can contribute to creating cognitive illusions that make it harder for the human cognitive system to process information in a normal or rational manner. By backgrounding certain elements, Frank Underwood prevents his addressees and the recipients from accessing them and thereby fosters shallow processing. These 'weapons of influence' (Cialdini, 2014) are means used by metapragmatically skilled people who profit by the mental shortcuts that humans traditionally make, rendering them particularly vulnerable. One of these rules is exploited by the anti-hero in his authoritative way of expressing his opinions as if they were scientific truths: 'consider for example, the shortcut rule that goes "if an expert said so, it must be true". There is an unsettling tendency

in our society to accept unthinkingly the statements and directions of individuals who appear to be authorities on the topic. That is, rather than thinking about an expert's arguments and being convinced (or not) we frequently ignore the arguments and allow ourselves to be convinced just by the expert's status as "expert"' (Cialdini, 2014: 8–9). Chap. 6 has shown how this 'simplified thinking' is induced by Frank's linguistic and rhetorical choices that place the recipient in a pupil-like position, especially through the generic use of the second person pronoun. The infernal rhythm imposed by the protagonist's 'watch and learn' attitude also leaves little time for the recipient to ponder over his reprehensible crimes.

As 'metarecipient' (Dynel, 2011)[4] to the series, my goal was thus to discuss the main characters' strategies of manipulation from a linguistic, rhetorical, (socio)pragmatic, (socio)psychological and cognitive perspective. Trying to draw boundaries around the fuzzy notion of manipulation, I have situated it on a continuum between persuasion, on the one hand, and coercion, on the other, analysing pure instances of both ends and more blurred intermediate cases leaning on one side or the other. In *House of Cards*, manipulative discourse aims at convincing the other (persuasion end) by more or less covertly 'forcing' her into the trap set up for her (coercion). If Chap. 4 focused on Frank's meddling with his targets' rational and cognitive abilities, the fifth chapter added another essential component of suasion: the consideration of Opponents' face wants and needs. Chap. 5 explores a peculiar kind of cajoling that aims at 'seducing': its specificity lies in the fact that it displays a hybrid form of (im)politeness falling out of Leech's General Strategy of Politeness. The seducers-manipulators' goal is indeed sometimes both to enhance the other's face through 'pos-politeness' (Leech, 2014) or 'face-flattering acts' (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010) but, at the same time, to promote their own selves so that the other can be tempted into playing along with them. The broader and more integrative theory of 'rapport management' (Spencer-Oatey) made it possible to account for the hybridity of (manipulative) cajoling discourse in which both self and other enhancements are at stake. Theoretically speaking, manipulative 'seductive' discourse thus

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[4] Among 'metarecipients' are reviewers, university scholars or 'film zealots' (Dynel, 2011: 1633) who have more time to reflect on Frank's rhetoric.

falls in between the politeness and impoliteness frameworks as conceived by specialists of the field. Far from consisting of on-record verbal attacks, enticing discourse must remain pleasing, it still deliberately and ostensibly impinges on the other's territory (negative face). If higher intentions are covert like in ordinary manipulation, overt face threatening acts may run along face-flattering acts in alluring discourse.

Frank's letter to the president is a case in point. Besides flattering Walker, the seducer-manipulator imposes upon him a surprising revelation he has never confided to anyone before (that is, his regret for not having pulled the trigger and killed his father). This constitutes a deliberate manipulative strategy designed to challenge the target's desire to remain 'autonomous' (negative face want). Francis also exerts pressure on the president without providing an out for him. He pretends to leave him a choice (use or not the letter against him), but in reality he urges him to act in a certain way. He does not help him avoid 'future debt', which would be using 'negative politeness' in Brown and Levinson's terminology (1987: 66). He purposefully incurs a debt. Indeed, the revelation and the accompanying letter exhort Garret to 'reciprocate', as such 'gifts' cannot be so easily discarded; they very manipulatively put him in the position of a debtor even if he did not ask for these 'verbal presents'. The payoff of Frank's 'bold on record' confession is that it makes him appear honest. He thus deceives the hearer into thinking he is not manipulative since he outspokenly reveals a most intimate matter he would not want the public to know. The intrusiveness of manipulative-cajoling discourse constitutes a face-threatening act, encroaching as it is upon the other's territory without any use of negative face redress strategies. Quite the contrary, it impolitely forces itself on the other—with the risk this incurs of disrupting relations if the target is not ready to let himself be imposed upon. Surprise and boldness are two privileged weapons of the art of

Persuasion   Manipulation   Coercion

politeness   (im)politeness   impoliteness

Fig. 7.1 Correlation of the persuasion–manipulation–coercion continuum with the (im)politeness framework

seductive discourse. These overt tactics aim at covertly establishing a ratio of power that is advantageous to the Self.

