

Representations of Shakespearean Women in Contemporary Brazilian Media

Christiane F. de Alcantara

Abstract Until the mid-1990s, Brazilian cinema has depicted women as exotic sexual objects. After the turn of the 21st century, Brazilian movie directors have tried to reproduce women as strong characters who defy traditional patriarchal authority. This paper investigates four Brazilian media that appropriate Shakespearean plays, namely the soap opera *O Cravo e a Rosa* and three movies: *O Auto da Compadecida*, *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta* and *As Alegres Comadres*. In each case, directors not only incorporate elements pertaining to Brazilian cultural identity to Shakespearean plots, but also portray female characters who subvert traditional female roles in order to exert their agency.

Key words cinema; Brazil; women; patriarchy; subversion; transgression

Author Christiane F. de Alcantara is from Curitiba, Brazil. She studied at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, completing her undergraduate and MA degrees English Literature. She is currently a doctoral student in the Comparative Literature Program at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. Email: calcant@purdue.edu

Brazilian cinema usually depicts women as exotic sexual objects. In the 1970s, during the military regime, when Brazilian art was very fervent, the most successful genre of movies was the Brazilian *pornochanchada*, a genre known for its highly eroticized depictions of women. In the *pornochanchada*, women were usually cast as coy sexual objects and men were macho sexual athletes (Johnson & Stam 405). After over a decade without any major production in Brazilian film, in 1995 movie makers began a new era of cinema, marked by a neo-liberal and post-modern approach. In this new phase of Brazilian film, contemporary themes such as poverty, violence, and racism became central to the narratives. Especially after the turn of the twenty-first century, the new period of Brazilian cinema has tried to reproduce the reality of Brazilian life in its most diverse contexts throughout the country. In this new perspective, directors have tended to portray women as strong characters who defy traditional patriarchal authority.

The thematic of female subversion of traditional social roles had already been addressed in many Shakespearean plays. If art imitates life, Shakespeare's theater mimicked the society of his time, when religion was at the very center of life in Tudor England. At that time, girls were raised to obey their fathers and later their husbands without questioning. Principally in the upper classes, women's destiny was very limited; they were supposed to be wives and mothers. In other words, women had little

choice in life (McDowall 84). However, in his theater, Shakespeare created some female characters that challenge the traditional passive roles imposed by society, thus showing that women have always struggled to have agency in patriarchal England. For instance, in *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like it*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Twelfth Night*, and others, Shakespeare was able to depict the conditions of women within a patriarchal system and created characters capable of transcending the limitations of their time.

This paper aims at analyzing the representation of female characters in different appropriations of Shakespeare's plays by Brazilian directors of TV shows or cinema. This paper shall concentrate on four contemporary works: the soap opera *O Cravo e a Rosa* (*The Carnation and the Rose*), and three films, namely *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta* (*Romeo and Juliet Get Married*), *O Auto da Compadecida* (*A Dog's Will*), and *As Alegres Comadres* (*The Merry Wives*). The soap opera and films here analyzed either incorporate a Shakespearean scene or compose their stories based on the main plot of a Shakespearean play.

In each case the directors adapt famous Shakespearean plays to the realities of Brazilian culture. Alex Huang and Charles Ross argue that "staging a Shakespearean play is a process not simply of representing that play itself but rather of negotiating the dynamics between the locality Shakespeare represents and the locality of the performers and the audience" (4). These appropriations reveal how the Brazilian directors re-invent Shakespeare's plots and adapt them to the Brazilian audience by creating a dialogue between the Bard and the Brazilian forms of cultural expression and showing women as strong transgressive figures.

