

“A Discussion of Linda Hutcheon’s *Theory of Adaptation* in Relation to Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed* as an Adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*”

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## 1. Introduction: *A Theory of Adaptation*

Among the people to discuss Fletcher's 1611 play *The Woman's Prize; or The Tamer Tamed*, Baldwin Maxwell is one of the few to plead for a very slight connection between this play and William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Based on an extensive analysis of, among other things, the characters and the settings of both plays, Maxwell arrives at the conclusion that "*The Woman's Prize* was originally not a studied continuation of or answer to *The Taming of the Shrew*" (359). More recent views acknowledge a more explicit connection between the two plays. Holly Crocker, for example, writes about *The Tamer Tamed* as a "strong answer" and "redress to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*" (409, 421), especially with respect to the roles and representations of the main characters. Molly Smith uses similar terms when she calls Fletcher's play a "sequel" to and a "pervasive commentary on Shakespeare" (38, 39), but she argues for a more extensive relationship between the two plays in which *The Tamer Tamed* elaborately comments on and rewrites *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the general introduction to their critical anthology *Adaptations of Shakespeare*, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier also present *The Tamer Tamed* as a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew* (1). In the introduction to the play itself they refer back to Smith's position when they state that "Fletcher's play presents itself in relation to Shakespeare's as its reversal or opposite" (23).

This cursory glance at the way others have written about these two plays reveals two interesting assumptions, one implicit the other explicit, that seem to lie at the heart of the view that Fletcher's play rewrites Shakespeare's. The first assumption manifests itself in the language used to talk about *The Tamer Tamed* as a rewrite. Words like 'commentary,' 'strong answer' and 'reversal' imply that *The Taming of the Shrew* poses a question to which *The Tamer Tamed* has found an answer, i.e. that *The Taming of the Shrew* elicits the answer that Fletcher provides in his play. The use of this terminology suggests uneasiness with *The*

*Taming of the Shrew*, an uneasiness that Fletcher is perceived to resolve in his rewriting and retelling of the story. Another, more explicit but no less important, assumption is the idea that Fletcher rewrote Shakespeare's play in the form of a sequel, so that *The Tamer Tamed* is both a continuation and a revision of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Fischlin and Fortier emphasise *The Tamer Tamed* as a rewriting of *The Taming of the Shrew* by including it in their anthology as an adaptation of Shakespeare. *The Tamer Tamed* is thus seen as a critical adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the form of a sequel.

In her recent book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon does not leave room for this double definition of *The Tamer Tamed*. She excludes sequels from the category of adaptation, on the notion that "there is a difference between never wanting a story to end [...] and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways" (9). Pointing out the fact that we use the same word for both the product and the process of adaptation, she proposes a twofold definition of 'adaptation' as product and process. First, adaptation as "a formal entity or product" is "an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works" (7). As Julie Sanders also points out in *Adaptation and Appropriation*, an adaptation enters into an explicit and "sustained engagement" with the work or works it adapts (4). This double definition of 'adaptation' as process involves the two subcategories of "a creative *and* an interpretive act" by the adapter, and "an extended intertextual engagement" of the audience with the adapted work (8). In the first subcategory of the definition of 'adaptation' as process, adaptation is a double process of (re-)creation and interpretation in which the latter always precedes the former (18). This double process is "an act of [either] appropriating or salvaging," depending, not so much on the motives of the adapter, but on the perspective of the audience, be it critic or otherwise (20). The audience and their reception of an adaptation are central to the second subcategory of the process of adaptation. This process of reception is "unavoidably a kind of intertextuality," on the condition that the adapted work is familiar to

the receiver (21). This implies that experiencing an adaptation as adaptation also means experiencing the adapted work as adapted work. In other words, the reception of an adaptation renews, re-interprets and re-creates the subsequent reception of the adapted work.

This twofold approach to adaptation, Hutcheon explains, is largely inspired by the need for a new theoretical frame to replace the frame of “fidelity criticism” that has dominated adaptation studies for so long (6-7). She is not alone in this attempt to change the critical perspective to a more productive approach. In the earlier mentioned *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders intimates that to use ‘fidelity’ as a critical tool is outdated (20). Interestingly, she slightly undermines her own view by suggesting that “it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place” (20). In his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, Peter Brooker is less equivocal when he states that taking fidelity as a criterion is both “futile because, strictly speaking, fidelity can only mean literal repetition, and deluded because a judgement of success or failure is clearly dependent on differently situated strategies of interpretation” (108). Brian McFarlane goes even further by claiming that the continued discussion of the futility of fidelity as a criterion of successful adaptation is in itself absolutely futile, because it is a debate that should have been settled by now (15). Linda Hutcheon is part of this deliberate move away from the persistent idea that infidelity to the adapted text means the failure of the adaptation. She suggests, for example, that “perhaps one way to think about unsuccessful adaptation is not in terms of infidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one’s own and thus autonomous” (20-1). To her, the only interesting aspect of the notion of ‘fidelity’ is that it naively supposes that adaptation merely aims to be a reproduction of the adapted text, in the sense of a replication (7).

