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**‘Shining the light on women’: Recreating the Comedies in Matías Piñeiro’s Film
Adaptations of Shakespeare**

Argentine filmmaker and dramaturge Matías Piñeiro is curiously drawn to Shakespeare’s comedies.¹ Bucking a prevailing trend to prioritize a tragic coupling of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, Piñeiro’s allusive and sensual adaptations of the comedies occupy a unique position in the story of Shakespeare and world cinema.² Three recent films – *Rosalinda* (2010), an adaptation of *As You Like It*, *Viola* (2013), an adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, and *La Princesa de Francia* (2015), an adaptation of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* – are described by the director as a ‘Shakespeare-ida’.³ ‘Shakespeare-ida’ is a multi-layered term in Rio de la Plata/Argentine Spanish, connoting an extended engagement with Shakespeare over more than one artistic encounter and a tripartite arrangement or trilogy.⁴ Trilogies, of course, have a special place in Argentine cinematic culture, with filmmakers such as Lisandro Alonso, Daniel Burman, Leonardo Favio, Raul Perrone and Martin Rejtman having all produced trilogies that unite in their similar time periods, locations, character types and narrative arcs.⁵ In an Argentine context – and inside global Shakespeare studies – *Rosalinda*, *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia* signal something that is more than the sums of their parts. Together, they form a sustained interpretive corpus and a bold and ambitious redefinition of the Shakespearean comedic genre.

This article will argue that central to that redefinition is the foregrounding in the ‘Shakespeare-ida’ of Shakespeare’s female characters. So it is that a Rosalinda is extracted from *As You Like It*, Hispanicized and granted titular prominence; the same goes for Viola (from *Twelfth Night*) and the Princess of France (from *Love’s Labour’s Lost*). In all three filmic titles, a single *persona* is highlighted, suggesting a directorial tilt away from the thematic and towards the subjective. And, from a director ‘conscious of wanting to do

Shakespeare around women’, the films lend women characters a centralizing significance through an emphasis on gendered spaces, female bodies and expressions of same-sex desire. But Piñeiro’s titles connote not only Shakespearean characters but also theatrical and cinematic roles – jobs of acting. After directing an avant-garde mash-up of Shakespeare plays for the theatre, Piñeiro records being struck by ‘connections between Shakespeare’s female characters and the actresses [with whom he works]’; the remark points up a link between the women of the comedies and contemporary Argentine womanhood but also, more importantly, a continuing preoccupation with filmic and theatrical intersections.⁶ In short, the titular *Rosalinda* represents at one and the same time a Shakespearean character and a defining theatrical role for the actress who plays her (with *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia* working in a like capacity). Hence, a recurring thread across the trilogy involves women who cross boundaries of art, theatre and life. This article spotlights the ways in which all three films revolve around multiple ‘performances’ of Shakespearean drama across a range of traditional and non-traditional performance spaces. While recognizing the classic features of the ‘play-within-a-film’ genre – the triumph of putting on a show in conditions of adversity and the rapturously received curtain-call – my argument is that Piñeiro’s trilogy complicates and interrogates this key cinematic genre.⁷ Testing, stretching and twisting the conventional performance/life dichotomy, the trilogy blurs any clear-cut notion of a distinction between ‘real-life’ and performance. The films demonstrate instead – not least through unconventional and deceptive camera work – the extent to which types of performance form part of a deeply immersive experience.

Any meta-theatrical analysis is bolstered by the fact that *Rosalinda*, *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia* consistently utilize, as in a repertory company structure, the same cast members, immediately lending the work an *ensemble* feel. Exemplary for my argument is the actress María Villar, whose sad and expressive features appear throughout the trilogy. Her

roles – Luisa/Rosalinda (actress and heroine in the first film), Viola (‘twin’ and wannabe actress in the second) and Ana (student and bit-part actress in the third) – function intertextually to construct internal narratives about particular women and the characters they play while simultaneously privileging the situation of an actress defined by her movement in and out of Shakespearean parts. Accessing Shakespeare thus, I maintain, the films place a new imaginative spin on some of the central motifs of the comedies, not least their concern with being and seeming, rehearsal and substitution, dissimulating and disguise, and purposefully invite engagement with performance-centred actions and plot-lines. Within these arrangements, women characters are illuminated via scenes of all-female interaction and exchange, a facilitative cutting back of male roles and a strategic play with the text. Echoing some critical readings of the endings of the comedies, *Rosalinda*, *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia* simultaneously show women in situations where differences and tensions prevail.⁸ This article suggests that the films’ endings function as anti-endings, moments that unmoor any expected generic comic conclusion. If film genres are challenged, so too are Shakespearean conventions, the plays being invoked, pushed and written over as part of a project that reflects on women’s overlapping lives while granting to Shakespeare a new cinematic niche. Here, *As You Like It* operates as a key text, whether as the basis for an adaptation, as in *Rosalinda*, or as a stimulus to citation, as in *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia*. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the trilogy’s fascination with the epilogue to *As You Like It*, which, through a process of coming back, brings to a head the trilogy’s concern with women’s voices, identities and performance possibilities.

