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**A Thematic Study of Shakespeare's The Taming of the
Shrew**

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Dedication

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who has supported me to get to this point. Then I dedicate this graduation thesis to every person who sacrificed his life for the sake of the homeland, all the martyrs, especially the October martyrs who could not live these moments because they lost their lives in order to provide a better life for others. I dedicate it to my family, especially my mother, to Prof. DR. Raad Kareem and every professor or teacher who supported us to complete our study journey, last but not least to my friend (Dhuha) who helped me a lot and was a source of motivation for me whenever I felt despair.

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The Introduction

Shakespeare became the most famous playwright of his time, writing at least 38 different plays. He was one of the writers who had given numerous plays in the London theater by 1592. Most playwrights of the time collaborated with others at some point and critics agreed that Shakespeare was among them, for example, *The Taming of the Shrew* is derived from an ancient story, and *The Comedy of Errors* is based on the plot of an ancient Roman writer.

In the early seventeenth century, Shakespeare wrote "Problem Plays" such as *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *All's Well that Ends Well* and a number of his best-known tragedies. Critics believe that Shakespeare's greatest tragedies are considered the wealth of his art. Among the most famous of Shakespeare's tragedies is *Hamlet*. (Muir , 2005)

Shakespeare switched to tragic comedies or romantic plays and completed three major plays, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, in addition to some other plays. Some commentators saw that this shift in the theatrical aspect is evidence of a calmer interpretation of Shakespeare's life, but it was merely a reflection of the literary aspect prevailing at the time.

The Taming of the Shrew is a comedy written between 1590-1594 and first printed in 1623. The play talks about the volatile relation or the unconventional marriage between Petruchio who is trying to dominate his wife and Katherine. The play consists five acts and it is presented as a play within a play where a person plays a trick with a drunk named Christopher into thinking that he is actually a gentleman. It is one of

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Shakespeare's earliest comedies, and it shares many essential characteristics with his other romantic comedies include lighthearted and slapstick humor, disguises and deception, and a happy ending in which most of the characters come out satisfied. (Allen and Muir, 1981).

The main plot of the play presents the ongoing struggle between the shrew, Katherine, and Petruchio, and his attempt to subjugate her in various ways such as preventing her from sleeping and eating, etc. The sub-plot centres on the other partnerships which develop throughout the play, primarily focusing on Bianca and her suitors, but also following Hortensio's relationship with the Widow. (Thompson, 1984).

This paper deals with major and minor themes in the play. The paper is divided into an introduction, a section on major themes, another section on minor themes, and a conclusion that sums up the findings of the paper.

Section One:

The Major Themes

The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's comedy plays, as a romantic comedy that focuses on the relationships between men and women but they develop from the initial interest in marriage, this play differs from the romantic comedy as it does not end with the wedding, but rather focuses on the relationship between them after marriage. The play tends to social and economic relations and their impact on marriage. The choice of the husband is based on his economic level and social status instead of relying on the inner feelings of the lovers, in addition to how this relationship affects their families, not only their lives, and manages this relationship between the husband and the father of the wife, so it becomes like a transaction involving the transfer of money and gifts. (Brown, 1957: P. 57-58; see also P- 94-99).

The Taming of the Shrew is about the marrying Baptista to his daughters. Throughout the play there is tension between the concepts of marriage, one of the concepts of marriage is that there is love between them and this is what Lucentio desires with Bianca, but in this play the relationship of marriage is a matter of mutual economic benefit and Baptista embodies this issue when he negotiates the dowries of his two daughters. Such as in this quot " Then tell me, if I get your daughter's love, what dowry shall I have with her to wife " (Shakespeare. 1623) It seems that he is selling his daughters, for example, in the relationship of

Lucentio and Bianca, he is competing between Lucentio and Hortensio and accepts the person who is economically better. He will not agree to Lucentio until he secures his financial position. In addition to Hortensio's

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relationship with the widow, he soon abandons his love for Bianca and marries a rich widow, all this refers to the importance of money in choosing the right husband or wife.