In order to understand the directors' adoption of Shakespearean elements to their films, it is necessary to correlate the Brazilian texts to the English playwright's works. *O Cravo e a Rosa* (dir. Walter Avancini, 2000) is a Brazilian soap opera first exhibited in 2000 which was based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The story is set in 1920s São Paulo. The main character Catarina Batista (Katherine) is an example of modern woman in the 1920s who refuses the roles of housewife and mother. Catarina is known as "a fera" ('the beast') for sending all her suitors running away, but in order to help her sister she agrees to marry Julião Petrucchio (Petruccio). Petrucchio is a farmer who believes that women were born to take care of their husband and children, that is, to be the queen of the home. Another main character in the story is Bianca. She is completely different from her sister Catarina; she dreams about being engaged and getting married, but can only do so after the older sister finds a husband.

O Auto da Compadecida (dir. Guel Arraes, 2000), originally a play written by Ariano Suassuna in 1955, is a version of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Adapted to the cinema in 2000 by the director Guel Arraes, this film switches the setting from Venice to the Brazilian desert lands of the Northeast. It incorporates elements that are traditional in Brazilian culture, such as *literatura de cordel* (a kind of popular oral poetry), the Catholic Brazilian Baroque, and traditional Brazilian myths of the Northeast (such as the *Cangaceiro*, a bandit). In this film, two poor friends—Chicó and João Grilo—struggle to find ways to get money so as not to die of hunger.

The alliance of João Grilo's cunning and Chicó's cowardice leads the two men through several tricky adventures until Rosinha, the daughter of the city coronel (the local landowner who rules the town), arrives. Chicó immediately falls in love with Rosinha and decides to pretend to be rich and educated in order to marry her.

O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta (dir. Bruno Barreto, 2005) is a modern and comedic version of Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead of setting the plot in Verona as in the original play, in this movie the story is set in São Paulo in the twenty-first century. The main characters are Julieta (Juliet), the coach of a feminine soccer team, and Romeu (Romeo), an ophthalmologist. Julieta is the daughter of Alfredo Baragatti, the fanatic fan and member of the board of directors of Palmeiras soccer team, whereas Romeu is the chief of the uniformed rooting of Corinthians soccer team - the greatest rival of Palmeiras. The original family struggle between the Capulets and the Montagues is transformed into a struggle about soccer, the most important sport in Brazilian culture (Humphrey & Tomlinson 101).

The last work analyzed in this paper is Leila Hipólito's *As Alegres Comadres* (2003), a version of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. This adaptation sets the story in nineteenth century Tiradentes, Brazil. The movie shows how a broken Portuguese ex-military man, João Fausto (Falstaff), uses his status as former member of the Brazilian Emperor's court to deceive the local bourgeoisie. His life becomes complicated when he decides to seduce two married women, Mrs. Lima (Mrs. Page) and Mrs. Rocha (Mrs. Ford), because he believes these women have access to their husbands' money. Fausto hopes that once the women have been seduced, they will give him money and jewelry. After the wives learn about his interest in both of them, they pursue their revenge. At the same time, Mr. and Mrs. Lima try to find a suitor to marry their daughter Ana (Anne Page); however, the girl is already in love with a broken aristocrat named Franco (Fenton).

In each of these four contemporary Brazilian adaptations of Shakespearean plays, women appear as strong characters who subvert passive roles and are able to find agency in a patriarchal context. Below I will discuss each work in further details, focusing on the representations of women and in the appropriation of elements pertaining to Brazilian culture and incorporated to Shakespeare's plays.

1. *The Taming of the Shrew* and *O Cravo e a Rosa*

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare's Katherina is first portrayed as bad-tempered, constantly scolding and having fits. In contrast, her sister Bianca is said to show "mild behavior and sobriety" (*The Taming of the Shrew* 1. 1. 71). Nevertheless, as the plot develops, the situation turns: Bianca refuses to follow her husband's command to come to him (5. 2. 87 - 88), whereas Kate ends up delivering a brilliant sermon on the importance of a wife's submissiveness to her husband (5. 2. 148 - 191). In her speech, Kate strongly emphasizes how she has wrongly been scolding and that a wife should obey her husband:

Kate: My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haply more,

To bandy word for word and frown for frown.
 But now I see our lances are but straws,
 Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
 That seeming to be most which we indeed least are (5.2.182 – 187).

