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FITTING INTO HONOUR THROUGH MARRIAGE INSTRUCTION IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

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ABSTRACT

The character of the shrewd and bad-tempered woman has been a recurrent one through the history of literature. *The Taming of the Shrew* is considered an example of literature on this topic. This master's dissertation is an attempt to analyse how female virtue is represented in *The Taming of the Shrew* and how the female lack of virtue affected the marriage and social reputation of the characters. In addition, the paper studies to what extent the play could be considered a moral one with a lesson for the female audience for since the moment in which Katherine reaches virtue by becoming an obedient wife she also starts to fit in the roles imposed by society.

Key words: virtue, social roles, Elizabethan, drama, female.

RESUMEN

El personaje de la mujer astuta y con mal carácter ha sido recurrente en la historia de la literatura. *The Taming of the Shrew* se considera un ejemplo literario de este tema. Este trabajo de master es un intento de analizar como se representa la virtud femenina en *The Taming of the Shrew* y como la falta de virtud femenina afectaba el matrimonio y la reputación de los personajes. Además, este trabajo estudia hasta qué punto esta obra se puede considerar moral, enseñando una lección a la audiencia femenina de la época ya que desde el momento en que Kate alcanza la virtud convirtiéndose en una esposa obediente, también empieza a encajar en los roles impuestos por la sociedad.

Palabras clave: virtud, teatro, roles sociales, isabelino, drama, feminidad.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Ancient History, achieving virtue has been a goal for different societies. The concept of virtue could have different interpretations, but this essay will be focused on virtue in the context of the Early Modern period. Being a virtuous person implied having certain qualities that were a product of the cultural and religious values of society. “Virtue in the early modern culture was largely understood as self-government, as a rational ruling of inordinate passions” (Langis 2011:2). Virtue was considered a quality that made possible the control of affections, therefore, the lack of it could have consequences such as leading to an unsuccessful marriage or not fitting into the standards of society. The purpose of this essay is to study the play *The Taming of the Shrew*, one of early comedies of William Shakespeare. This essay aims to analyze how virtue is portrayed in the play focusing on female virtue and specially in the character of Katherina and her change from an unvirtuous woman to a virtuous one.

To begin with, in order to understand the context of the play, a short historical background of the Early Modern period in England will be presented. After this, we will deepen into *The Taming of the Shrew*, firstly by giving some information about the sources of the play; secondly, talking about the social conventions and marriage in the Early Modern England and its representation in the play. Then, we will examine the concept of virtue and how it is presented in the main male and female characters of the play. Following this, we will focus on the taming of Kate and its final outcome. Finally, some and conclusions and the references used will be presented.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Early Modern period is one of the most interesting periods in the history of England since it was a flourishing period, not only political but also literary. It could be said that the core of the period ranges approximately from 1485 to 1603, which coincides with the ruling of the Tudor dynasty since the first Tudor, Henry VII accessed to the throne in 1485 and the last Tudor, Elizabeth I, died in 1603. Therefore, it could be referred to as well as the Tudor period. From the end of the War of the Roses in 1487, England turned into a powerful and wealthy country with its peak represented in the reign of Elizabeth I.

During the 16th century, the English language developed enormously from an unsophisticated language to an elegant and prestigious one. William Shakespeare made a great contribution to development of the English language by coining new words and

expressions which are still used today. Besides, he recorded some other words that already existed but never recorded in written form due to the fact that no English dictionaries existed at that time. Therefore, he contributed to the standardization of the English language.

The court was the centre of power and culture, but it could be a dangerous place for noblemen since they needed to show their power and gain a relevant position. At the same time it was risky because the court favoured betrayal since there was a great competition between the different noblemen in order to gain power and a position of influence in the court. At the same time the court was developing, cities and economy also improved greatly thanks to the development of markets and international trade. As a consequence, cities grew and therefore also population.

Humanism was one of the most important currents of thoughts during the Renaissance. This intellectual movement was initially created in Italy and expanded through Europe. This movement had a strong influence in different fields of arts such as architecture, painting, or literature. Generally speaking, it could be said that it involved an interest for classical antiquity, namely Greece and Rome. While in the Middle Ages, the centre of life was religion, during the Renaissance, the human being became the centre of interest.

Humanism also arrived in England and had its peak during the reign of Henry VIII, and it affected specially literature and spirituality. Humanism also brought with it an interest in education and a revision of the curriculum in which Latin still played a fundamental role as a language of culture and prestige in spite of the growing popularity of English as well as other vernacular languages which were becoming symbols of a national identity. Consequently, many classical works were translated into English and therefore more accessible to readers. As a result of the interest in education, universities in England also developed quickly and opened to new students from the gentry or middle-class.

Concerning religion, the Reformation had a great impact not only in politics but also in culture and society. Before this time, few people dared to question the supremacy of the Catholic Church and its highest authority, the Pope. However, in 1517, Martin Luther, a monk and professor at the University of Wittenberg questioned and criticize the corruption of the Catholic Church. Luther gave more importance to the individual by stating that salvation could be achieved by individual faith. As it can be

noted, the more prominent role of human being was in consonance with the humanist current of thought.

In England, the Reformation did not have such a great impact as in northern Europe until the reign of Henry VIII. Although he was considered a defender of Catholicism, he broke with the Catholic Church due to Rome's decision of not accepting his divorce of Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Eventually, Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Church of England in the Act of Supremacy of 1534. One of the consequences of this break was economical, for in the following years, many properties and money of the Catholic Church were expropriated and given to the Crown.

When Henry VII died, his only son, Edward, who was a Protestant, continued with the reformation of the English Church. However, Edward died very young, and his sister Mary accessed the throne. As she was the daughter of Catherine of Aragon, Mary was a fervent Catholic who persecuted Protestants and for this reason, she gained herself the nickname of Bloody Mary. In 1558, when Mary died without heirs, Elizabeth was proclaimed queen, and as daughter of the reformist Anne Boleyn, she was a Protestant and defended this faith during her reign.

Elizabeth I's reign is one of the greatest periods for the history of England. Although through Europe there were conflicts between Protestant and Catholic extremisms, she was able to avoid massacres. In spite of the wars with other countries such as Spain, and the constant threat of rebellion she maintained a relative peace which enable the country to grow and become powerful.

This period was very fruitful in terms of literary production in different genres. Printing, which was introduced in England by William Caxton helped making books cheaper and accessible to people and consequently people had more opportunities to learn. However, manuscripts were still popular, specially in poetry. Besides, printing was also important because it was used for spreading ideology, for instance, with the publishing of Catholic pamphlets. The book industry grew enormously, and popular books were printed repeatedly. Thus, patronage also became popular and intellectual circles were created.

Although literature in general flourished during this period, it was drama the one which developed the most with the works of Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, or Thomas Kyd among many others. During the 16th century, different playhouses were built, such as the Globe Theatre, even though there were plays long before this time for

instance in the form of mystery plays or the morality plays. The existence of traveling theatre companies under the patronage of a nobleman was quite common such as the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Although the plays used to be of a religious tone, due to the influence of classical plays, comedies and tragedies were adapted to the times and the taste of the public.

Although theatre was supported by Elizabeth I and enjoyed a growing popularity authorities were quite hostile to it. There are different reasons for this hostility, such as the public health since there were diseases which spread easily with the gathering of lots of people in a playhouse. Another reason derived from the gathering of people was the noise, the traffic, and the increase of criminality. Moreover, the Puritans did not like theatre as well since they thought plays could be immoral, or they were concerned for example with the fact that boys played female roles.