In his Shakespearean fascinations, Piñeiro is the latest addition to a long and venerable history of Shakespeare in Argentina.⁹ In particular, in the wake of the *Guerra Sucia* or ‘Dirty War’, the 1976 to 1983 period during which military and police forces targeted – and ‘disappeared’ – communist sympathizers, several theatrical adaptations

appeared that used Shakespeare's tragedies to raise concerns about guilt, complicity and accountability.¹⁰ The 'New Argentine Cinema' has been similarly marked by a predilection for harking back either to the years of military dictatorship or to the economic recession that, beginning in the 1990s, came to a crisis in 2001: filmmakers favoured ideologically-oriented work that, variously, examined the insecurity of the nation-state, conditions of displacement and the effects of neo-liberalism.¹¹ Piñeiro's Shakespeare adaptations pursue an alternative agenda, instead using the comedies to elaborate intricately layered fictions about women's intersecting and complex lives. As a result, his trilogy serves to broach wider debates about sexuality, the nature of gendered identity and gender as performance. Part of this might be linked to Piñeiro's discomfort with what he describes as 'the nationalization of filmmaking ... I don't want to make films "national" in order to be sellable', he states. Arguably taking a leaf from the work of Argentine female directors such as María Lucia Bemberg, Verónica Chen, Lucía Puenzo and María Inés Roqué, who are distinctive for airing ideas about sexual orientation, representing women who resist authoritarianism, developing new forms of film aesthetic, and pursuing genre experiment, Piñeiro finds in Shakespeare's comedies instruments for addressing types of female alliance and the status of woman as subject and agent.¹² Aesthetics are vital to the enterprise. The films showcase art-house visuals and a meandering, looping style, and they repeat, rework and invert particular narrative features, often derailing a neat and linear arrangement, all in interests of, in Piñeiro's own words, 'shining the light on women ... a subversive act'.

I

Commissioned as part of Korea's Jeonju International Film Festival's digital project, *Rosalinda* is shot in and around a cabin in the verdant waterways of the Tigre River Delta

northeast of Buenos Aires. The leafy setting approximates the locale of *As You Like It*, a play famous for its a pastoral world. Images of the ‘spring time ... the green cornfield [and] ... acres of rye’ (5.3.16, 20, 35) are shadowed in the naturally-lit cinematography and in the prevailing green of the vegetation, trees and clearings.¹³ Shots of a lustrous and luminous landscape, women eating fruit and draped bodies basking in the sunshine belong with a recent turn in Latin American cinema towards ‘sensorial and emotional ... ways of experiencing the contemporary moment’ (Podalsky 3, 20).¹⁴ Underlining the sensorial pull of the landscape is the ideal of a group of youthful exiles from the city enjoying a holiday retreat, while a young woman, a realization of Audrey, confidently rowing through the waterways, suggests the situation of the country ‘maid’ (5.1.33) or local population. More generally, the river in *Rosalinda* separates out phases of action, and, when the characters dive into the water to cool off, narrative or scenic breaks are suggested. Frequent glimpses of the still-moving streams dappled with sunlight intimate the flux and flexibility of identity and echo the film’s figurative playing with roles.

Figurations of identity in *Viola* are captured not in moving streams but in the roads and highways of Buenos Aires. Viola’s opening question, ‘What country, friends, is this?’ (1.2.1), makes perfect sense in the alienating environment. As in *Twelfth Night*, which references inns and ‘suburbs’ (3.3.39), *Viola* privileges an urban setting; distinctive in her sea-green coat, Viola, the titular heroine, rides her bicycle around socially mixed districts of the city much as her Shakespearean equivalent in *Twelfth Night* moves between Illyrian households. Again taking its cue from the play, *Viola* is displaced, a personality slightly adrift. She is pictured, for example, consulting a map, unsure of her own direction; nowhere is this more obviously enunciated than in the long take that shows Viola aimlessly traversing the streets, with the ambient noise of the traffic underlining a general sense of disorientation.

La Princesa de Francia is also filmed in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, but here particular locations are spotlighted so as to mime the metaphorical investments of *Love Labour's Lost*. A series of sports settings, such as a football pitch and a sports club ('Club Telefonos'), analogise *Love's Labour's Lost's* concern with varieties of play and game, as instanced in references to archery ('Their conceits have wings / Fleeter than arrows' [5.2.260-1]), tennis ('a set of wit well played' [5.2.29]) and sport in general ('These ladies' courtesy / Might have made our sport a comedy' [5.2.852-3]). The film's wide-shot opening shows a night-time football match taking place in a fenced-off city pitch; the soccer players represent versions of the theatrical players we are shortly to meet, while the routing of the goalkeeper, Lorena, by both teams suggests the competitive underside to gameplay. Competition also inheres in *Love's Labour's Lost's* wordplay, a signature feature of a work whose *raison d'être* is to be found in the world of the 'academe' (1.1.13), the 'book' (1.1.74) and 'learning' (4.2.28) – modes of 'living art' (1.1.14). In this connection, *La Princesa de Francia's* deployment of a gallery location (the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires) reverberates, for the space both facilitates an appreciation of art and ignites reflection and argument. (It is here that Jimena and Ana critically arraign the 'female nudes' of nineteenth-century French painter, William-Adolphe Bouguereau, and his conservative, exploitative style).¹⁵ So does the setting showcase the ways in which the film flips the play to underscore intellectual interventions by women (as opposed to men) while, at the same time, emphasising the artistic representation of female bodies as a subject of debate.

