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# Adaptations of Shakespeare in Teen Hollywood

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## Introduction

When I first considered a topic for my thesis, I was intrigued by the idea of combining my passion for Shakespeare and my love for romantic comedies. Luckily, two films stand at this intersection: *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) and *She's the Man* (2006). Both films were created around the same time, starred young actors before their “big breaks,” and included a message about female empowerment. Most importantly, both films were adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays—*10 Things* is based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, while *She's the Man* is based on *Twelfth Night*. This thesis follows these two plays and their respective films, exploring various aspects of the movies and studying the context in which they were created.

*10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* have both aged with grace—the recent *New York Times* article celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *10 Things* explains that the “movie’s continued relevance” and “its status as a beloved teen comedy” have created a long afterlife decades after the films were first released (Kaplan 1). Now considered classics, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* have a lasting influence that increases constantly, as new generations of teenage viewers watch the movies for the first time. Since the films have such a long shelf life, studying these movies and examining their achievements and shortcomings can help us gain a better understanding of the influence they hold. As movies geared towards teenage audiences, the messages and values in *10 Things* and *She's the Man* are directly applicable to their viewers’ lives, and thus should be studied with a critical eye.

This thesis focuses on two specific aspects of *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man*. Firstly, it examines the movies as Shakespeare adaptations, looking carefully at how Shakespeare’s plays are transformed into teen romantic comedies. Secondly, it analyzes the movies’ approaches to gender, sexuality, and feminism by considering both the overt and

underlying messages of the films. After an in-depth analysis of both, I was disappointed to find that *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are surprisingly conservative, both as Shakespeare adaptations and as putative “Girl Power” movies. As adaptations, both romantic comedies struggle to find the best balance between fidelity to the original play and adaptive freedom. As “Girl Power” movies, both films convey half-hearted messages of female empowerment, while simultaneously supporting postfeminist values. Rather than taking advantage of this opportunity and producing creative and progressive films, the creators of *10 Things* and *She's the Man* choose a more conservative, and ultimately more disappointing, path.

### **Genres**

While *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are just two film adaptations of Shakespearean plays in an industry with many, they differentiate themselves from the vast majority of adaptations because of their genre. Movies today are expected to fall within specific genres, from their earliest stages of development all the way until they are marketed and distributed. Placing films into genres with widely known characteristics can be a helpful guide for viewers who are overwhelmed with content, yet unsure of where to begin. Often, certain genres appeal to a specific demographic. As teenage romantic comedies, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are aimed at an audience base that mainly consists of female adolescents. Since the films sit at the intersection of two genres, they are required to adhere to strict rules both as romantic comedies and as teen movies. As conventional, heteronormative romantic comedies, the films must center around a man and a woman, and present a story of the two falling in love, overcoming obstacles along the way to demonstrate that love can conquer all. The movies are expected to be lighthearted and funny, with zany supporting characters that push the love story forward and a moment of truth where the couple must persevere despite conflict. As teen movies,

the films must take place in some social environment, where a large number of adolescents are forced to interact with each other (often, this dreaded setting is high school). The movies can also be framed as “coming of age” stories, where the protagonists must deal with peer pressure and social conflicts while learning about their own identities. While the teen movie genre and the romantic comedy genre have some overlap, the two are still distinct. Teen movies are geared towards adolescent viewers, and thus focus on teenage issues and topics of interest. During a time of significant physical, emotional, and social maturity, teenagers are constantly grappling with these rapid changes and trying to make sense of their place in a larger social group. Thus, teenage movies often depict interpersonal conflicts with people in authority as well as peers. The film begins with a teenager struggling with a certain issue, and follows the protagonist as he/she learns to overcome the problem, often through trial and error. Interestingly enough, teen movies are “perhaps the only film genre that is virtually never produced by the people it involves” (Shary 40). Teen movies are never created by their intended audience: adults are writing, directing, and producing teen films, drawing from their past experiences but never creating the movie from their present reality. Meanwhile, romantic comedies are geared towards a wider age group, though generally female. The name of the genre gives a clear idea of what to expect: a story that is funny and romantic, and closes with a happy ending. The art of creating a romantic comedy has been perfected to the point of becoming formulaic, where all romantic comedies follow the same pattern of events: a meet-cute, a montage of happy moments, a conflict, and a reconciliation. When considering the requirements of teen movies and romantic comedies, the expectations set by these two genres present a fascinating opportunity for Shakespeare’s plays to be interpreted through a modern lens. Teen movies and romantic comedies are some of the most

lucrative genres in the box office, and bringing Shakespeare into the midst of today's entertainment industry can be beneficial for Hollywood and Shakespeare alike.

### **Bringing Together Shakespeare and Teen Movies**

While adapting Shakespeare plays to appeal to teenage audiences seems like a strange choice, it has proven to be quite successful. As a sort of sub-genre, "Shakespeare teenpics" (Klett 71) have done well in the box office. The primary example of a Shakespeare teenpic (and arguably the film that began the whole sub-genre) is Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, which stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes. Unlike later films such as *10 Things* and *She's the Man*, *Romeo + Juliet* retains the original Shakespearian dialogue, but sets the story in contemporary America at Verona Beach. The film was a box office success, garnering over \$147 million despite its \$14.5 million budget. It also received a positive critical response, winning many awards and garnering significant recognition. As part of the aftermath of its success, many adaptations followed, as Hollywood realized the substantial cultural interest and considerable financial gain in fashioning Shakespeare for teenage moviegoers. While this paper only focuses on two Shakespearian adaptations that also cross over to the romantic comedy genre, these teenpics varied in theme and emphasis. Regardless, they were received with enough interest for others to be created.

There are multiple reasons for why Shakespeare teenpics have proved to be so successful. As Thomas Doherty argues, the American movie industry has been "juvenilized" (Doherty 92) starting in the mid-1950s, and even more so after the creation of the PG-13 rating in 1983. By the late 1990s, filmmakers had been targeting teenage audiences for decades. Thus, trying to appeal to adolescents was already a common trend, and adapting Shakespeare for film did not stand in the way of this movement. Rather, filmmakers "exploit[ed] certain intersections" (Klett 71)

between the teen movie genre and the Shakespearean canon. While Shakespeare's comedies always emphasize romantic relationships and end in marriage, teen movies often have the same focus, and end with a couple uniting. Additionally, many of his comedies present children "rebell[ing] against restrictive parents" (Klett 71), which easily translates to the common theme of gaining independence in adolescence. Also, the combination of Shakespeare and teen movies is especially appealing to filmmakers because of Shakespeare's cultural capital. As a genre, teen movies are not considered impressive or intellectual; films in this genre are expected to be simple and even formulaic. When targeting such a young audience, whose interests in high school crushes and social status are often considered immature by adults, filmmakers recognize that their movies may not be held in high esteem. But by claiming that a film is based on a Shakespeare play and thus "invoke[ing] Shakespeare's cultural authority" (Clement 5), these teen movies suddenly receive more legitimacy. Shakespeare, revered for his masterful writing and respected for his commercial value, suddenly elevates an ordinary teen movie above its peers.

### **Teen Movie Audiences**

But before delving more deeply into the movies themselves, it is important to consider their intended audience. As mentioned previously, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are both intended not just broadly for teenage viewers, but specifically for teenage girls. Since romantic comedies are overwhelmingly watched by women, a teen romantic comedy is still targeted at female viewers, albeit slightly younger ones. While the films do not explicitly say that the target audience is teenage girls, many clues point to the same answer. Firstly, the main characters of both *10 Things* and *She's the Man* are teenage girls, and their stories revolve around adolescent problems such as peer pressure and high school crushes. These are topics that

are geared towards other teenagers; such subjects are not relevant to adults' lives. Also, the vast majority of teen movies with female leads target a female audience, while teen movies that star male leads are more likely to receive a warmer welcome from boys. For example, *Clueless* and *Mean Girls* are both watched predominantly by female viewers, while *American Pie* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* have a mixed gender audience. The marketing of these movies are also reflective of their expected audience: movies made for girls prominently depict female characters on posters and in trailers, making them the main focus. In fact, the original trailer for *She's the Man* (Clip 1) does not show a male character until about 25 seconds in—and by the time Viola's brother enters the screen, almost every female character (even the minor ones) have already been depicted. In the original trailer for *10 Things I Hate About You* (Clip 2), the camera follows Bianca Stratford, and then shifts to focus on Kat. The first time two male characters interact with each other occurs approximately one minute into the trailer—before that, every clip includes a conversation with at least one Stratford sister involved.

Before delving into how Shakespeare has been adapted for Hollywood, it is essential to examine the intended audience of these movies. Film adaptations of Shakespeare are usually aimed at adult audiences, who have had significant exposure to Shakespeare's work. But when creating adaptations aimed for teenagers, and more specifically for teenage girls, the creators of *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* have an added challenge of creating films that are relatable to adolescents yet still adhere to the original play. Additionally, given that the audiences of these films are still in a stage of “adolescent development” (McLennan 2), it is important to study the themes and messages that are being conveyed. Both *10 Things* and *She's the Man* are intended to send messages of female empowerment; however, their failure to do so is one of the main considerations of this thesis. By conveying postfeminist values and encouraging

conservative beliefs under the guise of “Girl Power,” these films communicate mixed messages to their teenage audiences, adding to the confusion they already experience during this developmental stage.

### **The ‘90s and the “Girl Power” movement**

Both *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She’s the Man* were created as a combined result of the ‘90s teen movie phenomenon and the “Girl Power” movement. The two Shakespeare adaptations were created near the end of a “sea of late-‘90s rom-com takes on classic literature” (Kaplan 1). From *Clueless* based on *Emma* to *She’s All That* based on *Pygmalion*, the overwhelming success of these book-to-movie adaptations sparked a trend that lasted over a decade. Even many years later, in 2010, the immediate success of *Easy A* (based on Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*) once again demonstrated that the tried-and-true formula of literary adaptation still holds strong. Along with this increase in teen movies adapted from literature, the popular culture of the ‘90s brought a wave of feminism and female empowerment, most well known as the “Girl Power” movement. This term, first coined by American punk band Bikini Kill (who, interestingly enough, is mentioned in *10 Things* as a band Kat likes), grew in popularity when the Spice Girls adopted the slogan in the mid-1990s. The “Girl Power” movement gained momentum because of a few factors that came together at the same time. Firstly, the 1990s was a “period when a great deal of anxiety was focused on the figure of the adolescent girl” (McLennan 5) after studies were published proving that girls’ education was being marginalized. The scholarly and media attention that followed as a result made sure that issues of gender equality and feminism stayed at the forefront of everyone’s minds. At the same time, third-wave feminism, an iteration of the feminist movement, started in the early 1990s and coincided with the “Girl Power” movement that was spreading quickly and successfully. But

rather than staying in the political realm, the “Girl Power” movement helped feminism seem more digestible, and reach a broader audience through popular culture. Such a move came with consequences, however: as many critics have argued, the transformation of feminism into “Girl Power” presented a “watered-down version” of the original beliefs, now “co-opted and commodified” (Bertucci 426) for the general public. In the third chapter of this thesis, my analysis of *10 Things* and *She’s the Man* reveal a similar conclusion for the films: while both attempt to embody progressive beliefs about feminism and gender, they ultimately provide a disappointingly weakened and conservative version of the original beliefs.