As this dissertation is focused on the concepts of honour and virtue, it is useful to provide an explanation of these concepts and see how they the idea of honour developed from Ancient Greece to the Elizabethan period. Although the concept of honour and its implications has changed through time, it has always existed in different societies, and it could be considered as a social construct, product of different social and cultural values. Therefore, to understand what honour and virtue implied in the Elizabethan period, we have to look back to the past.

In Ancient Greece, philosophers already questioned the meaning of honour and represented it in literature. At that time, honour was associated with the higher classes, namely aristocracy, and as the upper classes were also the ruling ones, honour had a social function. Homer exposed the concept of honour in *The Iliad*, which “reveals honour's integral action both to aristocracy and to a social conception of virtue, for it is the preserve of a ruling class whose excellence resides in the successful maintenance of the social unit” (Pacheco 1990:27). Therefore, honour was regarded as means to maintain society as it was structured. Consequently, doing good could be considered as a duty for aristocracy, who was the one in charge of keeping stability in a society.

Aristotle regarded honour in two ways, for there were different types of honour, moral and social. Whereas previous philosophers associated honour to a social role or duty, Aristotle included the individual into the concept of honour. Moral honour implied that if someone did a good deed it was because this person chose to do it and it could have a reward such as public honour. Thus, by doing good actions and behaving in a virtuous way, honour was achieved but not only for the sake of society's maintenance

but also to improve individual reputation. By contrast, the Stoics aimed at having a virtuous life performing good actions that benefited society, following morality, and forgetting about the reward that honour might bring.

With the development of Christianity, the concept of honour was adapted to fit into the values of religion. While during Ancient Greece and Rome, honour was a man-centred concept, for Christianity it was God-centred. A relation in which man was subordinated to God was established. Therefore, honour was a tool to reach God, who was considered the source of virtue. The chivalric culture developed during the Middle Ages and some events, such as the Crusades, contributed to the association of honour with serving God. According to Pacheco, the Crusades represent a moment “when the self-assertive spirit of aristocratic virtue was enlisted into the service of Christ” (1990:63). Thus, a new role was added to the concept of virtue, that of spreading and defending Christian values and delivering justice.

Consequently, during the Tudor period, the concept of honour was highly influenced by the previous conceptions. With the break between Henry VIII and the Catholic Church, the sovereign was the head of the State and the Church. In addition, Elizabeth I, in order to maintain her power adapted deeply rooted Catholic beliefs, such as the cult to the Virgin Mary, using them in her favour by becoming the Virgin Queen. These facts had a direct influence in the Tudor conception of honour and virtue. While during the Middle Ages God was the source of virtue, during the Tudor period it was the monarch. According to Pacheco, “honour was achieved through obedient service of the monarchy” (1990:73). Thus, the social role of honour depended upon the loyalty to the king or queen, and it also included giving good advice to the sovereign and being protectors of the Queen.

3. SOURCES OF *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

The Taming of the Shrew is what is known as a play-within-a-play, that is to say, the play starts presenting a story in which the characters tell or represent a different story. The play begins with an induction in which a nobleman tricks a beggar called Christopher Sly by making him believe that he is a nobleman who has lost his memory. Then, the page tells him the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* to entreat him.

Although this is one of the first plays written by Shakespeare in the early mid-1590s, the play was first published in the 1623 *First Folio*. According to Oliver (1982:2), there is another version of *The Taming of the Shrew* printed in Quarto format

in 1594 in which the story of Christopher Sly has a sad ending. “The evidence strongly suggests that *The Taming of the Shrew* was set up by the Folio compositors from author’s manuscript, not a transcript of it, or a prompt-copy used in the theatre” (Oliver 1982:4).

Regarding the induction which focus on the character of Christopher Sly, there is not a clear source for it. Despite this fact, “the form of the story most widely known today is that in *The Arabian Nights*” (Oliver 1982:34), in which also a man is entertained with storytelling. *The Taming of the Shrew* is not the only one of Shakespeare’s plays in which we see a play-within-a-play, for in *Hamlet*, for instance, another play is represented with the purpose of discovering the murderer of Hamlet’s father.

There is not a clear source for the story of Petruchio and Kate, but there is a general agreement among scholars that the source of Bianca’s plot is George Gascoigne’s *Supposes*. This is the English translation of Italian comedy *I Suppositi*, written by Ariosto and first played at Ferrara in 1509 (Oliver 1982:44). It is possible that Shakespeare eventually could have access to this play. In this story, Erostrato falls in love with Polynesta, and he is able to arrange meetings with her because he is disguised as a servant for her father named Damon, while Erostrato’s servant, Dulipo, is pretending to be Erostrato wooing Polynesta. To achieve his plan, Erostrato also persuades a traveler to impersonate his father. As we can see, the plot is the same as Bianca’s story. However, in the end Polynesta got pregnant and Erostrato goes to jail. It is possible that Shakespeare changed this ending because it was not suitable for a comedy.

Concerning the story of Katherina and Petruchio, the topic of the angry woman was a recurrent one in literature long before Shakespeare wrote this play. “There are shrews in Old English verse, and in Chaucer, in medieval tales, in Persian literature, in popular Italian stories, in Danish and other folklore” (Oliver 1982:48-49). As we can see, the topic was a common one not only in different countries and cultures but also different moments of history. According to Oliver (1982:49) scholars like Richard Hosley, have identified the source of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the verse tale *A Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe, Lapped in Morrelle’s Skin, for Her Good Behavyyour*. In this tale there is a shrewd woman who has a younger sister, and this sister is the favourite daughter of his father. This woman marries and she is tamed by her

husband. Eventually, during a family dinner she shows good behaviour. As it can be noted, the plot is the same as Katherina's plot.

Another proposed source by scholars is the *Colloquies* of Erasmus, published in 1518. In this set of dialogues, Erasmus writes about a wide range of topics, but it is the one called "The uneasy wife" the one which directly relates to the topic of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In this chapter Erasmus, through a dialogue between Xantippe and Eulalia, gives advice for a successful marriage and how the members of the couple should behave to overcome marital problems. It is interesting to note that there is a direct mention to this historical character when Petruchio says "as Socrates' Xanthippe, or a worse" (1.2, l.70).

However, Oliver (1982:49) also states that according to the scholar, J. H. Brunvand, the source of Shakespeare was not a literary source but oral tradition. In oral tradition, the archetype of the angry woman was a common one and, therefore, the audience was probably already familiar with it. This fact made the topic an interesting one for a successful comedy. All in all, there is not a single and clear source for *The Taming of the Shrew*.

4. SOCIAL CONVENTIONS AND MARRIAGE IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

Regarding their status in society, although there were two queens during the Tudor period, the situation of women in England did not change drastically compared the previous years. Women were regarded as socially inferior to men, although there are a few exceptions, such as Queen Elizabeth I. But even in this case, she considered herself more a sovereign rather than a woman. The Church also reinforced this idea of male superiority, justifying it with the ideas of the Bible and the Reformation did not bring a change in this attitude.

Concerning education, girls usually did not receive formal education since it was believed that they did not need to be educated in order to be good wives. Women of upper classes or wealthy families could be taught some skills but usually they were basic and useful pieces of instruction for managing their household. Therefore, women did not have access to grammar schools or universities. However, we can see in the play that Baptista invested time and money in the education of his daughters as it can be noted in the following quotation: "I will be very kind and liberal to mine own children

in good bringing up” (1.1, l.98-99). This quotation suggests how open-minded he was in relation to the education of his young daughters.