Figure 1: Ana and Victor exchanges views in the gallery. Courtesy of Matías Piñeiro

Inside this sequence of settings, all three films imagine their Shakespearean cast meta-theatrically as comprised of companies of actors. Rather than the key production operating, as

in the 'play-within-a-film' genre, as the end-point towards which the company aspires, Piñeiro's films reposition individual productions and discover performance as a more diffuse and continual activity which always extends beyond the confines of the theatre space. In *Rosalinda*, it is clear that the amateur company at work on *As You Like It* are participating in a type of theatrical boot-camp: characters try out for roles and experiment with changes to the cast. Lines are delivered complete with hesitations and mistakes, resulting in interpolated remarks ('it's awful ... you're terrible'). The general lack of theatrical paraphernalia, and the ways in which the natural backdrop surrogates for props and set, elaborate the whole as fundamentally self-conscious. A similar emphasis on a company obtains in *Viola*, although here there are consistently assured levels of performance: we begin with an accomplished all-female and sumptuously costumed *avant-garde* production. The inclusion of lines from *The Merchant of Venice* establishes that this production represents a *pasticcio* or pastiche (mash-up) of four different plays, with *Twelfth Night* being the most prominent.¹⁶ These lines are delivered in a plush but intimate theatre in which audience and actors share physical proximity. For example, the camera cross-tracks between Cecilia/Viola/Cesario and Sabrina/Olivia, who are on stage, and two men nearby watching intently from separate spaces in the audience. As the initial wooing scene between the women unfolds, Cecilia/Viola/Cesario's in-production remark to Sabrina/Olivia ('With adorations, fertile tears, / With groans that thunder love' [1.5.224-5]) is registered on the face of one of these men, Agustin, Sabrina/Olivia's ex-boyfriend. He, it is implied, is the jilted lover akin to Orsino, and Cecilia/Viola speaks as he would wish to. Clearly, the production works to stimulate connections beyond its immediate Shakespearean remit. The idea is taken up in the fact that the professional production is but one incarnation of *Twelfth Night*. Performances of the wooing scene are taken outside the theatre and played in other, quotidian venues, without costume, suggesting how extensively the play permeates the film's fabric overall.

La Princesa de Francia is bracketed by two theatrical spaces in which identical versions of the exposure scene from *Love's Labour's Lost* (4.3) are played. The first space is a theatre in which warm green and yellow tones predominate, and it is apprehended through the character of Lorena, the props assistant: her movement between the auditorium and the back-stage area, between brightly and dimly lit environments, is integral to the film's elaboration of intrigue (the actresses in the company are all having an affair with Victor, the director and, in a piece of cross-gender casting, the Princess of France). After the production's run, Victor leaves the country, his father having died. The action then restarts, one year later, with Victor's return and his desire to resurrect the former all-women production but this time as a radio play. Parodied, then, is the state of affairs that concludes *Love's Labour's Lost* (a camera pan over dying leaves and an autumnal setting brings to mind that play's frosty ending and the imminent arrival of Hiems or Winter). The film proper, and the attempt to get the radio production off the ground, operate as *Love's Labour's Lost*'s sequel, a chronological 'prolongation', to use Gérard Genette's phrase, of an 'earlier work' (162). The ensuing radio performance space is suggestively contrasting, marked by dun grey and brown colours that signal not only the progress of time but also a change in mood. Welcoming Victor back are the romantically discarded actresses from the earlier production, but, referencing the play's closing focus on suffering ('enforce the pained impotent to smile' [5.2.831]) and punishment ('Raining ... tears of lamentation' [5.2.791]) is the women's realization that they have been betrayed – by the two-timing director and also by each other. Hence, when the company comes together for the radio production, it is with an awareness of 'foul play' (5.2.738). Using the ending as its point of departure, then, *La Princesa de Francia* concerns itself with the ways in which time and experience affect performance, and this is registered in the embittered radio episode: the emotional investments of the original performance and the intimacies it generated have gone, and in its place is spirited

recrimination. Theatre, *La Princesa de Francia* suggests, can only ever be of the moment, its expressions of community fleeting and ephemeral.

Emerging from the attention to theatrical and performance activity are the ways in which women consistently fill the screen space. Both *Rosalinda* and *Viola* begin with titles that overlay images of the titular characters, suggesting the overriding importance of these female roles. The point is also made via the extended use of extreme close-up; any illusions of knowing the character intimately, however, are offset by the fact that such close-ups are invariably partial or obscured. In *Viola*, an extreme close-up of the subject's head from behind reveals Sabrina/Olivia rejecting her boyfriend on the 'phone, a device that privileges her responses and associates her with the story of her Shakespearean alter-ego while also denying us full access to her facial expressions. By the same token, in *Rosalinda*, a closely-shot 'phone conversation hints at a comparable personal crisis. Filmed from behind, Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede is glimpsed crouched next to a stream, the camera, blazon-like, itemising hair, neck and shoulders in such a way that she appears as a collection of parts rather than a woman who can be fully apprehended. Her tearful, one-way conversation hints at a trauma, at a world beyond, and, via its fraught emotional tenor ('No ... it doesn't matter ... bye'), an enigmatic context is suggested for her role play, for an embrace of 'theatrical performance' as potentially 'cathartic and therapeutic' (Jackson 127).

Such shooting styles are indicative of the way in which the trilogy favours a woman-centred aesthetic. *Rosalinda* is a case-in-point – Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede invariably occupies the middle of the frame, other characters being lensed to her side or in the background. The technique is fractured via a twinning motif in *Viola*. First, we meet Cecilia, the actress who plays Viola on stage in the production. Typically filmed in soft-focus close-up, Cecilia/Viola is seen contemplating her reflection in a range of dressing room mirrors; the camera angle means that we are invited to think of her in terms of a doubled or twinned

identity. But screen time is divided between her and the other Viola, who shares the name of *Twelfth Night*'s heroine and who additionally functions in a twinned capacity because she runs a pirate DVD (copying) business. (The career detail neatly plays with a broader thematics centring on the 'original' and the 'copy'). Both women are ignorant of the other, part of the film's preoccupation with misrecognition. Their accidental meeting outside the house of Agustin (Viola's customer and Cecilia's friend) furnishes an occasion for their paths to cross, not least when Viola, in Cecilia's car, is given one of the red rings from the *Twelfth Night* production. The talismanic object connects her to her 'twin', to the theatre and to the female cast, and her continual fingering of the ring suggests an ongoing union with this female Shakespearean community. In this way, *Viola* takes the premise of the male and female twins of *Twelfth Night* to elaborate a doubled arrangement within which two women find their lives coincide.