As for Petruchio and Katherina's relationship, marriage is just a way to get money and impose his authority on it. After all, he was able to tame her and make her obedient to him such as in this quote "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, Thy head, thy sovereign," (v, ii, 162-163). At the end of the play, when Lucentio come to Petruchio and Katherina to celebrate his wedding banquet, this indicates that marriage is a means of uniting families rather than a relationship between a married couple. (Droun, 2000: p. 63) .

The Taming of the Shrew is considered a comedy play, but behind it lies the issue of taming women and making them obedient to them. Here, The issue of gender and discrimination between men and women is an important issue, women are treated as commodities or things to raise the status of men and enhance their economic and social level. The play includes a number of characters that fit the traditional role of women and men, with the idea that the man is the dominant character and the woman is the submissive or obedient character. The play revolves around Petruchio's attempt to tame his wife, Katherina, and try to make her obedient to him in order to fit the traditional role of a wife, so this is the main idea of the play, destroying the spirit of a strong woman and making her subservient to her husband, so Petruchio uses the method of

humiliation, starvation and deprivation with Katherina to make her give up her behavior that does not fit with traditional women. (Stone, 1977: p. 520).

At that time, in Shakespeare's time, weak women were valued more than strong women. So Baptista valued Bianca more than Katherina, as she

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contrasts with her sister Kate, she is a traditional woman, obedient to her

father. Bianca's personality fits the traditions of that society and is more of a choice for marriage because men want a woman who is submissive to them: "What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see She is your treasure, she must have a husband, I must dance bare-foot on her wedding-day" (II, i, 31-33) In this quote Katherina talks with her father about Bianca and how much she is in their favour, and that she deserves to be married because she fits the traditional role of a woman. So, her father loves her very much, but under this innocent and obedient image there is a woman with an independent personality, especially in the last scene when she underestimated Kate's obedience to her husband after taming her, all this shows the other side of her personality .

As for Kate, she is a domineering, quick-tempered, temperamental character and thus reflects the traditional image of the ideal woman that men want to marry, so Huarchio tells her that no one will marry her. Despite her domineering personality, she hides behind this personality a sensitive woman who tries to protect herself from men in her community, for example, her father prefers her younger sister over her, so she tries to protect herself by trying to stay away from the marriage arranged by her father. Her hostility toward suitors particularly distresses her father but her anger and rudeness disguise her deep-seated sense of insecurity and her jealousy toward her sister, Bianca. She does not resist her suitor Petruchio

forever, though, and she eventually subjugates herself to him, despite her previous repudiation of marriage .Petruccio uses different methods to tame Katherina " For I am he am born to tame you, Kate, And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate Conformable as other household Kates." (II, i , 281283).

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In this quote Petruccio confronts Katherina with his intentions when he says. "I was born to tame you, Kate." He used the language of animal domestication and called it the wild cat, meaning the authority or the rebellious. Here, Kate, despite knowing his intentions, does not protest against marrying him, and at the end, he will succeed in taming her and becoming a traditional woman. In the final scene, Petruccio, Lucino, and Hortensio compete over who controls his wife more and who is more submissive to her husband, Katherina who is more tamed and more obedient to her husband. " Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, Thy head, thy sovereign, one that cares for thee, And for thy maintenance commits his body". (V, ii,158-160) (Shiqin, 2020: p. 57) .

Although her domineering personality, inside her she tends to submit and obey to men . Therefore, this play was subjected to some criticism because, in their view, it urges misogyny, as men do not act according to the traditional pattern of both sexes, but the women punished if she deviates from the traditional role, she must be obedient and submissive to her husband with whatever he wants. All this shows the sexism of men, misogyny and their treatment as commodities. (Fredericksen, 11 Nov 2013).

Disguise plays an important role in the play, all the characters disguised some of them physically by changing their roles and some by hiding their feelings and changing their personalities. Lucentio disguises himself as a teacher to work with Bianca and obtain her love, he will disguise himself as a private tutor named Cambio, so he can teach and court Bianca and his servant Tranio disguises himself as Lucentio. As for Hortensio, he disguises himself as a Latin teacher (Litio) and dresses up to be close to Bianca and to obtain her love and persuasiveness to marry her.

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Lucentio brings someone in disguise to be his father.