Given the popularity of the “Girl Power” movement at the time, it is unsurprising that both *10 Things* and *She’s the Man* decided to incorporate female empowerment themes into their storylines. While *10 Things* depicts a strong, feminist lead, *She’s the Man* focuses on gender discrimination and bias. These topics, which are often a part of the mainstream discussion of “Girl Power,” are intended to appeal to the movie’s teenage audiences and their families. Films that empower female characters are not only trendy but also considered inspirational. The combination of these two factors provides an additional boost for the movies as they are marketed and distributed. Thus, the heavy reliance on themes of female empowerment can be attributed to the cultural moment in which *10 Things* and *She’s the Man* were created.

Four hundred and fifty years after his death, Shakespeare remains a powerful touchstone for creators and consumers of literature and film, both “highbrow” and mass-market, all over the world. Even in cultural contexts seemingly far from Shakespeare’s own, such as popular entertainment aimed at American youth around the turn of the 21st century, the plots of his plays evidently still resonate. American filmmakers still find value and inspiration from Shakespeare’s stories, and the commercial success of *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She’s the Man*

demonstrate a lasting fascination with the Bard. It is obvious to say that present-day American society empowers women far more than did Tudor England: women today have far more legal and political agency and far greater social freedom than women did in 1600. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that these films present a vision of gender roles that is less complex and ultimately less feminist than Shakespeare's original texts.

Chapter 1: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *10 Things I Hate About You*

Out of all the plays attributed to William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* is widely regarded by modern audiences as one of the most offensive plays Shakespeare has written.

*Taming* is notorious for being anti-feminist and misogynistic, as the plot revolves around the eventual breakdown of a strong-willed woman until she is fully submissive. Petruchio, a visiting suitor from Verona, eventually marries Katherine, a bold and opinionated woman who many are afraid to approach. After their wedding, Petruchio begins to “tame” Katherine by refusing to provide her with food or clothing, and even denying her of sleep, saying that “This is a way to kill a wife with kindness; / And thus I’ll cure her mad and headstrong humor” (4.2.208-209). Slowly, Petruchio’s torture leads to the deterioration of Katherine’s will and mind, until she begins to readily agree with her husband, regardless of how ludicrous his declarations. As many critics have noted, *Taming* is a “problem play” that is more unsettling than it is comedic (Brown 36). Its message and values shock and disturb modern audiences, and thus make it one of Shakespeare’s most controversial plays—one that many believe cannot be redeemed.

*10 Things I Hate About You* is a 1999 teen romantic comedy starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger. The film is a modern adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and refashions the story from *Taming* into a plot about high school drama. The basic plot points of *10 Things* are the same as *Taming*, and the film makes a clear and concerted effort to stay close to the text it was based on. At the time of its release, *10 Things* was a moderate critical and box office success. Its reviews were generally positive, with many critics acknowledging its “charm” and “spirit” (Ebert 1). Although it was released in 1999, its popularity continues amongst teenagers today, with a cult following similar to those of movies such as *Mean Girls* or *Legally Blonde*. In fact, its faithful fanbase led television network ABC Family to create a TV series in 2009 based

on the movie, also called *10 Things I Hate About You*. The show premiered with 1.60 million viewers, a new record for a 30-minute comedy debut on the network. This show, which ran for two seasons when I was 14, sparked my fascination with the film and its impressive ability to remain relevant and engage its audiences despite the passage of time. Because the movie was clearly an adaptation of a Shakespearean play (a point made clear by the many Shakespeare references in the film), I was also intrigued by whether its position as a Shakespearean adaptation was a significant reason for its enduring success.

As explained previously, *The Taming of the Shrew* is considered shockingly misogynistic by today's audiences. Since the movie is a modern retelling of this controversial play, it is easy to assume that the film would attempt to redeem the misogynistic storyline of *Taming*—however, *10 Things* makes very little effort to do so. Disappointingly, the movie continues to limit the power of women by presenting them as prisoners of society, though in this case it is a very different society. Although the film is created long after the feminist movement gained traction, it does not take advantage of society's dramatic shift in values since Shakespeare's time. Instead, it stays loyally faithful to the outdated values of the original play, and eventually ends up even more conservative than *Taming* because of the way it presents these values. As a teenage romantic comedy, *10 Things* is also limited and molded by its position at the intersection of two genres, which also stands in the way of any attempt to redeem the original play. In this chapter, I will first begin by studying the triumphs and challenges of adapting *Taming* into a teen romantic comedy, a genre that did not exist in Shakespeare's time. I will then discuss how the film's singular focus on staying true to the original play hinders its ability to create nuance and redeem the original story. Lastly, I will consider the concept of faithfulness in adaptation, and how *10 Things'* focus on story fidelity undermines its efforts to be a successful adaptation.

## Adapting Shakespeare into a Teenage Romantic Comedy

There are many ways in which the creators of *10 Things* successfully adapted the play into a teenage romantic comedy, using the requirements of the two genres to reinterpret the text. The film begins with a nod to *Taming*, as Cameron (who plays the Lucentio character) sees Bianca for the first time and declares, “I burn, I pine, I perish.” He is directly quoting a line from the first scene in Act 1, where Lucentio initially becomes enamored with Bianca. While the rest of the film does not reference the play as directly, critic L. Monique Pittman points out that there are still “numerous clever echoes” (148) of the play’s plot points within the movie. Instead of tutoring Bianca in Latin, Cameron tutors her in French, a popular language of study in high school classrooms today. Joey’s bet on Bianca’s virginity parallels the wager at the end of *Taming*, where the husbands bet on their wives’ obedience. The back-and-forth sparring between Petruchio and Katherine is reflected not only in Patrick and Kat’s dialogue exchanges, but also in their paintball match. Patrick’s embarrassing song and dance on the bleachers is reminiscent of Petruchio’s ridiculous clothing and belated arrival to his own wedding—humiliating himself on purpose to convey a message. Prom replaces the feast in Act 5, and Kat’s poem called “10 Things I Hate About You,” written for a presentation in her English class, is the substitute for her speech in the last act. Here, each aspect of the play is carefully reinterpreted into an appropriate modern counterpart. Using the established tropes within the teen movie and romantic comedy genres, the creators of *10 Things* matched common storylines with *Taming*’s plot. For example, Joey’s bet on Bianca’s virginity uses the concept of a wager as the motivating force behind the story’s events. This trope is often used in romantic comedies, most notably in *She’s All That* and *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*. Patrick’s embarrassing routine on the bleachers as an apology to Kat is a classic example of the “big gesture,” an action the man in the romantic comedy performs

to capture (or often, re-capture) the woman's affections. Prom, perhaps the biggest trope in teen movies, is utilized in this film as the event where all the threads of the story come together and reach its climax. These tropes within teen movies and romantic comedies are not only common, but also expected to appear in films of the same genre. By cleverly taking advantage of the audience's prior knowledge of these clichés, the creators of *10 Things* translate *Taming*'s plot into a story that is accessible and comprehensible by adolescent viewers today.

The creators of *10 Things* also successfully adapt the film by finding clever ways to parallel the original play through its use of language. The dialogue in *Taming* is mostly in iambic pentameter, featuring witty and clever banter between various characters, such as Petruchio and Katherine. In one instance as Petruchio begins to take interest in Katherine, the two spar back and forth, demonstrating their verbal agility and comparable skill:

Petruchio: Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

Katherine: "Moved," in good time! Let him that moved you hither

Remove you hence. I knew you at the first.

You were a movable.

Petruchio: Why, what's a movable?

Katherine: A joint stool.

Petruchio: Thou hast hit it. Come, sit on me.

Katherine: Asses are made to bear; and so are you.

Petruchio: Women are made to bear, and so are you. (2.1.202-211)

In this passage, Petruchio and Katherine take advantage of the double meaning of "movable" as both a piece of furniture and a whimsical person to shape their responses to one another. Like many other characters in the play, they have a masterful command of language, and skillfully

twist words to convey their intended meaning. While Petruchio and Katherine speak in iambic pentameter because they are of the upper class, other characters speak in prose to show the audience that they are lower on the socio-economic ladder. Christopher Sly, a drunk tinker who begins the play speaking in prose, is later deceived and convinced that he is actually a lord. Upon this realization, Sly switches his speech from prose to iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's skillful manipulation of language is intellectually engaging and often very revealing. In contrast, the language in *10 Things* is the opposite of intellectual, instead purposely simplistic and colloquial. In one of the first conversations in the movie, Bianca explains the difference of the words "like" and "love" to her friend Chastity, saying, "There's a difference between like and love. Because, I like my Sketchers, but I love my Prada backpack." Instead of attempting to imitate *Taming* by speaking in puns and clever wordplay, *10 Things* acknowledges its position as a modern teen romantic comedy and adjusts its language accordingly. Its dialogue is an accurate reflection of how teenagers speak to one another. However, since the creators of *10 Things* were acutely aware of the dramatic contrast between the words of Shakespeare and the dialogue in *10 Things*, they take a humorous approach, while still using language deftly to signal social status, in the same way Shakespeare alternates between characters that speak in poetry and those who speak in prose. In one of the first scenes of the movie, Chastity asks her, "I know you can be overwhelmed, and you can be underwhelmed. But can you ever just be whelmed?" In response, Bianca replies, "I think you can in Europe." This amusing exchange between two friends pokes fun at the level of language used in the film, acknowledging that teenagers have a simpler grasp of language, especially in comparison to the characters of Shakespeare. While Petruchio and Katherine are using double meanings in their quick verbal exchange, Chastity is just trying to figure out whether "whelmed" is a word. But although the language is starkly different between

the two works, the dialogue of *10 Things* shares a notable resemblance to the dialogue in *Taming*: the film's characters speak in varying levels of language complexity to match their social status. *10 Things* is acutely aware of the stereotypical high school cliques—in fact, it begins the movie by walking the audience through each of the social groups in Padua High. In an effort to play into the expectations of a teen movie, *10 Things* portrays the “popular kids” as intellectually inferior to students in other cliques. The exchanges between Bianca and Chastity prove this point, and serve as a contrast to the way other characters speak. Cameron's friend Michael, who is an “audio-visual geek,” sees Kat and describes her to Cameron as a “mewling, rampallian wretch.” While he does not usually speak in such elaborate language, Michael demonstrates that he has the ability to do so. This distinction between the speech of the popular kids versus the other characters becomes significant when considering Bianca's arc through the film. Although we see her spending time with Joey and talking at Chastity's level, Bianca slowly reveals that she is not like the other popular kids. In a scene (Clip 3) where Joey is holding up two versions of a modeling photo, Bianca's language stands out from Joey's:

Joey: Okay, now, this is really important, okay? Which one do you like better?