Intersecting trajectories involving women are enabled by a general stripping away of male roles. Notably, then, in *Rosalinda*, the Dukes and Touchstone are amputated, meaning that the intensity of Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede's performance is allowed to resonate. The most ingenious example of the strategy is in *La Princesa de Francia* which, in the same moment as it trims male characters (Victor is one of only two men in the film), amplifies and adapts the women characters – as the on-screen *dramatis personae* introduces them, these are Paula, the girlfriend, Natalia, the ex-girlfriend, Ana, the lover, Lorena, the friend, Carla, the stranger, and Jimena, the betrayed girlfriend. Writ large in these descriptors is the identification with and relation to Victor, who plays the Princess of France; offstage, he is the pivot around which the women circle, the person with whom, unbeknown to each other, they are romantically involved. In a kind of mimicry of this circle of relationships, a copy of *Love's Labour's Lost* passes among the women, recalling the mix-up of letters in the play, suggesting an object of exchange, much like Victor himself, and spotlighting discrete phases

in the action (the film breaks evenly into six chapters, each of which has a woman at the forefront). And, in a delightful gendered reversal so typical of the ‘Shakespeare-ida’, it is not the men who conduct intrigue as the women, as evidenced in scenes of backstage plotting and camera pans over women rehearsing the Shakespearean male parts.

Figure 2: Cecilia/Viola/Cesario hatches her intrigue. Courtesy of Matías Piñero

Such a focus on a woman-centred aesthetic is matched by numerous episodes concentrated on interactions between women or intimate women-only exchanges. Germane is when *Rosalinda* discovers Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede and Fernanda/Celia/Aliena rehearsing for the second and third scenes of *As You Like It* in a woodland cabin which, thanks to roving camerawork and rhetorical emphases, is quickly designated a feminine space.¹⁷ The sequence picks up on the costuming cues in the play’s preparation for banishment, enacting the referents of *As You Like It* in the representation of a Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede who takes off her modern dress in order to put on a corset that flattens her breasts, jeans, cap and a T-shirt (items substituting for Renaissance garb). As one woman is bound, dressed and assisted by the other, language takes on a charged eroticism, ‘cross-dressing’, in Valerie Traub’s phrase, putting into circulation ‘woman’s desire for woman’ (108). Eroticism is particularly heightened via an edited dialogue which singles out ideas of same-sex attachment, divestiture and masculine-feminine confusion. For example, lines such as ‘I see you don’t love me as much as I do’ (1.2.6), ‘I’ll put myself in poor costume’ (1.3.105) and ‘suit me [at] all points like a man’ (1.3.110) are delivered with a sensual charge and arch suggestiveness.¹⁸ Dialogue is matched to action as if in a dressing-room, and an additional *frisson* inheres in the detailing of the bed, tossed with golden sheets; the women, it is suggested, have shared this space, and have been ‘bedfellows’.¹⁹ Whether it is getting ready for a role, or leaving a role behind,

eroticism in scenes between women is a constant across the trilogy. In *Viola*, a sequence of shots of the actresses brushing their hair and taking off their make-up after the production highlights the vicarious pleasure of an all-female company and, as in *Rosalinda*, bolsters the implications of a quintessentially sensual encounter. Having broken up with Agustin, Sabrina/Olivia declares herself invulnerable to love. After Sabrina/Olivia leaves, Cecilia/Viola/Cesario hatches a plan to show that she is mistaken and can be ‘conquer[ed] ... by ... seduction’. At once, of course, the idea rephrases *Twelfth Night*, equating Sabrina with Olivia (the former’s moods – ‘I don’t talk to anyone ... it overwhelms me being ... lifeless’ – take their cue from the latter’s withdrawal from society) and Cecilia/Viola/Cesario with Orsino. But the play is also instanced via shimmering cinematographic effects: the glossy sheen of the image and the flickering play of the light source act as correlatives for the erotic possibilities set in motion in *Twelfth Night*, the viewer being positioned as eavesdropper or voyeur.

II

If Piñeiro develops his ‘Shakespeare-ida’ in part through a women-centred *mise-en-scène*, then this is complemented and enhanced via a purposeful cutting and application of the Shakespearean text. In *Rosalinda*, the action unfolds in line with the action of the play, but, crucially, the film only includes those scenes which feature Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede. Hence, we see, in order, 3.2 (the encounter with Gabo/Orlando), 3.4 (Orlando’s failure to appear), 4.1 (Orlando’s arrival) and 5.2 (Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede’s promise to resolve and satisfy all). Such streamlining inflects – and accelerates – the film’s forward movement, meaning that it is always Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede who initiates, curtails and terminates. Gestures and actions support her hold over the proceedings, as when she takes away

Gabo/Orlando's paper or tears up the flowers. In addition, her command of the text is reflected in her pointing to her edition of *As You Like It* at the line, 'by all pretty oaths' (4.1.162), and motioning to Shakespeare as a repository of wisdom. Later, at the promise to unravel the characters' complications, she reads from this edition: she, at this point, is the ultimate Shakespearean interpreter.

Figure 3: Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede shows her command of the Shakespearean text.