Girls were raised to believe that they should be obedient to a male authority which could be the father and the husband. We can see an example of this attitude in the induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*: “I am your wife in all obedience” (Induction 2, l.105). Obedience was considered a duty for women, and they were expected to have certain qualities, such as modesty or chastity, which were considered positive for them. The fact of having a troublesome character was considered one of the greatest faults a woman could have. This can be seen in the play when one of Bianca’s suitor refers to Katherine as “the curst, a title for a maid, of all titles the worst” (1.2, l. 127-128). One of the defects of Katherine was that she was disobedient and although “early modern women were not taught to be unquestioningly obedient, but rather that they had a responsibility to be virtuous, which requires performing submission so that they could reform others” (Murphy 2012:260).

Women were brought up to believe that marriage and having a family was their main goal in life. In the upper classes, marriage was a duty and most of the times a business too for arranged marriages that would benefit both families were common. If parents had several daughters it was a common practice not to marry the youngest daughters until the elder one had married first. In the play Baptista is also determined to follow this unwritten rule when he states, “not to bestow my youngest daughter before I have a husband for the elder” (1.1, l. 50-51). This practice was common for many centuries in England and other European countries. In English literature we can see another example in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen when Lady Catherine is shocked by the fact that all of the Bennet sisters have been presented in society although the oldest sister is still single.

The process of courtship of a woman was very important during the Tudor period and some conventions should be followed. One of these conventions was asking the permission of the father of the lady who a suitor was intended to marry. In the play, Lucentio defies this rule risking Bianca’s reputation specially when he elopes with her, so that when the fact is uncovered Baptista asks him “have you married my daughter without asking my good will?” (5.1, l.121-122). In the end, there are not negative consequences for this action since Bianca’s reputation will not be damaged as Vincentio assures to her father: “fear not, Baptista, we will content you” (5.1, l. 123). In addition, Lucentio’s courtship does not only break some rules but also sometimes seems to be

exaggerated and full of “clichéd Petrarchan tropes” (Langis 2008:50) as he also barely knows her and yet he proclaims his love for her since the first time he saw her.

Petruchio follows in a proper way the social conventions for wooing a woman, even though he might be too abrupt in the way he approaches Kate. He goes to Baptista’s house and introduces himself to the father of the future wife. They discuss about the dowry and when they reach an agreement about it, Petruchio speaks with Kate and agrees to get married in spite of the questionable willingness of Kate to marry. By contrast, the audience might not expect that Lucentio and Bianca did exactly the opposite. They used tricks such as disguise during their wooing but what is worse is that they hid their romance and eloped together without having the permission of the fathers. This situation was very risky for people belonging to the upper classes, especially for women since their reputation and virginity could be damaged.

Marriage would not always implied love. Most of the times it was a contract between the couple by which they could improve their wealth or social position. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, when Petruchio appears in the play he states that he intends to make a wealthy marriage: “I come to wive wealthily in Padua” (1.2, l.74). One of the most important aspects of marriage was the dowry. Specially in the upper classes, it was common that when a woman got engaged, a dowry was agreed for the husband. Sometimes, if a family had several daughters, it was common to marry only the youngest one and send the eldest to a nunnery. By doing so, the family could control their money for a longer time and also they could save money for different dowries.

The issue of the dowry in *The Taming of the Shrew* also has a great importance. Here the dowry of the two daughters is discussed. The agreed dowry for Katherine would be 20.000 crowns and half of Baptista’s lands after his death (2.1, l.120-121). For Baptista it was very important to make a good agreement for their daughters and he ensured that even in the case they could become widows, their financial security was granted after the death of the husband. Thus, Petruchio assures Baptista that she will be covered in the case of becoming a widow: “For that dowry I’ll assure he of her widowhood, be it that she survives me, in all my lands and leases whatsoever” (2.1, l. 122-124). The issue of Bianca’s dowry is also presented with great detail in act 2.1 (l. 347-398) in which Gremio and Tranio, pretending to be Lucentio, discuss who has more to offer Bianca. Again, the event of widowhood is emphasized when Baptista mentions it: “if you should die before him, where’s her dower?” (2.1, l. 391)

After marriage, there were also social conventions. The wife was considered a property of the husband, and thus, he had complete authority over the woman. The husband had to provide the wife with food, housing, and all the possible comforts. In exchange, the wife apart from taking care of the house and the family, should have a virtuous behaviour which, eventually, was also instrumental to reform an unvirtuous husband. According to Murphy, this belief was represented in literature, often with a story of an unhappy marriage in which “a wife must reform herself and choose to submit to her husband so that he can reform him, and thus make possible a happy marriage” (2012: 259). The idea that the husband was the provider of the family, and the wife should give him something back in return is also present in Kate’s final speech when she states that “for thy maintenance; commits his body to painful labour” (5.2, l.148-149) while the wife stays safe at home. She concludes that obedience is “too little payment for so great a debt” (5.2, l. 154).

The treatment Katherine receives from Petruchio certainly would shock the modern audience or reader; but at the time the play was written it was not so unusual to treat wives quite in a violent way. “Although husbands were encouraged to use peaceful means to inculcate their wives in these hortatory treatises, wife-beating was, nonetheless, a legal means of correction” (Langis 2011:49). Adultery was punished too, and one well-known example is Katherine Howard, Henry VIII’s fourth wife, who was beheaded for being adulterous and consequently for high treason to the king.

Summarizing, even though for a great part of the period the sovereign was a woman, the dominant ideology was a patriarchal one in which women submitted to a male authority. Moreover, since the focus of women’s lives was marriage, they had the duty of being good wives and this duty also implied being an example of virtue and good behaviour not only for their families but also for the community.

5. THE CONCEPT OF VIRTUE IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

5. 1. Female characters: Katherine and Bianca.

Virtue was a valuable quality in any person. In this section, the concept of virtue is going to be discussed and how it is presented in the main female characters of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the case of women, female virtue implied showing a behaviour with certain traces which were considered to be positive. Virtues were established according to cultural values of each society, and they guided social roles. Most of these qualities were connected to religion. Some of these qualities were humility, modesty,

piety, obedience, patience, etc. It should be noted that in the same way that there are virtues, there are the opposite vices, and, usually, they were parallel with the seven deadly sins from the Bible, such as lust, vanity, or pride, among others.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, when Petruchio is describing Katherine in an ironic way, he is also mentioning some of the qualities of a virtuous woman, such as modesty, temperance or moderation, patience, and chastity. “For she’s not froward, but modest as the dove; she is not hot, but temperate as the morn; for patience she will prove a second Grissel, and Roman Lucrece for her chastity” (2.1, l. 293-296)

Katherine and Bianca are the major female representations in the play, and they initially represent different female archetypes, although in the play they develop as characters for it can be noticed a change in Kate’s behaviour and Bianca towards the end of the play she reveals her true personality. Katherine represents the shrewd woman, a character which was common in literature and oral tradition. Since the beginning of the play she is presented as a bad-tempered woman. She uses physical violence against her sister and towards the music tutor. Besides, she also has a sharp tongue and an undeniable wit in her speech and responses.

For the rest of the characters in the play it is quite clear that with this personality, she will be unable to marry due to her bad behaviour as Hortensio states: “No mates for you unless you were of gentler, milder mould” (1.1, l. 59-60). Also Gremio, another suitor of Bianca, agrees that Kate is not a suitable wife “to cart her rather. She’s too rough for me” (1.1, l. 55). This bad and unvirtuous character has made her gain the reputation of a shrew and as Hortensio warns Petruchio, she is “Renowned in Padua for her scolding tone” (1.2, l. 99).

