Women and Film Adaptations
Feminism in Shakespeare’s
*The Taming of the Shrew*
This paper will focus on feminism over time as well as film adaptations. By comparing the play *The Taming of the Shrew*, written by William Shakespeare, with the movie from 1967 with the same name and also the movie *10 Things I Hate about You* from 1999, the aim is to see if, and how, the specific wave of feminism, and the woman, is portrayed in the different film adaptations. The different waves of feminism and the movie of that wave are presented together, one by one. Lastly, an analysis of the movies follows.
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1. Introduction

Ever since the beginning of film history, adaptations have been made (Hutcheon XI), simply because of the fact that the stories of old classics were favourable to adapt to the screen given that the audience already was familiar with the story and was therefore not in the need of the sound of a dialogue; they would understand the scenes even without the luxury of a dialogue. The early movies struggled with one problem in particular: the total possible length of merely twelve minutes. The problem of time limits has always been present for producers of film; when transferring to the screen, it is not possible to include the whole of what you wish to adapt. Consequently, what to focus on becomes the new issue for those interested in making an adaptation. Yet, it is not merely a question of time and money: the wish to focus on a certain perspective may display the prevailing thoughts of society and the movements following them.

Along with the success of William Shakespeare’s plays, which are continuing to prosper and being reproduced to this day, comes adaptations re-enacting and reproducing the story, strengthening the patriarchal gender hierarchy as the old still impacts the new because of the references to Shakespeare. In this essay, William Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew, a play believed to be controversial even in its own time, will be discussed in relation to two film adaptations of the play: The Taming of the Shrew (1967) and 10 Things I Hate about You (1999). There will also be slight references to the 1929 adaptation The Taming of the Shrew. The movies, being presented in 1967 and 1999, were released in periods when feminism definitely was in focus, though different versions of feminism: the 1960s can be described as the age of the second wave of feminism while the 1990s was presented with the third wave. The different spirits of the eras in question (strong political movement in the 1960s and equality in the 1990s) influences the movies produced in the particular period just as well as
the spirit of the Elizabethan era (with the Reformation and Renaissance thoughts) influenced Shakespeare when writing the play. As Katharina, the protagonist, is not acting according to the norms of a woman in early modern society, which as Stephen J. Lynch states in *Shakespearean Intertextuality: Studies in Selected Sources and Plays* was being “silent, chaste, and obedient” (6), questions have been raised about the play, arguing the play to be a criticism of society; a question which is still open for discussion and which leaves room for adaptations and interpretations and in addition it leaves room for questioning the female role in society.

The argument made in this essay is that the values and how the representation of the woman of the different waves of feminism can be found in the adaptations of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* and can be shown by comparing the traits of the waves to the adaptations. The aim is hence to analyse the adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* from a feminist historical perspective with the help of feminist film criticism as well as adaptation theory to see how the role and the image of the woman is represented.

2. Women in Film Adaptations

The three versions of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1929, 1967 and *10 Things I Hate about You*) looked at in this essay (with more focus on the two latter) are adaptations of the play, the 1929 and 1967 versions however being more so than the latest movie as the two former retain the dialogue and the language of the play. *10 Things I Hate about You* is an updated version, set in the 1990’s. The movies being adaptations establishes a need for a short introduction to adaptation studies. Adaptation is not solely the move from a reading experience to the cinema. Other media may be involved, such as videogames and musicals, but as in this particular essay the subject of movies is dealt with, film criticism needs to be put on the table and
particularly feminist film criticism. Films can be considered as mirrors of society as the movie makers are influenced by the society of which they are a part. Feminist film criticism can also be considered as a critique of society as they critique the picture of “woman” presented in most movies.