For Petruchio, his disguise is not in order to deceive anyone, but to tame Kate and embarrass her in front of society. When he arrives at his wedding dressed as a madman, Petruchio aims to embarrass Kate and force her to give up her bossy personality, wanting her to know the nature of their relationship "To me she's married, not unto my clothes." (III, ii, 112) By surprising her with his behavior, he detracted from her opportunity to show her rebellious behavior in front of the community and increase the community's sympathy with her, as he was more horrible in his behavior than her.

For Katherina, she was a domineering, rebellious character who did not get along with anyone in her life, but after her marriage she became the most obedient character to her husband. It is possible that she disguised herself as a weak and obedient character to convince her husband that he could actually tame her: "I am ashamed that women are so simple/to offer war where they should kneel for peace" (V, ii, 161-162) through this quote we wonder if Kate has been tamed, if she is pretending to please her husband, or if the two are pretending to surprise Balthasia and the characters. (SHAKESPEARE, 2010: p. 215).

Section Two:

The Minor Themes

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare presents us with different types of love concepts, there is the relationship between the daughter and the father, and there is conventional relation in the sense of pure love or the sincere relationship between two people and there is the conventional relationship that occurs as a result of interests or benefit to them for money or for other reasons, such as the relationship of Katherina and Petruchio, where their relationship is devoid of love and compatibility between them.

Petruchio and Katherina's relationship is unconventional, devoid of love only for the sake of money and wealth, Petruchio is drawn to marry Katherina for her wealth, as well as his tendency to challenge and tame Kate and dominate her. (Hillegass, 1971: p.56).

Their relationship is a reflection of marriage in the sixteenth century, where marriage between families is organized on the basis of mutual benefits between them and without giving women the right to choose and

without concern for love or emotions, maybe they learn to love after marriage like Katherina eventually did, although we're not sure if she's really happy or if she pretends to be a good and obedient wife.

Despite Petruchio's intentions, they eventually share a love that transcends the norm in that era. Although Petruchio uses different methods with Kat, such as making her wait at the wedding, dressing her in a crazy outfit, or depriving her of sleep and food, they eventually agree and their relationship becomes one of a loving couple more than any other relationship.

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Pet. First kiss me, Kate, and we will.

Kath. What, in the midst of the street?

Pet. What, art thou ashamed of me?

Kath. No, sir, God forbid; but ashamed to kiss.

Pet. Why, then, let's go home again. Come, sirrah, let's away.

Kath. Nay, I will give thee a kiss. Now pray thee, love, stay. Pet. Is not this well? Come, my sweet Kate. Better once than never, for never too late. (V, ii, 131-138).

This quote illustrates the development of the relationship between Katherina and her husband, and this represents the romantic aspect of love in the play . (Dash, 1981: p.61) .

The same thing applies to Hortensio, who marries a rich widow and leaves his attempts with Bianca for money. The widow inherited money and lands from her husband .So , it seems clear that the men in this play treat women and marriage as a business deal, and women are a means of negotiation, as in the last scene when the wives were bet with a hundred crowns.

The other type of love is the traditional love that applies to Bianca and all her suitors (Lucentio – Hortensio – Germio – Tranio) each of them trying to woo Bianca and get her love. Especially her relationship with Lucentio, he was fascinated by her beauty as he describes her, he compares her to mythical women and praises her physical and mental beauty .

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. (I, i,174-176).

This quote shows Lucino's concern for her external appearance and ignoring what she should be, and thus this romantic love means attention to the superficial form and ignores the essence, as well as the same applies
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to Hortensio and Germio , they call her “the jewel of my life”, “sweeter than perfume” , and this indicates an interest in the external beauty and this explain their brutal behavior with Katherina because they prefer traditional women more than rebellious women and for them Bianca is an example of traditional women. (Rohrsen,1977: p.228-231).

The relationship between fathers and sons in this play focuses on how they deal with their children of marriageable age, whether the relationship of Baptista, Katherina and Bianca, or the relationship of Vincentio and Lucentio, and even the fictitious relationship between Lucentio disguised as Tranio and his imaginary father, all of whom deal with marriage as a financial negotiation that serves their interests .