What are the reasons for Katherine to be so rough? There are different reasons that attempt to explain why Katherine has such a bad attitude, but all of them are interpretations of the characters based on their words and actions since it is difficult to know which were the real intentions of the author. She could be showing her disconformity with society, more specifically with the values of a society which is kind of forcing her and by extension all women to have certain qualities such as obedience and silence in order to be virtuous.

When dealing with the character of Kate, the audience should take into account her personal circumstances, as they might had an influence on her behaviour during the play. In this play, there is not a motherly figure for Katherine and Bianca. Motherless heroines are common in Shakespeare’s literature and different examples can be found

such as Cordelia, Beatrice, Ophelia. In other cases, such as Juliet's one, the mother is present, but she does not seem to be supportive and empathic with her daughter; but in her case, this motherly role might be performed by Juliet's servant.

In the case of Katherina and Bianca they lack both this support as they are motherless, and there is not a wiser female servant who could function as a mother and advise them. Besides, they are friendless as well and it seems that due to different circumstances, such as Kate's attitude they are kind of isolated. As Kate is the eldest sister, the audience or reader might suppose that her role naturally would be to become the woman of the house, but she has not been prepared for that role and neither had the guidance.

One might think that although they have no mother and probably not many friends, they have each other, Katherina has her sister and vice versa. The issue is that we do not see a good relationship between them in terms of sisterhood and this could be another reason for Katherina's behaviour. Women have been taught that a good relation between sisters is important and they should be supportive with each other. However, it is interesting to know as well that rivalry between siblings have always existed, as we can see for instance in the *Bible* with the story of Cain and Abel. Since the beginning of the play it is quite obvious that Katherina and Bianca do not have a good relationship. A reason for this unsupportive relationship between the sisters might be the preference of their father for Bianca, and the diverse ways both of them are treated.

Apart from this problem, there is an important source of conflict between them, and it is the question of marriage. Marriage poses a problem between them because in order for Bianca to get married, Katherina must marry first. This should not be a problem since it was a frequent practice during the early modern period. The problem arises when Bianca has lots of suitors, but no one dares to marry Katherina due to her attitude and reputation. As a consequence, Katherina develops her angry character because she could be jealous of Bianca due to the fact that she has lots of admirers, including her own father, while she is criticized at all times. In addition, Katherina knows that Bianca's real character is not so obedient and submissive as she appears to other characters.

Although it is reasonable to think that once the question of marriage is solved when Kate is engaged to Petruchio, the sister's relationship would improve, and they would get along, their tense relationship continues throughout the play and there are no expectations for it to improve in the future. For instance, even though Katherina is not

willing to marry, Bianca is not supportive or empathetic with her, and when she has to leave early the wedding because Petruchio commands to do so, Bianca's attitude is to laugh at them by saying about her sister "that being mad herself, she's madly mated" (3.2, l. 245).

As noted above, it can be perceived in Baptista some preference towards Bianca, without any doubt she is the spoilt child while Katherine is always criticized for her character. The difference of treatment that Baptista gives to each of their daughters is clear, for instance in the following quote: "Petruchio: Pray have you not a daughter called Katherina, fair and virtuous? Baptista: I have a daughter, sir, called Katherina" (2.1, l. 42-44). In this quotation we can see how Baptista clearly denies that Katherina might be fair and virtuous.

It is logical to think that this different treatment that both sisters receive from their father might influence their attitudes and contributed to embitter Katherine's personality. However, after Katherine is engaged to Petruchio we can see a different attitude in Baptista towards her daughter, specially during the wedding day. As Petruchio is late for the ceremony and he later appears in unsuitable garments, Baptista shows pity for the daughter and insists on Petruchio that this is not the way to treat a woman of her social status: "And yet we hear not of our son-in-law. What will be said, what mockery will it be" (3.1, l. 3-4). In this quotation, Baptista recognizes that he is worried about the reputation not only of Katherine but also his own family.

Reputation is a very important concept in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Generally speaking, reputation refers to opinion that people have about someone based on experiences. Kate's reputation, it can be assumed, is not good since in her community she is a renowned shrew and consequently an unvirtuous woman. Since the play does not focus on the past, we are not able to know if she always had this reputation or it has been acquired through her childhood or adolescence. The problem is that Katherina's reputation could affect the whole reputation of the family.

Baptista's reputation could be affected because it might be assumed that he is not able to control her. Taking into account some facts such as age or parenthood and including the social and historical context of the play, Baptista is in a higher position compared to Katherina. Firstly, he is the father, and she is the daughter. Secondly, the age as he is older than her. Thirdly, he is a man, and she is a woman. All these factors contribute increasing Baptista's authority over her. However, he might be regarded as a weak man, and he might even be mocked at for not being able to master his oldest

daughter. “Unlike chastity and silence, obedience is the feminine virtue that most obviously seems to require doing something: reacting to the husband or father by following his rules” (Murphy 2012:265). Since Katherine does not seem to follow his father’s rules, this constant disobedience defies her male authority, namely the father, and put at risk the reputation of both of them.

From Bianca’s point of view, Katherina’s unvirtuous attitude could affect Bianca’s reputation as well but maybe in a positive way. The fact that Katherina could be so unvirtuous and shrewd could reinforce the idealization of Bianca as the poor and virtuous sister who cannot marry because her sister does not allow it due to her attitude. Nevertheless, although it could eventually improve Bianca’s reputation, it would not be useful for the purpose of getting a husband, which we could imagine that in general it was the normal final objective for a maid of the upper classes.

Why was Katherina considered so unvirtuous for the rest of the characters? As mentioned at the beginning of the section, being virtuous implied having certain qualities desirable in any women, and specially in a wife. From the vices mentioned, unruliness and disobedience could be considered one of the worse. “Early modern women were not taught to be unquestionable obedient [...] The authors of prescriptive texts concentrate on the influence of virtue, but these rewards depend upon feminine submission” (Murphy 2012:278). Although sometimes Katherina uses physical violence, her lack of virtuous is showed through language. “For Kate, language is an aggressive form of rebellion and a sword she wields to protect or to assert herself” (Hjelm 2016:72).

Chastity was another appreciated virtue in women and although it could no be said that Katherina shows a lustful behaviour, during the scene of Petruchio’s wooing and through their words, it can be perceived some kind of sexual tension between them. For instance, when Petruchio tells Kate that “women are made to bear, and so are you” (2.1, l. 201) or the conversation they have about the wasp and the tail (2.1, l.211-220). By contrast, this initial sexual tension disappears towards the end of the play when Katherina becomes virtuous. We can find an example of her moderation when Kate refuses to kiss his husband in public when she is asked to do so. Finally, although she gives him the reason for not kissing him, “no, sir, God forbid, but ashamed to kiss” (5.1, l.134), she eventually kisses him.

Even though Katherina is regarded as a shrew, it is quite easy for the reader or audience to feel sympathy for her. Firstly, she is in an inferior position within the family

due to the preference of her father for Bianca. Secondly, it seems that she is almost obliged to get married. There are several examples of her denial. One example would be when she says to Petruchio “I’ll see thee hanged on Sunday first” (2.1, l. 299), clearly suggest that she is not willing to marry. Another example takes place during her wedding day when she says “No shame but mine. I must forsooth be forced to give my hand, opposed against my heart” (3.1, l.8-9). Thirdly, the audience would feel sorry for her, due to the way Petruchio treats her from their wedding day onwards.

