

Sexism in Adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*

Different Approaches in Adaptations for Children, Young
Adults, and Adults

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Abstract

William Shakespeare's work still has an important place in society. However, some of his works are considered to be outdated and controversial by some critics. Adaptations have the ability to amend and criticise elements that appear to be problematic in the original. However, they do not always use this opportunity. This thesis explores the ways in which Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted. Approaches towards sexism have been examined in four chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew* and contains studies by researchers who have focussed on ways in which sexism in Shakespeare's play is visible. The following three chapters focus on three different target audiences. The first of these chapters features a close reading of two homonymous children's adaptations. It discusses parallels within the play and ironic elements that affect sexism perceived in Shakespeare's play. Furthermore, the teen film *10 Things I Hate about You* and the young adult novel *Vinegar Girl* are analysed. The protagonists' modernised versions are discussed. This discussion presents the contribution of these changes to the relationship dynamics and to the overall story. Lastly, a study of the *Moonlighting* episode "Atomic Shakespeare" is included. This episode of the show, which is about two detectives and their love-hate relationship, is based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. In this chapter the show's ridiculing and revisionary elements in relation to Shakespeare's play are analysed. Altogether, this research argues that the aforementioned adaptations have not only borrowed the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*, but have approached sexism in *The Taming of the Shrew* considering the needs of their target audience. Hence, the criticism in the adaptations is not always overt.

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The girls today in society
Go for classical poetry,
So to win their hearts one must quote with ease
Aeschylus and Euripides.
But the poet of them all
Who will start 'em simply ravin'
Is the poet people call
The bard of Stratford-on-Avon. (Porter)

Introduction

What could be the reasons that have made Shakespeare one of the bestselling playwrights of all time? Was it the way he told his audience about reality in a fictionalised way? Perhaps it was his way of talking about politics without being too explicit, or maybe it was the fact that he was a good writer and his plays were enjoyed by many? At least, he will not be erased from our minds soon, considering that Shakespeare's works are still present in popular culture and simultaneously considered highly important to the cultural elite (Neumann 2).

Shakespeare's plays continue to be relevant in contemporary social contexts. "[O]ne of the fascinating effects of Shakespeare's plays [is] that they have almost always seemed to coincide with the times in which they are read, published, produced, and discussed" (Garber xiii). Hence, readers have been able to connect with his works for years and continue to do so. Even though Shakespeare is still prominent in the current curriculum of (English) literature, many of his plays are considered to be out-dated, anti-Semitic, racist, sexist, or thought to be exclusively promoting what we might now call old-fashioned values (Shapiro x; Neumann 5). Nevertheless, we still read Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, as Shakespeare is undeniably part of the literary canon. The literary canon is considered to be important in gaining general knowledge and thus it is explored starting at an early age. "Cultural literacy is the shared information that is often taken for granted. [...] It is a census of cultural and natural information that is often alluded to without explanation in serious talks, books, and articles" (Hirsch 48). This canon is large and expands every year, but does not include all literary works at once (Hirsch 48). To get an understanding of the canon thoroughly, it is preferable to start understanding parts of it at a young age.

Although Shakespeare's works are sometimes considered to be outdated, they still fit in mainstream media and arts. One of the many purposes of adaptations is creating a debate around Shakespeare's work and change the perceptions regarding contemporary relevance and

controversy (Fischlin and Fortier 1). A sufficient number of adaptations is created for different purposes and targeting different audiences, and thus, those who are not interested in his original work will still interact with Shakespeare's work (1). For instance, *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play that has often been adapted although some researchers argue that the play is sexist due to the plot focussing on women having to be obedient to their husbands (Shapiro; Neumann 5) – which will be further explained in the first chapter. In adaptations, controversies are dealt with in different ways to suit the writer's own contemporary audience. This thesis will explore adaptations in relation to the more seemingly problematic aspects of Shakespeare's play. Sexism will be investigated by close reading Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and several adaptations. The adaptations will be divided into three subcategories with their target audiences as the variable. The first subcategory consists of children who are classified as humans who have not reached puberty yet ("Child"), the second subcategory consists of young adults, understood as humans who have reached puberty and who are in their mid-teens to early twenties ("Young Adult"), and the third category consists of adults: humans who have reached the age of maturity ("Adults").

The various adaptations of Shakespeare's early comedy examined in this thesis are: *The Taming of the Shrew* (2009) by Andrew Matthews, "The Taming of the Shrew" (1807) by Mary Lamb, *10 Things I Hate about You* (1999) directed by Gil Junger, the young adult novel *Vinegar Girl* (2016) by Anne Tyler, and the episode "Atomic Shakespeare" from the television series *Moonlighting* (1986). All adapters have approached sexism differently. This thesis consists of an analysis of contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew* in relation to their target audiences. This research argues that the main subject of this play is connected to gender discrimination and that the aforementioned adaptations have not merely borrowed the plot and avoided the controversial subject, but instead tried to address this topic in a way that fits the needs of their target audience.