As I have shown above, critical writing on *The Tamer Tamed* frequently concerns its

potential status as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, as well as the degree of loyalty Fletcher displays in his rewriting of Shakespeare's play. Some view *The Tamer Tamed* rather neutrally as a reworking of *The Taming of the Shrew*, whereas others argue for a more critically explicit position of *The Tamer Tamed* to the play it adapts. The question whether or not *The Tamer Tamed* is an adaptation and, if it is, to what extent it is rooted in its 'original' are questions that still seem to be gnawing at the edges of discussions of *The Tamer Tamed*. For this reason, I will analyse Fletcher's play as an adaptation of Shakespeare's in chapter two, as a starting point for my discussion of Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation. With this analysis, which will focus on the characters of Petruchio, Katherine and Maria, and on the twin theme of courtship and marriage that is central to both plays, I will argue that Fletcher wrote an adaptation that is both a sequel and a prequel, in the sense that his play informs Shakespeare's to such an extent that in a way it 'precedes' it. I will then use this analysis as a case study to further discuss Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation in the third chapter, focusing on how to critically assess adaptations as well as the strengths and limitations of Hutcheon's theoretical definition of adaptation as product and process. The final chapter will review and conclude the discussions of this paper.

## 2. *The Tamer Tamed* as an Adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*

In order to provide a basis for a further discussion of Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation in chapter three, I will in this chapter analyse John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed* as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and, more specifically, as an adaptation that is complementary to its adapted text. Molly Smith, among others, has argued that with *The Tamer Tamed* Fletcher is writing against Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and that the former "rewrites and undermines the ideological assumptions" of the latter play (39). This suggests that appropriation would be a more appropriate definition of Fletcher's play than adaptation. In this chapter, however, I want to argue that with *The Tamer Tamed* Fletcher rewrites *The Taming of the Shrew* by writing *into* Shakespeare's play, rather than against it; he rewrites and balances the material of *The Taming of the Shrew* rather than undermining or overthrowing it. If Fletcher's play is indeed "a strong answer" to Shakespeare's, as Holly Crocker contests (38), then it is a response that is not characterised by opposition and reversal (Fischlin and Fortier 23), but rather by addition and elaboration. Although *The Tamer Tamed* presents itself as a sequel, in its position to *The Taming of the Shrew* it also plays the role of a prequel. The play provides an insight into the main characters that influences our reading of *The Taming of the Shrew*. After the events of *The Tamer Tamed*, Petruchio is no longer the same 'man' in *The Taming of the Shrew*, that is to say, in the perception of the reader.

In the first section of this chapter I will examine how and to what extent the relationship between the two plays shapes the character of Petruchio as a tyrant in *The Taming of the Shrew* through his character of a frustrated tyrant in *The Tamer Tamed*. The tyrannical character of Petruchio manifests itself mostly in his relationships with Katherine and Maria. The second section concerns the way Fletcher continues and deepens the way *The Taming of the Shrew* deals with the twin theme of courtship and marriage.

## 2.1 Petruchio: Two Times a Tyrant

As sequel to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed* presents Petruchio as a man whose character has been deeply marked by his marriage to his first wife, presumably Katherine, whom we know from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Moroso remarks to Tranio and Sophocles that with "her most abundant stubbornness / [...] [she has] turned his temper / And forced him blow as high as she" (Fletcher 1.1.17-20). The men fear that, unless she adopt an aggressive and shrew-like attitude herself (1.1.25-30), Petruchio's new wife, Maria, will not last long under the irascibility of the formerly "still Petruchio" (1.1.37). This characterisation of the early Petruchio is somewhat surprising. The first meaning of 'still' that the editor Lucy Munro suggests – 'meek' or 'quiet' – seems as unlikely and ill-fitting to the Petruchio we know as the second meaning she gives, 'constant'. The first time we meet Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* he bursts out in anger at Grumio, showing a temper that is as fiery as it is fitful (Shakespeare 1.2.1-19). This instance is followed by many other examples of his seemingly inconstant character, both in his behaviour and in reports of others about him. But on closer scrutiny, Petruchio may prove not to be as "mad-brained" as Gremio professes him to be (3.2.153). Rather, he can be described as a stable-minded and strong-willed person, albeit with rather remarkable behaviour.

In fact, his ravings and antics may be the strongest argument for a 'still' Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the context of this play, they are proof of his purposefulness and determination in acting on his resolutions. Petruchio himself sheds light on his behaviour by motivating it with his aim to tame Katherine. He delivers two soliloquies in which he explains that his oddities are all key aspects of the taming process. In his first monologue, just before he is about to meet Katherine for the first time, he proclaims that he will "woo her with some spirit" and reverse everything she says in his interpretation of, and answer to it (2.1.165-76). The second soliloquy is delivered after he has just started the actual taming.