The audience might think that Katherine was forced to marry Petruchio since Baptista and Petruchio agreed on their marriage without asking her opinion. Maybe marriage would be at the same time a kind of liberation for her. “The options which she has once she has been married, however, are clear: she can either leave her home and take her chances with Petruchio or stay home and be miserable as an unwanted and humiliated old-maid daughter” (Hjelm 2016:72). We cannot see in the play her personal preference and how she reflects upon her different options. She did not believe she was able to get a husband due to her reputation as a bad-tempered woman. Despite the fact whether she loved Petruchio or not, marriage was the best socially accepted option for a woman of her position.

Katherina and Bianca are compared many times during the play and for the other characters both of them represent on one side what a woman should be (Bianca) and on the other side the complete opposite (Katherina). One example of this comparison could be found through Lucentio’s words: “But in the other’s silence do I see maid’s mild behaviour and sobriety” (1.1, l. 70-71). Another example is found when Tranio makes the following statement about the sisters: “The one as famous for a scolding tongue as is the other for beauteous modesty” (1.2, l. 251-252).

Consequently, one of the reasons that might explain why Bianca is an important character in the play despite having fewer lines compared to Katherine, is because she is useful to establish a comparison with Katherine. While Bianca is said to embody all the desirable qualities of a virtuous woman, Katherine is completely the opposite. According to Oliver, the author “does not merely contrast one sister with another: he uses the younger as part of the explanation of the acquired shrewishness of the elder” (Oliver, 2008:47). This would explain the purpose of introducing Bianca in the *dramatis personae* and why, although she has fewer dialogues compared to Katherine, she is an such an important character in the play.

She is the youngest daughter and the favourite of her father, and this added to the fact that she has so many suitors could make her feel beloved, in contrast to Katherine. From the beginning of the play, Bianca is presented as the perfect woman both in appearance and personality. One of the first descriptions of Bianca is made at the beginning of the play the first time that Lucentio sees her: "Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move, and with her breath she did perfume the air. Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her" (1.1, l. 171-173).

The word "sacred" emphasizes the idea of Bianca's idealization and the fact that Lucentio falls in love with her at first sight seems childish and could even be regarded as a mockery of the idealization of Dante's Beatrice. "Sweet" was the other word used to describe Bianca, being of a gentle character and docile were desirable qualities in a woman. "Moderation, gender-inflected appears in Shakespearean drama as the conduct book ideal of feminine virtue, for instance, in Lucentio's first description of Bianca" (Langis 2011:22). She is obedient and dutiful at all times following her father's commands: "So well I know my duty to my elders" (2.1, l. 7). Even the name Bianca reinforces the idea of her being sweet and mild.

However, this was only the initial impression. Later on in the play, the audience gets to discover that the real character of Bianca is not that sweet and innocent as it may seem at the beginning. She plays tricks with her father in order to get what she wants. Nonetheless, her most unvirtuous action is disobedience by eloping with Lucentio and getting married to him without her father's permission, defying his father's authority. However, when it is the clearest that Bianca is not so innocent is during the final scene of the play. During this scene she disobeys her husband and as a result he does not only lose the bet, but also his reputation might be damaged since he did not manage his wife to obey in contrast to Katherine.

With this behaviour, Bianca clearly lets his husband down as we can see when Lucentio says "the wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca, hath cost me a hundred crowns since supper-time" (5.2, l. 127-130). Furthermore, what could be more surprising for the audience is the fact that Bianca does not regret her behaviour and even blames Lucentio for trusting her: "the more fool you for laying on my duty" (5.2, l. 127-130). In addition, Lucentio is not the only one disappointed by Bianca, as Hortensio, one of Bianca's suitor regrets loving her and refers to her as "this proud disdainful haggard" (4.2, l. 39)

At the end of the play, Bianca, who was initially presented as the virtuous sister publicly shows that she is not the virtuous and obedient daughter and later wife that she pretended to be. By contrast, with Katherine the situation is the opposite, she appeared to be unvirtuous and untamable but eventually she embodies the qualities a virtuous woman should have. Thus, although Kate and Bianca are compared, Kate is “the virago, who more successfully integrates feminine modesty and male assertiveness as the true exemplar of human virtue” (Langis 2011:46).

5. 2. Male characters: Petruchio and Lucentio.

There are some differences in how the concept of virtue is applied to women in contrast to men. As we have previously seen, some of the female virtues were obedience, silence, piety, chastity, and moderation, among others. Although some of these virtues were the same for men, for instance there is not such emphasis as with women of men being chaste, obedient, or pious. According to Langis, “by Shakespeare’s time, virtue had divided along gender lines to designate female chastity and manly excellence including courage and valor” (2011:25).

The Taming of the Shrew begins presenting the character of Lucentio. He is young and seems to be unexperienced in life since he left his house to study at the university of Padua and he states that his objective is to achieve virtue: “For the time I study, virtue and that part of philosophy will I apply that treats of happiness by virtue specially to be achieved” (1.1, l. 17-20). Therefore, virtue is not only applied to women, but also men should be virtuous. However, although he seemed to be very determined on following his plan of studying, it is interrupted by the sudden appearance of Bianca.

Lucentio somehow represents the student, education, and the humanist ideology which as we have seen in previous sections of this essay had a great importance during the Renaissance and Early Modern period. Notwithstanding his plan of going to Padua’s University at the end of the play, it is not clear whether he continues with his studies or now that he is married he will spend his time dealing with his father’s business.

Although Lucentio is quite focused on being virtuous, he shows that his will is not strong enough to commit himself to his plan. In addition, he shows a great lack of honour and trust when he makes up his plan for wooing Bianca, disguising as a tutor in order to woo her. As if this act was not enough, he and Tranio lied to the pedant so that he impersonates his father in order to be able to marry Bianca, an action which subsequently implied a great distress on his real father when he thinks that his son has

been murdered by his servant. Despite all this questionably virtuous actions, when everything is revealed, Lucentio quickly asks his father for his forgiveness. Moreover, it should be noted that the Lucentio is the first one that regrets the way he has done everything and not Bianca to her father.

Petruchio has more lines in the play compared to Lucentio and his character is complex, and his acts and words have different interpretations. Petruchio comes to Padua in search of a wealthy wife since his father has died. "One rich enough to be Petruchio's wife, as wealth is burden of my wooing dance" (1.2, l. 66-67). From lines 68 to 74 he continues describing what is important for him in a marriage. He mentions other famous women such as Xanthippe or Sybil, some of them known for their lack of virtue for several reasons, for instance, their anger. Hortensio offers him Katherine as a wife, but he warns Petruchio that "her only fault, and that is faults enough, is that she is intolerable curst, and shrewd, and froward" (1.2, l.87-89). Despite this, Petruchio is willing to undertake the daunting task of taming a potentially unruly wife.

For Petruchio, as it was common at those times, marriage does not necessarily imply love, and since he steps in Baptista's house he is determined to marry Katherine even though he still does not know her, and he has been warned about her bad character. However, as long as the lady has money, he does not care about her bad behaviour. This attitude shows that Petruchio has a lot of confidence in himself. Some readers might think that this way of thinking of Petruchio is not very virtuous, but it has to be taken into account the social and historical context of the play and that time, in the marriages of the upper classes, the social and economic advantages of the match weighted more than the love that the couple could feel or not.