Kate's final speech shows that women should not have a hot temperament or defy their husband. Kate delivers what seems to be the final message of the play, that women should be obedient and subservient to their spouses.

Unlike Shakespeare's Kate, in the Brazilian soap opera *O Cravo e a Rosa*, Catarina maintains her shrew behavior until the end of the story. At first her shrewishness sends all suitors running away, including Petruchio, whom she dismisses because she believes she is too good for him. She claims that she is beautiful, educated, and rich, whereas Petruchio says she is rustic and rude. However, Petruchio and her father Mr. Batista (Baptista) decide to deceive Catarina; Petruchio asks Batista to pretend that he does not approve of Petruchio's courting Catarina. In order to cross her father, Catarina accepts Petruchio's wooing. From this moment we start to see Catarina's strong temperament; she accepts Petruchio's courtship just to show disobedience to her father.

Since Bianca dreams about getting married, she tries to convince Catarina to marry Petruchio, because at that time the younger daughter could only marry once her older sister was already wedded. To help Bianca, Catarina agrees to marry Petruchio, but she imposes some conditions: she will only marry an obedient husband. She demands separate bedrooms and states that she will not perform any wifely duties, because she will only keep appearances. Petruchio accepts and is very submissive to her, but he promises to tame her when they are married. Unlike in the original play where the two sisters do not get along well, in *O Cravo e a Rosa* the women are united to take small but subversive steps so as to achieve their independence. Catarina accepts the role of wife ascribed by society in order to help her sister, but by stating her firm decision that the marriage will not be consummated, she shows that for the early twentieth century society, only appearances mattered.

Even after the wedding, Catarina keeps her shrewish behavior, although she grows more loving towards her husband. For instance, in episode 59, Petruchio finds Catarina crying because Mr. Batista forces Bianca to marry a man she does not love. Catarina's vulnerability and her increasing love for Petruchio lead her to kiss her husband. After they kiss, however, Catarina goes mad and accuses Petruchio of taking advantage of her. Throughout the story of the soap opera, such moments when Catarina's sweeter side is suddenly replaced by scolding repeat themselves in a series of attacks on Petruchio.

However, shrewishness is transformed into a positive characteristic in the soap opera *O Cravo e a Rosa*. This can be perceived, for instance, in episode 124, when Catarina verbally attacks Marcela, Mr. Batista's evil fiancée. Although her behavior does not conform to the way a well-bred woman should act, she is excused for doing a good thing in exposing Marcela's evil doing and saving her father from a deceitful marriage.

Towards the end of the story, Catarina and Petruchio adapt to one another: Catarina becomes more pleasing towards Petruchio, and he also becomes more refined so as to please her. When Petruchio falls seriously ill, Catarina diverts her shrewishness into a more efficient way of imposing her will and having agency: she decides to administer her husband's farm and to build a cheese factory there. Thus, at the end of the story, shrewishness assumes a different characteristic: it becomes associated with female independence and determination.

Another female character whose agency was explored in this TV series is Bianca. Bianca begins the story as a romantic young girl, unlike her sister Catarina, who is portrayed as extremely manipulative and intelligent. Throughout soap opera series, Bianca is obedient to her father, agreeing to marry Heitor, a man she does not love, because it is her father's desire. However, during the final episodes, Catarina's disposition seems to rub off onto Bianca. On the wedding day, Bianca fakes a faint, and with the help of her sister Catarina, she runs away from her unwanted marriage in order to be with the man she truly loves, Edmundo. By acquiring some of Catarina's features, Bianca becomes independent and active. The happy ending with a marriage between Bianca and Edmundo suggests that Bianca's disobedience to her father and her refusal to marry Heitor was proper. The soap opera redefines being a shrew to mean, instead, autonomy and self-sufficiency. In this way it finds a way to make acceptable a patriarchal play that otherwise might seem offensive. According to Velvet D. Pearson, "the play can easily be distasteful to the feminist awareness of the 1990s, and if a way is not found to make the text compatible to the sensibilities of a modern audience, performances of it will cease, and the text will sink into obscurity, to be read only by the most dedicated Shakespeare scholars" (229). Thus, in the Brazilian modern version of the story, Kate's sharp tongue becomes an indication not of a scold but a strong woman.

