



Otázka: The Taming of the Shrew - Zkročení zlé ženy

Jazyk: Angličtina

Přidal(a): Honza

1) About the author

William Shakespeare is believed to be among the best playwrights and authors in the world and is certainly the most widely known English author in the world. He was the third of eight children of a daughter of a landowner and a city council member, so his family was quite rich. The date of his birth is not exactly known, but, he is believed to have been baptized on 26th April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire in central England. Not much is known about his life until 1582 when he married Anne Hathaway who was older than him, as she was 27 years old, while he was only 18. Six months after the wedding, their first child, a daughter named Susanna was born. Shortly after, Shakespeare disappeared and not much is known about him until he arrived in London seven years later.

By that time, in 1592 He had been working as an actor and a playwright for a theatre company known as Lord Chamberlain's men, which was very successful, as in 1613 the company built the now famous Globe theatre where Shakespeare performed many of his plays. The company's success earned Shakespeare considerable wealth, in 1559 he even bought a mansion in Stratford, known as New Place, the site of which is now a sightseeing location. He visited the mansion often until his death on 23rd April 1616.

William Shakespeare's writing and plays can be divided into several categories. He was an author of both tragic and comic plays as well as historical plays and poetry. Tragedies of Shakespeare's time portrayed themes of suffering, revenge and strife and typically most major characters died over the course of the plot. Comedies on the other hand dealt with themes of love, and romantic relationships and included dance, or song as well as used motifs of



exaggerated, farcial situatons, such as a chracter mistaking the identity of other characters.

Histories obviously drew inspiration from the historical account of the life of kings of England
Such as *King John* (1623) or *Henry V*

Another way to divide Shakespeare's plays is to separate them chronologically into four periods: early (before 1594) during which time he wrote the historical play *Richard III.* about a scheming English king, or the *Comedy of errors* (mentioned as first performed in 1594). Some of these plays are inspired by Roman and Greek plays from the period of classical antiquity, such as *Midsummer night's dream* (between 1594-96) which is set in a fictionalised fantastical version of Athens during Classical antiquity.

The second spans from 1594 to 1600 and shows Shakespeare's maturation as writer as he starts move away from exaggerated themes to focus more closely on human nature and includes such plays as *Troilus and Cressida* (1602) which deals with the story of Hector during the Trojan war. , a history play in two parts about *Henry IV* (Published 1558/59) , or the comedy *Merchant of Venice* (first quarto-a book in small format- published 1600), which portrays themes of antisemitism, self interest contrasted with love and the conflict between fighting to have one's revenge and granting mercy.

The third period of Shakespeare's work began in 1601 after the death of father. This experience deeply affected him and also influenced his work as he wrote his most famous tragedies such as *Hamlet* (between 1599 and 1602) *Macbeth* (Between 1603-1607, commonly claimed to be 1606) *Othello* (approx 1603) or *King Lear* (in 1608 as quarto and in 1623 as a folio, or as book in large format) during this time.

The final period begins in 1608 and ends three years before his death. It is characterised by a more optimistic outlook on life, which can be seen in the plays *Cymbeline* (approx 1611),

Winter's tale (1623) and *The Tempest* (1610/11) These plays are characterised not as comedies or tragedies, but rather as romances or Tragicomedies, which combined aspects of both, as well as some typical elements such as motifs from pre-Christian pagan mythology, magic and improbable situations, such as shipwrecks, a contrast of pastoral scenery and the urban setting or a palace, such as in *The Tempest*) and a happy ending which often involved the reunion of long lost travellers with their family.

2) The Taming of the Shrew

The plot of Zeffirelli's film opens with the character of Lucentio (Michael York) and Tranio (Alfred Lynch) arriving in Padua to get an education at the university but then he notices Katherine Minola (Elizabeth Taylor), a strong-willed and ill tempered daughter of a rich aristocrat Baptista Minola (Michael Hordern) and Hortensio (Michael York) and Gremio (Alan Webb) attempt to woo Katherine's gentle younger sister Bianca (Natasha Pyne). But first they need for Katherine to marry, because Baptista won't let Bianca marry until Katherine is married and there are even more suitors who hope to marry Bianca.

Then arrives the main character Petruchio (played by Richard Burton) who wants to enjoy life and find a rich wife for himself. Lucentio and Tranio take advantage of this and persuade him to court Katherine, so she'll marry and then they'd be free to court Bianca.

Petruchio starts wooing her by using reverse psychology, treating her acid retorts as sweet sayings. Their courtship involves extended scenes of the two exchanging witty wordplay and even incidents of the two scuffling and other physical comedy until she finally agrees to marry him.

After an ostentatious marriage, their journey to Petruchio's home is much less glamorous as Katherine is drenched by rain and when she arrives at her husband's home, he starts to tame her wild temperament by teasing and abusing her by various nonviolent means, for example praying for a quite long time before a meal and then throwing the meals away just before she could taste them and later belittling her taste in fashion before insulting the tailor. Finally he succeeds in taming her and as Lucentio married Bianca, all other characters meet on her wedding and the film ends after Katherine gives a speech in which she says wives should be obedient to their husbands.



3) Film review

I have to say I liked this film very much, even though I must admit some situations especially those involving disguises or a confusion of characters were quite difficult for me to understand. On the contrary, I think the charm of the film is mainly in its simplicity. The main plot of Petruchio wooing and then taming Catherine manages to be very entertaining, just by virtue of the absurd approach of reverse psychology, which is what makes the brilliant Shakespearean worldplay shine all the more. This scene also touches upon one of the main themes of the novel, the relationship between man and woman. Consider, even though Petruchio has seen that Catherine is a horrible woman who bullies her sister, he still agrees to woo her for the benefit of others. Even when she scuffles with him physically and plays practical jokes on him, in the scene in the attic, (which I have to say was one of the most funny scenes in the movie for me) he doesn't slap her even once, even though I can imagine a man who might lose his temper (and dignity) in frustration.

I might say it is possible this points at another interpretation of Petruchio's character, that is, he might be as harsh and untameable as Catherine is, except only she is infortunate enough to bring up that side of his personality. I think this interpretation then leads to a conclusion the scenes at Petruchio's house aren't images of a husband bossing his wife around but instead a psychological game of cat-and-mouse of a husband to win the respect of his wife by matching her temperament. And it is a game that Petruchio steadily wins until Catherine announces his victory in a theatrically overblown manner at the finale, which may sound misogynistic but I think it wasn't in fact what was intended, that Catherine was just grandiosely admitting that Petruchio has won the game of matching her own acerbic temperament and deserves to love her.

I would recommend this movie to anybody who not only likes Shakespearean comedy full of wordplay but also appreciates complex themes that can be analyzed.