The wedding day is very important in the play for several reasons that we shall see later. In addition, it is also an opportunity to see more details about Petruchio's attitude and behaviour. The way Petruchio appears in his wedding and the attitude he shows during the ceremony is completely unsuitable not only on account of his social position but also for any honorable and Christian man. He sometimes mocks the sacred rituals by not taking them seriously. He also appears late dressed in improper clothes embarrassing Katherine and her family and provoking anything but laughter in all the guests. "To wish me wed to one half-lunatic, a madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack" (2.1, l. 287-288)

The other gentlemen in the play try to protect Petruchio by stating that he is an honorable man who would never fail to show up at his wedding. An example of this can

be seen through Tranio's words: "Petruchio means but well, whatever fortune stays on him from his word. Though he be blunt, I know him passing wise; though he be merry, yet withal he's honest" (3.1. l. 22-25)

Showing this great disrespect for religion is one of the clearest signs Petruchio's unvirtuousness. Is this attitude feigned on purpose or certainly he is so unvirtuous? Some authors, like Schuler, have proposed the comparison of Petruchio with the devil as he "exhibits the traits of several popular demonic and near demonic types: the comic stage-devil of the mystery plays" (Schuler 2004:392). Apart from Petruchio, the only character compared to the devil is Katherine as Gremio describes her: "I say a devil. Think'st thou, Hortensio, though her father very rich, any man is so very fool to be married to hell?" (1.1, l. 122-124). Even her own father refers to her as the devil: "For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit" (2.1, l. 27). It is funny to see how the only man that would dare to marry to a devil was another "devil" like Petruchio.

Even though both members of the couple are compared to the devil, even Gremio, who was very hard criticizing Katherine, admits that her shrewdness is nothing compared to Petruchio who is worse than her. "Gremio: Why, he's a devil, a devil, a very fiend. Tranio: Why, she's a devil, a devil, the devil's dam. Gremio: Tut, she's a lamb, a dove, a fool to him" (3.2, l. 154-156)

Towards the end of the play, it seems that in some way Petruchio has changed his attitude to a humbler and more correct one as we can see in the scene when Katherine sees the clothes that have been prepared for her: "Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor, for 'tis the mind that makes the body rich; and as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds, so honour peereth in the meanest habit" (4.3. Pag.203, l. 168-171). Although Petruchio have never seemed to be interested in clothes as he stated on his wedding day that Katherine was marrying him and not his clothes. It is not clear if this shows a real change in attitude or is part of his taming plan. However, Petruchio has always been a virtuous man, and everything was part of his taming plan. An instance of his virtuous character is how he tries to improve Kate's reputation during the courtship. Although everyone warned him about Katherine's personality, he tells Gremio, Tranio and Baptista that she is "modest as the dove; she is not hot, but temperate as the morn; for patience she will prove a second Grissel, and Roman Lucrece for her chastity" (act 2.1, l.293-296).

Furthermore, at some times in the play it could seem that Petruchio does not care for Katherine, due to the way he treats her and the fact that he stated that he was

interested in her money. However, during different scenes of the play, Petruchio requires from Kate a public sign of her affection, namely a kiss. This could imply the willingness of Petruchio to be a right and loving husband despite his interest on her money and dowry could suggest that he only cares about his own wealthiness and the benefits he could get from this marriage, and this is definitely another virtuous feature of him.

Also, concerning the way he treats Katherine, contrary to the view that he is cruel to her and forces her to be submissive, he truly behaves like an honorable and virtuous man by the way in which he respects her. One example is when during the courtship he assures Kate that he is a gentleman (act 2.1, l.220) and he did not strike back when she hits him after saying so. We could find another example in their wedding night, they did not have any sexual intercourse for according to Curtis “in her chamber, making a sermon of continency to her” (4.1, l.170). As they were married, during the Tudor era it was not strange if the husband wanted to exercise his right of consummating the act with his wife. By contrast, although Petruchio does not openly say it, he respects Katherine who had a difficult day due to their wedding and the long trip to her new home.

Summing up, although Petruchio sometimes lacks delicacy and display some cruel taming techniques to Katherine, it could be said that he is a virtuous man for distinct reasons. Firstly, despite the way he showed up to his wedding, he is faithful to his word. Secondly, he is polite with Katherine and respects her as it is expected from a gentleman. Thirdly, he protects Kate and tries to improve his reputation even though sometimes this is done with irony. Finally, even though he is too harsh in the taming, according to his point of view, all was done in care for her, proving that he eventually he will be a good husband.

6. THE TAMING: HOW KATHERINE REACHES VIRTUE

The taming is the process by which Petruchio attempts to control Katherine so that she stops her unvirtuous behaviour. It is difficult to say if this process already started during the courtship or later, but a clear starting point would be the wedding day. During this day, Petruchio humiliates Kate several times. First, he arrived late to his own wedding, and this represents a great offense against her, especially when Petruchio knew about her reputation and by arriving late, he would induce the guests to think that he would not show up to the wedding because he might not be brave enough to marry Kate. Even

Katherina herself recognizes it when she says: “Now must the world point at poor Katherine and say lo, there is mad Petruchio’s wife, if it would please him come and marry her” (3.2, l. 18-20).

When he arrives to the wedding, he is wearing old garments, a different pair of boots in which one is laced and the other is buckled, a rusty sword, a broken hilt. Thus, he is wearing so inadequate clothes for his position and in such an important day in which it was normal to wear your best clothes. During the Early Modern period, clothes had a significant importance since they were a sign of high position and wealthiness. Even Baptista is angry at him and blames him for these unrespectful actions: “Why, sir, you know this is your wedding-day. First were we sad, fearing you would not come, now sadder, that you come so unprovided” (3.2, l. 96-98). Even Tranio acknowledges that his garments are not suitable for a wedding: “see not your bride in these unreverent clothes” (3.2, l. 111). Petruchio is so properly undressed that it had to be done on purpose, but he does not want to give importance to it: “to me she’s married, not unto my clothes” (3.2, l. 116). Again, it is done on purpose to reaffirms his power over his wife.

The details of the wedding service are not seen in the play, but we are able to know how it was because Gremio talks about it to Tranio. During the wedding service he also showed disrespect for the sacred ritual by giving completely inappropriate replies when he is asked if he accepted Katherine as his wife: “ay, by gog’s wounds” (3.2, l.159) and then by swearing loudly. During the feast, the offense to Katherine continues with his denial to enjoy the wedding feast because he has to leave hastily. Although the rest of the guests try to convince him not to leave, he is determined to do so. It is curious here that even Katherine tries to convince him to stay in a gentle way by asking him to stay for the sake of his love for her but when Petruchio rejects the idea again, she again becomes angry and states that she will enjoy the feast until she pleases to go. However, Petruchio forces her to leave because he thinks he has the right to do so since she is his wife: “I will be master of what is mine own” (3.2, l. 231).

When Petruchio and Kate are in their house, the taming becomes harder to endure for Katherine. The first report we get of their new life as a married couple comes from Grumio. Curtis, another servant, asks him if Katherine is such a shrew as people say and the answer of his interlocutor is: “She was, before this frost, but thou know’st winter tames man, woman, and beast: for it hath tamed my old master, and my new mistress” (4.1, p.19-21). From these words we can infer that Katherine had a difficult

journey to her new home and that it was too cold for her, perhaps because his husband did not provide enough comfort for her to travel. Besides, she also fell off her horse and Petruchio instead of helping her, beat Grumio: “how he left her with the horse upon her, how he beat me because her horse stumbled” (4.1, l. 66-68).

