

ENGLISH AT3

Values within society are constantly changing. Texts provide a window into society's values and priorities and adaptations can reveal societal changes. Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* adapts *The Taming of the Shrew*, to be more relevant to modern audiences while still reflecting the themes of the original. The way *10 Things* is presented demonstrates how society's view of female agency and independence has significantly changed, although also displays how the themes stem from traditional roles of women. There is a particular challenge in adapting this text for a modern audience, as the central theme of "taming" a woman, is inherently misogynistic.

'Male Gaze' is the concept that delineates the ways most of literature describes and perceives women from the heterosexual male perspective. Female characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*, predominantly Katherina and Bianca, are heavily impacted by this, Bianca simply acts as an extension of the male characters, and Katherina functions as an objectified antagonist for the male audience. The audience is introduced to Bianca in conjunction with Lucentio's introduction to her. "Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish" Lucentio proclaims after Bianca exits the stage. The repeated use of the pronoun "I" demonstrates that Lucentio's description of lust for Bianca is not about Bianca, instead it is his response to her. This introduces Bianca to the audience as merely an object of Lucentio's desire, rather than a separate person. Then, when a female character breaks the status quo, detaching herself from this male fantasy, she is ridiculed. Petruchio and Katherina's first meeting results in a violent friction between the two. Contradicting this, Petruchio announces that they will be wed the following Sunday. Katherina retorts "I'll see thee hanged on Sunday first". The juxtaposition between this rebuttal and Petruchio's announcement shows the parallel discrepancy of the two character's desires. However, due to Petruchio's gender, and by extension, power, his wishes are expected to be granted. The other characters ignore Katherina's disapproval, even mocking it. While Katherina's retort is commanding, it feels false. She is aware she has no power, that Petruchio's desires will be granted. This adds to the humour: her feelings, thoughts and concerns are reduced to nothing more than a punchline. This depiction of women as nothing more than objects, to viewed by and ridiculed by men, shows their inordinate lack of agency, their role is to simply act as supporters of the patriarchy.

Between the writing of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *10 Things*, the depiction of women in media has greatly changed, allowing for more multifaceted representation of female characters. This change is reflected in *10 Things* as the female characters are established to have desires and agency away from their male counterparts. The movie starts by visually introducing us to the female characters. The first scene begins by panning to a car of teenage girls wearing bright, colourful clothing, listening to pop songs and giggling. This is then juxtaposed with Kat's worn-down car pulling up next to them, blaring rock music. These two distinct female identities are represented and juxtaposed in nuanced ways, the cars they are driving, the clothes they are wearing, the songs they are listening to. The characterisation of these characters away from men is very different to the female characterisation in *The Taming of the Shrew*, which is solely based on men's judgement. Kat is listening to the song "Bad Reputation" by Joan Jett, a rock and roll and feminist icon. The historical feminist impact of this song shows that Kat's behaviour is her attempt to break free from society's expectations for women. In this scene it is made clear through the characters facial expressions that within Kat's attempts to detach herself from social norms, she is excluded by the other characters. This shows that these conventions, which stem from traditional female role, are heavily affecting the modern social landscape, especially for teenagers. However, even simply the inclusion of female agency and distinct characterisation, shows the immense changes in societal views of women.

A primary theme in *The Taming of the Shrew* is marriage. The marriages presented in the play represent two underlying attitudes towards marriage at the time. The first is the belief that marriage is a financial institution, in which women are traded. Although Lucentio and Bianca's relationship is at first romantic, it is discovered that from Baptista's perspective, their marriage is purely a financial affair. During Lucentio's and

Gremio's competition for Bianca's blessing, Baptista announces "That can assure my daughter greatest dower. Shall have my Bianca's love." The use of high modality language, does not consider Bianca's perspective, leaving no room for her to have personal desires. She simply acts as a good which is traded between the men. This is reinforced by Baptista possessively, saying "my Bianca". *The Taming of the Shrew* also displays the patriarchal ideas that to be a "good" woman, one must be a submissive wife. The main plot of *The Taming of the Shrew* involves Petruchio "taming" Kate to fit the social conventions of being a wife. In Kate and Petruchio's first meeting, Petruchio declares "For I am he born to tame you, Kate, and bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate, conformable as other household Kates." Using metaphor to compare Katherina to a domesticated animal reflects how Petruchio, and society, believe that women are essentially animals, capable of being domesticated but nevertheless always inferior to men. Petruchio dubbing Katherina a "household Kate" reinforces stereotypes that women should be housebound. Marriage in *The Taming of the Shrew* reflects how greater society views women's independence.

Marriage is replaced in *10 things* through romantic relationships between teenaged characters. By the 1990s marriage and the role of women within romantic relationships had changed significantly. The central view of relationships is not an extension of power of one party over another. In *10 things*, Patrick develops a deep respect for Kat, despite her not conforming to the traditional female stereotypes. During their date, Patrick admits, "You never disappointed me." The vulnerability of Patrick's facial expression, and the gentle music, makes this moment the romantic climax of the scene. Patrick's admission of love and understanding of Kat is the opposite of Petruchio's taming of Katherina. While Patrick respects Kat despite her flaws, Petruchio must change Katherina. By the changing of this fundamental plot, it creates a story that is more appealing to a progressive audience. Financial status and compensation are no longer as significant to relationships. In many western cultures, women usually have complete autonomy over who they marry or are in a relationship with. The theme of money and relationships is reflected in *10 Things* by Joey paying Patrick to date Kat. Kat is distraught to discover that money has been exchanged in return for her affection, sardonically questioning whether it was "a down payment now and then a bonus for sleeping with me?". Kat's caustic tone displays the absurdity of this and the clear upset that being traded has brought her. This is a complete contrast to the unquestioned behaviours of the men in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The presentation women's power within relationships in the two texts is entirely contradictory, highlighting the extent to which values in society have changed, especially in respect to female autonomy in relationships.

10 Things I Hate About You, transforms *The Taming of the Shrew* to reflect contemporary values about women and romantic relationships to present the narrative without the inherent misogyny that would alienate a modern audience. It provides progressive views on female autonomy and agency, reflecting how society and cultural context have changed, and reflecting how traditional roles inform the themes. The comparison between the ways that female roles and roles within relationships are presented in the two texts shows the changes that society undergone to reach this point.