Furthermore, adaptation is not something new to us. Linda Hutcheon says in her book *A Theory of Adaptation*: “Shakespeare transferred culture’s stories from stage to page and made them available to a whole new audience”, referring to a long tradition of adaptation (2). This long tradition of adapting stories into other media spread and since the beginning of production of film, adaptations of plays and novels into this medium have been the choice of many producers, contributing to the need of a theory of adaptation. It is easily believed that adaptations are only made because of the economical gain and of course, the money issue plays its part as it is known that an already produced successful script, for example, is beneficial to adapt as it is well known and has worked before. With the help of Linda Hutcheon, we can instead look beyond economics and see that there are other reasons for adapting, for example the familiarity reason is present even without the economical gain as it makes the audience think they know what to expect from a movie, they know the story and have a referential point. When the adaptation instead changes the story or makes a shift, it is easier to compare and relate. However, as Hutcheon mentions towards the end of the book, “adaptations are not simply repetition; there is always change” (176) meaning that an adaptation is always a work on its own. It is not just another exact copy of a previous movie or script; it becomes a new product and should therefore be considered and judged as a new product. The 1967 *The Taming of the Shrew* is an perfect example of how it becomes a new product as Hutcheon states, “Paul Dehn, Suso Cecchi D’Amico, and Franco Zeffirelli, with acknowledgements to William Shakespeare, without whom they would have been at a loss for words” (93), presented in the beginning of the movie: it is not an exact replica, but merely an
adaptation. The emphasis in the three movie adaptations observed is clearly directed towards the main plot of Katharina and Petruchio/Patrick while the subplot, consisting of the aspiring love of the younger sister Bianca and Lucentio/Cameron and the pursuit of Bianca by other men, thus showing Katharina in another light. This manner of contrasting the sisters to each other can be done because of the earlier mentioned familiarity with the story. The audience know the story and know how Bianca usually acts. In *The Taming of the Shrew* (1967), cutting out much of her dialogue, thus making her the ideal woman (marriageable, obedient, quiet), changes the representation of both Bianca and Katharina. There is a bigger contrast: Katharina is more of a shrew than before. This can also be seen in *10 Things I Hate about You* where Kat is shown as a girl totally acting outside of the norms and Bianca as the good little sister who cannot do anything wrong. This will be more thoroughly discussed later on in the essay.

As mentioned earlier, using feminist film criticism in this essay is much needed and hence it needs to be presented. Feminist film criticism was – unlike feminism within other areas of criticism – developed in an early stage of film studies; it emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Feminism is useful in film studies since, as E. Ann Kaplan writes, “[f]ilm study is enhanced by feminist perspectives because the word ‘feminist’ implies a particular stance vis-à-vis women: it implies a concern with gender difference in general, but taking up the perspective of women specifically” in the introduction of her book *Feminism & Film* (1). To explain the feminist film criticism movement, Kaplan draws links between the analyzing methods used by the early feminist film theorists and those of the feminist literary theorists: they both chose to consider “women’s neglected roles in, and contributions to, various cultures and, in literary studies, to explore neglected women writers and feminist themes in fiction and drama. They also studied how women have been represented in literature across the centuries” (2-3). The New Critical approach was used which includes analyzing formal aspects of the text: such as characters and language. The feminists focused mainly on
categorizing “female social roles” and discussing “their [the roles] limiting of women to the conventional domestic sphere”. In some cases, they “analysed the resistances of certain characters to social female constraints” (Kaplan 3). The film theorists distanced themselves from and reacted towards the literary manner of analyzing, the New Criticism, and according to Kaplan, there was “[a] fascination with post-structuralism and things French” in the 1980s, making the sign with the signifier and the signified important. The sign “woman” and how it is represented in connection with the feminist waves is what will be discussed.

What do we think of when we hear the word “woman”? Similar to feminist literary studies, there are different areas within feminism which are possible to focus on and several different perspectives possible to mix with feminism. One example Kaplan mentions is exactly the question of “what signs have been used to produce meanings about women [and w]hy these signs rather than others?” A scholar may consider “art [to be] a deliberate construction by someone (or some groups of people) making art or entertainment for an imagined audience or receiver” and as it is something constructed, a certain image of the woman has been presented (2). She discusses a feminist post-structuralist manner of thinking, and while considering both the play and the adaptations, Katharina does not act according to the norm or what has come to be the normal behaviour of the particular sign “woman”, making the link between the sign and the word arbitrary. When we think of a “typical woman” and how she should behave, we do not think of a character like Katharina. Later, this in connection with the specific feminisms of the different decades is to be analysed.