Degrees of Sexism in Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew*

The Taming of the Shrew is about the beautiful and gentle Bianca who wants to get married to one of her many suitors, but her father insists that her undesirable and dominant sister Katherine gets married first (1.1.50-51). Lucentio tells Katherine: "No mates for you, unless you were of gentler, milder mold" (1.1.58-60). When women were too assertive or shrewish, they were not regarded as marriage material. Petruccio arrives and tells Bianca's suitors that he wants "to wive it wealthily in Padua" (1.2.73) and therefore, Bianca's suitors arrange Petruccio to woo Katherine (1.2). Petruccio asks Baptista, Katherine's father, for permission, who is glad that someone is willing to marry his daughter (2.1.40-141). Petruccio and Katherine talk. They quarrel and Petruccio tells her that he will marry her with or without her consent and that he was "born to tame" her (2.1.273). When Baptista enters, Petruccio tricks him. He tells him that Katherine wants to marry him and that they have agreed on pretending to hate each other in public (2.1.289-315). Petruccio then proceeds to tame the dominant Katherine by humiliating her at their wedding and treating her badly (3.2; 4.1; 4.3). Later, Petruccio only wants to go to Bianca's wedding on the condition that Katherine changes her behaviour and submits herself to Petruccio. Thus, Katherine seems to change (4.6). Moreover, the play suggests that men should dominate their wives. The men in the play even bet over "whose wife is most obedient" (5.2.67). After his triumph, he asks Katherine to give her thoughts about honouring husbands and being a submissive wife, which she does in a soliloquy (5.2.130-179).

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is often argued to be a sexist play (Shapiro; Neumann 5). Robert Heilman observes that Petruccio's behaviour towards Katherine to a trainer's behaviour towards animals. "Kate is conceived of as responding automatically to a certain kind of calculated treatment, as automatically as an animal to the devices of a skilled trainer" (qtd. in Bean 65). Some critics argue that Shakespeare comments on society and the way women were perceived through Katherine's seemingly ironic speech at the end of the play

(Baumlin 238; 252). According to Coppélia Kahn, Katherine's character changes too and thus, "fulfils Petruccio's wishes, but is transparently false to human nature" (99). Through her speech, she is portrayed as being tamed by Petruccio while she is directing us to the "social illness of materialistic patriarchy" (Kane 65). Baumlin even argues that Petruccio helps Katherine to find her true self, someone who cares deeply for others, and that essentially, Shakespeare and Petruccio do the same thing – they try to change the people around them using their language. The scholarly opinions on this play vary and readers tend to have their own interpretations of the text. Although the consensus seems to be that Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew* is sexist, this opinion may vary to some degree.

A significant factor seemingly toning down sexism in *The Taming of the Shrew* is the play's Induction. Shakespeare starts with a plot about Sly the drunkard, who is tricked by a lord into thinking that Sly himself is a rich lord (Induction II). The lord and his assistants make Sly believe that he is ill and that he has to watch a play for his recovery (Induction II). The play consists of the main plot of Katherine the Shrew and Petruccio. The Induction is significant for the further appreciation of the text. For example, the tone of the story is set with the Induction as it presents the humorous act played out for Sly. The audience knows that Sly is being tricked and this dramatic irony makes the conversations comical. He changes his attitude the moment he thinks he is a lord and he even tells his wife – of whom everyone else knows that that is not his wife but a young man – to "undress" and "come now to bed" (Induction II). Besides this, the play within the play is also presented as being "a pleasant comedy" and "mirth and merriment" to Sly by the messenger (Induction II). This again implies that the story can be taken light-heartedly. Simultaneously, this trick also indicates that changes can be misleading and acted out. There is a parallel between Sly who appears to be a lord, but is still the same drunkard he was before, and Katherine who appears to be a tamed and obedient woman, but who may still be the same shrew. This "prepares us for the irony of the dénouement" (Kahn

39) and thus, Katherine's soliloquy changes meaning as well, considering that it parallels the trick in the Induction. Furthermore, Sly utters the words "let the world slip" before the play starts, suggesting that there is an escape from reality (Induction II; Harper). "By suggesting a departure from reality, Shakespeare asserts that what Sly and the audience experience is a fantasy. Thus, if the characters are not fully human, then Petruccio's treatment of Kate could be excused at the end" (Harper). The Induction creates a space of discussion because it entails parallels and humour.

As mentioned previously, Katherine's soliloquy is one aspect of Shakespeare's play that influences the many interpretations regarding Katherine's changed behaviour. Although she seems to be obedient to her husband and not ill-mannered, it is striking that she has much space to speak in comparison to the other women in the play. Even though she was humiliated by Petruccio several times and he claims that he only wanted to marry her for money, she is still able to praise him as someone who "commits his body to painful labour" (Shakespeare 3.2; 4.6.2-23; 1.2.73; 5.2.139-140). Katherine contradicts herself and therefore she appears to be "[l]ike an actress reciting her lines" and she is "essentially preaching something she has never experienced nor believes in, and it is far too bizarre to be taken seriously" (Harper). Thus, Katherine would seem to be acting out the character of Kate the obedient wife. As Kay Stanton states, Katherine "learned how to 'play the game' [...] so that she can manipulate her husband and society to, effectively, let her be" (qtd. in Drost 43). As mentioned before, this soliloquy also parallels the deception in the induction. In addition, Katherine's speech is also a parallel of Petruccio's speech about Baptista's daughter:

I am a gentleman of Verona, sir,
That, hearing of her beauty and her wit,
Her affability and bashful modesty,
Her wondrous qualities and mild behavior,