Although Kate's shrewishness is tamed in Shakespeare's play, Catarina's struggle for genuine agency leads her to a more active and autonomous societal position. In Brazil, soap operas are considered *obras abertas*, that is, open works where audiences' interpretations and perceptions are taken into consideration during the production of the shows. Thus, writers of soap operas may change their original plot according to the audience's will (Lopes 26). This means that Walcyrr Carrasco and Mário Teixeira, the writers of the Brazilian soap opera *O Cravo e a Rosa*, might have wanted to make Catarina more submissive at the end of the story, but that the Brazilian public was more interested in viewing a shrew and strong woman struggling to have agency and voice in the 1920s.

2. *The Merchant of Venice* and *O Auto da Compadecida*

Although in *The Taming of the Shrew* Katherine is often believed to lack agency, in several other Shakespearean plays women demonstrate a stronger and more powerful character. Such is the case of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. In this play, Bassanio borrows money from Shylock and offers to take a pound of Antonio's flesh if the loan is not paid. When Antonio forfeits, Shylock takes him to court. Unfortunately for Shylock, Portia—Bassanio's wife—disguises herself as a man (Balthazar) and goes

to Venice to serve as legal expert in Antonio's trial to save her husband's best friend. Dressed as a young male "doctor of the law," Portia asks Shylock to show mercy, but the Jewish moneylender refuses. Thus the court must allow Shylock to extract the promised pound of flesh. At that very moment, Portia points out a flaw in the contract; she realizes that it does not entitle Shylock with any drop of Antonio's blood:

Portia: Tarry a little; there is something else.
 This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
 The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh:'
 Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;
 But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
 One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
 Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
 Unto the state of Venice (*/The Merchant of Venice/* 4. 1. 316 – 323).

As Portia cunningly realizes, it is impossible to cut skin without dripping at least a little blood. She decrees that if Shylock were to shed any drop of Antonio's blood, or to take any more or less than a pound of flesh, he will lose his lands and goods (Act 4, Scene 1). Shylock is trapped, and thanks to Portia's intelligence, Antonio is freed.

Although Guel Arraes' *O Auto da Compadecida* reproduces Suassuna's play of the same name, the director brings some innovations to his movie. One of the most important innovations is the incorporation of the trial scene. Arraes also substitutes Major Antônio Moraes' sick son for the character Rosinha, who does not exist in Suassuna's play. In Rosinha's first scene she is wearing a white dress, suggesting feminine purity and naiveté. Rosinha seems to represent the perfect daughter, one who is pure, chaste, and subservient to her father. Since the movie portrays the Brazilian *nordestino* society of the 1930s, when women were prepared almost exclusively for matrimony (Moreira & Silva 9), Major Antônio Moraes searches for a husband for his daughter, fearing that his daughter might bring dishonesty to the family (that is, that she might have sex before marriage), if he does not act. But he wants to make sure that Rosinha is united to a wealthy man, so as to consolidate political and financial alliances.

In the Brazilian film *O Auto da Compadecida*, one of the main characters – the poor Chicó – falls in love with Rosinha, the daughter of the city *coronel*. When Chicó discovers that Rosinha is also in love with him, he asks his best friend João Grilo for assistance. In order to help Chicó, João Grilo creates a scheme to deceive the Major; he pretends that Chicó is a rich and educated landowner and introduces him to Antônio Moraes as such. After the introduction, the *coronel* is convinced that Chicó is the best match for his daughter. When he tells Rosinha he has found a husband for her, she immediately rejects the idea, trying to state her will. Nevertheless, she suddenly changes her mind when she notices that her father wants to marry her to the one she loves. She pretends to be obedient in marrying the man her father has chosen, but spectators know that, in fact, she is subverting his male power, using his authority to marry Chicó. Here Rosinha starts to demonstrate her astuteness, de-

mystifying the image of purity we attribute to her in the beginning of the movie (Moreira & Silva 10).