Laura Mulvey somewhat continues on the subject in Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema and speaks of how the woman is traditionally there to be gazed at (she has a “to-be-looked-at-ness” to her), and the oddity of Katharina’s behaviour challenges this. The “to-be-looked-at-ness” is what the sign “woman” means within cinema. The woman is supposed to have a fixed role and can be considered to have the same role in society. When continuing on
this subject, Mulvey discusses another perspective often used within film criticism: psychoanalysis. The function of the woman in film has been on two levels: “as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen” (40). In consequence, she forms a small part in the otherwise male dominant world of cinema. As Mulvey mentions “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (Ibid). The woman cannot be seen as strong because it goes against the norm as well as it does not leave any room for the man to clear the situation and be the hero if the woman is independent and can take care of herself. The development of passive/active roles is in relation to the phallocentrism of psychoanalysis, presented by Sigmund Freud. Feminist psychoanalysts believe the women displayed in films to represent the male fantasy alone and men’s fear of castration. Women should merely appear in movies to enhance the performance of the male character. Although strong female personalities and characters are indeed presented in movies, the overrepresentation of strong male characters in film forms a norm of how the women should be represented, making characters like Katharina outsiders, a character to react against. This can be related to society as well, where women often stand in the background, behind the men. This is also a common trait for the feminisms of the 1960s and 1990s: the fight against gender inequalities. Psychoanalysis does in this manner play a part as it is another contributing factor to the image of woman in society. The passive/active dichotomy becomes the norm and the norm is what feminists act against.

Still, this sign then, “woman”, is believed to be created in society itself. Mulvey states that “[i]n reality, the fantasy world of the screen is subject to the law which produces it” (39). This is something that Elisabeth Cowie strengthens in her article “Woman as Sign”: “Feminist analysis of film assumes ‘woman’ [as sign] as an unproblematic category constituted through the definitions already produced in society – as mother, housewife, worker, sexual partner and
reflected in film” (Feminism & Film 48). As mentioned, film is a representation of the society we live in, whether it is a narrative or not, fiction or non-fiction. Connotations are hard to change and the connotations of “woman” are still that of her being quiet, subordinate and meant to do lighter labour. Women should not speak their minds in the way that men do and should take the nurturing role, mothering the children. That was the role she had during Shakespeare’s time and that role is still what is considered to be womanly. Women should not play the hero. Movies and adaptations of texts which have lasted a long time and have been used countless of times, such as Shakespeare’s, reinforce the values of society. They are used over and over again because of this: they still work even though not written in modern time and they are easily adaptable. Adaptations “assert the basic ideology of our culture” and “point us simultaneously to both ways of defining narrative: as a specific cultural representation of a “basic ideology” and as a general human universal.” (176) Repeating stories is needed to understand and be a part of the cultural society.

When considering the years when the movies reflected upon in this thesis were released, one can see how the release years connect to prevailing feminism aspiring in society, making feminism a crucial part to add in relation to the movies. The different feminisms of the different ages help to reinforce the image and sign “woman”. Therefore, the relevant feminist perspectives will be presented in connection with the film analyses later on.

What often tend to be included when speaking of feminism are the three waves of feminism: one in the late 19th and early 20th century; the second in the 1960s; and lastly one in the 1990s. The first wave was inspired by the thoughts of liberty, equality and natural rights, the products of the Enlightenment, but from a feminine perspective and that these should be applied to both sexes. The social change which had sprung from the Enlightenment also brought out ideas of abolition, an idea that feminists used when taking in regard their own situation (Britannica Online 3; Freedman 84). The first wave came to entail a main question
of suffrage as this was what pervaded many countries at the time, especially the United States. The second and the third wave sprung out of the first wave. They will however be more thoroughly discussed later on, in connection to the movies.

3. *The Taming of the Shrew* – The Play

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, written sometime in the period of 1590-94 by William Shakespeare, we are presented with a story which has come to be a true classic; the story of Katherina, the shrew, who her father decides need to be married off before her little sister Bianca can be married. Bianca is seen as the young, beautiful maiden with suitors just waiting for a chance to marry her while Katherina is considered to be the bad, evil sister who is ageing by the day; this makes it more difficult for Katherina to find someone to marry. With the ultimatum - that of Katherina marrying before Bianca the father of the house, Baptista, decides to bring forward - the suitors find themselves in a complicated situation considering the rumour preceding the elder sister. Therefore, they are in great need of a suitor; a void which is filled by Petruchio whom is considered something of a madcap. He accepts the challenge of Katherina and they marry. Shortly after the taming of the shrew begins – Katherina will conform and adapt to please her husband.