Am bold to show myself a forward guest
Within your house, to make mine eye the witness
Of that report which I so oft have heard. (2.1.47-53)

Everyone knows that she is infamous for her harsh behaviour and that Petruccio is using this monologue to “wive it wealthily in Padua” (1.2.73). This is an ironic element resembling Katherine’s soliloquy, as Katherine and Petruccio both talk about virtues that are contradictory to their behaviour. Therefore, thoroughly examining Katherine’s soliloquy can change perceptions regarding sexism in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Altogether, the degree to which sexism is apparent in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* varies. Although many researchers agree that the plot indicates a bias towards women’s behaviour, his writing involves elements that create space for discussion, such as parallels with the Induction and contradictions in their words and their behaviour. These elements are not always noticeable at first sight and therefore, many adapters choose to work with sexist ideas in the play. Likewise, this research will also focus on the sexism in *The Taming of the Shrew* and look at the extent of sexism in adaptations for different audiences.

Irony and Parallels in the Children's Adaptations

Books and stories can have an impact on morals and values. Considering that children are susceptible, their perceptions of gender roles are also shaped through books and stories. "In their early years children form ideas about worth, future roles, and expectations placed upon them. Sex-role socialization is one of the most important learning experiences for the young child" (Kaufman 1). As mentioned in the first chapter, *The Taming of the Shrew* presents certain ideas about gender roles and marriage (Heilman qtd. in Bean). Although adaptations could be used to change the ideas that are presented and erase the debatable factors to make a plot more suitable for children – and thus, without teaching them traditional gender roles – writers have not always used this opportunity. In many cases the stories have been simplified in a manner that even the parts that softened the sexism in Shakespeare's play – such as verbal irony and comedy – have disappeared.

This chapter analyses two children's versions of Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew*. The plots in the two children's versions do not deviate much from Shakespeare's plot. The locations and the characters have not changed. Both narratives have left out the Induction and the plot is simplified. The language is modernised and whereas Shakespeare has written a play, both children's adaptations are in the form of a tale. In this chapter, sexism in *The Taming of the Shrew* will be analysed with regard to the influence of removals and additions in two children's adaptations – Mary Lamb's and Andrew Matthews's tales.

First of all, Matthews' adaptation distinguishes itself because it includes the character's drawings as caricatures. These caricatures give the story a comedic element as all drawings have an overly exaggerated way of depicting the characters – they have big noses, hair like straw, and old-fashioned clothes (Rhodes, Brennan, and Carey 474). The characters are satirised with images that create a comedic effect and including the drawings enlightens the subject. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Shakespeare had ironic elements in his play that

softened the questionable ideas regarding gender roles. The caricatures emphasise the ironic elements in Shakespeare's play, as Bianca and Katherine are both being introduced as "pretty", but the drawings suggest something else (Matthews 7). Children will connect those caricatures and texts to each other according to Sipe's transmediation theory. "When reading a picture book, Sipe assumes that readers subconsciously go through a process of transmediation. Based on semiotic theories, he states that we use separate cognitive structures for decoding texts and images. In this way, an interpretation of the text in a picture book is formed, as well as an interpretation of the image" (qtd. in Schrijvers). This suggests that the inclusion of caricatures in Matthews's *The Taming of the Shrew* results into a more humorous view of the play.

Besides his addition of caricatures, it is also notable that Matthews has left some verbal irony in the text, unlike Lamb. For example, Petruccio jokingly talks about Katherine after seeing that she smashed the lute over Hortensio's head (30). In Matthews' adaptation, there is a corresponding drawing, and in addition Petruccio appears to enjoy what he sees and remarks that "[s]he's a lively one!" and that he is "longing to meet her!" (30). Furthermore, he "chuckled" in Matthews's adaptation (30), which implies that he finds it humorous. This irony is similar to Shakespeare's verbal irony and compared to Lamb's text, Matthews has not hesitated in reusing this irony. In the same passage in Lamb's adaptation, Petruccio tells Katherine that she "is a brave wench; I love her more than ever, and long to have some chat with her" (Lamb 203). Matthews portrays Petruccio as chuckling and exclaiming, which creates the sense that he does not take her too seriously, while Lamb does not include any humorous or ironic element. This leads to a serious depiction of Petruccio's reaction to Katherine's tantrum in Lamb's adaptation (203). This example shows that the addition or removal of irony and laughter has changed the tone of the play. Matthews has included more ironic and humorous elements which ensure that even without the Induction the readers are supposed to realise that it is only a play and not real, whereas Lamb has removed these elements

entirely and therefore, the whole story has changed into a more serious one of which the morals can be taken seriously.

In addition, Matthews has added a chapter called “Notes on Love and Marriage” to explain what happens in the play and that their behaviour would be different in modern times (60-61). He explicitly states that nowadays the audience feels sorry for “feisty Katherine” and uncomfortable about Petruccio’s behaviour (60). The combination of the drawings, the language, and the end notes ensured that Matthews’ adaptation is easier to interpret as comedy, whereas Lamb leaves out a significant amount of irony and comedy compared to Shakespeare’s play and makes it easier to interpret the story as a sexist one.