Courtesy of Matías Piñeiro

If *Rosalinda* progresses via the heroine's linked scenes, the action in *Viola* moves through a series of repetitions – the recurrence of the same scene or speech. So, in *Viola*, the first meeting between Viola/Cesario and Olivia (1.5) is replayed and replayed, possibly because, in contradistinction to *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* does not grant the heroine an equivalent dynamism or agency beyond this scene. Or, to modulate the point, 1.5 is repeated in that it is at this moment that the heroine is at her most eloquent. The first iteration of the scene is when Cecilia/Viola/Cesario is on stage, her blue and purple padded Renaissance doublet testifying to her cross-dressed appeal. When Cecilia/Viola/Cesario and Sabrina/Olivia relocate to the latter's apartment, the scene is repeated as an *ad hoc* or extra rehearsal. Specifically, Cecilia/Viola/Cesario uses rehearsal for erotic ends, finding a power in Shakespearean persuasion that gradually breaks down Sabrina/Olivia's resistance.²⁰ Both episodes – production and subsequent rehearsal – are self-consciously related, the casually worn check shirts of the apartment sequence echoing the cross-dressing accoutrements of the fully-fledged production. There are also differences: the shift in location to a domestic space suggests how words acquire additional shades of meaning when delivered in a private, rather than public, venue. Thus, Sabrina/Olivia is indeed 'lady of the house' (1.5.149), because of

where the scene is located, while lines such as ‘I took great pains to study it’ (1.5.172) recall the preceding discussion in the dressing-room, the plot to shake Sabrina/Olivia out of her seeming invulnerability to love. The whole is suggestively allusive: Cecilia/Viola/Cesario is indeed ‘out of [her] part’ (1.5.159) because she is out of the theatre, but she is also in her part – and using her role – to pursue her seduction agenda.

Crucially, the rehearsal of 1.5 takes place seven times in the apartment, on each occasion but one ending at the line, ‘Placed in contempt’ (1.5.258), but beginning at later points in the dialogue. Increasingly fast-paced and truncated Shakespearean lines highlight the diminishing quantity of the resource: having already experienced the scene in the theatre sequence, an audience is aware that Cecilia/Viola/Cesario’s Shakespearean language is rapidly running out and that there are no further lines to come. Finally, Cecilia/Viola/Cesario and Sabrina/Olivia kiss passionately at the seventh iteration of the line, ‘You might do much’ (1.5.245), invested here with a transgressive charge. Reverse head-shots, blocking, eye-line matches and the upward and downward sweep of the camera, all of which support the thrust of the dialogue, are key to the ways in which an erotics of friendship transmutes into a physical expression of desire. Discussing the play, Valerie Traub notes that eventually ‘*Twelfth Night* closes down erotic possibility’ (141); however, by multiply replaying 1.5 through Cecilia/Viola/Cesario, the film delivers on same-sex desire in a way that the play cannot. *Viola*, then, pushes *Twelfth Night* into terrain that the play hesitates fully to explore or allow.

Figure 4: Cecilia/Viola/Cesario and Sabrina/Olivia share an intimate moment. Courtesy of Matías Piñeiro

Paring back the Shakespearean text as a prelude to focusing in on particular scenes (or the repetition of a single scene) results in a significant change of narrative direction. The last time we see Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede in her theatrical role is a high point: she is directing and dictating. But this is also, of course, the moment at which the film runs out of its Shakespearean language. (There are no more scenes involving Rosalinda/Ganymede, the film having depleted its source). Self-consciously, the next stage of *Rosalinda* is premised on the idea that there are no further speeches for the character to enact.²¹ This next stage signals the difference between Rosalinda/Ganymede, the energetic Shakespearean heroine, and Luisa, the ‘uninteresting, grey and neglected’ actress who, in Piñeiro’s words, is ‘laid aside’.

Commenting on the ‘play-within-a-film’ genre, Cary M. Mazer writes that Shakespeare is generally ‘depicted as redemptive, for actors and audience alike’ (329), but, in *Rosalinda*, *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia*, any developments are fragmentary and qualified – the engagement with Shakespeare does not necessarily lead to a better dispensation, and the ameliorative potential of performance is seen as temporary. If the centripetal movement of the first phase of the film is dedicated to Rosalinda/Ganymede’s vitality, then the centrifugal movement of the second phase concentrates on Luisa’s decline, suggesting that her centrality was always dependent only on performative participation. With her script exhausted, Luisa fades into silence; she avoids conversations, is subject to gossip, and listens rather than directs. The onus of direction falls instead to Gastón (earlier uncomfortable in the Corin role), and it is he who now pro-actively propels the action forwards. Dark-filtered close-ups on Luisa’s face are indicative of her new status, while her abandonment of Shakespeare is implied in the non-Shakespearean book that she takes up to read.²² Writing on *As You Like It*, Peter B. Erickson notes that, once Rosalind/Ganymede has relinquished her ‘disguise, she also gives up the strength it symbolises’ (she is ‘phas[ed] out’ or ‘reduced’), and, paralleling this figuration, Luisa is now back in the floral dress of the start; as in the play, the costume

change signals a diminution in speech, visibility and authority (156, 157, 164). The physical movement of Luisa adumbrates her compromised position. Long takes show her boating inexpertly down the river alone, and the beep of her 'phone and her answer ('Hello?') suggest that the personal difficulties from which she was temporarily released are still to be addressed. The imaginative thrill of the Shakespearean performance notwithstanding, the narrative, for Luisa, circles back to its original, traumatic starting-point.