The Major agrees to the union of Chicó and his daughter, believing that he is making a good political alliance. However, in order to marry Rosinha, Chicó has to remodel the local church building. As a poor man, he cannot afford the money for the new design project and borrows from Antônio Moraes. As proof of payment, João Grilo assures the Major that Chicó will give a piece of his back skin if he does not pay for the loan. Knowing that Rosinha's grandmother left her a piggybank full of money as a wedding gift, João Grilo is certain that Chicó will be able to pay the loan. It turns out, however, that because the currency in the piggybank is out of circulation, Chicó and João Grilo cannot collect enough money to pay Rosinha's father. As a consequence, Major Antônio Moraes is entitled to remove a strip of Chicó's skin as payment for the loan.

As in Shakespeare's play, in *O Auto da Compadecida* it is a woman who literally saves her lover's skin. Rosinha realizes that the debt does not include blood. She not only saves her lover, however, but she finds freedom from her father's power, who cannot collect what he is owed.

If in Shakespeare's play Portia had to wear a male disguise in order to make herself credible and to exert her agency, by contrast in *O Auto da Compadecida* Rosinha defies her father's will and power in her own identity and feminine garments. Rosinha's participation in João Grilo's scheme to deceive the Major about Chicó's true identity is very significant. given the strongly patriarchal society of the Brazilian Northeast. It demonstrates that "for the population as a whole, behaviors, attitudes, and values were revealed that diverged from the ideal conceived according to the model of the patriarchal family" (Samara and Costa 214). Rosinha's transgression shows that, although in Brazilian society women are often expected to take submissive roles, in practice many find a way to escape a passive position making their voices heard. Like Portia, Rosinha is empowered when she finds a way to prevent her father from collecting his bond of Chicó's flesh. And like Catarina in *O Cravo e a Rosa* Rosinha in *O Auto da Compadecida* is a transgressive character who finds a way to impose her will in chauvinist and patriarchal society.

3. *Romeo and Juliet* and *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta*

Another famous Shakespearean play where the female protagonist demonstrates agency is *Romeo and Juliet*. In this play, Juliet is the one to suggest marriage to Romeo and to plot their secret wedding in Act 2 Scene 2:

Juliet: Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
 If that thy bent of love be honourable,
 Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,
 By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
 Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite;
 And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay
 And follow thee my lord throughout the world (148 – 154).

Aware of her father's plans to marry her with Paris, Juliet decides to marry Romeo in secret, but their love is interrupted by Mercutio's and Tybalt's deaths. Romeo is banished and Juliet goes after Friar Lawrence for advice. The two of them concoct a plan to reunite Juliet with Romeo in Mantua; the night before her wedding to Paris, Juliet should drink a potion that would make her appear to be dead. The Friar, then, would write Romeo a letter explaining their plan and after Juliet was laid to rest in the family's crypt, the Friar and Romeo would secretly retrieve her, and the two lovers would be free to live away from their parents' feuding (Act 4 Scene 1).

It is Juliet who creates the plot that ends in the lovers' tragic end; she is the one to first suggest marriage and together with Friar Lawrence she creates a plan to get rid of the feudal authority of the Capulets and Montagues in order to be with her beloved Romeo. Although Romeo and Juliet ends tragically, maybe suggesting that female transgression brings negative and tragic consequences, in the Brazilian film version of this play the two lovers end happily. In *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta*, the main couple has to face several episodes of adversity before they can finally be together and the tragic plot is transformed into a comedy.