Bianca: Um... I think I like the white shirt better.

Joey: Yeah, it's, it's more...

Bianca: Pensive?

Joey: Damn, I was just going for thoughtful.

After hearing his response, Bianca looks confused and even a little judgmental as she realizes that Joey has no idea what “pensive” means. This scene and other similarly subtle instances later on in the film hint to the audience that Bianca is making a concerted effort to fit in with the popular kids, although it is not her natural place. This realization eventually comes to the surface

when Bianca finally recognizes the superficiality of her popular friends and leaves the clique as she starts to date Cameron. While the language in *10 Things* is significantly different from the language of *Taming*, the varying complexity of dialogue is skillfully used in *10 Things* to divide social groups, just as iambic pentameter is used to distinguish the educated upper-class characters from those of lower status.

Clearly, *10 Things* utilizes clever strategies to adapt Shakespeare into a modern-day version of the story. Yet because of the strict structure of the genre, adapting Shakespeare into a teen romantic comedy is also very challenging. The genre has specific requirements that are not inherently met by the nature of Shakespeare's plays. One significant example of how this manifests itself in *10 Things* is in the beginning of the film, as the scene is set. In Shakespeare's play *The Taming of the Shrew*, a young man from Verona named Petruchio comes to Padua with one goal in mind: to "wive it wealthily" (1.2.76). When he hears about Katherine and her father's wealth, he eagerly questions Hortensio for more information. Although Hortensio warns him against courting someone who would be a "shrewd ill-favored wife" (1.2.65), Petruchio dismisses his friend's concern, brashly stating that he wouldn't care even if she was "as old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrewd / As Socrates' Xanthippe" (1.2.71-72). To him, a wealthy marriage will lead to happiness, and no ill-tempered wife can get in the way. In contrast, Petruchio's counterpart in *10 Things I Hate About You*, Patrick, does not seek out Kat. He is entreated by Cameron and Joey, who offer to pay him so that he would make Kat fall in love with him. While there are financial incentives in both cases, the storyline of *The Taming of the Shrew* is heavily reliant on monetary interest—for Petruchio, marriage is for money alone. He is indifferent to Katherine's personality or character, and makes no attempt to impress her or create a meaningful relationship with her. Meanwhile, Patrick is intrigued by Kat's bold personality,

and learns about her interests so that he can impress her. Although he initially pursues her because he is paid to do so, he soon begins to cultivate a genuine relationship with her and his affections become authentic. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the driving force of the story is Petruchio's greed and desire for a wealthy marriage; in *10 Things I Hate About You*, the primary motivation is Patrick's efforts to woo Kat. This subtle yet significant difference between the original play and its film adaptation is a direct product of the film genre's restrictions. While a teen romantic comedy can begin with Joey paying Patrick to chase after Kate, the genre requires the story to develop further than just a financial endeavor. Mercenary interests have no place in a film created for adolescents, as teenage audiences cannot relate to the financial interest of *Taming's* characters. In this way, the adaptation is a "significant departure" from the original play, where money was the "prime motivator" for each of the marriages (Bertucci 420). Unlike the adults in *Taming*, the high school characters in *10 Things* are not interested in finances. As adolescents in an affluent suburban town, their concerns center around popularity and peer relations, rather than making money. Thus, although Patrick initially pursues Kat because of Joey's payment, it is not sufficient motivation for him to continue—both from his perspective, as well as from the audience's. Unsurprisingly, in the process of pursuing after her, Patrick falls in love with Kat, and the chase becomes real. As a romantic comedy, the genre requires a lightheartedness that cannot coexist with substantial monetary greed. The transformation of Patrick's feelings from financial interest to romantic interest is essential to the genre's requirements. Throughout the film, a strong undercurrent emphasizing the importance of love is intentionally built into the plot since love must be essential to the storyline. The movie ends with Patrick spending the money he received as payment by buying Kat a new guitar, signifying that his only gain throughout the process was his relationship with her.

Another manifestation of the genre's strict expectations is the role of peer pressure in the film. As a movie geared towards teenagers about the teenage experience, the theme of peer pressure is unavoidable if the film is to accurately portray the challenges of adolescence. However, peer pressure is a concept completely foreign to *The Taming of the Shrew*, since the play's characters are all adults in a society with very different social rules. Yet in *10 Things*, peer pressure is essential to the basis of the setting. Kate's "shrewish" personality developed in a stressful instance of peer pressure a few years ago—her freshman year boyfriend, Joey, had pressured her into having sex before she felt ready. Regretting it afterwards, she decides to abstain from sex, and Joey breaks up with her as a result. Kate's frustration over the power of peer pressure and teenage social norms is the reason she becomes regarded as a mean, angry feminist. Later in the movie, she becomes concerned that her sister, Bianca, is getting swept up in the same pressured environments she initially struggled in. The film takes some time to address this complicated sister relationship, using this opportunity to heal their bond so that they stand in solidarity with one another. This narrative arc of familial reconciliation has no place in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Since the play centers around the Italian city of Padua, not a suburban high school near Washington state, the characters in the play relate to one another very differently. Unlike *10 Things*, which deals with high school crushes and sisterly squabbles, *Taming* discusses marriage and dowries. The stakes are higher in the play, and its content does not conform to the patterns of teen movies. Thus, when the play is adapted into a teenage movie, many plot points are molded into an acceptable version of the original.

Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this change comes from how the film resolves its story. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the ending of the play is uncomfortable and sobering. The previously strong and opinionated Katherine has become a weakened, deferential shadow of her

former self. Her transformation is so apparent and dramatic that her father says that he now has “another daughter” (5.2.27). Because of her marriage to Petruchio and the trials she had to endure, Katherine is nothing like how she was before. When the husbands decide to wager on who has the most obedient wife, Petruchio wins, and Katherine gives a startling speech denouncing the other wives for not readily obeying their husbands. Amongst other bold claims, she states that “Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign” (5.2.162). In the beginning of the play, Katherine’s conversations with Petruchio are littered with disdain and harsh language. Now, she calls him her “keeper” and “life” (5.2.162), a complete shift from her previous perspective. While this transformation is worrying enough, the men’s reactions to her change are even more concerning. Baptista, Katherine’s father, congratulates Petruchio for his accomplishment, and adds “twenty thousand crowns” (5.2.126) to the prize money “for she is changed as she had never been” (5.2.128). Petruchio, who originally married Katherine solely for her wealth, is now rewarded with additional funds because of his success in changing Katherine into an obedient wife. His greed and domineering attitude toward Katherine are validated and encouraged, rather than denounced. The play ends on a bleak note: “Now, go thy ways, thou hast tamed a curst shrow. / ‘Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so” (5.2.205-206). As the characters leave impressed by Petruchio’s accomplishment, the modern audience watching the play sits in horror, shocked by the bleakness of the so-called comedy. The classification of *Taming* as a comedy, a play with a happy ending, brings another level of uneasiness. Is Katherine’s complete “taming” truly a happy ending? Who is happy at the end of the play, and at what cost? Rather than leaving the theatre with a sense of satisfaction, the audience feels unsettled by the blatant misogyny displayed not only by the male characters, but also by Katherine, who had been the only strong female character at the beginning of the play.

While the ending is unsettling, it pushes the audience to think deeply about its implications. Instead of leaving with a sense of satisfaction and forgetting the nuances of the play, audience members might dwell on the resolution, and thus spend more time evaluating the play's message while comparing it to their own values and beliefs. In that sense, the play's provocative ending is effective.

In contrast, the conclusion of *10 Things* neatly ties together all the conflicts of the film. Kat and Patrick are in love, Bianca is dating Cameron, and the two sisters are closer than they ever were before. Walter, Kat and Bianca's father, allows Kat to attend Sarah Lawrence in the fall, and does not stop Bianca from having a boyfriend. In a romantic comedy, a happy ending is required, and *10 Things* delivers that faithfully. But while the audience is expected to leave the theater satisfied, the complete (and in many cases, superficial) solutions at the end of the film are disappointing. Rather than seizing this opportunity to add nuance to the movie, the filmmakers decide to take the easy route of patching up every problem without really wrestling with the issue. For example, Walter's adamant refusals to let Bianca date somehow dissipate by the end of the film, when he is suddenly much more accepting of the idea. While part of his acceptance of the change is because of Kat's relationship with Patrick, the film still does not satisfactorily present Walter's process from absolute refusal to willing acquiescence. His genuine concern for his daughter's well-being is never thoroughly discussed; instead, it is portrayed from Bianca's perspective as an annoyance that conveniently evaporates. Rather than creating closure, the ending of *10 Things* is too artificial to be satisfying. Instead of engaging the audience in thoughtful reflection or analysis, the film's easy solutions give its viewers too little to consider. The message of the movie is surprisingly shallow, especially given its advantage as a modern work unrestrained by the dated values of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Ultimately, these quick solutions leave *10 Things* as a paler version of the original play. Unlike the uncomfortable yet thought-provoking resolution to *Taming*, the superficial ending of *10 Things* leaves the audience with a false sense of completion, enough to walk out of the theater and forget the conflicts of the film, rather than grapple with its message. Because *Taming* ends with Katherine's defense of her husband's violent and oppressive power over her in their marriage, the audience leaves the theatre considering the implications of the conclusion. While the ending of the play can be effective if interpreted directly from the original text, many modern productions make directorial decisions that subvert the play's offensive ending and instead reshape the final message into a more acceptable conclusion. Although the actors rarely change the play's dialogue, the way they present their lines can change the meaning. By bringing the play to a less offensive and perhaps more humorous close, the directors of these *Taming* productions forfeit their power to shock and challenge their audience, and instead focus on pleasing their viewers—an action also taken by the creators of *10 Things*.

However, *Taming* has a notable advantage over *10 Things*. As an original work, *Taming* is not tied down by the rigid expectations that naturally exist for adaptations. By definition, adaptations modify an original text to better fit a new setting or medium. There is an immediate assumption that adaptations will still resemble the original work it was based upon, and thus adaptors must be mindful of the way in which they form their new work. In contrast, when Shakespeare was crafting the storyline from his own imagination, "there was no great body of theoretical writing on which he could draw as a guide" (Wells 107). This lack of guidance and expectation gave him more freedom to write as he pleased, and he was "constantly experimenting in content and form" (Wells 105) as a result.

