

Gender criticism in the world literature

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



In the gender criticism approach to literature, you analyze how sexual individuality impacts the response of the reader on a story. How do these connotations affect the reader, characters, and images of society in general? Does the story castoff or encourage the concepts offered in the writing? Femininity, manhood, and patriarchy are all methods that can be recognized within William Shakespeare's, *The Taming of the Shrew*. The tension between the two sexes, ultimately, are what bring about the disagreements that are existent. During the time period that Shakespeare places these characters into, the English Renaissance, women are known for being oppressed under the men. King Henry VIII divided from the church to get a divorce which created numerous difficulties. His marriage had been arranged, and he was no longer pleased with his queen. Many times, the superior classes prearranged their children's matrimonyes, but they could not as effortlessly be detached from their unwelcome partner as King Henry could.

The resolve of nuptial differences became a significant focus in literature of this age. *The Taming of the Shrew* inaugurates these notions throughout its acts. The characters are plunged into and consumed with the contemplation of marriage, but they tussle with how they should behave inside one. Kate and Petruchio do not see eye to eye on how the distinctive genders are to be treated by the other. Both protagonists clash psychologically on what roles each gender should assume within a relationship.

Katherina Minola is well-known as being the town "shrew." The entire city detests her, but that is how she wants it. She mentions, " My tongue will tell

the anger of my heart, or else my heart concealing it will break” (4. 3. 78-79). She is a single woman that has zero concern in becoming united with a man. She lives her time self-sufficiently and amid her individual opinions. She epitomizes women’s suffrage and empowerment despite her insensitive intentions. With every suitor that pledges interest in Kate, she lashes back with dissatisfaction and aggression. “ If I be waspish, best beware my sting” (2. 1. 210). Her father has made the decree that she must marry before her younger sister, Bianca, who has countless suitors, but who could love Kate? Bianca’s men are undone upon hearing this. They respond with objections like, “ She’s too rough for me” (1. 1. 55). A ferocious irritability frenzies within Kate. One account of this is exhibited when she smacks Petruchio. She holds nothing back to preserve feelings. She merely expresses her mind, and when she speaks, her words slash through their target like butter. Each comment is meticulously considered with delicate precision. She will hit one where she trusts it will damage them.

Why does Kate act like this? After examining her engagements, it becomes apparent that the anger is a defense mechanism that she uses to shield herself. She has seen many of the women become subjugated after being wedded, and the mirages of unsatisfactory lives play repetitively throughout her mind. “ I see a woman may be made a fool, If she had not a spirit to resist” (3. 2. 215-216). This frightens her! She does not want to fall victim to the same situation. Her psyche has made her recourse to fueling an everlasting and unquenching fire that stings to keep away adversaries. For her, it is easier to push away anyone and everyone. This way, someone

cannot hurt her. There is not an opportunity for her to get upset, so she feels safe and shielded lashing out in this way. When she gets married to Petruchio, she disregards him. Her subconscious is in complete alert, at this point, because her vilest apprehension has just become her reality. She is someone's property. She is looked down upon and is unfavored in the public's eye. "He is not bossing me around," one can almost hear her think. "Who does he think he is?" "I have rights and opinions the same as him, so what makes me so different?" Her strength that she has dwelt with her whole living, along with her mentality that she has always assumed, is controlling the forefront of her actions. They still overpower Petruchio and his will!

Comparable to Katherina, Petruchio breathes a narcissistic life. The Earth orbits around Petruchio, so he thinks. Living as an affluent single man, he gets everything that he desires. Money lies at the top of his affection. He is materialistic and vain. "And for that dowry, I'll assure her of Her widowhood, be it that she survive me" (2. 1. 123-124). His one ambition in life is to marry a rich woman that submits to his every beck and call. "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, Thy head, thy sovereign, one that cares for thee" (5. 2. 155-156). He sees this as a challenge, but not one that he cannot handle. He is the supreme "shrew tamer". "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" (2. 1. 272-274). He boasts in his capability to make women compliant to his commands. Subsequently, he turns around and educates

the other men to do the same things to their women. The potency in traditions and customs lies at the heart of Petruchio.