Furthermore, the soliloquy is an important factor in Shakespeare’s play as it alludes to ironic situations and, therefore, challenges the interpretation of the degrees of sexism in the play. Although it is understandable that the explicitly mentioned, old-fashioned virtues in the soliloquy can be interpreted as even more sexist when the audience does not immerse in the text. Katherine’s voice has been taken away from her – literally – by almost entirely removing the soliloquy. Her soliloquy is reduced to: “And to all the wonder of all present, the reformed shrewish lady spoke as eloquently in praise of the wife-like duty of obedience” (216). She does not have her own monologue anymore and the narrator tells her story instead. When someone talks on behalf of the other, this person appropriates the voice of the other. Katherina is the oppressed person here and it might be considered problematic to remove her soliloquy to simplify the story. “The practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for” (Alcoff 7). This means that by reducing Katherine’s soliloquy, the writer has changed her into an even more passive and tamed wife as she is not allowed to talk. Matthews did not remove the soliloquy, but he has shortened it. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Shakespeare uses contradictions in Katherine’s speech – for example,

Petruccio's marries Katherine for her dowry and she describes him as a man who "commits his body to painful labour" (5.2.139-140). Matthews has kept some of these contradicting elements in his shortened version. "Our husbands keep us warm and safe, and work hard to feed and clothe us" which is ironic considering that this was everything that Petruccio tortured Katherine with by taking it away from her (56; 40-41). This shows that Matthews' interpretation is closer to Shakespeare's play in terms of humour and irony softening the sexism overall, and thus, leaving out the soliloquy the way Lamb did could in many ways be regarded as increasing the sexist elements.

Similarly, leaving out the metatheatrical element of Shakespeare's play impacts the perception of the main plot. Both adaptations simplify the plot by leaving out the Induction, which is one of the key elements for a thorough understanding of the plot. The Induction indicates that the main plot had levels of deception as well as a comedic tone. This omission in both adaptations can change the story to one that is evidently sexist. While it makes sense to simplify a story for children to understand it more easily, leaving out the frame narrative has more impact than it appears to have at first.

Although Matthews left out the Induction as well, his version appears to have more humorous elements than Lamb's version. It appears that addressing sexism was not a priority in the children's versions, even though that may be problematic regarding the morals and values presented to children. Whereas Shakespeare's play includes ironic elements that tone down sexist ideas, the writers of the children's versions chose to omit those parts and thus, simplified the play. For example, they omitted the Induction which changes the tone of the play and suggests some parallel deception in the play within the play. Furthermore, Katherine's soliloquy is significant to the adaptations as well. Although Matthews has shortened and simplified the soliloquy to make it suitable for children, he did not remove Shakespeare's verbal irony. Lamb has simplified the soliloquy by summarising it into one sentence and erased

Katherine's voice entirely. Lastly, Matthews distinguishes himself with the extra chapter "Notes on Love and Marriage" and the addition of caricatures to regain some of the irony that was left out. Matthews simplified Shakespeare's play and simultaneously ensured that children who read his book understand that the morals presented in the play are not to be taken seriously. Lamb simplified the play as well, however, she did not provide any elements to help children understand the comedic tone of the plot more thoroughly.

Katherine and Petruccio as Different Personas in the Teen Adaptations

In this chapter, the approach to sexism in teen adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is analysed. The audience of teen films includes young adults ranging from twelve-year-old teens to adolescents in their early twenties. These films and books are often filled with themes that teens and adolescents relate to – from coming-of-age stories to love and sex. Some researchers believe that these themes help adolescents with some of the struggles they come across while growing up (Glenn 34; Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 132). These themes help adolescents “make sense of themselves and their place in the adult world they will soon enter” and therefore, also affect their decisions regarding “identity development” (Glenn 34; Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 132). The audience has to empathise with the protagonist to achieve this effect as “students are likely to read books in which they find something to which they can relate”, which is even apparent in various teen adaptations of Shakespeare's plays (Goodson 163).

Two teen adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* are Gil Junger's film *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) and Anne Tyler's novel *Vinegar Girl*. Compared to the children's adaptations, the teen adaptations' relationships with Shakespeare's play are not immediately clear. The titles are not the only variables that are entirely different from Shakespeare's play, but the plot, time, and place have also been changed to suit teen preferences. The protagonists are not Katherine and Petruccio, but Kat and Patrick (Junger) and Kate and Pyotr (Tyler). In the film *10 Things I Hate About You*, Kat and Patrick meet in high school. Kat's sister, Bianca, is not allowed to date until Kat dates (00:19:20-30). Therefore, Cameron and Joey, two pupils who are interested in Bianca, set up Kat with Patrick (00:26:29-27:30). The young men pay Patrick to date Kat as he seems to be the only one tough enough to handle the fierce Kat (00:30:30), consequently leading to Patrick and Kat falling in

love. Kat finds out about the guys' pact and she is devastated (01:51:21). However, Patrick and Kat still end up together when she decides to forgive him (01:57:50-58:20).

In Anne Tyler's novel *Vinegar Girl*, Kate and Pyotr meet through Dr. Louis Battista, Kate's father, who is a scientist. Pyotr is Louis's lab assistant, but he is about to be deported (13). Kate's father asks her if she wants to marry Pyotr, so he can stay in the country and help her father finish his research (47). At first, Kate does not accept this, but then she changes her initial decision. Kate agrees to marry Pyotr out of loyalty to her father and because it will not affect her life majorly (121). They face some struggles, but in the course of the story, Kate and Pyotr get closer, fall in love, and marry. In this chapter, it is argued that the changes in both narratives are created to connect to teenagers. Kat and Kate are less shrewish and Patrick and Pyotr do not intend to tame them. Consequently, the teen adaptations are not focussed on Katherine as a shrew and Petruccio as a tamer, but more on the vulnerability of the characters and their backgrounds. The erasure of certain characteristics created by Shakespeare ensures that the plots are no longer focussed on sexist morals and values.