Additionally, the film industry today has clearly defined genres with rules that movies are expected to follow faithfully. For example, teenage movies as well as romantic comedies are expected to be light and even superficial. Films of these genres are not encouraged to be profound, and *10 Things* is compliant with this expectation. While *Taming* also has restrictions as a comedy, Shakespeare was bolder in experimenting with his plays, constantly “modif[ying] comic form” (Wells 120) to achieve his desired outcome. Even though his comedies are expected to end in happy marriages, Shakespeare still pushed the bounds of genre restriction. In fact, although his comedy *Love’s Labours Lost* concludes with its characters united with their lovers, it does not end with marriage. The women discuss marrying their lovers in a year’s time, but no weddings occur at the end of the play. Although both *10 Things* and *Taming* experience the pressure of genre restriction, the creators of *10 Things* yield to those expectations, while Shakespeare ignores (and often, reshapes) them.

Thus, obedience towards genre restrictions is not a sufficient reason to justify all of the decisions made in *10 Things*. Although the teenage romantic comedy is a specific category, there is still a lot of freedom within those bounds. Even in other areas of the film where genre restrictions do not apply, *10 Things* does not take advantage of opportunities to add nuance and complexity to the play. The adaptation is so focused on its efforts to remain faithful to the original text, it blindly misses chances to redeem the story or improve its message.

### **Missed Chances to Redeem the Story**

One example of this misstep can be seen by the way *10 Things* adapts the concept of patriarchal power from *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the original play, Katherine and Bianca have almost no autonomy in deciding their marital statuses. Baptista, their father, declares that he will “not bestow [his] younger daughter / before [he has] a husband for the elder” (1.1.50-51),

thereby forcing Bianca to wait until Katherine is married. Later, when Petruchio decides to marry Katherine, he makes the decision on his own, then tells Baptista that they have “‘greed so well together” (2.1.314), although Katherine has not assented. The men in the play are responsible for forming the story and forcing the sisters to conform to their plans. This imbalance of gendered power is part of the problematic nature of the play that offends our modern values, as the women are given almost no say in the circumstance of their marriages. *10 Things* takes this aspect of the play and creates a modern adaptation of it. Walter, the girls’ father, creates a house rule that Bianca cannot date until Kat does so first. Later, Patrick, Cameron, and Joey work together to make Kat fall in love with Patrick, so that Bianca becomes eligible to date. In both the play and the film, the men are manipulating the storyline, using their power to achieve their goals. The women are given almost no agency, instead settling into a state of reactivity as they are forced (often unknowingly) to go along with the men’s plotting. Here, *10 Things* finds a straightforward way to transform ideas from the original text into the adaptation. However, its choice in adapting the concept of patriarchal power by directly finding its modern-day equivalent is disappointing. Values and expectations in 1999 were drastically different than those in 1590. Instead of using this opportunity to reimagine the plot and give the female characters more autonomy over their storylines, the creators of *10 Things* preserve the gender imbalance of power. In fact, this depiction in the film adaptation is more concerning than the depiction in the original play. Given our society’s stance on gender equality today, the sobering ending of *Taming* reminds the audience that the play’s values and messages should be analyzed critically. In the same way that the ending of *Taming* was likely perceived as acceptable based on societal values of the time, the happy ending of *10 Things* gives no indication to its audience that the teenage boys’ manipulation of Kat and Bianca should be scrutinized. This is another instance of how the

surface-level “happy ending” of *10 Things* lulls the audience into a false sense of security. In its efforts to remain faithful to the original text, the film leads its audience astray by allowing them to accept the gender imbalance of power without seriously questioning it. The only moment of justice for all the manipulations against the Stratford sisters occurs at the prom, when Bianca finally realizes what Joey had been planning all along. After betraying her trust and attending the prom with Joey, Bianca’s best friend Chastity spitefully tells her, “You know Joey only liked you for one reason [...] he was going to nail you tonight.” Shocked, Bianca marches back onto the dance floor, where she accosts Joey and punches him in the nose, saying “That’s for making my date bleed!” She then punches him again, saying “That’s for my sister!”, and promptly follows it by kneeing him in the groin and saying, “And that’s for me” (Clip 4). Bianca’s defeat over Joey is satisfying for both the other characters in the film and for the audience, who have been watching Joey manipulate Kat and Bianca for his own gain. However, this moment of victory does not completely level the imbalance of power—after all, Joey was not the only character responsible for the manipulation. Because of Cameron’s crush on Bianca, Cameron and Michael devise the entire plot, and use Joey as a “backer” to finance their strategy. After explaining the plan to Joey, he officially agrees to the plan, and pays for Patrick to chase Kat. While Cameron’s intent was not as crude and shallow as Joey’s, he is equally to blame for manipulating the Stratford sisters. But instead of receiving the consequences for his actions, he only reaps the rewards—Bianca defends him against Joey at the prom, eventually falls in love with him, and they begin to date.

Because the film attempts to remain as faithful as possible to the play, the movie also struggles with confusing contradictions. While it directly translates the patriarchal power in *Taming* to an almost identical version in *10 Things*, it takes a more creative path in adapting

Kat's "shrewish" personality. While Katherine in *Taming* is strong-willed and has a sharp tongue, the film's creators depict Kat as an "angry, man-hating 'femi-nazi'" (Bertucci 414). Later on in the thesis, I plan to engage in a larger discussion of the film's views on feminism. However, here, I will say this: by equating being a feminist with being a shrew, the filmmakers create a problematic underlying assumption for the movie's premise by conveying to its audience that feminism is a bad thing. The portrayal of feminism through Kat is aggressive, angry, and intolerant of others—a surprising depiction, considering the popularity of feminism at the time and the waves of feminism that had begun a few decades earlier. This choice to characterize Kat as an angry feminist is not only surprising, but also inconsistent with the rest of the film. As an intelligent, strong feminist, Kat would not acquiesce so easily to the manipulation of the men around her. Throughout the movie, she becomes "tamed," which is depicted in the film as a slowly softening heart towards the people around her. This does not necessarily contradict the ideas of feminism; however, Kat's slow but steady acceptance of the gender imbalance of power and growing complacency towards the social norms of high school does. By the end of the movie, Kat's values as a feminist are in tension with her willing submission to gender norms.

Even when it is not contradicting its own story, the film forces incongruent and unrealistic circumstances into the plot in its effort to remain close to the original text. This is most evident in the hastily-formed subplot involving Kat and Bianca's mother. Like many of Shakespeare's plays, the mother figure in *The Taming of the Shrew* is missing. Baptista Minola is the only parent involved in Katherine and Bianca's lives—there is no mention of a mother. However, the omission of a maternal figure does not mean she has passed away; it simply presents her as absent in this storyline. While *10 Things* picks up on this distinction, its attempt to translate this minor detail into an acceptable modern-day equivalent is confusing. The movie

only mentions Kat and Bianca's mother a few times, and each instance is brief and ambiguous. In a scene where Kat explains to Bianca why she had sex with Joey in ninth grade, she reluctantly adds, "[It was] right after Mom left." The lingering pain felt by both Stratford sisters over their mother's abandonment is occasionally mentioned throughout the film, but never directly addressed and resolved. This subplot becomes a fleeting thought that passes through the film a few times, without much logic or reasoning. For an attentive viewer, the lack of closure can be surprising and puzzling—and because it comes with no explanation, the subplot only seems to only exist so that the adaptation faithfully follows the original play. But even if that is the only motivation, the film's decision to depict an absent mother by creating one that abandoned her daughters is also a confusing choice. *10 Things* is set in a comfortably wealthy community where most of the upperclassmen in high school have impressive cars. As a movie that relies heavily on romantic comedy tropes, *10 Things* suddenly departs from these genre expectations by creating a mother who abandons her picturesque family. This is not only incongruous with the rest of the film, but also unrealistic. There are many other ways of depicting an absent mother in a modern-day setting that would make more sense—for example, Kat and Bianca's mother could be a workaholic, who is constantly occupied and thus never present; alternatively, perhaps she is around the house, but takes a very passive role. The choice to create a mother who abandoned her children, seemingly without explanation, is inappropriate for the film's setting and genre.

### **Faithfulness in Adaptation**

While the film's attempts at remaining faithful to the play are admirable, its execution is lacking. Part of its inability to adapt the play with more success lies within the way it approaches the concept of adaptation. In philosopher James Harold's investigation of faithfulness in

adaptation, he provides a useful framework to examine movies against their original sources. He focuses on two distinct senses of fidelity: story fidelity and thematic fidelity. Story fidelity is the degree to which the film “tells the same story” (92) as the literary work, while thematic fidelity is the degree to which the film “preserves the story’s themes” (94). Story fidelity is common, but very difficult to execute successfully, since the change in medium from play to film can complicate the adaptation’s ability to directly translate aspects of the story from the original text to the newly created movie. The definition of story fidelity is also complex, as it encapsulates not only the same plot points, but faithfulness in the “narrative telling of those events” (92). In his argument, Harold points out that while story fidelity is “always *relevant*, [...] it is not always *desirable*” (92). The complicated nature of adapting a story from one medium to another is even more challenging given other restrictions such as time frame or genre restrictions. In contrast, thematic fidelity is a lot more abstract, focusing on more general concepts that do not require detailed translation from one medium to another. While this is easier than struggling with a faithful narrative adaptation, it is also more desirable. Even though moving a narrative from a play to a film may take considerable effort and time, it does not necessarily demonstrate deep engagement with the original text. In contrast, thematic fidelity “requires a kind of skill and excellence on the part of the adapter” (94) that stems from a thorough understanding of the source material.

As discussed previously, *10 Things I Hate About You* struggles with attempting to remain faithful to *The Taming of the Shrew*. It puts most of its effort into story fidelity, or trying to find ways to translate the play’s storyline into a modern film. Admittedly, it does so impressively, cleverly finding ways to parallel the play’s storyline with plot points popular in teen movies. However, as Harold points out, story fidelity is insufficient. Not all aspects of the narrative

translate easily. Unfortunately, because of their preoccupation with story fidelity, the creators of *10 Things* spend little time exploring the potential for thematic fidelity. Some of the general concepts are still present, but they lack the emphasis required for a truly faithful adaptation of the play. The ending of the play is starkly different than the ending of the movie, and their messages leave audiences with opposite reactions. While *Taming* focuses on marriage as an avenue for financial gain, *10 Things* centers around themes of peer pressure and fitting in to the norm. If *10 Things* had focused more of its attention on translating thematic arcs from the play to the film, it could be much more effective in conveying its message to the audience. Its message would also be more aligned with the message of *Taming*, rather than a paler version of the original. Story fidelity does not guarantee thematic fidelity—in fact, efforts to directly translate a narrative from the original text to the adaptation can skew the themes to fit the adaptation's requirements. In this case, the creators of *10 Things* force *Taming*'s storyline into a teenage romantic comedy, an intersection of two genres that have many requirements of their own. By adhering to those genre requirements while strictly following plot points, *10 Things* is forced to change the play's themes to more teenage-focused issues such as social pressure and identity exploration. In contrast, since thematic fidelity keeps the heart of the text intact, a version of *10 Things* that focuses on capturing the messages in *Taming* would likely have a different storyline, but more accurately adhere to the play's themes. After all, surface-level plot points are used to convey a deeper message—so to focus on the actual plot points rather than the underlying themes would produce a skewed adaptation that lacks the basis of the original text.