One reason for being a classic is the theme of female submissiveness, a theme which has produced some controversy surrounding the play and different interpretations of it have been presented, for instance how Katherina’s performance should be considered. A.L. Rowse gives his opinion regarding the irony of the play in *The Annotated Shakespeare*:

It is no less anachronistic and out of keeping to treat what Shakespeare wrote as if it were ironical and he did not mean it when he said:
Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee
And for thy maintenance, commit his body
To painful labour both by sea and land
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe. (120)

This part of Katharina’s famous last speech is what is most often discussed by contemporary readers. What does she really mean? This window left open makes the play open to different interpretations. Critics believe that the play was a subject of criticism and controversy even in its own time as the representation of such extreme female submissiveness was not to be received well by the early modern audience with the ideals present at the time. The ideals for a woman were for her to be chaste, obedient and submissive and to put her family before everything else. Jacqueline Eales shows an example of this in *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, that “William Gouge emphasized that the wife was ‘joint governor with her husband’ over their children and servants, but she was subordinate to her husband and ruled others only as long as she was obedient to him” (p.25). She also shows an example from a funeral sermon where a wife is described as “as pious, charitable and reticent, but often also as meek, gentle and tenderhearted”. Also, “[t]hey stressed the importance of wives’ maternal role and their subjection to husbands and other male relatives” (29), leading one to the conclusion that the behaviour of the woman mentioned above was the desirable one. The speech delivered by Katherina in the end of the play, which is furthermore in focus in the 1967 adaptation as well, is the longest monologue in the play, and as it is said by a woman who culturally is supposed to be silenced, it is a remarkable as well as a questionable action.

The play includes an Induction, where a tinker named Sly is so intoxicated that he falls asleep. He is found by a Lord who brings him to his house where the Lord decides to play a
practical joke on the expense of Sly. Sly is treated and tricked into believing he is a Lord and is then presented with the story of the Shrew. The story about Katherina and Petruchio turns into a play within a play, which makes it easier to comment on society as it is considered all an act. It becomes hard to distinguish which parts are real and which parts are not, whether or not for instance Petruchio’s treatment of Katherina and Katherina’s final speech on the obedience of wives can be considered “real” or not. Are the actions ironic and situations present in society which Shakespeare indeed wished to criticize or is Katherina actually so devoted and tamed by her husband that her speech is to be interpreted by the word? Is the intention to show women’s (believed to be) rightful role in early modern society – submissive, obedient and quiet – or is it a critique of the same? The perspective on marriage had changed after the Reformation and as mentioned in the introduction of the aforementioned book, *Annotated Shakespeare*, by Margaret Jane Kidnie "[c]onduct books from the period argue[d] forcefully against enforced marriage – as Baptista puts it, his daughter’s love, not the money, should be ‘all in all’" (xxvii). Rowse speaks of Petruchio and his beloved Kate and argues that it was in fact love: “He really loves Kate, and the psychological subtlety – which only Shakespeare would have been capable of – is that Kate has fallen for her man too, though she is too proud and obstinate to confess it” (120). However, when Katherina is to be married the issue of dowry is in focus and not whether or not she loves Petruchio, hinting at Shakespeare criticizing yet again by making it into a farce, something which needs not to be taken seriously.

4. *The Taming of the Shrew* and Second Wave Feminism

Mentioning the adaptation *The Taming of the Shrew* from 1967 in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, Russell Jackson speaks of second wave feminism as not being showed in the
adaptation, it does not “address any of the sterner questionings of the feminist movement that was already gaining momentum when it [the adaptation] was made” (227). On the contrary, I believe that it is shown, for instance in the fighting before the wedding which can be considered as an action of second wave feminism: fighting for the right not to marry or at least being able to marry whomever the woman wishes to marry. This will be developed further together with the analysis of the movie below. Depiction of the society and the revolts going on at that particular time is not as obvious as in 10 Things I Hate about You, which will be seen later, but it is possible to see the second wave feminism in the 1967 version.

Springing from the earlier mentioned ideas of the first wave feminism, the 60s movement came to be known as the second wave and includes equality and justice and it contains influences from the civil rights movement and the fight for an Equal Rights Amendment and a legislative for equality were the top priorities. When releasing The Taming of the Shrew in 1967, the second wave feminism was prevailing. Second wave feminism is presented well in Chick Flicks - Contemporary Women at the Movies in which Ferriss and Young for instance mention how the second wave feminists consider the “choice [to be] collective[.] [I]t refers to women’s right not to have children and enter careers and professions formerly closed to them” (3-4). They should be allowed to go outside the norm. The second wave can hence be considered a reaction to the work made by women, for instance in factories, during World War II; work that the women later lost on the behalf of the men returning from the war, resulting in the women no longer being needed. Most women went back to their work at home, as housewives, and according to Laura Brunell in Britannica Online:

[i]n the United States, the difficulties of the preceding 15 years were followed by a new culture of domesticity. Women began marrying younger and having more children than they had in the 1920s. Such television programs as Father Knows Best and Ozzie and
Harriet reflected what many observers called an idyllic suburban life. By 1960, the percentage of employed female professionals was down compared with figures for 1930. (5)

Because of this, the fact that women had been doing the same work as men during World War II usually did, resulted in that women had entered new grounds, among other things the desire for a change grew stronger (Brunell, Britannica Online; see also Freedman 130). This "new culture of domesticity" creates a picture of how a woman should be and act. This is what makes the shrew of the play a shrew in the first place: she does not act in what is considered by the society standards to be an appropriate manner and therefore she is notorious. A woman should be quiet and are in some cultures silenced (Freedman 307).