When they arrive at their house, Petruchio is very rude with his servants in such a way that, although they have prepared everything for the couple’s arrival, Petruchio is not satisfied at all. The same happens with the dinner they prepared, although they served a juicy lamb, Petruchio complains that it is burnt and dry. Using this excuse, he did not allow Katherine to eat anything although he perfectly knows that she is starving, and she showed her willingness to eat.

He also uses as an excuse the theory of the Four Humours, which was, as it is well known, was a theory proposed by the ancient Greeks and quite popular during the Elizabethan period. This theory proposed that in the body we had different body fluids that had to be balanced. The excess or lack of eating certain foods would unbalance these humours, consequently provoking diseases. When Petruchio proposes that it is better not to eat mutton apparently he is suggesting so because eating lamb would increase a choleric temperament and both of them are already choleric and angry: “and better twere that both of us did fast, since, of ourselves, ourselves are choleric, than feed it with such over-roasted flesh” (4.1, l.161-163). There is another reference to this theory when Grumio says: “I fear is too choleric a meat” (4.3, l.19). However, it is difficult to know if Grumio does not allow Katherine to eat meat because he also believes in this theory or because he is following Petruchio’s commands. Probably, Grumio is following his master’s orders, for in the following lines he mocks at her by offering beef and mustard, then denying the beef and offering just mustard knowing that she is hungry and would eat anything.

Thus, part of the taming includes deprivation of food and sleep: “she ate no meat today, nor none shall eat. Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not” (4.1, l.184-185). This quotation also could suggest that the decision of not having meat because she was too choleric was just an excuse for making her not to eat anything. At different moments Petruchio justifies his behaviour towards her by saying that “all is done in reverent care of her” (4.1, l.191). He also states that “this is a way to kill a wife with kindness, and thus I’ll curb her mad and headstrong humour” (4.1, l.195-196). With these lines it is clear that Petruchio has a plan to tame Kate and change her into a virtuous woman. We are not able to know if Katherine is aware of Petruchio’s plan o

she just thinks that it is his own character, but she complains that he uses the excuse of love for treating her so badly: “he does it under name of perfect love” (4.2, l.12).

Petruchio continues with his game of depriving Kate of food until he gets the response he wants. An example is the following: “seest how diligent I am, to dress thy meat myself, and bring it thee. I am sure, sweet Kate, this kindness merit thanks. What, not a word? Nay then” (4.3, l. 39-42). In this example we can see that Petruchio definitely has a plan for taming, and it is not just due to his personality that he is so mean with Kate. He makes her clear that a bad behaviour will be punished by saying to her: “The poorest service is repaid with thanks, and so shall mine before you touch the meat” (4.3, l. 46-47). At times, he knows how to be gentle and sweet with her but if Kate does not behave with him in a sweet and obedient way, he returns to his cruel behaviour with her. When Kate finally shows gratefulness to him for giving him food, she is finally able to eat.

Another similar example of taming with this kind of give and take game occurs during the scene of the tailor. First, Petruchio announces that they will visit Katherine's father for Bianca's wedding and they will do so dressed in the most elegant, rich, and fancy clothes. However, when the tailor shows the clothes he starts to complain about how awful they are. Although Katherine complains and says she likes the cap and that it is the fashion for gentlewomen, Petruchio tells her: “when you are gentle, you shall have one too” (4.3, l.71). Again, the same pattern, if Kate behaves good, she shall be rewarded.

Although in front of Kate, Petruchio complains about the cap and the dress and states that he does not want them, hiding it from Kate, he says that he will pay the clothes. Nevertheless, when they are alone, Petruchio tells Kate that they are not going to wear those fancy clothes: “we will unto your father's house, even in these honest mean habiliments. Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor, for 'tis the mind that makes the body rich” (4.3, l. 166-169). In this quotation, Petruchio is being gentle with Kate, and he comforts her giving her reasons why they do not need rich clothes. At the same time, he refers to some of the traditional virtues, namely humility and moderation, preventing her from being vain. In other words, he is appealing to her to behave in a virtuous way. All of these actions have the same outcome, proving that Petruchio's will and desires always prevail despite the objections of her wife. According to Langis, Petruchio always uses a gentle and polite language with Kate in order to present her a model of behaviour, but at the same time “he simultaneously performs the words and

actions of the choleric woman, to show Kate unremittingly a picture of her own vicious conduct” (Langis 2011:44). Even one of Petruchio’s servants realized about his master’s strategy: “He kills her in her own humour” (4.1, l. 168)

One the questions that may arise in the audience is whether this process of taming was done in Kate’s benefit or Petruchio’s. Although the taming was hard to endure for Katherine, it would have a benefit for both members of the couple. If Katherine improves her behaviour and become a virtuous woman, Petruchio’s authority would be reinforced. Besides, a common benefit for both of them would be having a happy marriage.

Petruchio’s behaviour with Katherine have been strongly criticized by some scholars who argue that Petruchio could be obliterating Kate’s own personality and being misogynistic with her. However, there are different interpretations of this behaviour. Petruchio could also function as some sort of “teacher” for Kate. It has been mentioned in the previous sections that Kate and Bianca are motherless, and it seems that also friendless. This circumstance would influence to some extent the formation of the personality and consequently on the social skills of the characters.

For Bianca this circumstance did not have a negative effect. However, we cannot forget that Bianca has the supportive love of her father. In the case of Katherine, she did not have any guidance on how to behave properly in society, and she lacked the constant support of her father. It might be possible that her unvirtuous personality is a reaction against all the values that society expected from her.

At the end of the play, the audience has seen a change in Kate’s personality, as if she was a completely different woman. Even his father acknowledges this change when he says: “Another dowry to another daughter, for she is changed, as she had never been” (5.2, l. 114-115). However, did she really change her personality? Maybe Katherine was a virtuous woman all the time but the behaving like a shrew was a mechanism of defense for her. We cannot forget that even though she was reluctant to marry Petruchio, she complied with his father’s will. It could be that she just adapted herself to her new circumstances. In his father’s house, she could behave unvirtuously in part because his father lacks the power to control or understand her as he was only able to criticize her and compare her to her virtuous sister. When she is at her new home with her new status of a married woman, Petruchio does not tolerate this kind of behaviour.

During the taming process Kate and Petruchio had different choices. For instance, Petruchio might allow Kate to continue with her disrupting behaviour. Another

option was that he could control her using not only verbal but also physical abuse. The result of these options would be extremely unhappy for both of them. If Petruchio used physical violence towards her, her personality would be undermined, and she would live scared of Petruchio and feeling loath for him.

If Petruchio would have chosen the first option, letting Kate to behave unvirtuously it would also be bad for both of them, since they would be fighting and having arguments on a daily basis and their social reputation could be damaged. On the one hand, people in their social circle would laugh at Petruchio for not being able to control his wife. On the other hand, the reputation of Kate would continue being that of a shrewd and unvirtuous woman. Having this kind of reputation would not allow her to fit in her community as she did not meet the social expectations of women at the time, who were supposed to be virtuous. If she were able to fit in the society she lived in and behave as the docile, sweet, obedient woman that was required by Petruchio, for sure their marriage would be a success.

Katherina learnt to have a virtuous behaviour in a hard way, for if she had been virtuous since the beginning of the marriage she would not have been deprived of food and sleep. Thus, she acknowledges that her previous behaviour would not work in her new life. Therefore, this is why Petruchio is referred to in this essay as a kind of teacher for her, providing her with the guidance she lacked during her life on how to behave virtuously according to the social etiquette of the time. “Petruchio is the agent by whom Kate is saved from herself, as it were, and from her reputation as an undesirable woman” (Hjelm 2016:69).