As an individual film, *10 Things I Hate About You* is funny, entertaining, and charming. It is easily identifiable as a teen romantic comedy, and the movie's longevity and consistent popularity is emblematic of its ability to satisfy audience's expectations. However, as an

adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *10 Things I Hate About You* falls short. The film struggles to adhere to the genre restrictions of teen romantic comedies while still remaining appropriately faithful to the original text. It also fails to see the shortcomings of *Taming*, and instead blindly tries to mimic its plot and values. In its attempts to mimic the play's plot, the film focuses on story fidelity, which requires a shallower understanding of the text rather than deeply engaging with its message. In its attempts to mimic the play's values, the film fails to take advantage of its opportunity to redeem a shockingly misogynistic play, and instead reconfirms male dominance and female submission. *10 Things* is too conservative in its attempts to remain faithful to *Taming*. It does not take bold steps forward, but instead follows meekly in the shadow of the original play. Given Shakespeare's own daring and inventive writing, *10 Things*' choice to closely adhere to the play is ironic.

Chapter 2: *Twelfth Night* and *She's the Man*

Seven years after *10 Things I Hate About You* debuted in theatres, screenwriters Karen McCullah Lutz and Kirsten Smith helped create another film adaptation of a Shakespearian play. This time, William Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night* was turned into a film called *She's the Man*. Just like *10 Things*, *She's the Man* is both a romantic comedy and a teen movie, using characteristics from both genres to shape its approach in adapting a play for film. While there are many similarities between these two adaptations, they differ in one significant way: unlike *The Taming of the Shrew*, whose "troublesome content" (McLennan 4) is widely considered offensive and misogynistic by our modern values, *Twelfth Night* is generally innocuous, more well known for its "tendency to destabilize understandings of [...] the masculine-feminine dyad" (Pittman 124) rather than offend its viewers. The story follows Viola, a young noblewoman who suddenly finds herself shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria. Assuming that her twin brother Sebastian has not survived the storm, Viola disguises herself as a man named Cesario and finds work in Duke Orsino's household, where she gains his favor. As the story unfolds, the interactions between Orsino, Viola, and Countess Olivia create an unrequited love triangle: Orsino pines for Olivia, Olivia is attracted to Cesario (who is Viola in disguise), and Viola falls in love with Orsino. The story becomes further complicated by the arrival of Sebastian, who has survived the shipwreck and bears an uncanny resemblance to Viola. Through mounting confusion and increasing complexity, the deception finally unravels when Viola reveals her true identity, and reunites with her long-lost brother. In an ending customary for a Shakespearean comedy, the play closes with a double marriage, bringing together not only Orsino and Viola, but also Olivia and Sebastian.

In *She's the Man*, Viola Hastings is the star female soccer player at her high school, Cornwall. But when the team gets cut and the coach refuses to allow girls onto the boy's team, Viola disguises herself as her twin brother Sebastian and attends his high school, Illyria Preparatory, so that she can join the boy's soccer team there. Although she initially attended Illyria so that she could prove her worth as a female soccer player, she quickly falls in love with her roommate, Duke Orsino. In turn, he has a crush on Olivia Lennox, a popular girl in school. But rather than returning his affections, Olivia quickly becomes enamored with the new student, Sebastian (who is Viola in disguise). As the movie continues, the complexity surrounding this love triangle steadily increases until it reaches its climax at the Cornwall-Illyria soccer match, where all is revealed.

Although *She's the Man* shares many similarities with its original text, it makes bold and substantial changes in adapting the characters and plot of *Twelfth Night* for film. Instead of translating the nuance and intricacy of Shakespeare's work into a movie, *She's the Man* embraces the simple and shallow nature of teen romantic comedies. Its end result lacks the complexity of Shakespeare's storyline and the artistry of his writing. However, the film is surprisingly adept at adapting the play to appease its audience. Instead of fixating on strict narrative fidelity, film director Andy Fickman focuses his attention on bringing the themes of *Twelfth Night* into *She's the Man*. This focus on thematic fidelity provides more creative freedom, so that the adaptation can capture the overarching motifs of the play while creating a version that relates more directly to the interests of present-day teenagers. In this chapter, I will analyze how *STM* adapts two aspects of the play: the characters and the plot. Since these two features are essential to the overall narrative, focusing on the changes made between the play and the film in these areas can shed light on how the creators of *STM* approached their adaptation.

## Adapting Characters

From the start of the movie, *She's the Man* clearly rejects the idea of strict narrative fidelity from the way it adapts Shakespeare's characters for film. In *Twelfth Night*, Viola dresses up as a man and goes by the name "Cesario," becoming a page in Duke Orsino's palace. In *She's the Man*, the character Cesario does not even exist—the only acknowledgement of his character in the film is a pizza parlor called Cesario's where all the students spend time after school. Instead, when Viola disguises herself as a boy, she takes her brother Sebastian's identity, pretending to be him in all of his classes. Given the drastic differences between the storyline of the play and the plot of the movie (which is discussed in more detail later on in this chapter), creating a new "Cesario" character and fitting him into the teen movie narrative would have been challenging and unnecessary. But because the creators of *She's the Man* feel comfortable with distancing the film from strictly adhering to the play's storyline, Viola instead dresses up as her twin brother, a plot point that becomes an essential part of the movie's premise.

Instead of strict narrative fidelity, the creators of *She's the Man* are more interested in ensuring that the film fits with general genre expectations and appeals to teenage audiences. As with the vast majority of teen movies, *STM* takes place in a high school with conveniently irresponsible educators and clearly defined social groups. Many of the characters in *Twelfth Night* are turned into supporting friends for the primary characters of the film: Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby become Andrew and Toby, Duke's soccer teammates, while Antonio becomes Paul Antonio, Viola's hairdresser and friend. Rather than nobility living in their separate palaces, Duke Orsino becomes Duke, the captain of the soccer team, while Countess Olivia becomes Olivia, the pretty popular girl adored by all the boys at Illyria Prep. The majority of the play's characters are fitted into teen movie equivalents, and a few additional characters are

added in order to create a traditional teen movie plot. Viola's ex-boyfriend Justin and Sebastian's girlfriend Monique have "no Shakes counterpart" (Klett 73). They are created specifically for the sake of the film, highlighting the tension between various high school relationships, but lacking any substantial role in the movie's efforts as an adaptation. Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, Viola and Sebastian's divorced parents, have no equivalent in Shakespeare's play, and their cluelessness throughout most of the film is unsurprising, as parents are often portrayed as "inadequate or oppressive" (Klett 72) in teen movies. Clearly, the creators of *She's the Man* feel comfortable with significant character transformations, as they are more concerned about catering to teen movie expectations rather than staying close to Shakespeare's plot.

In fact, *She's the Man* does not just fit into genre expectations; it embraces its identity as a teen romantic comedy. Since romantic comedies and teen movies are not expected to provide textured, nuanced characters, *STM* happily obliges by providing characters with little complexity. The movie presents its characters as flat stereotypes, and any sort of depth is clearly highlighted so that the audience notices. For example, Duke is first depicted as a "dumb jock" who excels on the soccer field but has trouble speaking in complete sentences in front of girls. However, as he emerges as the main character's love interest, the film makes an effort to emphasize to the audience that he actually has more depth than it seems:

Viola: You're a really sensitive guy, aren't you?

Duke: No, I—I just think that relationships should be more than just the physical stuff [...] when I'm with someone, I want to be able to talk about other stuff.

Like, I don't know, serious stuff. Stuff I can't talk about, you know, with anyone else.

[...]

Viola: Like... this kind of stuff?

Duke: Yeah.

In this scene, Duke seems to show deeper reflection and some level of emotional maturity. Even so, the dialogue between Duke and Viola is very deliberate, so that the audience understands clearly how Duke should be characterized. Although Duke denies it, Viola's observation that he is "a really sensitive guy" is supposed to resonate with the audience. As he reflects out loud, his desire for a partner who can talk about "serious stuff" with him is supposed to demonstrate more depth than the "dumb jock" label Olivia uses to describe him earlier on in the movie. This is the only scene in the film where Duke is depicted as a contemplative, perhaps complex character. By adding this one scene, *STM* expects audiences to believe that Duke's character has depth and nuance, although the rest of the movie offers no other example of thoughtful reflection.

In contrast, Shakespeare takes a much more nuanced approach towards his characters. Unlike *She's the Man*, which tries to convince its audience of Duke's depth through one half-hearted scene, *The Taming of the Shrew* brings together many scenes throughout the play to create a more in-depth understanding of the character. For example, through Duke Orsino's scenes throughout the play, the audience slowly realizes that his love for Countess Olivia is not as genuine as it may seem. Rather, Orsino enjoys the experience of being in love, more than he actually loves Olivia. The play first begins with a lovesick Orsino:

Orsino: If music be the food of love, play on.

Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,

The appetite may sicken and so die.

That strain again! It had a dying fall. (1.1.1-4)

Even from the start of the play, Orsino is passionate and dramatic, theatrical in his lovesickness. He tells the musicians to “play on” (1.1.1) and give him “excess of it” (1.1.2), hoping that an overindulgence in the music that feeds his love for Olivia will lead to the death of his passion. A few lines later, as he describes the first time he saw Olivia, he says that in “That instance was I turned into a hart, / And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds, / E’er since pursue me” (1.1.22-24). These lines, which are supposed to describe his first feelings and sensations towards Olivia, are surprisingly self-centered. He is the hart and his desires are the hounds—so the chase is being conducted within himself, rather than between himself and his supposed love, Olivia. The only direct mention of Olivia in this description is that “she purged the air of pestilence” (1.1.21), which sounds somewhat romantic, but has no real meaning. In another scene later on in the play, Orsino instructs Cesario to go to Olivia and “Surprise her with discourse of [his] dear faith” (1.5.27) and “act [his] woes” (1.5.28). The dramatic nature of Orsino’s instruction reveals an enjoyment in the emotions connected to love, while providing no evidence of his actual affection for Olivia. Notably, Orsino does not speak to Olivia directly until Act 5 Scene 1, yet again demonstrating the lack of relationship between the two characters. Throughout the play, Shakespeare provides various clues to show the audience that Orsino loves the theatricality of love more than he loves Olivia. This observation is never explicitly stated in the play, but instead requires careful observation and analysis. Unlike the previous scene from *She’s the Man*, where Viola states outright, “you’re a sensitive guy,” Shakespeare takes a more nuanced and complex approach in his characterizations.