The continuum in Fig. 7.1 offers a synthesis of Chaps. 4 and 5, as it correlates manipulation with politeness and impoliteness theories. On the second line, the hybrid category of '(im)politeness' is here to account for cases that mix courtesy and impoliteness with the aim, not of hurting the others but of winning them over.

As Leech expounds, politeness is 'communicative altruism'. Although he concedes that altruism does not need to be genuine, for him still 'in polite utterance, the other person is considered the beneficiary and the speaker is not' (Leech, 2014: 6). Persuasion seeks to convince an addressee by using rational arguments, that is to say, a way of reasoning that the hearer might follow and agree with (or not). The correlation of persuasion with politeness becomes clear when one sees persuasion as necessitating the maintenance of social cohesion and harmony so that the parties present feel respected and their positions acknowledged during negotiation or resolution of conflict, for instance. Awareness of face sensitivities (the attention paid to the other's needs and wants) partakes of the skills of a good persuader. On the other side of the spectrum, impoliteness is correlated with coercion in that it involves a deliberate attack of face sensitivities in order to hurt the addressee's feelings and/or intimidate her into agreement. In 'coercive impoliteness',[5] the beneficiary is the speaker and the other person the victim. At the centre of the continuum, manipulation (and more specifically the sub-category of 'seductive' discourse[6]) occupies an in-between position between the politeness/impoliteness poles in that:

– it feigns to consider the addressee as the beneficiary (while hiding selfish intentions);
– it may exhibit both Self's and Other's face enhancement (in contradistinction to Leech's politeness strategies); and

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[5] See Chap. 4, footnote 22. Due to a clash of interests, the coercive action 'impoliteness' implies is not in the interest of the target.

[6] If sweet talk can be manipulative, manipulation is not always 'seductive' (for lack of a better word in English). There is thus a specificity to this type of manipulative discourse.

– it may boldly threaten face and incur debts (unredressed impoliteness).

Used as strategies of manipulation, the mixed mode of (im)politeness must be set apart from the 'verbal violence' that uses politeness as a veil for aggression—what Agha (1997) calls 'topic aggression' and Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2010) 'polirudeness', for instance, which consists in attacking the other without seeming to do so on the surface (see also Fracchiolla, 2008; Fracchiolla, Romain, Moïse, & Auger, 2013). Although manipulative (im)politeness conceals a hidden violence (the point being to make the other surrender, see Chap. 5), it does not involve *veiled* rudeness as in the case of 'polirudeness', for in 'seductive' discourse, the impolite invasion of the addressee's space is rather *overt*.

To recap, on the continuum designed earlier (Fig. 7.1), there are various degrees of manipulation. When the cursor moves to the right, manipulation slides into pure impoliteness, engaging in face-attacks that aim at coercing addressees into doing something that is not in their interest. If the cursor moves towards the left, 'polite manipulation' consists in obtaining favours while maintaining good work collaborations though the addressee may be perfectly conscious of the underlying coercion (the persuader's selfish goal). Manipulation becomes more insidious when the addressee is lured into agreement through an attempt at controlling her mind unawares or exploiting her vulnerabilities. The cognitive manipulation practised by the Nazis is one of the darkest in history. More scaringly still, as Blass (2005: 186) shows, part of their propaganda found an echo in its victims' desires: 'some of the claims of the Nazis were accepted because they were coherent with the plans and desires of the addressees.' In the fictional world of *House of Cards*, Underwood also recurrently gets his way by conjuring up a positive future that materializes the target's inner feelings and hidden ambition (see the epistemic subworld constructions, Chap. 3). The anti-hero sometimes wins the day by showing the

Persuasion	Manipulation	Coercion
polite manipulation	**im/polite seductive conquest**	**impolite manipulation**

Fig. 7.2 The manipulation–politeness continuum

other what her subconscious desires aspire for, seeking common ground with his 'victim', enhancing both selves in the process. Indeed alluring discourse both explicitly cajoles in order to influence the victim's deeds and implicitly works on her beliefs and feelings. The final continuum in Fig. 7.2 integrates the intermediate possible degrees of manipulation on either side of the hybrid form of the im/polite 'seductive conquest'.