Like Juliet in Shakespeare's play, in the Brazilian movie, Julieta is also a very strong woman. From the beginning of the story we see her effort to coach a team of female soccer players in Brazil, a country where although soccer is the most popular sport, it is quasi-exclusively played by men. Julieta has to struggle against the board of directors of Palmeiras, the club where she plays, because they believe that soccer is not a sport for women. The directors' sexist opinion about female soccer is discussed by the sociologist Janet Lever, who claims that in Brazil, soccer is associated with masculinity and the presence of women as players or fans would weaken some men's interest in the game (154). Such interpretations of the most popular sport in Brazil are recurrent in Brazilian society, where it is assumed that soccer should be played by men for men only. This chauvinist view of soccer is challenged in the movie by Julieta's talent for the game and by her successful coaching of the Palmeiras women's team. However, despite her efforts to convince the directors of the women's talent for soccer, Julieta loses the battle. She becomes even more disappointed when she discovers that her own father did not vote in her favor.

As the story goes on we see more of Julieta's transgressive side; when she goes to a soccer game with her family, she sees Romeu cheering for her rival club (Corinthians). She becomes immediately interested in him. After an argument with her father, Julieta hurts her eye and goes to an ophthalmologist. During the eye examination, she realizes that the doctor is the same man she saw in the stadium cheering for Corinthians. She interrupts the examination, stares at Romeu and flirts with him. It is Juliet who makes the first move, thus pointing to a new direction for women in Brazil, who traditionally are expected to be coy and wait for men to act.

Another instance when Julieta makes her agency known is when she convinces Romeu to pretend to be a fan of Palmeiras so that he can be accepted by her father. He learns all the history of Julieta's team, wears the team shirt, goes to games with her entire family and even goes to Japan with her father to cheer for her club. Even

though in Brazil most men are strongly devoted to soccer and to their teams, Julieta is able to convince Romeu to switch sides and root for her club. Julieta's passion for soccer, already non-traditional for women, makes her subvert the commonly expected role where she would switch teams in order to please Romeu.

Julieta's most subversive moment occurs after her father discovers that Romeu is not a *palmeirense* (a person who cheers for Palmeiras soccer team). Dr. Baragatti asks Julieta to choose between Romeu or her family, just as Juliet in Shakespeare's play has to choose between her family and the love for Romeo. In this film version, Julieta also chooses Romeu and goes against her father, exerting her agency and refusing to submit to his rule.

Julieta's progressive attitude also demonstrates recent changes in women's behavior in Brazilian society. The movie cleverly shows that a woman can choose to have a career, even if it is traditionally performed by men. It also portrays a transformation in female conduct when it comes to relationships by showing that women can take the first move without being considered immoral. By providing a happy end to the story, it seems that the director Bruno Barreto wants to say that women are allowed to violate socially acceptable norms without being punished. Thus, the Brazilian modern version of *Romeo and Juliet* welcomes female subversion of patriarchal authority.

4. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *As Alegres Comadres*

Like the film *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta*, the Brazilian movie *As Alegres Comadres* (*The Merry Wives*) provides another instance of a daughter who defies her father's will in order to exert her agency in the choice of her husband. *As Alegres Comadres* is a film version of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In Shakespeare's play, at the same time that Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page plot their revenge against Falstaff, Mr. and Mrs. Page also try to find a suitor for their daughter Anne Page. Mrs. Page prefers Dr. Caius for a son-in-law, and Mr. Page prefers Slender (3.2.55 – 56), but Anne Page does not want to marry either of the two gentlemen chosen by her parents. She is in love with Fenton and at the end of the play the two lovers plot against her parents and get married.

Similarly to Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and to Julieta in *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta*, in the Brazilian version of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Ana Lima (Anne Page) is the one to make the first move in her love affair with Franco (Fenton). From the beginning of the movie, as Franco descends the train, Ana demonstrates her interest in him. Her eyes follow Franco's movements and later she gossips with Maria (Mrs. Quickly) about him. Moreover, when the couple meets in the forest, Ana kisses Franco and starts to undress him. Although in the play Anne and Fenton are rarely left alone, in this film version the couple is often portrayed together kissing unaccompanied. This proclivity shows Ana's subversion of her father's authority: even if her father states that she shall not marry Franco because he wants her to marry Silva (Slender), she continues with the relationship contradicting his decision.