First of all, the teen adaptations clarify misconceptions around the modern versions of Katherine and Petruccio, and the narratives encourage empathy for the protagonists. As a result, this creates plots without taming. As mentioned in the first chapter, in Shakespeare's *The Taming of The Shrew* Katherine is depicted as ill-tempered. She hits her sister Bianca and breaks Hortensio's head with a lute (2.1.22; 2.1.142). Petruccio wants to marry Katherine for money as he says that he is there "to wive it wealthily in Padua" (1.2.73) and besides, he humiliates her publicly at their wedding – arriving late and dressed inappropriately – and then deliberately deprives her of food and sleep (3.2; 4.2.169-192). In contrast, the teen adaptations of Katherine and Petruccio are not as discourteous as Shakespeare's characters. Their behaviour has an underlying reason and the purpose of Petruccio's adaptations is not to tame Katherine's adaptations.

In *10 Things I Hate about You*, Kat is portrayed as a man-hater, which is a result of her relationship with the popular guy Joey. He pressured her into sex, left her, and later tried to date her sister (01:15:45-17:05). Before this is revealed, a conversation between Kat's sister Bianca and Bianca's friend Cameron foreshadows that there is an underlying reason behind Kat's behaviour, as even her little sister Bianca is wondering why Kat has changed.

CAMERON. I noticed she's a little anti-social. Why is that?

BIANCA. Unsolved mystery. She used to be really popular, and then it was like...she got sick of it. Or something. There is a bet as to why. (00:17:06-17:18)

This shows that Kat used to be different, but that for some reason unknown to her peers, she has changed. Later, Kat explains to Bianca that Bianca's love interest Joey was different than what she thought. She tells her that "not all experiences are good, Bianca. You can't always trust the people you want to" (01:17:20-24). This suggests that Kat's trust is broken and that it "catalyz[ed] the misanthropic identity that Kat has performed throughout the film" (Hopkins, Ingman, and Reynolds 152). Kat has created a distinctive opinion due to her history with men, whereas Shakespeare does not elaborate on Katherine's history. Katherine's behaviour is portrayed as a character flaw. However, Kat has turned into a man-hating anti-conformist due to her traumatic experience induced by conformism. "Everyone was doing it, so I did it... After that I swore I'd never do anything just because everyone else was doing it. And I haven't since" (01:16:23-40). Although she remains fierce, Kat becomes likeable due to her vulnerability. She is portrayed as dominant throughout, but her vulnerability shows that she "is human and not simply a —know it all boss" (Kalman 3). Besides, even for teens and adolescents who did not experience the same thing, it is understandable where her anger originates from. "Losing virginity represents the crossing-over point – the signifier for adulthood" (Seifert 50). Loss of virginity is deemed important and special among teenagers and adolescents as it is a step

towards adulthood. Having that special moment taken away, the experience is deemed unpleasant. Unlike Shakespeare's Katherine, Kat is not just portrayed as unlikeable and shrewish, but she is presented as a vulnerable human-being who is misunderstood.

Moreover, Patrick does not have the task to change her behaviour and to make her seem likeable to society, unlike Petruccio. As mentioned earlier, Petruccio only wants marry Kate for dowry and thus tells Katherine's father that he can change Katherine's behaviour (1.2.74-75; 2.1.130-141). Patrick also just dates Kat for money (00:23:00), but he starts liking her as he gets to know her. Although he earns money from dating with her, he is not a mean character like Shakespeare's Petruccio, who humiliates Katherine. Like Kat, Patrick is also a misunderstood teen. The high school students have spread lots of wild rumours about both and while they talk about what they know about each other based on those rumours, they also figure that most of the information is false and get to know each other better.

PATRICK. No. None of that stuff is true.

KAT. State trooper?

PATRICK. Fallacy. Dead guy in the parking lot?

KAT. Rumor. (1:10:20-26)

People spread rumours about them being rebellious, fearless, and sex addicts, making them both appear different from what they are. Moreover, instead of being mean to Kat, Patrick finds out about Kat's interests and makes sure that they can spend time together (00:30:06). This contrasts with Petruccio's behaviour towards Katherine. Petruccio is mean towards Katherine as he belittles her by depriving her of basic necessities hoping that her suffering will change her character (3.2; 4.2.169-192). Patrick does the opposite and tries win Kat's heart by being nice to her, engaging with her, and going on dates together (00:29:11-30:30). Unlike Petruccio who tries to make more money in a bet after he has supposedly changed Katherine's behaviour (Shakespeare 5.2.67), Patrick's intentions become genuine throughout the film, as seen in the