Katherine has had to deal with a railing husband on the way to their new home (4.1.53-62), and on arrival it appeared that after wooing and wedding her, he does not yet intend to bed her (4.1.153-8). Leaving a confused Kate in her chamber, Petruchio enters the stage alone. We can imagine him rubbing his hands together contentedly, when we hear him muttering to himself,

Thus have I politically begun my reign,  
And 'tis my hope to end successfully.  
My falcon now is sharp and passing empty,  
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorged,  
For then she never looks upon her lure.  
[...] Ay, and amid this hurly I intend  
That all is done in reverend care of her.  
[...] This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,  
And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour. (4.1.159-180)

The fact that Petruchio is able to set out a strategy and act accordingly, despite receiving critical feedback from his social circle and causing embarrassing scenes, marks him as a man with a 'constant' and consistent character. He may be whimsical in the particular goals he sets himself, but in the realisation of these goals he most certainly is not.

However, the fact that Petruchio's character is by nature constant does not necessarily mean it is also naturally amiable. In the opening scene of *The Tamer Tamed*, Moroso implies that Petruchio's character has been entirely corrupted by his marriage to Katherine and that he turned into a tyrant *only* because of the hardship he endured in his marriage to Katherine, a marriage that appears to have been determined by an on-going power struggle (Fletcher 1.1.16-20). Velvet Pearson sketches Petruchio as a "many-faceted, sensitive character," especially because of his "kindness" and "decency" in his role of Katherine's husband and

tamer (234), a designation that she implicitly seems to wish to see replaced by the less negatively connoted ‘educator’ (232). In the words of Coppélia Kahn, Pearson seems to “argue that Petruchio’s heavy-handed behavior is merely a role briefly assumed for a benign purpose” (89). However, this picture does not do justice to the temperament Petruchio proves to possess on numerous occasions, nor to the reality of the harshness of the taming process to which he submits Kate. Petruchio may not be deprived of certain noble motives and thoughtful attentions, but these are overshadowed by a marked tyrannical streak in his character; “[i]f Petruchio were female, he would be known as a shrew” (Kahn 93). Moreover, this tyrannical streak does not only show in his treatment of Katherine, but also surfaces in his behaviour to other people. Petruchio is a constant man indeed, an unmoveable man who cannot bear his will to be thwarted or ignored. As pointed out above, his ravings to Grumio in front of Hortensio’s house are a first indication of this character trait (Shakespeare 1.2.1-19), as well as his attitude towards Baptista when he asks for Katherine’s hand (2.1.110-37). In contrast to the other two young men in the play, Hortensio and Lucentio, it does not take him any effort to behave like this. Lucentio gives his servant Tranio great freedom by letting him play the role of master. Instead of feeling the need to curb his behaviour every now and then, he allows Tranio to become the person to instruct *him* and devise his strategies for him (1.1.139-200). Hortensio, in turn, claims that Petruchio’s “taming-school” (4.2.54) has taught him how to tame a wife, so that if his widow “be froward, / then [Petruchio has] taught Hortensio to be untoward” (4.5.78-9). However, when the moment comes that she does defy him, he does not so much as utter a syllable against her behaviour, let alone an angry one (5.2.86-97).

In *The Tamer Tamed*, Petruchio’s behaviour is no less mad-brained than it used to be in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and on the surface little seems to have changed. But from the outset it becomes clear that he is an altered man, as Tranio indicates (Fletcher 1.1.37).

Petruchio seems to have lost his balance and spiralled out of control. In *The Tamer Tamed* Petruchio lacks both reason and motive for his erratic behaviour. He has found a wife that is “gentle [and] tame” (1.2.75), who married him because she wanted to (1.3.144-5), and yet he will treat her as if she were the worst shrew alive. Tranio portrays him as a tyrant, who will not suffer the slightest annoyance by his wife’s behaviour without inflicting due punishment on her.

His very frown, if she but say her prayers  
Louder than men talk treason, makes him tinder;  
[...] She must do nothing of herself, not eat,  
Sleep, say ‘Sir, how do ye’, make her ready, piss,  
Unless he bid her. (1.1.41-47)

Petronius, probably due to his parental authority, is the only person who dares to hint at Petruchio’s delusional ideas about his marriage. When he brags about his sexual performances of the coming wedding night, Petronius mocks Petruchio’s bloated words.

Will you to bed, son, and leave talking?  
Tomorrow morning we shall have you look,  
For all your great words, like St. George at Kingston,  
Running a-footback from the furious dragon  
That with her angry tail belabours him  
For being lazy. (1.3.17-22)

And indeed, only moments later Petruchio learns that Maria has fortified herself with Bianca and has no intention whatsoever to admit him to her bed. “[D]raw all you force before it, and mount your ablest piece of battery, you shall not enter [her room] these three nights yet,” Jaques warns him (1.3.73-5). From this moment on, Petruchio falls into one angry fit after another. He attempts to control himself, partly because he seems to believe that if he can but

make her leave her fortification and her accomplice “Colonel Bianca, [who] commands the works” (1.3.70), he’ll have won the game, but every indication of Maria’s continued rebellion makes him lose control of himself again (1.3.197-210).