Ferriss and Young also state that the "suspicion of and resistance to media-driven popular culture and the consumerism it supports" was considered as an important feature of the feminists of the 60s movement (4). The consumerism of the following wave of feminism (logically called the third) is hence far from present in the era of the second wave feminism, building up resentment between the two. Continuing on the material of Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young and their descriptions of second wave feminists, they acknowledge the "rejection- or at least questioning - of femininity" (4), for instance meaning the reluctance of wearing pink and clothes most commonly associated with what a woman, according to society's norms and rules, should wear. The feminists of the 60s furthermore believed in the power of political action, mentioned by Ferriss and Mallory Young: "Reliance on political action, political movements, and political solutions" is stated as a signature element of the feminists (4).

In Zeffirelli's The Taming of the Shrew, the focus lies on the story and relationship of the two main characters Petruchio and Katharina and the subplot, the younger sister Bianca and the suitors for her, is not displayed. This version is a direct adaptation; it is set in Padua,
Italy, clothes of that time are used and Zeffirelli does use the actual lines of the original play. They do not, however, follow the order of the scenes to the letter. What to focus on is decided depending on the film crew’s preference which, in this particular case, is on the main plot, that is the story of Katharina, Petruchio and their marriage, and the subplot of Bianca and her three different suitors is, as mentioned, more or less invisible. Instead, the spectators are presented with feisty stormy arguments and witty conversations between Petruchio and Katharina while Bianca only has a few short lines.

Obviously, Katharina in *The Taming of the Shrew* is not the typical second wave feminist, she is not so radical, but some features of the wave can be distinguished in her behaviour. As mentioned, the resistance to get married as well as continuing to resist even after being married can be classified as Katharina making a somewhat feminist statement. She does perform the classic womanly tasks, being a housewife, but after watching the whole movie and especially the ending scene, which has been added to the original, where Katharina leaves the room, not allowing Petruchio to reach her, one can reach the conclusion that she is still resisting the norms of marriage. The marriage is on her terms, and that even though she performs the role of being a housewife it is just that: a performance. It can be seen in her facial expressions and her movements. They are exaggerated. It cannot be considered real as she, when organising the house she is all smiles, but as soon as Petruchio is close by she instead has an angry facial appearance. Through this, she becomes unreachable and untameable. Similar to the Induction of the original play which is believed to exist to show that it is not the reality being depicted but merely a farce, a world without the true order, the behaviour of the Shrew can be seen as a farce, just a performance. One cannot during the movie be entirely sure that she is truly tamed by Petruchio and the final scene confirms it. She, by not letting Petruchio catch her, is still in some sort of control. She has still not accepted the marriage and is solely keeping up appearances.
Concerning the domesticity, there is a focus on this in Zeffirelli’s version, a change within the household. An example of this is once Katharina has been wed to Petruchio and they finally arrive to Petruchio’s somewhat crazy household, she decides to conform and she is displayed in the movie as a housewife who runs around the house, cleaning and deciding how it should be decorated. In the movie we can see her earning some respect from the servants of the household as she manages the house. In the play, this gain of respect is not shown at all and she instead has everyone working against her, completely in the service of their master Petruchio; Grumio refusing to give her food, making fun of the starving Katharina, is one example of this (Shakespeare, IV.3). However, similar to the 1929 version as well as in the play, as mentioned, the audience cannot be entirely sure of Katharina’s intentions. In the movie from 1967, she is clearly ignoring Petruchio and her facial expressions often show her understanding the rules of Petruchio’s game which she then decides to adapt to. The importance of showing this conformity of Katharina can be seen when seeing both the 1929 and the 1967 versions, as in both of them, the scene from the play where a discussion concerning the presence or absence of the sun, takes place:

Katherina: The moon? The sun! It is not moonlight now.

Petruchio: I say it is the moon that shines so bright.

Katherina: I know it is the sun that shines so bright. (IV.5:3-5)

The discussion of whether it is the moon or the sun which shines in the afternoon continues leading up to Petruchio saying:

Petruchio: I say it is the moon.