The creators of *She’s the Man* make no effort to create the same depth or complexity in their adaptation. They are satisfied with conforming to the low expectations of romantic comedies and teen movies, two genres that expect stereotypical characters to “follow the well-

established [...] formula” (Klett 73). Although *STM* hopes to benefit from Shakespeare’s cultural capital, and enjoys the elevated perception that comes with associating the movie with Shakespeare, it makes little effort to elevate the quality of the film above flat, formulaic characters. For example, Feste, the witty and clever jester whose perceptive commentary is often more enlightening than the dialogue of the characters around him, does not have a film equivalent. Instead, his name is adopted by Malcolm Festes, a classmate at Illyria Prep who is also vying for Olivia’s affections, while trying to discover and expose Viola’s secret to the school. As the antagonist in the movie, Malcolm is haughty and proud, an adaptation equivalent of *Twelfth Night*’s Malvolio. Malcolm bears no resemblance to Festes’ character; the only potential connection between the two characters lies in Festes’ identity as the fool, and Malcolm’s obvious foolishness. *STM*’s choice to reduce Festes’ character—arguably the most perceptive and witty character in the play—into a surname with no real significance shows its disinterest in adapting Shakespeare’s clever characters for the teen romantic comedy. Given the chance to create a modern-day Festes, whose skillful wordplay and insightful commentary could bring a different and valuable perspective into the movie, *She’s the Man* would rather rely on slapstick humor and typical romantic comedy plot points to entertain their audience.

While *She’s the Man* is not focused on strict narrative fidelity, it still recognizes the importance of adapting storylines from the play into the film. In order for a movie to be an adaptation, it needs more than simply using the same themes as the original source; the plot should still be recognizable. By focusing its attention on adapting specific storylines rather than the entire play, *STM* has more freedom to find creative ways in translating the narrative into a teen romantic comedy. In comparison, when *10 Things I Hate About You* attempted to adhere to genre expectations while also staying faithful to the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*, its efforts

resulted in a disappointingly conservative message that reinforced the misogynistic values of the original play. But because *She's the Man* is more selective in its narrative adaptation, its end result is more successful.

One of the storylines that *STM* adapts from the original play is Olivia's attraction to Viola disguised as a man. As mentioned previously, the movie makes a significant change by dressing Viola up as her brother, Sebastian, rather than a new character, Cesario. However, the end result is the same: instead of falling in love with Orsino, Olivia falls in love with the messenger trying to persuade her. In the original play, Orsino attempts to gain her affections by sending her love poems. But Olivia quickly dismisses them, saying, "I cannot love him" (1.5.264). Instead, she quickly falls in love with Cesario, whose genuine conversations with her feel refreshingly different from Orsino's repetitive courtship, which he began "long ago" (1.5.265). *She's the Man* takes this premise and creates a high school equivalent, using aspects of the teen movie genre to create a scenario that teenage audiences find relatable. In *STM*, Viola (dressed as Sebastian) approaches Olivia during biology and tries to encourage her to consider dating Duke, saying, "Have you ever thought about going out with Duke Orsino? I see that." But just like in the play, Olivia dismisses the idea, saying "Duke? No—no—no! I mean, he's good-looking and everything, but he's just not the guy for me." In both the play and the adaptation, Olivia is unimpressed with Duke, despite his long-term affections for her. Rather than falling in love with Duke, Olivia develops a crush on Viola in disguise. While this comes as a shock to Viola, the audience is not surprised: from their first interaction, *STM* makes it clear that Olivia is interested in Viola because she is so refreshingly different. When Viola and Olivia accidentally bump into one another outside of the principal's office (Clip 5), Viola helps pick up Olivia's books and they have a quick exchange:

Viola: Ooh, cute shoes!

Olivia: Oh you think so? I got them at Anthropologie.

Viola: No way! They have shoes there?

Olivia: Oh yeah. Right by the accessories.

Viola: Huh. [clears throat, speaking in a deeper voice] Here are your books.

Viola's first reflex to comment on Olivia's shoes is instinctual—as she realizes her actions, she quickly clears her throat and returns to acting more masculine. But when Viola leaves the quick conversation, obviously annoyed with her inability to stay in character, Olivia stands behind her, smiling and looking on. Later, when Viola confesses that she feels uncomfortable dissecting animals in science class, Olivia shakes her head in amazement, and says, “Wow. Most guys would never admit that.” Through a series of similar events, *STM* makes it clear that Olivia is interested in Viola because she speaks and acts differently than the other boys. While the stereotype for boys is to act tough and manly, Viola's honesty and vulnerability (both considered more stereotypically feminine qualities) set her apart in Olivia's eyes. This is a direct parallel to Countess Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, who falls in love with Cesario because of his “tongue,” “face,” and “spirit” (1.5.297-298). As Duke Orsino predicted, Countess Olivia is drawn to Cesario, in part because of his more feminine features.

By choosing this particular storyline to focus on, the creators of *She's the Man* adapt this narrative in an accurate yet creative way. Instead of just transferring the general plot points into the film, the creators carry over the deeper reason why Olivia falls in love with Viola. *STM* could have depicted Olivia's crush on Viola and rejection of Duke in a variety of ways; however, it chooses to adhere closely to the play by incorporating the explanation for Olivia's affections while adapting it to fit the high school plot. In *Twelfth Night*, Duke Orsino's lovesick speeches

are clichéd and uninteresting. In fact, his courtship is a nuisance in Countess Olivia's eyes, so much so that she tells Malvolio that "If it be a suit from the Count, I am sick, / or not at home; what you will, to dismiss it" (1.5.117-118). *STM* cleverly reshapes this into Duke's long yet fruitless crush on Olivia, who is completely uninterested in the prospect of dating a walking cliché—the stereotypically dull jock. By transferring the reason for Olivia's lack of interest in Duke Orsino into a teenage equivalent, *STM* demonstrates an impressive balance of strict fidelity and innovative adaptation. This occurs yet again when *STM* depicts why Olivia falls in love with Viola. While Countess Olivia is captured by Viola's honest and genuine speech (in contrast to Duke's unoriginal declarations of love), Olivia in *STM* is caught off guard by Viola's sincerity and frank confessions. Although this storyline is just one part of the play, the decision to focus on skillfully adapting this narrative for the film resulted in a thoughtful and impressive modern-day equivalent. This would not have been possible if the creators of *STM* were intent on complete narrative fidelity.

Soon after, the film's adaptation of Olivia's storyline begins to diverge. In *Twelfth Night*, after falling in love with Viola, who she believes to be Cesario, Countess Olivia asks Sebastian to "go with [her] and this holy man / into the chantry by" (IV.iii.23-24). Bringing along a confused but willing Sebastian, Countess Olivia gets married. In contrast, Olivia in *She's the Man* sees Sebastian arriving at Illyria in a taxi at night and rushes up to him, kissing him and reciting lyrics from a song he had written. In both scenes, Olivia rushes up to a confused but pleased Sebastian, declaring her love for him. However, unlike *Twelfth Night*, *STM* tries to create a layer of authenticity in Olivia and Sebastian's relationship, since the spontaneous and hurried marriage of the two characters would not be realistic or lasting by today's standards. *STM* accomplishes this by creating a brief but useful sub-plot: in an earlier scene in biology, Olivia

finds Sebastian's song lyrics in Viola's binder. She is visibly moved by the lyrics, saying, "Those are really good. So honest." By adding this scene earlier on in the movie, Olivia's eventual relationship with Sebastian gains a certain level of legitimacy—after all, the song lyrics she loved were written by Sebastian, not Viola. This divergence from the original play in order to create a more genuine relationship between the two characters is another example of how *STM*'s creators are unafraid of deviating from the original text. The creation of this connection between Olivia and Sebastian through song lyrics fits well into romantic comedy and teen movie genre tropes. The trope of music bringing a couple together is especially appealing to romantic comedy audiences—films such as *Music and Lyrics* and *Begin Again* prove that it is successful even when used as the central theme of the story.

### **Adapting Storylines**

As already mentioned previously, *She's the Man* makes drastic changes when adapting the plot of *Twelfth Night* into the teen romantic comedy. Instead of incorporating the various plotlines into the film, *STM* rejects strict narrative fidelity by lessening some storylines and completely eliminating others, all in an effort to place its main focus on one plot: the love triangle between Viola, Olivia, and Duke. But by heavily focusing on this single storyline while muting others into the background, *STM* is unable to incorporate all of the play's themes into the film. Its thematic fidelity becomes selective, only focusing on themes that fall within the teen movie or romantic comedy genres.

Out of all of the play's plot lines, the story of Viola, Olivia, and Duke's affections for one another is most fully adapted into the film. The choice to focus almost solely on the romance between these three characters was intentional and strategic. The basis of any romantic comedy is a love story—and although teen movies do not share this same requirement, they almost

always include it as well. Thus, by choosing this storyline to be the main focus of the film, *STM* can easily translate the complicated interpersonal relationships and plot points into a high school equivalent. Additionally, since love triangles are a common and beloved trope in both romantic comedies and teen movies (from *Pretty in Pink* to *The Hunger Games*), the emphasis on the Viola-Duke-Olivia love triangle is appealing to its audiences. In fact, the creators of *She's the Man* take advantage of the convoluted nature of the characters' romantic relationships to garner interest for the movie by describing the scenario on its promotional posters (Figure 1). But while

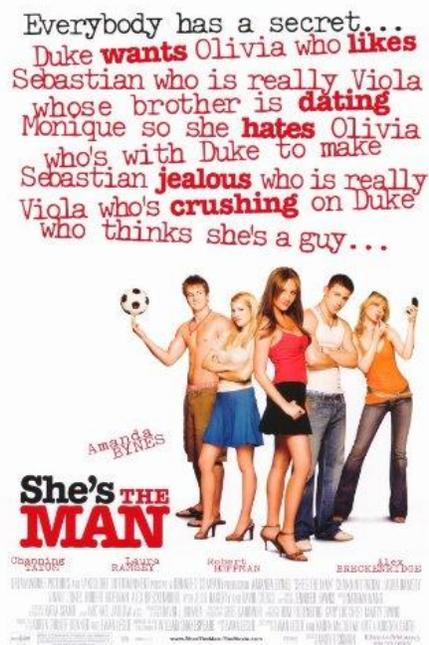


Figure 1. *She's the Man* poster

the love triangle in *Twelfth Night* revolves heavily around three characters, the promotional posters for *STM* purposely complicate and dramatize the relationships further by also including other characters such as Sebastian and Monique, and presenting words such as “dating,” “jealous,” and “crushing” in bold. These words all emphasize the drama that unfolds in the movie, while subtly trying to appeal to teenage audiences by using their slang (after all, “crushing” is a term exclusively used by adolescents).