end scene. He buys Kat the guitar she has always wanted with the money he has earned through dating her (01:31:20-39). The film ends with Kat telling Patrick off when he buys her a guitar. “You can't just buy me a guitar every time you screw up, you know” (01:31:57). Furthermore, the closing credits are accompanied by the music of punk-rock band Letters by Cleo. Although Letters by Cleo is not part of the Riot Grrrl, a feminist movement associated with punk-style rock music, they are presented as a band similar to bands linked with this movement when they announce they are the fictional band Gigglepuss from Olympia (Friedman 57). Olympia is the “birthplace of Riot Grrrl”, and in addition to that, Patrick compares them to two existing famous Riot Grrrl bands, Bikini Kill and Raincoats (57). Altogether, Kat telling Patrick off and the film's end credits suggests that Kat has not changed too much as she still is outspoken and into the same Riot Grrrl music. It was not Patrick's purpose to change her and he has fallen for her the way she was – a riot girl who was not afraid to flash their teacher or hit Joey's car purposely (01:31:41; 00:26:57). The characters are depicted as relatable and likeable instead of unbearable, and there is no actual intention of taming or change. This alteration seems necessary as “the figure of the shrew and her eventual taming by her partner are especially difficult to translate into a genre that post-dates the feminist movement because the values expressed by the shrew-taming action clash with a contemporary sense of the proper treatment of women” (Friedman 46). Understanding this argument allows us to believe that the teen film manages to reduce the sexism in Shakespeare's play and distract from it.

Similarly, Kate's character in Tyler's *Vinegar Girl* is different from the shrewish Katherine. A shrew is “a garrulous, domineering, and intractable wife” (Brown 1), which does resemble Katherine's description in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In Shakespeare's play, Katherine's behaviour needs to be tamed by her husband. Katherine's behaviour is unpleasant as she occasionally has violent outbursts – for example, when she hits her music teacher with a lute (2.1.142-159). Kate is not domineering like Katherine in her behaviour towards others.

“Tyler challengingly abides by the original storyline, exploring the notion of character growth, making the shrew’s change of heart entirely plausible without demeaning the young woman” (Martiny). Kate is tactless and witty. She knows this, but she often does it without realising (McAlpin). For example, she is confronted when she tells her student’s parent that the child will stop sucking her fingers “once her fingers grow so long that she pokes both her eyes out” and Kate does not realise that “she’d been so witty” (29). These witty and tactless comments occur several times throughout the novel. However, even though Kate appears to be rude, she continues to help others around her without expecting a return. She agrees to marry Pyotr; she prepares her dad’s lunch; she is basically the maid of the house (120; 2; 118). In fact, Kate is the opposite of domineering. She knows that she lacks authority and assertiveness. “Who was she to order children to take a nap? She completely lacked authority, and all the children knew it; they seemed to view her as just an extra tall, more obstreperous four-year-old” (19). She may be tactless, but others actually seem to like this about her. Especially children appreciate her honesty as they tell her that they admire her. “‘When me and my brother grow up,’ David Samson said, ‘we’re going to marry you.’” (23). Tyler herself also stated that Kate “merely [is] a smart young woman — still a dangerous creature in some circles — who doesn’t care about making everyone around her feel comfortable” (Tyler, “Anne”). However, Kate also does not make them heavily uncomfortable, whereas Katherine appears to bother other people – like her music teacher – as well. Therefore, it is unlikely for Kate to be interpreted as a shrew the way Katherine can be interpreted. Thus, Kate is also not tameable nor meant to be tamed.

Like Kat, Kate is excusable for their behaviour as it is her situation that has changed her. As mentioned previously, Shakespeare has not provided his audience with a background story about Katherine. In *Vinegar Girl*, Kate states that “[s]he wished she had had a mother. Well, she *had* had a mother, but she wished she’d had one who taught her how to get along with the world better” (33). Even her father admits that he is a big part of Kate’s problem

regarding human interaction. “I know I expect more of you than I should... You’re shut away at home, you’re puttering in the garden, you’re tending children in a preschool, which, come to think of it, is probably the last place on earth to... I’ve been selfish” (118). Kate’s dad treats her like a maid after the death of her mother. Moreover, she finds out that she was different before her mother’s death. “It was as if Kate the child had been a completely different entity from Kate the grown-up” (117). This demonstrates again that Kate is a product of her environment and thus, by providing a background, Tyler creates sympathy. So, Kate’s persona is more like Kat in *10 Ten Things I Hate about You* than to Shakespeare’s Katherine, considering that Shakespeare has not given any specific reasons that could explain why Katherine behaves the way she does.

Furthermore, Pyotr is not portrayed with the same attitude as Petruccio. As mentioned before, Petruccio wants to marry Katherine for dowry and treats her badly to tame her shrewishness. Indeed, Pyotr comes across as hostile several times. Kate even states that “[e]ver since the wedding he had been downright abusive, as if now that they were married he thought he could treat her however he liked” (224). However, his uncanny approach to women is also part of his “dicey command of English, his culturally retrograde upbringing in a foreign country, and his commitment to scientific rationality – not, as in Shakespeare’s play, from a contempt for women’s self-assertiveness or a desire to draw Kate out of her shrewish shell” (Hartley 241). This is already apparent at Kate’s first meeting with Pyotr, when Kate remarks his thick accent as Pyotr talks about peanuts as pig’s food and his extraordinary love for bananas as “a miracle food” (8-10). “Portraying Pyotr as comically inept rather than misogynistically motivated allows Tyler to sidestep the problem of Petruccio’s shrew-taming project for modern readers” (Hartley 241). In contrast to Petruccio and similar to Patrick, Pyotr is not forcing Kate into marrying or loving him. His motive for marrying her is that he needs a wife to obtain a visa, it is not his purpose to change her. However, at their first meeting he

actually seems to like her and he just continues wooing her (6). This makes Pyotr also more likeable and relatable. He likes her from the beginning, even when he states that she is “rude-spoken” (7). Therefore, the interpretation of Shakespeare’s play that a woman has to be tamed by her husband to become marriage material disappears entirely.