What appeared to be latent tyranny in *The Taming of the Shrew* has developed into full-blown tyranny in *The Tamer Tamed*. In *The Taming of the Shrew* Petruchio was in control of the situation, and ultimately in control of Katherine because he had made the plan that tamed her, whereas she lacked that overview and was lost in the events. By contrast, in *The Tamer Tamed* it is Petruchio who occupies a position similar to that of Katherine. Maria is in control of a situation that Petruchio does not understand. Maria’s behaviour confuses him, because he cannot grasp it, understand it, and therefore cannot control it. He haphazardly makes plan after plan to thwart her and turn her into the obedient wife he believed her to be. Maria, however, keeps slipping through the mazes of the nets he puts up to catch her at her own game. He feigns illness, and she has him locked up and guarded, supposedly for his own safety (Fletcher 3.2.20-33), and afterwards blames him for not letting her come near him (4.1.27-34); he tells her he plans to leave her to travel, and instead of begging him to stay she encourages him to go (4.4.114-153); he stages his own death, and instead of lamenting the loss of her husband she laments the insignificance of his life (5.4.1-39). She frustrates his plans and turns them to her own use, until Petruchio resembles a cat chasing its own tail.

Holly Crocker argues that in *The Taming of the Shrew* “Petruchio employs the early modern analogy between house and state to legitimate his sovereignty,” whereas in *The Tamer Tamed*, Fletcher “recast[s] Petruchio as a tyrant” (410). However, by portraying Petruchio in *The Tamer Tamed* as a frustrated tyrant who is out of control, Fletcher at the same time sketches Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* as a tyrant who is establishing and confirming his position of power and control through the taming of Katherine. The difference

between Shakespeare's Petruchio and Fletcher's is not so much based on a contrast between sovereignty and tyranny, but on the possession or the lack of control. Control over others as well as over himself, both of which grant or take away from him control over the situation and his own life. This means that throughout both plays Petruchio is a tyrant, and that in *The Tamer Tamed* Fletcher illustrates how in the process of establishing his tyranny in the *The Taming of the Shrew* he foreshadows his own defeat as a tyrant.

## **2.2 Wooing, Wedding and Bedding Katherine and Maria**

In both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tamer Tamed*, Petruchio is a tyrant predominantly and most explicitly in his relationship to Katherine and Maria, and by the nature of these relationships, in a context of courtship and marriage. Courtship and marriage are central themes of both plays. In *The Taming of the Shrew* Petruchio's motives to woo Katherine are clearly stated. "I come to wive it wealthily in Padua," Petruchio tells his friend Hortensio, "[i]f wealthily, then happily in Padua" (1.2.71-3), no matter how ugly or shrewish the young lady in question may be. When Hortensio warns him for Katherine's reputation of being a shrew alongside recommending her as a wife to Petruchio, the latter brusquely brushes these objections aside,

Hortensio, peace. Thou know'st not gold's effect.

Tell me her father's name and 'tis enough,

For I will board her though she chide as loud

As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack. (1.2.89-92)

Although Petruchio has never even seen Katherine for himself, he immediately visits Baptista Minola, Katherine's father, in order to organise the match and settle the dowry. This would give the impression that Petruchio is only concerned with the wealth Katherine can bring with

her into the marriage, even though he claims to have plenty of “[c]rowns in [his] purse” already (1.2.51-5). Coppélia Kahn goes so far as to state that Petruchio’s “role as a property-owner is the model for his role as a husband; Kate, for him, is a thing” (94). However, in his proposal to Baptista, Petruchio includes the condition of winning Katherine’s love (2.1.115-6), a condition that is repeated by Baptista as a breaking point for the match (2.1.124-5). Money appears to be the principle motive for Petruchio’s wooing of Katherine, but at the same time love seems to be an essential component to make the match an actual possibility.

This combination of love and property also runs through the rest of their relationship. On their wedding day and in their ensuing marriage, or rather, in the ensuing taming process, Petruchio talks about and to Katherine in terms of property and wealth, as well as in terms of love. Shortly after their marriage vows have been pronounced, he “emphasizes his ownership of Katherine at the very moment he is to be celebrating their place as a couple in the wider sphere of family and community” (A.L. Smith 306), by stating,

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,  
My household-stuff, my field, my barn,  
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything. (3.2.219-21)