In addition, despite her recognized shrewishness, during the whole play Katherine shows a unique personality. Part of Petruchio’s role as a teacher is to help her to channel her character into a socially acceptable form by becoming virtuous. “He helps her to re-create herself while retaining the best part of her personality, bringing her from a woman who protests to a one who acts to achieve her goals” (Hjelm 2016:69).

The case of Bianca is different since her personality is not changed; she just smartly hid the worst traits of her personality. The audience could notice that somehow there has been an inversion of roles. While the eldest sister was regarded by society as a bad-tempered woman not suitable for marriage, she changed at the end of the play into the perfect submissive wife. By contrast, in the case of Bianca she was regarded in the play as the perfect portrayal of Renaissance beauty and virtue but at the end of the play

she shows certain qualities that were attributed to her sister. Most probably, she was disguising some traits of her character to his father and some of her suitors in order to get a husband and, when she got one, she showed her real character which was not as ideal as in the beginning of the play.

In any case, there has been a change in Katherine's attitude and it has nothing to do with romantic love. How could she develop so early feelings for Petruchio when he has been so cruel to her? She is just being practical. If she had no other choice than to accept the marriage and being Petruchio so stubborn, she preferred to obey Petruchio. Therefore, is the so-called taming really successful? Or it is just that Katherine surrendered due to the circumstances? One plausible reason might be that she realized that behaving unvirtuously would not lead her to a happy marriage nor a happy social life in her community.

As *The Taming of the Shrew* is a comedy, the audience might expect a kind of farce and a play full of comical elements, even though if the play is examined deeply, is not easy to laugh at the way Katherine is treated sometimes; but it is this treatment that Petruchio gives Katherine that makes the audience sympathize with her. For part of the audience it might be easy to understand the shrewd behaviour of Katherine given the treatment of favour that his father bestows on Bianca. Besides, she is forced to marry a man she barely knows and then he treats her in bad way by not allowing her to eat or enjoy her wedding.

However, as the play is a comedy, Shakespeare could not be so openly dramatic and that is one of the reasons why he added comical elements to the play. In addition, Shakespeare might have another purpose when he wrote the play. "At least two distinct levels of game playing are employed in Shakespeare's comedies: the first, which is recreational in nature, and a second which is re-creation and involves a more deliberate action and which is task or goal oriented" (Hjelm 2016:67-68). Conduct books for women with guidance of how to behave were common during this period. In the form of a comedy, something that was attractive and enjoyable by the audience, he could introduce a moral tale for women. With this play, he was advising women that it was better for them and for their marriage to behave virtuously in order to have a happy life and if they did not submit they could see the consequences of being an unvirtuous wife in the taming that Katherine suffered. Thus, Katherine changing her shrewdness for virtuosity at distinct levels, becomes a model of behaviour for other women. For a woman, being virtuous was not only guaranty of her inclusion and acceptance in society

but also a way to deal with an abusive husband. In some respects, Petruchio could be considered an abusive husband, at least during the wooing and taming scenes.

The submission of Katherine at the end of the play could also be regarded as a way of self-protection against the abusive manners of her husband. Thus, being virtuous had a double purpose, firstly to fit in the society and secondly, to make their marriage more successful and in some cases even reform their abusive husbands through their virtue. “The larger purpose, that woman’s behaviour can affect people outside the marriage unit, is an element of “empowering” obedience. Women, then, are responsible for the souls of a community in addition to their own and those of their families” (Murphy 2012:261). Therefore, female virtue was a duty for women, not only in marriage but also a social duty with the purpose of maintaining the order of the community.

In act 4.5 we can see the initial results of the taming. When the couple is about to start their journey to Padua, they discuss if it is day or night, and although the scene is set during the day, Petruchio insist that it is night. Even though, he is perfectly aware that it is the sun that shines brightly, he is evaluating Kate to see if she agrees with him. Although initially Katherine disagrees with him, she realizes that it is better to please her husband and surrenders to his will.

However, the last scene is of paramount importance for the play, the part of Bianca’s and Lucentio’s wedding shows the results of the taming. Petruchio, Hortensio, and Lucentio make a bet to see who has the most obedient wife. While neither Bianca, nor the widow come when their husbands command, Katherine surprises everyone, starting with her father, when she appears at once. By doing this, Katherine shows in public her new behaviour while the other wives reveal their disobedience, which in the case of Bianca, was completely unexpected for the rest of the audience.

The peak of the scene is Kate’s speech (5.2, l.136-179), which is of foremost importance because on one side, she publicly shows her new acquired virtue; and on the other side, she gives a lesson to women in general, including the audience, on how to be a good wife. “The purpose of the performance of feminine virtue is thus not only external acknowledgment, but also the ability to teach others how to be virtuous” (Murphy 2012:266). Thus, Petruchio wins the bet and declares that her wife is the most virtuous: “I will win my wager better yet / And show more sigh of her obedience / Her new-built virtue and obedience” (5.2, l.117-118).

7. CONCLUSIONS

Through this master's dissertation, we have offered an analysis of *The Taming of the Shrew* focusing on female virtue and how it could be achieved in order to have a successful marriage and fit into society's conventions. The play is a good portrayal of diverse ways of wooing and relationships during the Elizabethan period. We get to see what it was proper or not in an amusing way. Moreover, the character of Katherine is an interesting and complex one since she has to face different problems during the play, such as the preference of his father for his younger sister or the way she had to marry a stranger and suffer the taming. This situation poses a dilemma in her, whether to completely submit to her husband in order to have a happy marriage and restore her reputation; or continue with her disruptive and unvirtuous behaviour.

"Critics have produced an echo chamber, arguing that the play is either irredeemably misogynistic or emblematic of feminist subversion and resistance" (Hutcheon 2011:317). While I agree with the scholars who criticize that Petruchio's behaviour with Katherine is not correct, the historical and social context of the play at the time it was written cannot be ignored. Thus, what it was normal and common during the Early Modern period, it might shock the modern reader.

Society rules and values have changed enormously since the times when the play was written. When a writer creates a piece of literature, he or she is transmitting ideas, beliefs or thoughts through literature and it is inevitable that the social and historical milieu might have an influence on his or her work. For this reason, literature cannot be submitted to a moral judgement based on the values of the modern society. Therefore, it is difficult for a woman of the modern audience to feel identified with the problems Katherine faces, at least in the Western culture. However, for a woman of the Elizabethan period it could be a normal situation. Thus, despite the fact that the play is a comedy, it also presents a moral dilemma for women and therefore it has a moral purpose. There was no secret that for successful relationships by being virtuous women could not only reach marital happiness, but also protect her own reputation, the one of their families, and even their community by being examples of virtuosity and good behaviour.

Part of the value of Shakespeare's plays is how he dealt with universal topics such as love, death, power, betrayal, or revenge, in a way that was valid for the audience of the 16th and 17th centuries as well as for the modern audience today. *The Taming of the Shrew* deals with some of those topics, love, and relationships. Although *The*

Taming of the Shrew has not been considered by scholars as great as other Shakespeare's comedies such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, it was very popular with the Elizabethan audience. The fact that this play had many different adaptations from theatre to cinema, such as the one by Franco Zeffirelli in 1967 starring Elizabeth Taylor or the modern adaptation *Ten Things I Hate About You* (1999), proves the popularity that it still keeps with the modern audience.

8. REFERENCES

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