Katherina: I know it is the moon.

Petruchio: Nay, then you lie. It is the blessed sun.

Katherina: Then God be blessed, it is the blessed sun.

But sun it is not, when you say it is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be for Katherine. (IV.5:16-22)
This exact scene is represented in the movies as well. Katherina (Katharina in the movie) starts off disputing with Petruchio but decides to please him with agreeing with him that it is the moon. With her line “And the moon changes even as your mind” she states his insanity as well as her will to adapt. Her conforming is probably not without intentions, intentions we do not know however. It can be interpreted that Katharina indeed does adapt but mainly to have an advantage on Petruchio, making him believe that it is he who actually has the upper hand but instead she is in control. There is not an obvious action by Elizabeth Taylor’s Katharina as there is in Mary Pickford’s (with a wink towards her sister in the end, after giving the famous speech) but some smiles let us know that the 1967’s Katharina has other intentions and she is perhaps merely keeping up appearances while she, in fact, is the one in charge.

5. 10 Things I Hate about You and Third Wave Feminism

The third wave of feminism, which could also be renowned as post-feminism, was a response to the second wave and much like the second wave, the movement of the third wave intended to refine and build on the work of the previous wave. However, critics have also considered post-feminism as a “retrogression” towards old values since many of the women of today see the contemporary feminism as somewhat completed and that there is not much more to be done. Hoi Fung Cheu discusses this trend within feminism in *Cinematic Howling: Women’s Film, Women’s Film Theories* and she speaks of “feminism without women”, an expression taken from Tania Modleski. According to Cheu, “the postfeminist world declares the triumph of feminism to prevent women from engaging in further discourses on social change”, a development which she fears will make us return to the feminism of the past (7). Like the other waves of feminism, third wave feminists were influenced by other theories and movements surrounding them; in this particular era, postmodernism had shaped society and influenced feminism.
Postmodernism is a reaction to modernism and has mainly influenced cultural aspects such as art, architecture and literature. Postmodernism is nevertheless applicable when considering behaviour and thoughts of contemporary society. Peter Barry discusses in the book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* theory from a literary perspective, ideas that can be transferred to the thought of today's society as literature represents those. Parody and pastiche are crucial to the postmodern literary works. Furthermore, postmodernists reject the gap between high and "popular" art, that is, they are wishing to equalize the value of the two art forms. The wish to remove the distinction between high and popular art can be developed into an idea of people not being differentiated into classes of high and low, but instead being on an equal level (81). If this is to be taken into mind, the equality should be between women and men as well. Another element of postmodernism is "the loss of the real": people of contemporary society do not know what is real and what is counterfeit because of the many different representations and images produced and displayed today (84). "These are also copies or representations for which no original exists", Barry states, which can be interpreted as the loss of the originality among us (87). Postmodernists believe that one does not wish to stand out, causing us to conform and adapt, much like Katharina does in the play, but what Patrick, the man, instead does in *10 Things I Hate about You*.

As earlier mentioned, *10 Things I Hate about You* is a 1999 version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, though merely based upon the actual play. It is set in a high school environment in the 90's with only slight references to the play and the Shakespearian such as sonnets; names like Verona, Padua High School, that the sisters' names are not changed and the fact that their last name is Stratford; and Katharina's friend's interest in Shakespeare. Not to forget, the basic storyline is the same, but instead of marriage, the elder sister in *10 Things I Hate about You* has to start dating before it is allowed for her little sister Bianca to date, thus giving it a
modern twist. Katarina the Shrew is well-known on campus as a hostile, unsympathetic girl who will not act as everyone else just to be liked. However, her love for her sister is obvious and it is because of her that Katarina decides to somewhat “act like a normal teenager”. She goes to a party with Patrick Verona, a boy considered to be crazy and dangerous who also is paid by Joey Donner to do so. Joey Donner is the rich, good-looking boy in Padua High School who will do anything to date Bianca. Meanwhile, there is another “suitor” for Bianca: Cameron. Similar to Lucentio, he takes on the role of tutoring Bianca to get close to her and it is also he who provides Patrick with information about Katarina; because Kat is dating Patrick, Bianca can date and Cameron himself gets a chance to date the younger sister.