He owns Katherine and he is master over what he owns. This already became clear the first time he saw her, when he appropriated her name and called her Kate, even though she made it abundantly clear to him that her name is Katherine (2.1.177-85). At the same time, it can be argued that the fact that he shortened her name, and is the only person in the play to consistently call her ‘Kate’ instead of ‘Katherine’ after that, is a sign of his affection for her and his intimate relationship with her. This paradoxical combination of mastery over and love for is also visible in the way he sets out to tame her. He subjects her to all kinds of deprivations, but claims to do so out of love for her (4.1.159-180). It is impossible to determine to what extent Petruchio’s love for his Kate is sincere, but there is no denying that,

from Petruchio's side at least and by extension for Katherine as well, love plays a crucial role in wooing and wedding Katherine. The same is true for bedding her. As I discussed above, Petruchio does not consume their marriage when they arrive in his country home, which appears to be part of his taming strategy. Along with not receiving any food or sleep, she is not to sleep with him. Only at the end of the play, when their relationship has undergone a painstakingly slow but radical change, does he lead her away to their bed chamber with a proud "[c]ome, Kate, we'll to bed" (5.2.184). In this way, bedding Katherine seems to be a confirmation of the fact that their relationship has found a balance. Whether we consider Kate to be tamed or not, there appears to be a certain basis of mutual respect (Pearson 236), maybe even love, that stabilises their relationship and allows them to consume their marriage.

In *The Tamer Tamed*, Petruchio also has two main motives for wooing, wedding and ultimately bedding Maria. The most important motive here appears to be love. Where in Shakespeare's play it needs to be pointed out twice that love is an important factor in a possible union between Petruchio and Katherine, in the marriage of Petruchio and Maria it seems to be a given. As Sandra Clark points out, "[t]he questions posed are rarely to do with love [...]; Maria and Petruchio in *The Woman's Prize* never doubt that they love one another, but the point is to negotiate terms for their relationship, not to test emotions and feelings" (129). We do not see any part of the wooing process, but Petruchio refers to it when he reminds Maria that nobody forced her to marry him (Fletcher 1.3.144-5). It is precisely because he knows that she loves him that he cannot understand why she would treat him like this, and deny him access to her bed. Indeed, as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, after the wooing and wedding, the bedding is postponed until the relationship between the two partners has reached a balance through a long and painful process of power negotiations. It is not their love that needs to develop in their relationship, but the place they give that love and in what way they let it determine their attitude towards each other that is at stake in *The Tamer*

*Tamed*. In this case, it is Maria rather than Petruchio who determines the terms of these negotiations. When Petruchio reminds her of her “due obedience” (3.2.144), Maria immediately protests vehemently,

Tell me of due obedience. What's a husband?  
What are we married for? To carry sumpters?  
Are we not one piece with you, and as worthy  
Our own intentions as you yours?  
[...] Take two small drops of water, equal weighed;  
Tell me which is the heaviest, and which ought  
First to descend in duty. (3.2.146-52)

If he acknowledges her as his equal in their relationship, then she is willing and able to be his wife in all respects. This is what lies behind her continued denial of Petruchio to her bed. It is a way to wield her power over him in her taming of him (M.E. Smith 52), but at the same time she seems to realise that the marriage cannot be consumed until it is a relationship that is worthy of such a confirmation. Yielding too early would confirm and continue the imbalance. Because she exercised the patience and the strength to deny Petruchio the fulfilment of his urges and because she gave him the time to find his place in their relationship, the bedding at the end of play now serves to confirm the mutual equality and respect that they have found, so that the words of Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* can finally become true. “Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life / [...] And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy” (5.2.108-10).



### 3. Revisiting *A Theory of Adaptation*

Like adaptation in general, *The Tamer Tamed* as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* has long been viewed from the perspective that a good adaptation should be ‘faithful’ to the work it adapts. In that context, the adapted work is often called the ‘original’, a term heavily connoted with ideas of originality and superiority because of its chronological priority.

Baldwin Maxwell, for example, once argued that *The Tamer Tamed* cannot possibly be called an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, because it does not resemble that play in any way; calling *The Tamer Tamed* an adaptation would be equivalent to calling Fletcher a poor playwright and, on top of that, a playwright who had a very limited knowledge of Shakespeare’s play (358). The unfruitfulness and, indeed, the incorrectness of this position have been recognised by later critics. Current critics agree that the chronological relation between an adaptation and its adapted work does not say anything about their quality, either as autonomous work or in the adaptive relationship. By extension, critics also tend to agree that *The Tamer Tamed* is indebted to *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the differences between critical approaches now usually concern the depth and nature of this relationship rather than any explicit assessment of Fletcher’s ‘faithfulness’ in adapting *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Fischlin and Fortier are some of the few to explicitly define *The Tamer Tamed* as an adaptation in their Routledge anthology of adaptations of Shakespeare. Other critics tend to see *The Tamer Tamed* as revising and rewriting *The Taming of the Shrew* rather than adapting it. Interestingly, in some cases it appears that Fletcher’s re-writing of Shakespeare’s play is seen as a sort of ‘un-writing’ or ‘un-doing’ of Shakespeare’s portrayal of the problematic relationship between Katherine and Petruchio and other males that people the world of *The Taming of the Shrew*. *The Tamer Tamed* appears to defuse or disarm the highly charged *Taming of the Shrew*. This means that the more ‘unfaithful’ Fletcher’s play is in its adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, the more *The Tamer Tamed* is being appreciated. Fidelity, albeit well-

disguised by the critically justified notion of ‘infidelity’, still appears to be a criterion by which adaptation is judged. Considering the above, Brian McFarlane’s claim that “this particular critical battle [need not] be refought,” the battle over the fact that ‘fidelity’ should no longer be a factor in the critical and theoretical writing about adaptation (15), may be an understandable desire, but also an unrealistic one. The reality is that the battle has not yet been fought to its end. Apparently, the idea of the importance of fidelity to the adapted work is so deeply entrenched in adaptation studies that, in spite of the ever growing acceptance of the view that “to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be ordinary or authoritative” (Hutcheon xv), the “‘fidelity’ factor” (McFarlane 15) is still latently present in the critical practice and theory of adaptation studies.