What justification does Petruchio get for his actions? It is clear. In his mind, he is simply doing what is communal and accustomed to men. Supremacy, authority, and masculinity are at stake if he does not succeed! However, he is not worried about this happening. In fact, upon meeting Kate, he explains to her father, “ Why, that is nothing: for I tell you, father, I am as peremptory as she proud-minded; And where two raging fires meet together They do consume the thing that feeds their fury: Though little fire grows great with little wind, Yet extreme gusts will blow out fire and all” (2. 1. 130-137).

Society has fed his brain with views that men are dominant over women. He perceives women as nothing more than property to acquire, manage, and discipline. He has certainly not stopped to ponder if his activities are morally acceptable. He does not think about the feelings of the women that he “ tames”. “ How could it be wrong if that is how men has treated women for so long?” “ Men are above women?” “ They do not care!” These are all items that any can envision course through Petruchio’s head. Therefore, when Petruchio espouses Kate, a shrew that is fixed on defying him, the two convictions clash. Each have a strong will that will not budge. However, Kate’s is frowned upon by all because it acts as socially unacceptable. Who will have the stronger will in the end?

Completing the story, one realizes that Kate was, indeed, no match for the will of society and Petruchio together. She no longer had the indomitable assertiveness and mindset that she was once bursting with. Petruchio had

absolutely shattered her spirit that transformed her into a new woman. Her fresh mindset was, “ I have to submit to have peace.” “ Is it worse to be submissive, or have him kill me?” Who knows how far Petruchio would have pushed Kate to break her will? “ This is a way to kill a wife with kindness, And thus I’ll curb her mad and headstrong humour. He that knows better how to tame a shrew, Now let him speak. ‘ Tis charity to show” (4. 1. 185-188). Her starved her, taunted her with fine garments, and deprived her of sleep, but Kate came to a point that she knew things would not get recovered. Women were meant to be passive to their husbands. As property, they were to do what they were told. She knew that she would never have a fighting chance of anyone helping her out of this situation, so she chose to make her life easier and “ live happily ever after.” However, her empowerment was demolished when her will was flung out the door. She no longer thought for herself, protected herself, etc. She was a servant to Petruchio, and a servant she would stay for the rest of her life. Although her end monologue was demanded by Petruchio, one could sense a genuine emotion that was shining through. She was bestowing her newfound wisdom upon her fellow women associates. She wanted to save them from the trouble she had endured. There was virtuousness hidden in her ego all along!

One of the women she tried to help was her sister, Bianca. She had all the boys after her. “ Why?” one might ask. Well, again, as a social normalcy, men’s minds were drawn to women that possessed mild, unobtrusive, timorous natures. “ Mistress Bianca, bless you with such grace As ‘ longeth to a lover’s blessed case” (4. 2. 45-46). This would permit them to appear

masculine without having to do all the dirty work of “ taming a shrew”. This is what pulled Lucentio in to Bianca, along with all her other suitors. When they were married, Lucentio thought he had discovered the faultless partner. Little did he know that Bianca had other things in mind. She turned out to be just as stubborn and insubordinate as her sister once was. She did not answer to Lucentio’s call to her. “ Sir, my mistress sends you word That she is busy, and she cannot come” (5. 2. 86-87). He found this disapproving, and his view of her was utterly tainted. “ How! ‘ She’s busy, and she cannot come!’ Is that an answer?” (5. 2. 88-89).

It was society that twisted the different feuding mindsets in this story. The mindsets molded the actions of the characters and contributed them each unique attributes. Without culture being there to pressure the characters into supposing a certain thing, striking distress into some, and causing misperception, tension would have been less. Kate and Petruchio commenced with parallel outlooks and dispositions, but gender role backgrounds, eventually, was victorious.