This shift represents a striking change of pace and mood, a move into more subdued emotional territory that chimes with the ways in which all three films in the trilogy elect to conclude. Luisa, for example, is one of a number of women in the 'Shakespeare-ida' who gradually come to be distinguished by a sense of disappointment or compromise. At the close of the film, the camera rapidly cross-cuts between four separate sets of characters embracing, but Luisa is absent from this unifying scenario. Significant here is the focus on Gabo/Orlando, passionately kissing Karin, who has rehearsed with him the wrestling scene. The film purposefully frustrates any hope that Luisa will pair off with her leading man, dislodging any construction of an affirmative relationship between performance and 'real-life'. With *Viola*, the emphasis is on the failing, unsatisfactory relationship between Viola and her boyfriend, Javier, and, in this film, too, audience expectation is derailed via a denial of the expected comedic couplings. In this sense, the endings of the 'Shakespeare-ida' represent types of anti-ending. *La Princesa de Francia* is part of this reconceptualization, for, in the wake of the radio broadcast of *Love's Labour's Lost* that concludes the film, no couplings are generated: the effect is to recall the earlier homoerotic play while foregrounding a disparate grouping of single selves. The film purposefully resists delivering on the play's anticipation of unions still to ensue.

Such a generally demythologizing emphasis is reinforced by the fact that all three films highlight notes of conflict and disagreement, despite playing with what William C.

Carroll describes as the Shakespearean prioritization of ‘social analogues to marriage’ (178). Hence, the ‘Mafia’ party game that concludes *Rosalinda* and in which all of the characters participate offers a variation on the idea of union and community even as it also embraces discordant elements. Echoing *As You Like It*’s notion of holiday ‘sports’ (1.2.20), the ‘Mafia’ game (or type of guessing game) shows the players taking on various roles (assassins, doctors, policemen and civilians) so as to identify and vote out a mafia member or a suspect, thereby executing a murder. The dimly lit interiors of the cabin offer a correlative to a darkening mood, as this is realized in drawn facial expressions, jokey statements of unease (‘I don’t trust you’ is an off-screen remark) and a frugally adorned environment. Eventually, it is Luisa who is voted out (metaphorically killed by the company). ‘Luisa is dead’, the last words of the film, announce the cessation of her involvement, and this is stressed in the camera’s dissolve, a fade to black. Because the film is her story, when Luisa evaporates, *Rosalinda* is over. Indexing the bitter-sweet effects of *As You Like It*, and wrestling with the implications of its ending, *Rosalinda* ends by juxtaposing exclusive and inclusive tendencies and aligning antitheses.

Viola closes with an improvised song on the keyboards about mothers, fathers and families, as performed by Viola and Javier, in the latter’s apartment. Incarnating the opening words of *Twelfth Night* and the injunction to ‘play on’ (1.1.1), the song would seem to enshrine a mood of conviviality – ‘in that moment’, Viola’s voiceover records, ‘I thought I truly loved him’ – and to endorse a traditional construction of Shakespeare’s comic ‘resolution’ (Carroll 175). However, in this film adaptation, audience knowledge functions to work against a seamless knitting together of plotlines as Viola’s voiceover, in a retrospective construction, accents things differently and helps to ‘shift’, in Piñeiro’s words, ‘the romance’. Thus, a sombre appendix tells us: ‘when we went to the theatre ... I introduced [Javier] to Cecilia ... whom he began meeting more and more ... all ended up changing’. This seeming

celebration also introduces infidelity (Javier turns out to be one of men earlier seen intently watching Cecilia/Viola's performance in the production of *Twelfth Night*). One of Viola's lines from the song stands out: 'if you misbehave ... I will forget you'. Because Viola is discovered here still cradling the red ring given to her by Cecilia/Viola/Cesario, the implication is that she is pondering the advice of her 'twin' that she should be more independent. Conjuring *The Merchant of Venice*, a play similarly preoccupied with a nexus of rings, fidelity and the fate of women, and building on the ways in which *Twelfth Night* ends with an anticipated change in identity ('when in other weeds you are seen, / Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen' [5.1.374-5]), *Viola* posits a heroine who reflects back on the past even as she looks forward to an uncertain future. Typical of the trilogy, the ending entertains more than one possibility. Viola's precise path of action is left open and, in Piñero's words, the emphasis is on 'doubleness ... ambiguity'.

The idea of a coming to awareness underprops the ending of *La Princesa de Francia*: as the broadcast approaches, all of the characters have woken up to uncomfortable realities. The infatuated Lorena realizes Victor is unattainable; Ana recognizes that Victor is not in love with her; Natalia, the ex-girlfriend, sees she has been displaced by Paula; and Paula, the girlfriend, finds inside the copy of *Love's Labour's Lost* a postcard of a Bouguereau painting (on which is written a note revealing Victor's faithlessness). The painting itself depicts a satyr being circled and then dragged, against his will, into the water by a group of nymphs, and, in its circular composition and punitive emphasis it echoes the opening scene of a player who is turned upon by her teammates, Victor's own situation (lovers and girlfriends turn against him) and the circular movement of the film as a whole.²³ The postcard functions, then, as a vehicle of exposure, paralleling the exposure scene from the play, 4.3, which, when performed as the radio broadcast, bristles with passive-aggressive friction.²⁴ Blocking suggests hostilities; silences are as voluble. Reaction shots abound as particular lines crackle

with charge. So it is that Paula/the King of France's line, 'he shall hear / Faith so infringèd' (4.3.141-42), appears as an accusation directed at Victor, and Lorena/Biron's remark is delivered both as injunction and self-assessment: 'step ... forth to whip hypocrisy ... what a scene of fool'ry have I seen' (4.3.147, 159). For her part, Ana plays Costard as bitter and resigned, lines referencing the letter suggesting the fatal postcard: 'treason ... makes nothing' (4.3.186, 187), she announces, leaving the studio soon afterwards. As in *Viola*, the surrounding context works against the ostensible thematic thrust of the post-broadcast conclusion. For, in the light of Victor's wistful voiceover ('I couldn't help but think how that day should have ended, I'd have preferred it went differently'), the scene of him and Paula kissing is revealed as a romantic fantasy only, a moment of wish-fulfilment. And, in a final exposure (the incriminating postcard), the film discovers what is actually left once the intrigues have run their course; only the ambient noise of the park remains and the trilling overlaid sound of birdsong, a reference, perhaps, to the mocking cuckoo (5.2.873-74) of *Love's Labour's Lost* and its perennial association with cuckoldry and infidelity.