In this chapter I will discuss Hutcheon’s suggestion to replace faithfulness as a means to analyse an adaptation’s success with the criterion of the degree to which an adaptation is also an autonomous work. In the first section I will argue for a multi-faceted approach in the critical thinking on adaptation, and will suggest focusing on the mutual engagement of an adaptation and the work it adapts, alongside the autonomy of the adaptation as a work in itself. The second section concerns the term ‘adaptation’ and the definition of that term. In order to be able to speak of adaptation in qualitative terms, it is essential to know what we mean when we use the word ‘adaptation’. In the final section I will discuss Hutcheon’s new approach to the often intermedial nature of adaptation, through the three modes of engagement she distinguishes: telling, showing and interacting with stories (22).

### **3.1 The Futility of Fidelity: Autonomy and Mutual Engagement**

The fact that the ‘fidelity factor’ still haunts critical thought and writing on adaptations and their relationship to the works they adapt illustrates the necessity of a constant awareness of

the unconscious assumptions and attitudes that guide our thinking about adaptation in general, but also particular adaptations. This awareness was part of the motivation for Linda Hutcheon to attempt a theory of adaptation that steered clear of 'fidelity' and other unproductive and restrictive notions attached to it (xiv). She suggests a new approach and a new terminology to speak about adaptations and their (un-)successfulness as adaptations. Rather than taking faithfulness as a starting point, Hutcheon suggests that the extent to which an adaptation is a creatively autonomous work, besides being an adaptation, determines its success as an adaptation; the less autonomous, the less successful an adaptation is likely to be (20-1). This attention for the autonomy of a work seems to be a direct contradiction to the idea of fidelity and is therefore promising as a critical and theoretical tool. It challenges any reductive notions of an adaptation being secondary by nature, because it shifts the critic's focus from 'the original' and its supposedly derivative adaptation to the adaptation as a work of potential quality in itself, rather than only in relation to its adapted work. If an adaptation cannot stand on its own, it is doubtful that it can be successful as an adaptation.

However, the focus on 'autonomy' in adaptation criticism also knows a pitfall that may be inevitable to any approach that attempts to steer clear of 'fidelity' as a critical criterion: because it attempts to radically distance itself from 'fidelity', it is in danger of boomeranging back to it by veering towards 'infidelity' as a qualitative criterion. This is also visible in the critical writing on *The Tamer Tamed* in relation to *The Taming of the Shrew*. For a large part induced by the problematic nature of the theme of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the way Shakespeare handles it, *The Tamer Tamed* has often been approached as an adaptation that is an autonomous work because of its critical position to *The Taming of the Shrew*. However, this problematises its status of adaptation, because *The Tamer Tamed* then derives its praise as an adaptation from the fact that it criticises and deviates from the work it adapts in what the critics consider to be the right places. There is no denying that Fletcher's

play is indeed an autonomous work, but at the same time there is no denying that, as such, it is deeply engaged with *The Taming of the Shrew*. As I have argued above, Fletcher does not so much write against Shakespeare's play as that he writes into it. It is both the autonomy of Fletcher's play and the complexity of its relationship to *The Taming of the Shrew* that make it interesting as an adaptation. Fletcher continues the story of *The Taming of the Shrew*, rewrites it, adds to it, subtracts from it, and reshapes it, doing so through a critical reflection on Shakespeare's play that both confirms and challenges aspects of that play. That is what constitutes the adaptive relationship of *The Tamer Tamed* to *The Taming of the Shrew*, and that is also an important part of what makes it a successful adaptation.

This argues for a multi-layered or multi-faceted approach to the analysis of adaptations as adaptations, i.e. in relation to the work or works they adapt. The autonomy of an adaptation is indeed an essential and productive point of departure in this context, but it cannot be the only focal point. Experiencing an adaptation as adaptation implies being aware of the existence of the work it adapts; we inevitably experience an adaptation as adaptation, then, in the context of its relation to the work it adapts (Hutcheon 120-1). At the same time, if we are aware that the adapted work is indeed an adapted work because we know one or more of its adaptations, these adaptations are always part of our experience of the adapted work. Adaptation "creates the doubled pleasure of the palimpsest: more than one [work] is experienced – and knowingly so" (Hutcheon 116). Our awareness of the engagement between the two texts, their *mutual* engagement, is an essential part of our experience of adaptations. If we, for example, read *The Tamer Tamed* as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, we read it as both an autonomous work and as an adaptation, because our mind is aware of and automatically processes the play's engagement with the adapted work (Hutcheon 21). If the adaptation, as an autonomous work, can create a mutual engagement that will ideally result in a mutually informing and reinforcing relationship, we may speak of a successful adaptation.