The first relationship between Baptista and his two daughters Katherina (Kate) and Bianca. Baptista, a rich man who lives in Padua, is

determined to marry his two daughters to a suitable man, but because of Katherina's difficult temper and her rejection of all men, he finds it difficult to marry her so, he decided that he wouldn't be allowed to any one to marry Bianca before Katherina's marriage .Baptista provided his daughters with an economic and social position, hee made an effort to educate them as well as learn music , despite his cares in his daughters, he considers their marriage an economic bargain for money and considers Bianca more valuable because she conforms to their beliefs and they prefer women who are submissive to them " Tarry, Petruchio, I must go with thee,

For in Baptista's keep my treasure is.
He hath the jewel of my life in hold,
His youngest daughter, beautiful Bianca,
And her withholds from me and other more, ... (I,ii, 112-116) .

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In addition, in the second act, when an argument occurs between Katherina and Bianca, Baptista rushes to defend Bianca without knowing the reasons. " For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit! "Why dost thou wrong her that did ne'er wrong thee?/ When did she cross thee with a bitter word?" (II, ii,26-28) .

These quotes illustrate Baptista's and the rest of the men's preference for Bianca. In the second quote, Baptista is clearly biased towards Bianca, so this explains why Kate is angry and her hate to men. In addition to Baptista's behavior when Katherina is engaged to Petruchio , he warns Petruchio about Kate and told him " arm'd for some unhappy words " It is clear that the main reason for Katherina's domineering behavior and her rejection of men is her father's treatment of her, at the end of the play he seems happy that Petruchio has managed to tame Kate according to this quote " Now fair befall thee, good Petruchio!

The wager thou hast won, and I will add
Unto their losses twenty thousand crowns,
Another dowry to another daughter,
For she is chang'd as she had never been. (V, ii, 123-127)(
Chronology of Shakespeare's Works" 2006: p. 17) .

The second relationship between Lucentio and his father who is a very wealthy man from Pisa, did not have a role in the beginning of the play, but his appearance in the fourth act is of great importance, as it led to an increase in confusion in the play. When he was on his way to visit his son in Padua, he met Petregho and Kat and they told him that his son had become her sister's husband. He thought they were joking, Upon arriving in Padua, he found another person impersonating him, especially since the servants were supporting the imaginary Vincentio

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(This is one of the important means that Shakespeare uses in a comic way in his plays to increase the ambiguity and confusion in the play) so, when they were about to transfer Vientisio to prison, Lucentio was forced to reveal his true personality, and thus Vientisio's presence was the means to end the disguise and reveal their real personalities .

Lucentio and Venito's relationship is short in the play, but they are distinguished by their more respect for each other. At the end of the play, Pendulo urges Lucentio to deny his father, but Lucentio asks his father to forgive him:

BIONDELLO: O! we are spoiled and—yonder he is: deny him,
Forswear him, or else we are all undone.
LUCENTIO: [Kneeling] Pardon, sweet father.

VINCENTIO: Lives my sweet son? (V,i, 91-95).

Lucentio's appreciation for his father reveals the value of Veentisto, although he was ignored upon his arrival in Padua, but he triumphed in the end " Fear not, Baptista, we will content you . " (V,ii, 99). It means his ability to win and convince Baptista (they treat marriage as a business deal). (Shakespeare,1992: p.143-138) .

The sitting of The Taming of the Shrew in Padua is considered an educational place, as it is a famous university. The play included many educational scenes, Baptista spent a lot of money on educating his daughters to expand the scope of education, but in general, the play tends to learn from life experiences more than formal education , for example, the main reason for Lucentio's coming to Padua is to continue his studies,

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but he abandons his goal due to the influence of passion, after meeting Bianca , Lucentio and Hortensio take advantage of the role of the teacher, but they also do it in a funny way, as they use the teaching as an excuse to get close to Bianca and once Lucentio achieves his goal he leaves the education . However, formal education was not common for all women of

that period, even middle class only for high class women, Shakespeare explains that education was inevitable for both sexes, but even educated women required obedience and this idea is present even in education when Bainca was asked to leave the theater she did so and said "My books and instruments shall be my company,/ On them to look, and practice by myself". (I,I, 82–83).