Figure 5: Victor finds himself alone. Courtesy of Matías Piñeiro

This emphasis on broken relationships matches a trajectory in the trilogy as a whole, a broader movement which takes us away from ideas of community and towards moments that privilege single women asserting themselves. Given that the heroine is granted all of her major speeches, a striking feature of *Rosalinda* (and a telling indication of her status in the second half of the film) is the omission of the epilogue. With this absence in mind, the appearance of *As You Like It*'s epilogue in *Viola* serves a restorative function. When the 'twins' finally meet, Cecilia/Viola chats to Viola about her work as an actress – she is about to leave the *Twelfth Night* production and so must learn a new 'text'. Picking up an edition of

As You Like It, she begins by reciting the epilogue. The missing ‘text’ from the previous film, *Rosalinda*, is here teasingly reinstated, while the casting of María Villar (Rosalinda) in the role of Viola looks backwards to her earlier role, intertextually expanding her contribution and emphasising the ways in which the first film persists into the second. Crucially, when Cecilia/Viola ends her rehearsal of the epilogue at the line, ‘I’ll begin with the women’ (Epilogue, 10), the possibility is left open for another kind of inauguration or intervention; accordingly, Viola takes over, completing the speech, furnishing a coda to *Rosalinda* and partially reversing the abbreviated nature of that prior performance. This, then, represents the first occasion on which the epilogue comes back, although, because divided between two speakers, it is not at this point the property of one character alone. However, in *La Princesa de Francia*, Rosalinda – and, more particularly, María Villar – is finally granted the full epilogue. After the credits have rolled, the disembodied voice of Villar (who plays Ana in *La Princesa de Francia*) delivers the epilogue in darkness. Marking the transition between credits and voice is the sound of a switch being turned off: it is as if Piñeiro’s work as filmmaker is coming to an end and the actress’, or character’s, is moving beyond the film’s constraints. Too, the sound betokens technology, suggesting that it is Ana who directs the scene, acts as auteur, and imprints her voice on the film’s *mise-en-bande*. Previously only delivered partially, the epilogue is now performed in its entirety, to the extent that Villar – or Rosalinda or Viola or Ana – has the last word. A baby’s cry adds a further dimension to the soundscape. The implication (and this is supported by the image of a pregnant Villar/Ana earlier in the film) is that Villar had given birth during the making of *La Princesa de Francia*, and that now the epilogue is delivered as words of endearment from a mother to child. Piñeiro affirms: ‘I wanted to celebrate these details life gives us ... finally to put the epilogue in full motion’. If, in *Viola*, the closing song anticipates bringing ‘a new child into this world’, that hope is realized in the conclusion to the trilogy as a whole. The famous epilogue,

fully distanced from viewers and auditors via the diegesis, finally becomes a private maternal statement, one powerful enough to supersede the global reach of cinema.

Conclusions

Laura Podalsky argues that ‘younger Argentine filmmakers have been particularly vocal about their disinterest in politics’, preferring instead to pursue ‘alternative ways of knowing’ and ‘other ways of experiencing the contemporary moment’ by means of ‘cinema’s affective possibilities’ (3, 4, 8, 20). Piñeiro’s work underlines this trajectory, not least in the director’s project to recreate Shakespeare’s comedies for late twentieth- and early twenty-first century sensibilities. Piñeiro pushes and tests what can be gleaned from situating the motifs of the comedies in various contemporary contexts and locations, eschewing a national politics of place in favour of a more muted politics of gender – an interrogation of relationships, roles and responsibilities that challenges comedic sanguinity. Shakespeare emerges from the project as possessed of a particular utility, with the process of adaptation generating meanings and resonances that speak particularly to issues of sexuality and performance.

But what is striking in this endeavour is how little usable text emerges once the comedies have been adapted. Or, to put the point in another way, the ‘Shakespeare-ida’ draws attention to the limited number of speeches and scenes that centre and prioritize women directly. As a result, *Rosalinda*, *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia* highlight the possibilities enshrined in the comedies in the same moment as they point up their limitations – the areas in which they fall short. In deliberating the amount of Shakespeare that is recoverable inside contemporary gender politics, the question of the endings looms large. Shakespearean comedic endings, it seems, are no longer pertinent or practical in the worlds that the ‘Shakespeare-ida’ invokes and explores, and across the three films it is irresolution,