The teen adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* have amended the characters in ways that make them more relatable for young adults. *10 Things I Hate about You*’s Kat and *Vinegar Girl*’s Kate are more similar to each other than to Shakespeare’s Katherine. The experiences that have influenced their behaviour are presented to the audience. Besides, Patrick and Pyotr do not treat Kat and Kate respectively as Petrucchio treats Katherine. Patrick and Pyotr are not concerned with taming or changing the personas of the girls. Erasing the main issues regarding sexism in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, ensures that teens and adolescents can relate to the characters in the narratives they read without being guided towards sexist beliefs.

Ridiculing and Revisionary Elements in Adult Adaptations

As people get older, it becomes difficult to put them in one homogenous category. Therefore, the range of the adult group does not have a particular end. In this research, seniors, middle-aged adults, and new adults are considered to be in the same homogenous group, as the audiences for these categories are not distinguished in film and literature.

In this chapter, an episode from *Moonlighting* will be discussed. *Moonlighting* is a romantic comedy about two detectives with a significant amount of (sexual and historical) references and jokes (Bosley). The episode “Atomic Shakespeare” is based on Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. “The classic text is repositioned as both desirable and outmoded” (Radner 8), as Shakespeare’s narrative is still overt in the episode. The writers maintain the relationship to Shakespeare by following the “Shakespearean model, preserving the basic outline of the Shakespearean play while incorporating a significant departure” (8). The episode provides overt criticism of sexism in *The Taming of the Shrew* by means of textual reversal, plot changes, and mockery.

Firstly, several reversals in the play indicate clear criticism of the play’s sexism. One of the most prominent reversals is Petruccio’s behaviour towards Katherine. Like the young adult adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*, his character has changed compared to Shakespeare’s Petruccio. However, *Moonlighting*’s Petruccio changes with the help of Katherine. In the beginning he still resembles Shakespeare’s Petruccio. For example, he states that he believes that Katherine should obey him. “If thy husband tells thee the moon is the sun, then tell him ‘tis the sun” (00:30:15-21). However, he is not unkind to Katherine. The narrator explains that “[r]ather than beat her into submission, Petruccio did decide instead to kill her with kindness” (00:30:48-55). While Shakespeare’s Petruccio seems to remain unkind and demanding even on their way back to Padua (4.6), in *Moonlighting* Katherine explicitly demands respect from Petruccio and asks him to “retreateth from [his] role as chauvinist” and

he complies (00:34:48-35:00). Consequently, this leads to the most prominent reversal, which is Katherine's soliloquy. Although it was argued in the first chapter that the soliloquy written by Shakespeare is not necessarily an indication of Katherine being tamed, it still makes her subservient at first glance. "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, thy head, thy sovereign" (5.2.146). By contrast, in "Atomic Shakespeare" Petruccio is pressured into making Katherine speak about Petruccio's dominance over her (00:42:56). However, she does not play along with him (00:45:15-30). Hence, Petruccio takes over and starts talking about the beauty of equality within marriage showing the rest what he has learned from Katherine (00:45:41-46:30). His speech suggests criticism of the play's sexism. Together, these alterations in Petruccio's behaviour have changed the story into one that criticises gender inequality within marriage.

Katherine's response to Petruccio's contradictions is another factor that indicates criticism of Shakespeare's play. As mentioned before, in Shakespeare's play Katherine changes her outspoken character after Petruccio treats her badly and submits to him by telling him that she will agree with what he says even when she knows it is not right: "But the sun is not when you say it is not. And the moon changes even as your mind" (4.6.20-21). However, in *Moonlighting*, Katherine stands her ground. She does not agree with Petruccio's words and makes him actively reconsider his "obvious [language] error" when she says "I believeth thou art mistaken" (Radner 10; 00:44:19). Her answer to Petruccio suggests that "*Moonlighting* is an improvement on the original because it offers a model of equality between men and women" (Radner 10). "Atomic Shakespeare" is a critical adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Katherine's improved and critical response to Petruccio, also indicates that previously she may have been right when she was presented as a disobedient shrew. Generally, this scene also shows that Katherine had the right to act shrewish as it suggests how she was

treated by people. Katherine's disagreement with Petruccio indicates that *Moonlighting* criticises Shakespeare's plot and the ideas that are presented in terms of gender equality.

Further criticism is inserted indirectly by ridiculing Shakespeare's play through elements such as anachronisms. Anachronisms are inconsistencies in chronology ("Anachronism"). Although anachronisms are not necessarily used to criticise, in this case it does resemble the act of mockery.