Although *She's the Man* makes some changes and additions when adapting the characters of *Twelfth Night* into

the film, the Viola-Olivia-Duke storyline remains largely intact, and most of the themes connected to the storyline are also faithfully adapted. As with all Shakespearian comedies, *Twelfth Night* is largely focused on love and desire. Each of the central (and many of the secondary) characters is in love with another character. But while love is the main focus of the play, this storyline also explores the relationship between love and another central theme:

deception. Since Viola is dressed as Cesario for the majority of the play, the deceptive nature of disguise becomes crucial to the plot development. If Viola had retained her original appearance, many of the story's complications would unravel. Countess Olivia would not have fallen in love with Viola, and the story would have inevitably shifted to take on a very different shape. Thus, the difference between outward appearance and true identity is central to the plot. This theme also appears in another storyline in the play, when members of Countess Olivia's household claim that Festes is mad because of his outward appearance and behavior, when in reality he is perfectly sane.

Although the love triangle plot is most faithfully adapted from all of the play's storylines, the creators of *She's the Man* still simplify the story. While the film focuses on themes of love and deception within the love triangle plot, it intentionally leaves out another central theme of the play, class and social status. In *Twelfth Night*, Viola is a noblewoman, and although she tells Countess Olivia that she is "a gentleman" (1.5.283), her disguise as the page Cesario in Duke Orsino's household means that she is still much lower in social status. So when Countess Olivia falls in love with Viola disguised as Cesario, her affections for the young page rather than the wealthy duke raise an interesting discussion about how love and class intersect. However, by the end of the play, Viola's true identity is revealed—including her social status. This then shifts the play's portrayal of love and class: since Viola is united with Duke Orsino and Countess Olivia marries Sebastian, the major characters in the play still marry within their social class in the end. Does the ending indicate that genre and societal expectations transcend inter-class romance? How does Viola's disguise as a man complicate this issue? While this multifaceted discussion is interesting to consider, it has no presence in *She's the Man*. Since the setting of *Twelfth Night* is adapted to a high school in *STM*, the differences in social class are muted in the film. While

Viola is initially introduced as an unpopular student at Illyria High, she quickly gains recognition and widespread admiration from her peers after a “public display of apparent heterosexual dating prowess” (Meyer 234). The film focuses much of its time portraying her ascent into becoming “cool,” a part of the story that is wholly created to satisfy genre expectations rather than adapt from the original text. The transformation of a disliked teenager into the most popular person in the high school is a common trope in teen movies, and the decision to include this as part of *STM*'s plot is appealing to its teenage audiences. However, by substituting the nuanced discussion on class and love with this storyline on achieving popularity, *STM* reduces the complexity of the main storyline and instead aligns itself with shallow genre tropes.

The theme of class is not just absent in the love triangle storyline—it is also conspicuously absent in another area of the play. One significant plot line minimized in the film is the practical joke that members of Olivia's household play on Malvolio, Olivia's steward. Malvolio, whose self-righteous and arrogant attitude makes him unpopular with the rest of the household, is deceived by Maria, Fabian, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew into believing that Countess Olivia is in love with him through a fabricated love letter. This sudden revelation uncovers Malvolio's own ambitious desire to marry significantly above his class: moments after reading the love letter, he proclaims, “I will be proud, I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance, I will be point-devise the very man” (2.5.165-166). His true intentions are revealed, and he quickly falls prey to the other characters' pranks, blinded by his eagerness to rise above their ranks. Through a series of elaborate tricks devised by Maria and her friends, Malvolio appears to be going mad, and is locked in the “hideous darkness” (4.2.32). Eventually, at the end of the play, Sir Toby and the rest of the group decide to let him out,

unveiling the joke to an angry Malvolio, whose dream of becoming Countess Olivia's husband never becomes reality.

While the Viola-Olivia-Duke storyline is central to the play, this storyline is also important in helping develop many of the play's supporting characters. However, in the film, it has no true equivalent. Although playing a practical joke is an acceptable storyline for a teen movie, the dark and questionable prank on Malvolio is difficult to translate into a light-hearted film for adolescents. Instead of engaging with the story and finding an adequate equivalent, *She's the Man* rids itself of this story almost entirely, only leaving behind a few altered remnants. In *STM*, there are no practical jokes, as Eunice (who is supposed to embody Maria's character) has very little interaction with Toby and Andrew. Malcolm, the character created to take Malvolio's place, retains the same haughty attitude and desire to be with Olivia. But instead of being attacked and deceived by others, Malcolm serves as the antagonist of *STM*, sneaking around Illyria Prep and trying to figure out Viola's secret so that he can expose her. The end result is the same, however: after Malcolm tries to publicly embarrass Viola, his plan backfires, and he finds himself humiliated in front of the entire school. Unlike *Twelfth Night*, where his embarrassment is directly caused by others around him, in *STM*, he is solely responsible for his predicament.

Even though the practical joke storyline is not the main focus of the play, it is an essential subplot that unfolds independently from the love triangle narrative. By the end of the first act in *Twelfth Night*, all of the characters in Olivia's household have been introduced; by the middle of the next act, Maria vows to "gull [Malvolio] into a nayword and make him a common recreation" (2.3.134-135). This storyline continues to develop throughout the play, eventually coming to a close in the last scene, when Malvolio is finally freed from the prank. But in *She's the Man*, Malcolm's conniving plot to expose Viola is formed very late into the movie, only

starting to pick up momentum at minute 72 of the total 105 minute running time. When it finally begins to take a more prominent role, it serves more as a vehicle to push the love triangle plot towards its conclusion, rather than a standalone storyline that develops independently. Compared to the many instances in the play where the Malvolio plotline takes center stage, the adaptation rarely highlights the progression of Malcolm's story. By minimizing his time on screen and using his investigation to drive the love triangle plot forward, *STM* presents this storyline as a minor and unimportant afterthought. Unfortunately, because of this reduction, the film's overall plot loses a layer of complexity, since the Viola-Olivia-Duke story becomes even more dominant. Simultaneously, the movie's characters are significantly less developed than the characters in the text, since much of the play's character development occurs within the storyline.

While Malvolio's storyline is considerably reduced and transformed for the film, the storyline involving Sebastian and Antonio is completely discarded. In *She's the Man*, Sebastian's absence is explained by a spontaneous trip with his band to play in London, rather than a life-threatening shipwreck. Similarly, Antonio's character does not exist in the same form as the play either: instead, he becomes Viola's friend and hairdresser Paul Antonio, who helps her disguise herself to fit in at Sebastian's new high school. In the film, Sebastian and Antonio do not cross paths, a stark contrast to the close friendship exhibited throughout the play. They both serve their purpose in the film, then exit the screen without any significant character development. Thus, the intimate relationship between Sebastian and Antonio in the play has no presence in the film adaptation. This is unsurprising: for a teenage romantic comedy in the early 2000s, audience and genre expectations both dictate that the romances in the film must exist between a boy and a girl. Since the creators of *STM* are not concerned with strict narrative fidelity, the transformation of

Antonio to Paul Antonio seems natural: by removing Antonio from Sebastian's side and placing him at Viola's right hand, *STM* erases any hint of male homoerotic desire. Instead of wrestling with the "intensity of feeling" (Atkin 72) between the two characters, the adaptation modifies Paul Antonio so that he now fits the trope of being Viola's gay best friend. This character's transformation is yet another example of how the film embraces the shallow and formulaic nature of its genre: rather than create a textured character, *STM* reduces the Sebastian-Antonio intimacy into a flat stereotype.

As with many of the character adaptations, plot changes in *STM* were created so that the adaptation would be more appealing for its intended audience. While Shakespeare's plays attracted audiences of all ages and classes, the romantic comedy and teen movie genres target a very small group of people with specific interests and expectations. Since teen romantic comedies are usually quite shallow, lacking the depth and complexity frequently evident in Shakespeare's writing, *STM* willingly adheres to its genre's low expectations. In fact, it embraces the superficiality of its genres by purposely minimizing plot lines that create complexity and depth, and emphasizing the one plot line that appeals most to its teenage audiences. By doing so, the adaptation becomes selective in its thematic fidelity, producing a more simplistic and less nuanced end result.

### Chapter 3: Gender, Sexuality, and Feminism

As I have argued, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are surprisingly conservative in their approaches to gender, sexuality, and feminism. While both films were produced in the same time period, and both embrace and strongly emphasize the “Girl Power” movement, the underlying message of the two movies encourage a return to traditional male/female gender roles and present a postfeminist attitude.

#### **Perpetuation of the Male Gaze**

Although the target audience for *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* is teenage girls, both films still depict many of its scenes using what feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey calls “the male gaze.” In her influential essay titled “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Mulvey explains the “male gaze” as a trope that refers to “the visual power dynamics set up across a gender axis between a (male) subject or viewer and the (female) object of the gaze” (Kosut 195). She continues by discussing three ways in which the male gaze is integrated into the film. The first is through the camera itself. As demonstrated by Gil Junger and Andy Fickman (the directors of *10 Things* and *She's the Man* respectively), movie directors are predominantly male, and the “male” camera is responsible for the way that women are depicted on the screen. Secondly, Mulvey argues that the gaze exists “within the dynamics of relationships in the film itself” (Kosut 195), that women on screen are largely objectified or reduced to flat stereotypes, significantly more passive than their active, well-rounded male on-screen counterparts. Lastly, there is the gaze of the audience or viewer of the film, who is often assumed to be male (even if the movie is intended for female audiences). As I will demonstrate in this chapter, whether the male gaze comes from the director, the characters of the film, or the

audience, it manifests itself through the camera angles and shots, so that the male perspective is “reproduced in [...] the cinematography” (Chandler).

Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze, first published in 1975, has not diminished in relevance over time. *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She’s the Man* both use the male gaze throughout each film, leaning on this conservative trope rather than freeing the central female characters from the confines of the male perspective. By doing so, its subliminal message to its audience (which happens to be young, impressionable teenage girls) confirms the power of male perspective and encourages the objectification of women.

*10 Things* and *She’s the Man* both introduce major female characters into the story through the lens of the male gaze, thereby demonstrating the dominance of the male perspective from the start of the film. In *She’s the Man*, the film begins with Viola playing soccer on the beach in a bikini with other girls (Clip 6). The camera movement, following Viola as she maneuvers around other players and scores a goal, gives her a “to be looked at ness,” a quality that “force[s] [spectators] to identify with the ‘male gaze’” (Meyer 233). This quality is made clear not only by the freeze-frames and short clips of Viola running, but especially by the clips of Justin, Viola’s boyfriend, and his group of friends, who watch the girls play from the sidelines. As they watch, laugh, and react to the girls’ soccer game, it is suggested that perhaps part of the reason the girls are playing is for the boys’ entertainment. The first image of female power in the movie (in this case, a group of girls playing a male-dominated sport) is already tied to male expectation and the male gaze. As the introduction comes to a close, the film makes a clear effort to establish *She’s the Man* as a “Girl Power” movie: when Viola heads the ball into the goal, Justin and his friends cheer, then begin bowing on the ground in amazement and admiration. In this moment, it seems like the girls have gained some sort of superiority or dominance over the

boys; however, this doesn't last long. A few seconds later, when Viola kicks a ball through a hanging life preserver, Justin catches it, then throws Viola over his shoulder, despite her laughing protests of "put me down!". Despite her impressive athletic ability, Justin's physical power and ability to carry her around demonstrates his eventual dominance over her. Viola, who is depicted from the start as a sort of "it" girl, still submits to her boyfriend's power in the end. By beginning the movie by depicting Viola as a beautiful, athletic girl with the perfect Hollywood "ideal male" by her side (Meyer 233), the creators of *STM* convey to their audience that Viola is to be admired—as an object of desire for boys, as a person to emulate for girls.