As Chap. 6 put forward, dark manipulation has a lighter counterpart ('aesthetic manipulation') whose aim is to entertain the viewers through suspense and surprises. However, this overt manipulation on the part of the 'collective sender' designed to whet the appetite of the audience for the show is coupled with a more covert one played out through the anti-hero. Francis Underwood's seductive conquest of the audience is both polite (he acknowledges the viewer's presence as a trustworthy fellow player) and impolite (this intrusion into the recipient's 'world' can be felt as face-threatening). In managing to control (some) viewers' beliefs and feelings (see section 'Rooting for the Anti-Hero'), the protagonist proves how easily and voluntarily one can become a victim to manipulation. This book has thus attempted to bring out the pragma-stylistic springs of the charismatic anti-hero's bold rhetoric with the aim of grasping the nature of the influence that is exerted on the seduced audience of *House of Cards*.

Towards a Less Irenic Philosophy of Language

Traditional philosophy of language has laid stress on cooperation predicated on rational intentions between reasonable human beings. Even politeness theory has an original bias towards seeing politeness as 'rational activity' (see Kádár & Haugh, 2013: 223). Yet the world of politics depicted in *House of Cards* seems to call for a more agonistic philosophy in which language is not so much the instrument of communication and transmission of information as the means used by protagonists to assign places. The study of the series corpus has indeed highlighted how much language *is* action and conveys force and violence. The dominant philosophy of language has put forward language as *communicative* action (in Habermas's words) to the detriment of language as *strategic* action

(see Lecercle, 1990). Lecercle reintroduces *agon* in the peaceful conception of exchanges wherein the agonistic aspects have been discarded as 'deviation, loss or failure' (see Sorlin forthcoming, 2016, my translation). Yet the researchers who have worked on these so-called communicative 'failures' tend to agree on their pervasiveness. Galasiński for one contests the 'truth bias'—and the attendant 'claim to morality'—of dominant communication theories. For him, deception is ubiquitous: 'lies, and more generally, deception are everywhere, in both the public and private spheres of our lives' (Galasiński, 2000: 3). The same ubiquity is claimed by Bousfield and Locher (2008) in their edited book on impoliteness. Focussing on a specific research object may drive one to see it at work in all places, but I would myself provokingly argue that manipulation is everywhere. Because the 'higher level deceptive intention' of the manipulator is hard to detect (de Saussure, 2005: 177),[7] there is bound to be a fine line between 'genuine politeness' and 'manipulative politeness'. In the non-irenic world of politics, at least, authentically altruistic politeness would constitute the exception rather than the rule: selfish interests indeed always loom behind 'you-first orientation' strategies. The manipulation of politeness is a means to avoid overt conflicts *and* have the other conform to the speaker's plan without seeming to force her. In *House of Cards*, those who are able to counter Frank's manipulation are those who have learnt to see through his politeness tactics or who are themselves experts at hypocritical manoeuvring (Chap. 5).

In a perspective that is consistent with his approach, Leech (2014: 23) construes the exercise of power through politeness as a 'second-order phenomenon': 'only when one has explained the "communicative altruism" view of politeness can one explain how it can be exploited strategically in the exercise of, or struggle for, power. Much polite behaviour takes place in private conversational context where no power factor is at issue.' For him, although power and politeness are 'compatible', politeness is 'not especially motivated by […] egoistical drives and the exercise of power' (Leech, 2014: 23). In *House of Cards*, egoistical drives *are* the engine of (im)politeness, and its strategic use aims at establishing power relations.

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[7] 'If the addressee manages to search for the higher level deceptive intention, he may succeed in detecting the manipulative intention' (see de Saussure, 2005: 177).