Anachronism can be seen to function as the historically-inflected form of what humor theorists have for some time, in the wake of Schopenhauer's formulation of Inkongruenz, described as 'incongruity humor,' which, as its name suggests, generates laughter via dissonance and the surprising conjunction of unlikely component. (D'Arcens 5)

The surprise element of the anachronism creates humour. One clear example of an anachronism are the ninjas that appear while Petruccio is fighting in Padua (00:10:30). It is clearly added to add humour as they are heavily contrasting the appearance of the others. Moreover, we see an anachronism at Petruccio and Katherine's wedding as Petruccio starts singing a twentieth-century song (00:24:24-26:36). These elements mock Shakespeare's play, while simultaneously adding humour to it. Therefore, the audience's perception of Shakespeare's play changes. Although it was already a comedy, the addition of mockery causes the play to appear foolish. This foolishness reflects to sexist ideas that are presented in his play. In "Atomic Shakespeare", the play is ridiculed and therefore, the presented ideas are not to be taken too seriously. In mocking the play in its entirety, ideas such as gender (in)equality in are also targeted.

Lastly, the frame narrative in "Atomic Shakespeare" indicates that the writers do not only criticise sexism in Shakespeare's play, but also modern culture as it still needs improvement regarding gender equality. Shakespeare has included a frame narrative about Sly,

who is tricked into believing that he is a lord. This frame narrative has been replaced with one about a young boy who wants to watch *Moonlighting*, but his mother finds it “trash” and he has a lot of schoolwork left to do (00:00:53). It is not clear whether the audience then watches the show with the mother or reads a modernised version of the play with the young boy in his youthful vocabulary (Radner 9). The father being absent in the frame narrative can be used to interpret situations within the household. One interpretation could be that the mother does not like the show as it shows criticism towards and improvements of gender equality, while in modern times, she still experiences inequality in her house where she raises the young boy without a father present. Another could be that the young boy who has seen inequality in his own home, imagines this play in a critical and modernised way to criticise his own home situation – which could also explain the ninjas and the modern music. “[T]his frame not only encloses *Moonlighting’s Shrew* but offers another representation of ‘woman’ to viewers who may have enjoyed the episode’s potentially subversive pleasures” (Hodgdon 551). This frame also pulls the viewer back to reality, where “the only place where mothers and women can have this kind of ‘cultural authority’ is a place where the fathers and men are absent” (551). General ideas about gender equality may have changed, but are not necessarily put into practice. This makes the frame narrative of “Atomic Shakespeare” a powerful tool in understanding the criticism in this adaptation.

The reversals and ridiculing aspects change Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* in such way that the adaptation in *Moonlighting* appears to be critical of the sexism in the play. Petruccio’s character has been changed entirely due to Katherine demanding respect from him. Consequently, this demand has impacted the inversion of the soliloquy at the end of Shakespeare’s play. In Shakespeare’s play, Katherine was the one giving a speech about the importance of dominant husbands, while in “Atomic Shakespeare”, Petruccio gives a speech about equality within marriage instead. Furthermore, the anachronisms and absurdities in

Moonlighting indicate mockery of Shakespeare's play. Lastly, the frame narrative about the mother and her son who discuss *Moonlighting* indicates that the discussion about gender inequality has not ended with Shakespeare. These changes and mockeries created a space for an adult audience to critically explore the play and the indicated sexist gender roles, but also to reflect on modern times.

Conclusion

In this thesis, several adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* have been examined. Although there is room for discussion regarding the interpretation and extent of sexism in Shakespeare's play, many critics agree that Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a controversial play because of the sexist views that are presented. This research shows that adaptations of this play often try to address this gender inequality in a way that fits the needs of their target audience. Although not all adaptations are necessarily used to comment on those views, most include elements that criticise the play.

The children's adaptations by Matthews and Lamb do not criticise Shakespeare's work. Children need a simplification of the plot, so they can comprehend the events more easily. However, the omission of the Induction and the shortening of Katherine's soliloquy simplify Shakespeare's irony and parallelism. Although it could be beneficial for children to understand that the indicated gender roles are not necessarily the norm, Lamb does not include anything that could imply such views. However, Matthews has several additions, such as caricatures and an extra chapter regarding "Notes on Love and Marriage". These additions indicate that this play is not to be taken too seriously.

Furthermore, the adaptations for young adults focus on erasing the sexism rather than criticising it. One of the most significant methods found in the adaptations is the change of Katherine and Petruccio's characters. The adapters ensure that young pupils are able to relate to the personas. Kat in *10 Things I Hate about You* and Kate in *Vinegar Girl* are not perfect, but their shortcomings have reasons and are understandable. Patrick in *10 Things I Hate about You* and Pyotr in *Vinegar Girl* are not meant to be tamers of Kat and Kate respectively and thus they are also not as mean as Petruccio in Shakespeare's play. Altogether, these changes help erase sexist ideas around marriage and love.

Lastly, “Atomic Shakespeare”, as the adult adaptation, has the most overt criticism of Shakespeare’s play and simultaneously, also criticises contemporary times. It includes characteristics and lines which contrast with Shakespeare’s play and mockery of sexist ideas through anachronisms and absurdities. Moreover, the frame narrative indicates that although ideas about gender inequality have changed, this is not always put into practice.

Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* demonstrates that it can be approached in several ways. Although this research provides valuable information about the influence of target audiences on adaptations, it is limited in the following ways. This research engaged in one play of Shakespeare’s, but it would be useful to investigate the influence of audience in other plays that allow different approaches. Besides, it does not include quantitative research regarding the effect on the audiences.

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