In 10 Things I Hate About You, the spirit of equality, which pervaded the culture of the 90s, was clearly influential when creating and filming. In this version, Patrick Verona, whose character is based upon the one of Petruchio, conforms and adapts according to Katarina’s likings and preferences when it concerns taste in music, prose and specifically non-smoking; in comparison, if we look at Petruchio whose aim is to transform Katharina without having to change his own appearance and personality whatsoever, we see a more post-modern man as Patrick is the one who adapts to please Kat. In the 1967 The Taming of the Shrew, we see a toned down Petruchio. He is still considered as a mad man with an odd behaviour, indeed, but as mentioned we do not see the extreme side of him to the same extent as in the play. Even less of that side is presented in 10 Things I Hate about You; we can think of the feeling of inappropriateness of such behaviour in a man of the 90s when men and women are considered more equal than ever. Him being equal and adapting to snare Kat can be seen as Patrick being a symbol of the postmodernism of the movie. He is however infamous as there are rumours about him at school about him being away from school because he was in jail, rumours which he later denies and explains to Kat. Being an original, not a copy or a part of the mainstream – which one can consider both Katarina and Patrick to be from the start - does not work, but
instead Patrick needs to become a copy of both other students at the school – acting like a
normal teenager – but also to some extent a copy of Katarina and he needs to conform. He
becomes the male equivalent of Katarina when choosing to adapt to her ways and likings,
such as listening to the same music and stop smoking. His old ways shine through now and
then, but he still continues trying.

Katarina, or Kat, of 10 Things I Hate about You is a feminist in an obvious way and she
does not intend to conform or take the people and world around her into consideration. Her
feminism and values shine through in plenty of her actions: she argues with the teacher in
class due to the fact that they study Hemingway’s literature and not that of Simone de
Beauvoir, Sylvia Plath or Charlotte Brontë – three iconic women writers who have had an
immense importance to feminist criticism; she is shown reading The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath;
and she is constantly making statements, trying to change the environment she is in. In the
same scene as the discussion about Hemingway instead of feminist literature she also
mentions how Patrick, by being late to class, just missed “the oppressive patriarchal values
that dictate our education” (00:06:15). Kat’s feminist thoughts and her unwillingness to
conform to the high school life are also shown through her taste in music; she attends a
concert with Letters to Cleo (a band with strong feminist lyrics) at Club Skunk where one can,
moreover, clearly see that the majority of the people in the audience are women, glaring quite
angrily at Patrick as he enters the club, as if he does not fit in. She and Patrick, furthermore,
discuss The Raincoats and Bikini Kill, whereby she is surprised of his knowledge of that
alternative, non-popular kind of music. Furthermore, she wishes not to be a part of the
consumerist society and she expresses this clearly when Bianca tries asking her to go to a
party, she responds that “Bogey’s party is just a lame excuse for all the idiots at our school to
drink beer and rub up against each other in hopes of distracting themselves from the pathetic
emptiness of their meaningless..” where Bianca and her friend Chastity interrupt her, saying:
“...meaningless, consumer-driven lives”, making it obvious that Kat has said this many times before (00:37:30). Her clothes are gender neutral, although leaning more towards a masculine way of dressing, showing her non-interest in being a fashion slave, as she does not feel the urge to follow the latest trends. These values do however not point towards a third wave feminism but instead the second wave values; the values which is detested by the third wavers and considered radical. The second wave feminist Katarina is thus considered radical and is misunderstood even though her behaviour can be considered as merely a reaction towards today’s society. Her behaviour does instead leave her to be acknowledged as a shrew. Through her actions, performing as a second wave feminist and being seen as an outsider, the postfeminism so present in the 90s is reinforced.

The role of Bianca helps to strengthen the picture of contemporary society and it contrasts the role of Katarina: She is the complete opposite of Katarina as she is the social popular girl with the intentions of staying that way. She has an interest in clothes and shoes and displays femininity in a manner typical of the third wave. Consumerism and femininity are two elements of feminism which divide feminists and postfeminists. The consumerism is shown with the help of Bianca’s conversation with her friend about the apparent difference between “like” and “love”. “Because, I like my Skechers,” Bianca says, ”but I love my Prada backpack.” Her friend Chastity then says: “But I love my Skechers” while Bianca then answers: “That’s because you don’t have a Prada backpack” (00:05:14); hence referring to material things for an emotion. The parody of the postmodernist era does reveal itself in this situation as well as when Bianca and her friend continue their conversation with Chastity saying: “I know you can be overwhelmed, and you can be underwhelmed, but can you ever just be whelmed?” Bianca’s answer to this question is: “I think you can in Europe” (00:09:17), showing ignorance and dumbness compared to Katarina and also the ignorance of
fighting for feminism which is considered to be one trait of the postfeminism, or third wave feminism.