According to Susan Besse, in the nineteenth century Brazilian society,

Children of the elite were reared to obey, even to the extent of accepting the

right of the patriarch to choose their marriage partner. Romance was normally an irrelevant consideration; instead, elite families arranged marriages for their children (often with cousins or close relatives) with the aim of cementing political alliances and guarding property and status(12).

Thus, the traditional role for Ana Lima would be to accept for husband whomever her father chose. In nineteenth century Brazil, she would not have much agency and would be forced to marry Silva, whom she did not love. The fact that she disobeys her father shows her will to exert herself in the choice of a life partner.

The final scene of the play, when the wives of Windsor and their husbands play a prank on Falstaff (Act 5 Scene 5), is interestingly adapted to Brazilian culture in *As Alegres Comadres*. In this film version, the director Leila Hipólito chooses to insert elements of Brazilian folklore such as the *Saci* (a one-legged mulatto youngster who smokes a pipe and wears a red cap that enables him to disappear and reappear wherever he wishes) and the Werewolf, and Orishas of Brazilian Afro religions such as *Ogun* and *Iemanjá* to represent the fairies and elves from the original play. Instead of the instructions to the fairies being delivered by Mistress Quickly, in the film version it is Ana Lima dressed as the Orisha *Iemanjá* who commands the fairies.

In Afro-Brazilian religions *Iemanjá* is the Queen of the Sea, a powerful guardian spirit. *Iemanjá* is a mother of all gods, the goddess of home, fertility, love and family (Omari 60). By choosing to portray Ana as this goddess, Hipólito seems to give more strength to her character at the end of the movie than what we see in the end of the original play. Ana Lima speaks more lines and has the chance to command the prank against Fausto. She is also very bold to deceive both suitors her parents had chosen and to get married to the man she loves.

Moreover, Hipólito chooses to transform the ending of the original play: in the film version, Silva (Slender)'s homosexual identity is revealed, when he is led to marry a boy. Moreover, the director transforms the end for Dr. Caius and Mistress Quickly: instead of having the doctor discover that he was about to marry a boy, the director chooses to exchange the boy for Maria (Mrs. Quickly), so that the doctor is married to his maid at the end of the story.

As we see, at the end of the film version, all the women are happy: Mrs. Lima and Mrs. Rocha are able to maintain their virtue and to exact their revenge against Fausto. Furthermore, Mrs. Rocha is able to prove her loyalty to her husband, Mr. Rocha, and to dismiss his jealous suspicions. Ana Lima is able to marry Franco whom she loves and Maria ends the story married to the French doctor. The happy ending for the women in the story may be Hipólito's feminist way of showing that female transgression does not always end tragically.

To conclude, in several Shakespearean plays the female characters do not conform to the submissive paths previously ascribed for them by Renaissance society. These women refuse to be merely minor characters, displaying their strength and power through their lines and acts. This strength is also represented in Brazilian media in the twenty-first century. In contemporary Brazilian TV and film versions of Shakespearean plays women are usually portrayed as strong characters that resist patriarchal

rules of Brazilian society. In other words, if Shakespeare was able to display the small but transgressive steps his heroines could take in the European societies of the sixteenth century, in twenty-first century Brazilian film versions directors seem to demonstrate that, although traditionally the Brazilian society is very male-centered, nowadays women are gaining more individual strength.

In *O Cravo e a Rosa*, the main character Catarina starts the story as a shrew, but her behavior does not change like that of Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Although at the end of the soap opera Catarina grows more loving towards Petruchio, she still scolds her husband. Moreover, Catarina diverts her shrewishness into leadership when she administers her husband's farm. Her sister Bianca also demonstrates a shrew behavior at the end of the soap opera, when she pretends to faint in order to escape an unwanted marriage. Shrewishness in the modern Brazilian adaptation becomes synonymous with female independence and agency, thus assuming a positive connotation. This view of shrewishness as positive may be associated with a transformation in Brazilian society that started in the first three decades of last century and continues to take place, where women have been gaining more agency and control over their lives (Campos 1). As a result, it seems that even though Shakespeare's play has been widely accepted by both male and female audiences in the past, nowadays it is more difficult to talk about the process of "taming" a wife and the consequences linked to it without sounding chauvinist and sexist.