This focus on mutual engagement becomes even more interesting when a work adapts several other works. The adaptation then can be said to engage with the adapted works, as well as to bring the adapted works in engagement with each other. The adaptation then creates a network of connections between works that previously might not have been linked in that way, engaging these works with each other, so that not only the adaptation itself is informed by its adapted works, but the adapted works are in their turn informed by the adaptation as well as the other adapted works.

### **3.2 Adaptation by Definition**

However, in order to be able to speak about adaptation in qualitative terms, it is first necessary to know what we mean when we use the word ‘adaptation’. In the history of adaptation studies, an uncountable amount of terms have been proposed in an attempt to accurately denote and categorise the phenomenon. Few of these terms have survived long in the practice of criticism. Fischlin and Fortier offer a sample of the many suggestions that have been made in the search for the right name, but their conclusion is that “there is no right name. There are only labels with more or less currency, connection to history, and connotations both helpful and misleading” (2-3). Some of these labels carry heavy connotations, negative or positive, others attempt to go beyond these limiting associations and search for more objective or neutral definitions. The word adaptation itself is such an attempt, and in spite of its deceiving implication of simplicity, “the word has stuck for a reason” (Hutcheon 15). A combination of factors like its currency, its connotation of re-contextualisation (Fischlin and Fortier 3), and its double denotation of both the product and the process of adaptation may be the reason for this persistent survival (Hutcheon 16). Fischlin and Fortier state that “[w]rit large, adaptation includes almost any act of alteration

performed upon specific cultural works of the past and dovetails with a general process of cultural recreation” (4). For the pragmatic reason of needing a definition that will enable her to theorise the phenomenon of adaptation, Hutcheon delimitates this liberal definition to adaptation as product and process. Adaptation is “an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art” (170). This means that as a product adaptation is “[a]n acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works,” and as a process it is both “[a] creative *and* interpretative act” and “[a]n extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8).

As I have argued in chapter two, *The Tamer Tamed* is an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. More specifically, it is an adaptation that is an autonomous work and at the same time deeply and complexly engaged with the work it adapts. *The Tamer Tamed* is a (re-)creative (re-)interpretation of *The Taming of the Shrew* (Hutcheon 172), but also a stage play with its own story and its own way of telling that story. Yet, according to Hutcheon’s theory, this play would not necessarily be an adaptation. In the first place, she seems to exclude sequels from the category of adaptation because it is their nature to continue a particular story or work rather than to retell or rewrite it through adaptation (9). On the other hand, she does allow room for “some hybrid cases” (171), which may be the nook where *The Tamer Tamed* finds its place. Secondly, Hutcheon’s “more restricted double definition of adaptation as product and process” (9) seems to leave little room for the more subtle adaptation that *The Tamer Tamed* is, with its apparently radical change in cast and reversal of dominance and power relations. It may be up to the critic, then, to interpret both theory and adaptation in an analysis of *to what extent* the work under scrutiny can be said to adapt another work. I emphasise these words deliberately, because it is not necessarily interesting or relevant to determine whether a particular work adapts another work. Rather, analysing to what extent a work adapts another work or works will lead to an analysis of the way this is done and the

consequences for both texts. This opens up fresh approaches to the works involved in the adaptive relationship, as well as interesting material for possible further theorisation of adaptation. A focus like this may blur any definite or absolute demarcation of adaptation and calls for a more fluid categorisation ranging from distant intertextuality to a complex relationship of extensive adaptation or appropriation (Hutcheon 170-1). This will be as much a pragmatic approach to defining adaptation as Hutcheon's decision to theorise adaptation as product and process. Definitions are always pragmatic, in the sense that they serve the theory and practice of what is being discussed, and often they open up a field as well as reveal limitations and further possible venues of research.

### **3.3 Intermediality and Modes of Engagement**

However "restricted" Hutcheon's "double definition" may be (9), it does allow her to cover a wide range of adaptations, as well as a wide range of cultural and financial issues connected to the production and reception of adaptations. She takes adaptation in general as her starting point rather than adaptation within specific media, as do for example the many works that have appeared on the adaptation from novel to film (xv). Hutcheon sets out to "derive theory from practice – from as wide a cultural practice as possible" (xiv). This means that *A Theory of Adaptation* covers and concerns a wide range of different media and, consequently, has an intermedial approach. However, rather than taking adaptation from and into specific media as her starting point, Hutcheon focuses on the way these media engage their audience and takes these modes of engagement as the frame for her theory of adaptation. She distinguishes the telling mode, the showing mode and the interactive mode, each of them allowing different degrees of immersion in the story (23-5). It is refreshing to approach adaptations from the perspective of the way they engage their audience, rather than from the perspective of the

medium that realises the adaptation, which “inevitably invokes that long history of debate around the formal specificity of the arts – and thus of media” (34). In order to obviate the possibility of a similar specificity debate about modes of engagement, Hutcheon emphasises that “no one mode is inherently good at doing one thing and not another; but each has at its disposal different means of expression – media and genres – and so can aim at and achieve certain things better than others” (24).