contingency and a lack of certainty that make for the final impression. If adapting a Shakespearean comedy in its entirety is not an option, then the impasse is resolved in two interlinked ways. First, the comedies prove wonderfully facilitative as bits and pieces; in a post-fidelity era, it is as citation, extract or abbreviation that Shakespeare operates most productively.²⁵ Second, the form of the trilogy suggests a subscription to a belief in Shakespearean multiplicity. By working through a range of texts, and by combining texts, a new realization can be arrived at, but this is only by dint of sustained experiment and consistent working at a genre. The experience of Luisa, then, cannot be confined to parts of *Rosalinda* alone, for it continues with variations across the other films in the trilogy, creating a series of stories about women that intersect but are never identical. In particular, the epilogue to *As You Like It* bears witness to this concerted attempt to work at the comedies: by persisting with Shakespeare in various forms, Shakespearean fractures can be identified and acted upon. The ‘Shakespeare-ida’ urges us to think again and anew about Shakespearean comedy, to reflect upon which of the heroine’s powers can best be marshalled and extended, to contemplate the effects and uses of Shakespearean language. It builds on and elaborates the erotics implicit in the plays, and it shows how location is invariably indissoluble from questions about women’s status and agency. In their continually self-conscious movements, *Rosalinda*, *Viola* and *La Princesa de Francia* take us back to questions of comedic genre even as they also look forward to Shakespeare’s infinitely renewable guises in world cinema.²⁶

NOTES

¹ A product of the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires, and working outside the national funding body, INCAA, Piñeiro's work has been acclaimed on the international festival circuit. Among other venues, his films have been shown at the Locarno and New York film festivals, at the Harvard Film Archive, at the Lincoln Center, New York, and as part of a retrospective at the Toronto Film Festival. Piñeiro's films include *El Hombre Robado/The Stolen Man* (2007) and *Todos Mienten/They All Lie* (2009), both of which use the creative writings of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, President of Argentina (1868-1874), as inter-texts, the documentary, *A Propósito de Buenos Aires* (2006), and the Shakespeare adaptations discussed in this essay. For a useful summary, see Horton 34-37; Quintin 29-30; Tracy 39-45.

² On some of these tendencies, see Burnett 1-19. Piñeiro states: 'I was tired of an approach that only stressed the tragedies' (interviews between Matías Piñeiro and the author, 29 March [2014], 17 November [2015], 23 May [2016]. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Piñeiro are taken from these interviews and appear in the text).

³ The comment forms part of the audio commentary on the Cinema Guild DVD of *Viola* released for a US market.

⁴ The director is also thinking beyond the trilogy format and currently embraces a more diffuse and transnational sequential remit. His latest film, *Hermia and Helena* (2016), is something of a departure. Longer, set in New York, and combining English and Spanish dialogue, it centres on a Buenos Aires theatre director, Camila (Agustina Muñoz), who accepts a residency to write a Spanish translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

⁵ See Aguilar 37; Andermann 11, 17, 85, 91; Falicóv 134-5.

⁶ The theatre production, *Chaos is Come Again*, involved mixed-up extracts from *As You Like It*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*.

⁷ See Jackson 3, 95, 255.

⁸ William C. Carroll writes that the endings of the comedies sound 'reflective ... melancholic' notes (178), while Lawrence Danson argues that Shakespeare consistently 'challenges the happy ending's formal and rhetorical claims' (68).

⁹ For critical discussion of Shakespeare in Argentina – translations, productions and adaptations – see Barcia 99-115; Dubatti *passim*; Tiffany 145-165; Zawadzki *passim*.

¹⁰ See Magnarelli 365-82. On the *Guerra Sucia*, see Robben 277; Romero 216-17.

¹¹ See Falicóv 8; Lee 26, 27; Page 3, 4, 6, 19.

¹² On women filmmakers in Argentina, see Andermann 107; Felten 56-7; Kramer 49-51; Oyarzabal n.p.; Rickey 41, 42, 44.

¹³ Quotations are taken from Shakespeare 1997.

¹⁴ See also Andermann and Bravo 4, 7.

¹⁵ Bouguereau was a painter known for his 'perfect finish, polished surface and pearly tone' (Amaya 6), although, as Robert Isaacson reminds us, he was castigated as lubricious and sentimental by some more progressive-minded contemporaries (17, 19).

¹⁶ Both in-film productions feature play-specific extracts from *Chaos is Come Again*. See note 5.

¹⁷ Fernanda/Celia/Aliena's injunction, 'I pray you, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry' (1.2.1), makes sense as a comforting response to Luisa/Rosalinda/Ganymede's distress in the previous scene.

¹⁸ Here, as elsewhere in *Rosalinda*, the subtitles subtly modernise Shakespearean English.

¹⁹ On beds as spaces for the potential expression of lesbian desire in the early modern period, see Jankowski 301-302. On ‘bedfellows’ in the early modern period, see Jardine 69-70.

²⁰ Cecilia/Viola’s plan references, too, the ‘jesting’ (2.5.17) of *Twelfth Night* – the plot to fool Malvolio into believing that Olivia is in love with him.

²¹ Steven Erickson’s reading that the film ‘could be split into two halves’ neglects the organic and interrelated character of the whole (57).

²² Luisa is pictured reading Eric Rohmer’s *De Mozart en Beethoven* (1996), a wry reference to the French *auteurs* who have impacted on the film and a reminder that the work we are watching is as concerned with cinema as with varieties of performance.

²³ For a discussion of the painting, see Isaacson 24; Wissman 89, 90.

²⁴ Conflict is also generated when Paula tears up Natalia’s leaflets advertising lessons in chemistry, physics and mathematics: the scene references the posting of bills in *As You Like It* and the educational sub-plot of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, illuminating how, as parts of a trilogy, the films exhibit a shared self-consciousness.

²⁵ On Shakespeare in the post-fidelity era, see Lanier 21-40.

²⁶ My thanks to Maurizio Calbi and Doug Lanier for their acute and insightful comments on an earlier draft of this essay, to Deborah Cartmell for encouraging this work, and to two anonymous readers for their enabling and generous feedback.

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