In addition, the film versions here explored seem to reveal a pattern of female transgression that may be associated with social transformations in Brazilian society. Traditionally, Brazil has been stereotyped as an archetypical patriarchal culture (Stevens 58). The traditional image of women in Brazilian art exploits their bodies and sexualities focusing on their objectification. However, in *O Auto da Compadecida*, *O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta* and *As Alegres Comadres* women are no longer portrayed as sexual objects, but are subjects who struggle and succeed in finding voice and agency in a patriarchal society.

However, I believe that these transformations in Brazilian film are still very much attached to the traditional roles ascribed for women. As we can perceive in all the works analyzed in this paper, even though the female characters in Brazilian soap operas and movies are portrayed as having a transgressive nature, all of them still fit the roles of wives and mothers, the traditional position for women in patriarchal societies. Thus, I believe that contemporary filmmakers have yet been unable to depict a complete subversion of the norms of society and I hope that directors choose to reveal different possibilities for women in future adaptations.

[Works Cited]

- As Alegres Comadres. Dir. Leila Hipólito. Perf. Guilherme Karan, Zezé Polessa, Milton Gonçalves. Ananã Produções, 2003. DVD.
- Campos, Zuleica Dantas Pereira. "Pela Mulher, Para Mulher: Uma voz Feminista no Recife dos Anos 30". Núcleo de Estudos para América Latina. Web. 2 May 2010.
- Huang, Alex & Ross, Charles, eds. *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace*. West Lafa-

- yette: Purdue University Press, 2009.
- Humphrey, John & Tomlinson, Alan. "Review: Reflections on Brazilian Football: A Review and Critique of Janet Lever's 'Soccer Madness'". *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1986): 101 – 108.
- Johnson, R. & Stam, R. *Brazilian Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Lever, Janet. *Soccer Madness: Brazil's Passion for the World's Most Popular Sport*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1983.
- Lopes, Maria Immacolata Vassallo. "Telenovela Brasileira: Uma Narrativa Sobre a Nação". *Comunicação & Educação*. Vol. 26 (2003): 17 – 34.
- McDowall, David. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. Harlow: Longman, 1989.
- Moreira, Lucia C. & Silva, Gisele Belini e. "Uma análise do O Auto da Compadecida – releitura da personagem Rosinha". *Annals of the XXX Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação*. 29 Aug. to 2 Sept. 2007. Web. 3 May 2010.
- O Auto da Compadecida*. Dir. Guel Arraes. Perf. Marco Nanini, Matheus Nachtergaele, Selton Mello, Rogério Cardoso, Denise Fraga, Diogo Vilela, Paulo Goulart. Globo Filmes, 2000. DVD.
- O Casamento de Romeu e Julieta*. Dir. Bruno Barreto. Perf. Luis Gustavo, Luana Piovani, Marco Ricca, Mel Lisboa. Globo Filmes, 2005. DVD.
- "O Cravo e a Rosa". Globo. Rede Globo, Rio de Janeiro. 2000. Television.
- Omari, Mikelle Smith. "The Role of the Gods in Afro-Brazilian Ancestral Ritual". *African Arts*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1989): 54 – 61 + 103 – 104.
- Pearson, Velvet D. "In Search of a Liberated Kate in 'The Taming of the Shrew'". *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1990): 229 – 242.
- Samara, Eni de Mesquita & Costa, Dora Isabel Paiva da. "Review: Family, Patriarchalism, and Social Change in Brazil." *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1997): 212 – 225.
- Shakespeare, W. *Romeo and Juliet*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994.
- . *The Merchant of Venice*. New York: American Book Company, 1998.
- . *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- . *The Taming of the Shrew*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1921.
- Stevens, Evelyn. "Machismo and Marianismo". *Society*, Vol. 10 (1973): 57 – 63.
- Suassuna, Ariano. *O Auto da Compadecida*. Rio de Janeiro: Agir, 2005.