In the context of my analysis in chapter two of *The Tamer Tamed* as adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* this approach of different modes of engagement rather than different media is also interesting. This is not because my analysis concerns an adaptation from one mode of engagement into another, obviously, but because I have compared and contrasted the printed representations of two stage plays rather than specific stagings of these plays. These printed editions have themselves been constructed out of a number of different manuscripts in a process that can be argued to have certain adaptive properties. These manuscripts have in their turn been staged numerous times over the years and “[i]n a very real sense, every live staging of a printed play could theoretically be considered an adaptation in its performance” (Hutcheon 39). My analysis, along with the abundant articles about both *The Tamer Tamed* and *The Taming of the Shrew* that have been written over the years, can also be said to be a way of adapting these plays. In my case, it is an adaptation of the textual versions only because I have never attended a staging of either play, so there is no viewing experience that can oscillate with my reading experience of the plays. This picture suggests an intricate web of more or less adaptive relationships and adaptive potential running through the history of the play’s texts, performances and interpretations. This web of adaptive relationship is constantly negotiating between two modes of engagement, showing and telling. The interesting part is that it is not necessarily between the direct and obvious adaptations that this negotiation takes place, although of course we do not know what Fletcher adapted, the



printed play, the staged play or a combination of both. It seems however, that the negotiation between and combination of modes of engagement in this case takes place in the adaptive actions surrounding the actual adaptation.

#### 4. Conclusion

*The Tamer Tamed* often appears to be viewed only in the light of its relation to *The Taming of the Shrew*, and there does not seem to be a single study that does not at least refer to the earlier play. As an adaptation, *The Tamer Tamed* does not escape its definition: to be experienced as an adaptation, i.e. to be experienced in the context of the adapted work. This has resulted in an interesting discourse on the two plays, because, as I have pointed out in this paper, opinions tend to differ as to the nature of the relationship between them. The first chapter of this paper provided a short introduction to the views on *The Tamer Tamed* in its adaptive relationship to *The Taming of the Shrew*, as well as a first introductory treatment of Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, that has been central to the discussion in this paper.

In the second chapter I have analysed the character of Petruchio in both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tamer Tamed* as tyrannical in relation to Katherine and Maria, as well as the significance of the delayed bedding in both plays, as a confirmation of the wooing and wedding that takes place relatively early in both plays. Based on this analysis, I have argued that *The Tamer Tamed* adapts *The Taming of the Shrew* by writing into that play, making it its own story by filling the gaps. It is a sequel that informs the work it follows. It is a critical reflection on *The Taming of the Shrew*, but as such, it does not only challenge but also confirms certain aspects of that play. Although some critics have argued for a more appropriative relationship between the two plays, a relationship in which Fletcher is sometimes considered to be rectifying Shakespeare's play, my view on the adaptive relationship of the two plays argues for a less violent appropriation of Shakespeare's material in *The Tamer Tamed*.

In the discussion of Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, I used this analysis of *The Tamer Tamed* as an adaptation to argue that our qualitative assessment of adaptations should

not be based on the autonomy of the adaptation only as a replacement of the ‘fidelity factor’. Rather, it should be combined with an analysis of the mutual engagement between adaptation and adapted work or works, an engagement that can be both critically challenging and confirming. A focus on an adaptation’s autonomy alongside its engagement with the work it adapts may seem paradoxical, but is in fact complementary. It is impossible to experience or analyse an adaptation as adaptation without in some way at the same time experiencing its adapted work. This relationship is essential to what an adaptation is. A definition of adaptation is difficult to give. Either people disagree with what others suggest, or the practice of adaptation disagrees with theoretical definitions. However, the hybridity that may be most reflective of the practice of adaptation makes it difficult to theorise adaptation. What is most important, therefore, both in the theory and practice of adaptation studies, is the awareness that there is no right definition and that all of us have our own, personal theory of adaptation, even if we are tempted to think we come to the field unprejudiced (Hutcheon xiii).

As a frame for her theory of adaptation, Hutcheon focuses on the different modes in which stories can engage their audience. In the light of Hutcheon’s highly intermedial approach to adaptation, my intramedial analysis of (the printed versions) of two stage plays is particularly interesting. Although the adaptation itself does not shift from one mode of engagement to another, the many viewings, readings and critical interpretations of both plays do negotiate between the modes of showing and telling. Although Hutcheon’s theory has its limitations and restrictions, it is predominantly a study that answers and evokes many questions at the same time. It is an interesting attempt to find a fresh approach on adaptation through the focus on adaptations as an autonomous works and intermediality through the modes in which stories engage their audience. As such, it is a significant and constructive contribution to the on-going discussion of the phenomenon of adaptation.

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