Another example of learning is learning from life represented by Katherina and Tranio, although Tranio did not receive a formal education, but he is an intelligent person and knows how to act and extricate himself and Lucentio from difficult situations, this shows that he obtained a social education through life experiences . As for Katherina, she is a strong-willed person, but she has learned how to be submissive to her husband after Petruchio uses violent tactics to tame her. In addition, Hortensio tries to learn from Petruchio in how to deal with his wife because they consider the relationship of Petruchio and Katherina to be the ideal relationship , he has been an enthusiastic onlooker in Petruchio's "taming school":

Well, Petruchio, this has put me in heart.
Have to my widow, and if she be froward,
Then hast thou taught Hortensio to be untoward. (VI , V , 78-80)

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So, if the education shown in the play is merely a means or a pretext for getting close to the beloved (Lucentio and Hortensio) or trying to change someone by violent means such as Petruchio, then we consider the scenes to be a criticism of formal education and a preference for learning through life experiences as Tranio. (Kocic-Zámbó , 2019: p.8-12) .

The play is concerned with the social stratification (the upper class and the lower class) but the issue of disguise in this play made great differences, for example, Tranio is a servant but he disguises as a gentleman or the man who disguises himself as a vincentio and Lucentio as Cambio but , at the end, everyone returns to their real position or class. Shakespeare presents the way of dealing with people depending on their dress or the way the individual behaves, through these things the identity

of the individual is determined, Shakespeare uses this method to show some comedy and at the same time shows the arbitrary way in which they treat servants or the lower class .

The benefit of a person is determined by his social status, for example, Vincentio is ignored at first because they think he is a liar, but after Lucentio admits that he is his real father, he regained his social standing and for his wealth and social status, Baptista agreed to marry off his daughter Bianca to Lucentio.

In the end, each person returns to what corresponds to his place in society (Tranio , Lucentio, Vintencio, even Christopher Sly. Shakespeare explains that it is possible to change social class through dress, but in the end the truth will come out and everyone lives according to his place in society. (Morris, 1981: p. 1-149) .

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Conclusion:

The Taming of the Shrew is a comedy play that deals with issues of Marriage, gender, love, disguise and social order. The play opens wide areas of interpretation and analysis as we cannot determine if the play is Misogynistic, or whether Shakespeare uses this style to mock Misogynists, or, for Kate, if she really does become an obedient wife or just goes along with her husband to please him, and Petruchio is he really a loving husband trying to find happiness in his marriage, or is he trying to subdue Kate to please himself . In this play, marriage is treated

as a negotiation or financial deal between the father of the wife and the husband, where marriage takes place with rich women or men to ensure financial stability. It does not matter to find a compatible wife as much as they care about her financial level. The scenes of ridicule of love appear in the play frequently, it is linked to money and we see many scenes of (Baptista, Petruchio, Hortensio, etc.) that confirm the ironic treatment of love, the only scene that confirms love is the scenes of Bianca and Lucentio before marriage, but their relationship changes after marriage, especially when he is summoned to her in the last scene to consider it part of the bet . The woman is seen as a bargaining tool, as if she is the property of her father, and when she reaches the age of marriage, he decides who is the right husband without caring in her opinion, after married, she becomes the property of her husband legally .

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Also the play is concerned with the relationship of fathers and sons. Fathers deal with their sons or daughters at the age of marriage, where marriage negotiations are conducted between fathers. Baptista tends to his daughter Bianca more than Kate because she is obedient to him, which leads to be a shrew character as she described by the writer and her rejection of men , as for the relationship between Lucentio and his father, it is distinguished as it is distinguished by their respect and appreciation for each other.

Regarding the issue of disguise, most of the personalities used this method to achieve a specific goal, including (Lucentio, Germio, Hortensio) who exploited the issue of education to achieve their personal ends, and here is an abuse of the role of official education at that time , Lucentio, Germio, Hortensio and Suntio disguise themselves as well as their characters (Kate, Bianca who looks cute but changes after her married) but in the end everyone comes back to their real character, In addition to the issue of social hierarchy, where a person is treated according to his position and social status, and there are many scenes that confirm this issue.

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