In addition to the abovementioned ignorance, the representation of Bianca in the beginning, being conceited, enables the audience to see the change in Bianca which occurs throughout the story as she becomes more independent and secure in herself, more similar to Kat. When she punches Joey Donner at prom towards the end of the movie she shows how she can take care of herself and make her own choices. This can be seen through the choice of dating Cameron instead of the much popular Joey, showing a maturity in her. Her actions send signals to the audience and convey the earlier mentioned message of young women being capable of taking care of themselves and doing so without conforming. You will find happiness even though you act differently than the mainstream crowd, going against one of the postmodern thoughts as well as alluding to the second wave feminism.

As well as in the original play, Kat lives under a patriarchal rule as she has a controlling father. Since the play is written in the 16th century it is in the play The Taming of the Shrew the more classic scenario of the woman not being allowed to marry whomever she pleases but instead the concerns lie with the dowry and the fortune contained by the suitor. In 10 Things I Hate About You the father is controlling when it concerns whom and when the sisters can date; yet this is not the biggest problem for Kat. The biggest issue with her father’s controlling behaviour is how he decides to take control over her life by for instance choosing which university she should go to. As he is a wealthy doctor and has the money, he is the one who is going to pay the tuition and her studies. With this he can control her and intends to do so as he intends to have her staying on the west coast, close to home, while she wants to go to Sarah Lawrence, an east coast school, a school which she is accepted to. Then again, as time flies, he reconsidered and he sends a cheque to the university and thus the heroine of the movie is content. He does however confess to why he behaved as he did, speaking of the long lost
insights of Kat's life. He therefore saw the cheque as a manner of being a part of her life. The action of him finally realizing that Kat will do what she wants without asking him for permission, the patriarchy becomes less strong, evolving into a newfound respect from Kat's point of view towards her father. By allowing Kat to leave for the university of her preference, a change in the patriarchal structure can be detected. Her father no longer has total control over her and her sister, but as it is shown that they are mature enough to decide for themselves, the need for a patriarch is abolished.

6. Conclusion

One could see that the waves of feminism are reflected back into the movies. The image presented of the woman – obedient, chaste and silent – is somewhat challenged because of the shrew’s behaviour in the movies, hence showing the traits of the waves. To conclude, feminist film theory is well applicable on the movies and one can see that even though the different feminist behaviour of the different waves is not as apparent in the 1967 movie as in the 1999 movie, the ongoing changes in society are noticeable. When Katharine in the 1967 version is putting up a fight against the marriage to Petruchio, one can consider that as a feminist statement of the second wave feminism, wanting to have the right to decide for one’s self whether or not to get married. She does also in that particular situation act against the norm of the time: a woman should get married and be a calm, obedient housewife. Indeed, she does get married and becomes a housewife but in a farce-like manner. She does in a way make fun of the traditional woman role as she goes around cleaning the house. She is still in control, even though her husband thinks he is in fact the one who has the control and that he has tamed his shrewish wife.
When we consider the other movie, the one from 1999 called *10 Things I Hate about You*, it is more obvious that third wave feminism has had an impact when producing it. The “conflict” or the reaction of third wave feminism towards second wave feminism can be seen through Katarina, or as she is more known as: Kat. She can be considered a second wave feminist, a radical one. She does not act as everyone else expects her to do as a girl of her age in the 1990s but instead she protests against society. Similar to the play, her sister Bianca is the total opposite but changes as well as the movie moves along. Bianca is seen as the shallow “princess” of the family and is a good image of the consumerism of our society today. However, as mentioned, she moves away from this and becomes more observant and down-to-earth. Patrick – the “Petruchio” of this movie – is the one who adapts to Kat, showing how our society has become more gender equal, which is what feminists have been fighting for.

So, one can see clearly that the society in which we live is reflected in the movies. Prevailing thoughts such as feminism are, perhaps sometimes more discretely than others, shining through and hence reinforcing the image of woman. These movies, building on an already controversial and discussed play, go against the norm of what a woman should act and be like. Especially *10 Things I Hate about You* shows a different kind of girl, but in the end there is always some sort of compromise: she does not live her life exactly the way she wants; she conforms somewhat. Perhaps that is the message: one has to compromise now and then.

As the movies show what the society is like at that exact moment in time, it also shows a change in society. There is more equality gender-wise and there has been progress. The 1999 adaptation shows, through mostly Kat yet also Bianca, that the picture of the woman can change. She can play the hero as well, both in the movies and in real life.
7. Works Cited

Primary Sources


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