Incidentally, even in the private realm, Francis and Claire's competitive relationship relies on (im)polite face-work (see section 'Face Sensitivities in the Underwood Couple'). (Im)polite manipulation might be exacerbated in the political realm as represented in the fictional series, but one might wonder if it does not inhere in any collaborative work where some form of power is at stake. If politeness towards subordinates, for instance, is a means to construct 'good workplace relations' (Holmes & Stubbe, 2014: 6), it is nonetheless used to accomplish the more powerful worker's specific 'goals'. In these respects, the interdependence between politeness and power embodies a first-order phenomenon.

Historically, in the eighteenth century, being 'polite' meant being 'civilized', but it was also connected with the exercise of power. The historical origin of 'politeness' indeed partakes of a social and political division (see Klein, 1989; Watts, 2002, 2003; see also Sorlin, 2013a). It was used by the upper class or those who aspired to belong to it—through manuals of good manners—as a way to separate the 'refined' from the 'rude'. With the birth of the 'polite society' in Britain also emerged the spectre of a notion that was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter in connection with Machiavelli: hypocrisy. Good manners became equated with dissimulation. There is, thus, an historical link between politeness and hypocrisy as pointed out by Davidson (2004: 8): 'while politeness and good manners can and should arise from the heart, they are also the product of years of discipline directed towards the suppression of true feeling.' Hypocrisy here renews with its Greek origin (ὑπόκρισις): 'the acting of a part on the stage, feigning, pretence' (*OED*).

In his performance of different selves depending on his audience, Frank appears to embody the Lord Chesterfield of the modern times. Like the latter in his letters to his son, Underwood cynically reveals to his audience the deeply interested quality of hypocritical politeness. Chesterfield's lines attesting to the necessity of using hypocrisy in society are well-known: 'A man of the world must, like the Chameleon, be able to take every different hue; which is by no means a criminal or abject, but a necessary complaisance; for it relates to manners, and not to morals' (*Lord Chesterfield's Letters* in Roberts [ed.], 1998: 106, see also Sorlin, 2013b). He was indeed one among other eighteenth century authors who thought

hypocrisy was not to be fought but 'embraced' as preferable to conflicting truthfulness or violence (see Davidson, 2004: 8).[8] For Chesterfield (like for Machiavelli), hypocrisy is what ensures social (and political) survival; it should thus be stripped of its negative, immoral connotations. In the twenty-first century political world of Frank Underwood, there seems to be no such thing as 'disinterested' civility either. To restrain oneself—to the point of doing violence to oneself through self-restraint—is a means to dominate others without using violence. The Underwood couple's constant self-control, keeping their 'true feelings' to themselves, must be seen as part of their practice of 'manipulation-politeness'.

Like other supposed 'failures' of cooperative communication, hypocrisy and manipulation deserve further sociolinguistic investigation beyond mere moral or rational treatment. This book constitutes a first pragma-stylistic attempt in this direction. Hopefully, the study of manipulation in fictional TV series dialogues will provide some insights into its workings in real-life interaction.

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[8] Davidson (2004: 8) indeed shows that, for society's sake, some writers from Locke to Austen came to perceive the hypocritical dissimulation inherent in good manners as preferable to conflict-inducing outspoken truthfulness: 'In response to the very general fear that manners are closely allied to hypocrisy, many of the writers treated in this study choose not to avoid but to embrace hypocrisy as a synonym for manners and strip the word in the process of much of its stigma.'

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Appendix

Transcription conventions (elaborated from Bednarek, 2012: 246)

(.)	*slight pause*
(pause: n seconds)	*longer pause with duration noted in number of seconds*
Capital letters	*strong salient emphasis*
:	*elongation of vowels (often indicating emphasis)*
=speech=	*saliently faster than surrounding speech*
\<speech\>	*saliently slower than surrounding speech*
-speech-speech-speech	*stammering speech*
↓	*marked pitch leap downwards*
↑	*marked pitch rise*
!	*indicates emotional/passionate speech*
?	*marked rising intonation (not necessarily question)*
,	*slightly rising intonation*
.	*marked falling intonation (not necessarily statement)*
'	*marked as 'quoted' by intonation/voice quality*

[...]	*includes sections of overlapped text*
...	*indicates a hesitation or an interrupted utterance*
( )	*includes transcriber's comments*
/.../	*indicates suppressed speech by transcriber*

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Index