Similarly, Bianca's entrance in *10 Things* also presents her from the male perspective, and uses various cinematic techniques to emphasize the male gaze even more clearly. The scene begins with Michael, a resident "geek" at Padua High giving a tour to Cameron, a new student in school (Clip 7). As Michael walks Cameron around campus, talking about the relationships between various friend groups, Cameron listens intently until he suddenly interrupts Michael, saying, "Oh my god." Entranced, Cameron looks forward, and the camera suddenly shifts from focusing on Cameron's love-struck facial expression to taking his point of view. The music immediately swells, and Bianca Stratford walks forward, looking to the side as she passes by Cameron and Michael. Still captivated by her, Cameron turns and begins to follow Bianca as she greets her friend Chastity. Looking longingly at her as she walks out of view, Cameron says, "I burn, I pine, I perish." This whole scene, the introduction of the first Stratford sister, is completely narrated and described from the male perspective. The camera is initially set on Michael and Cameron, but immediately flips to Bianca when she enters the scene. For the first few seconds, the camera takes Cameron's point of view, showing Bianca's entrance in slower motion and introducing a crescendo of music to match the wonder he feels. Then, as the camera

follows Bianca as she passes by the two boys, the audience is no longer looking at Bianca through Cameron's eyes, since he is in the shot—the eye-level angle of the camera allows the viewers to feel like another student at Padua High, looking at Bianca with the same kind of awe. This particular perspective on the scene, subtly presented to the movie's viewers, is another example of the male gaze. Although the audience is expected to be predominantly teenage girls, the filmmakers present Bianca from the perspective of a high school boy with a crush. The camera angles, music, and slow-motion effect all depict Bianca as desirable. Additionally, Cameron's awestruck expression and his fervent recitation of Lucentio's lines as he declares, "I burn, I pine! I perish" (1.1.157) from *The Taming of the Shrew* emphasize Bianca's immediate physical appeal. The combination of all the effects presents Bianca as more of an object than a person—Cameron's expression looks more like a child enthralled in a candy store, amazed by what he sees.

By introducing major female characters through the male gaze, both *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* immediately present a specific point of view that persists throughout the rest of the movies. Even as Viola and Bianca develop into more well-rounded characters, the viewers' initial understanding of the characters as objects of male desire becomes an underlying assumption that is difficult to recognize, especially as the narrative becomes more complex. Because both Viola and Bianca are first portrayed from the perspective of the male characters around them, the audiences' understanding of their identities is invariably linked to the male gaze. Trying to view these two characters from another perspective becomes difficult if not impossible, and attempting to identify where the male gaze affects the characters' depictions becomes more challenging as well. For young, impressionable teenagers viewing these films, the

use of the male gaze to portray female protagonists starting from the first few scenes of the movie can skew their understanding of what a strong female role model should look like.

While the initial instances of the male gaze already include an aspect of objectification, the later examples in the films demonstrate the extent that female characters are sexualized and objectified through the male gaze. In a scene at the cafeteria in *She's the Man*, the popular girl Olivia comes in to buy her lunch (Clip 8). Before she is depicted on screen, Toby coughs, "Incoming!" and Olivia walks in with her friend, as music begins to play. The camera focuses back to Toby and Duke for a second, as they look on at Olivia and shift in their seats, eager to watch her from behind. Then, the camera shifts back to Olivia, presenting the scene to the audience from Duke and Toby's perspective. Slowly, the camera moves downwards, assessing the two girls' physical figures, and finally settling on their butts. Here, the two girls are clearly being objectified, as the camera slowly pans over their bodies to show how carefully the boys are looking at their figures. By resting the camera on a sexualized part of the girls' bodies, the movie depicts Olivia and her friend as objects of sexual desire that the boys want to obtain. A few seconds later, Toby explains how Olivia's current vulnerability makes it the perfect "time to pounce." The idea of pouncing, as if they are prey, has strong sexual and predatory implications. It also relates to one of Mulvey's points about the male gaze, where the male characters have power and agency, while the female characters are passive and sexualized.

The deceptive nature of the male gaze is especially clear in this scene, as the sudden interruption of the scene by a female perspective is jarring. Aware of the boys' preoccupation and attempting to fit in as one of the them, Viola says, "Oh yeah! Check out the booty on that blondie." Immediately, the perspective shifts. In her effort to sound like one of the boys, Viola reveals the ridiculous and offensive nature of the male gaze. Every aspect of her statement is

true: the boys (and even the camera) are “checking out” Olivia, scrutinizing every inch of her body. The main focus of their attention is her “booty,” and their attraction to her is largely based on her stereotypically Hollywood beauty—marked by her blonde hair. But when Viola vocalizes the boys’ thoughts aloud, they react poorly to the statement. Duke immediately tightens up, saying, “Don’t talk about her that way.” Although his response seems to request respect for Olivia, this clearly isn’t the case—after all, the earlier camera shots from his perspective heavily sexualize her. Rather, Duke and Toby’s reaction to Viola’s statement demonstrate that on some level, they are aware that objectifying girls is not socially acceptable; but, until it is overtly stated, they are comfortable with taking part in it. Additionally, Duke’s immediate warning to Viola comes from a place of ownership—since he has a crush on Olivia, and views her as an object to obtain, he is unwilling to allow other “competitors” to vie for the same prize.

While the male gaze is just below the surface of the scene, it does not become apparent until Viola (a girl attempting to understand the male gaze) blatantly states them, in such a frank way that both the male characters and the audience are taken aback. By doing so, she inadvertently demonstrates that the moments preceding her statement were not from a female perspective. Rather, they are from a point of view that she cannot fully understand, because she is pretending to be a boy and does not actually view other girls as objects to be sexualized. The same objectification occurs in *10 Things I Hate About You*, when Patrick goes to Club Skunk to look for Kat. As he walks through the club and onto the dance floor, the camera follows him (Clip 9). At the edge of the dance floor, Patrick finally stops and looks into the crowd of girls dancing. The camera then passes by Patrick and assumes his perspective, weaving through the crowds at eye-level until it reaches the front. It then focuses back on Patrick, who blinks and focuses on a person in the crowd: Kat. The camera shifts back to Kat, taking Patrick’s point of

view yet again as he watches Kat dance in the crowd. After a few seconds, the audience sees Patrick look for a moment, then smile, seemingly heartened by the view of Kat dancing. This whole exchange completely centers on Patrick's perspective and reactions, making him the main figure who observes an object from afar. Later, as Patrick talks to Kat, he says, "I was watching you out there before. I've never seen you look so sexy." Although Kat had come to the club with her friends to dance and enjoy themselves, the film focuses on Patrick's interpretation of Kat's actions. As he watches Kat, she becomes increasingly sexualized and attractive to him. While she had come to an overwhelmingly female-dominated club to relax with her friends, Patrick imposes his opinion on her, assessing her in a similar way that Duke and his friends assess Olivia. Then, finding her desirable, Patrick tells Kat what he thinks, as a compliment. While this exchange is not as overt as the example from *She's the Man*, both scenes are clearly portrayed from the male point of view, and the camerawork from both movies provide the viewers with a male perspective. Even though both Olivia and Kat were simply going about their daily activities with their friends, they inadvertently become sexual objects that the boys find attractive. They have no agency in the way they are portrayed, and the film creators' heavy use of the male gaze emphasizes the male characters' thoughts, while simultaneously diminishing the female characters' actions.

Since the premise of both *10 Things* and *She's the Man* is a love story, it is very reasonable for the films to depict a woman from the male perspective. After all, a significant portion of the "falling in love" storyline in romantic comedies occurs through the depiction of one character through their soon-to-be partner's rose-tinted point of view. However, in this case, both films make little to no effort in portraying the man from a female perspective. The male gaze is heavily emphasized, while the female gaze is close to non-existent. Even when the

movies suggest that a male character is being perceived by a female character, the male characters are still regarded as people, and do not undergo the same objectification or sexualization that their female counterparts experience. For example, in *10 Things I Hate About You*, Patrick performs a grand gesture to win back Kat's affections by publicly singing and dancing in the bleachers during her soccer practice (Clip 10). During the scene, the camera mainly focuses on Patrick and his comic performance, but frequently shifts to gauge Kat's reaction. As she turns to look at her team, then turns back to Patrick, the camera switches its focus from Kat's reaction back to Patrick's singing. The camera's shift aligns with Kat turning her head back towards the bleachers, indicating that the audience is seeing Patrick from Kat's perspective. But unlike the moment in *Club Skunk* where Patrick watches Kat dance, the subject of the gaze is not being sexualized. While Kat's dancing in the club was solely for her own enjoyment, Patrick was dancing to make a grand gesture towards Kat. Kat didn't realize that she was being watched; in contrast, Patrick set up and prepared the entire scene, with a marching band and all, and put himself at the center of the spectacle. He is the center of Kat's attention because he wants to be, while Kat had no choice but to be watched by others in the club. In other words, Patrick had control over his audience's gaze, while Kat had no control over her own objectification through the male gaze.

The dancing itself is also very telling. In a recent interview celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the movie, Julia Stiles recounts her experience during the filming of *10 Things*. Even when she describes her dancing scenes in the movie, she expresses her own surprise at how "provocatively" she dances. In contrast, in the same interview, director Gil Junger recounts how "Heath was running with such joy" in his dance scene "that it physically exhausted the guards." While Kat's dancing is more provocative, Patrick's dancing was more of a performance, happily

put on by himself. As he continues to dance and sing on the bleachers, security guards begin to chase him off. Suddenly, his performance takes a comedic turn, as he runs around and skips away from the exhausted, frantic guards. In response, Kat can't help smiling and applauding, along with the rest of her soccer team. Patrick succeeds in gaining Kat's affection through his performance—his goal is met. This directly contrasts with Kat's dancing scene, where her only desire to dance freely and express herself is subverted when Patrick sexualizes her in his mind. His response to her dancing is a sexual attraction towards her, while Kat's response to his performance was simply increased affection. While Kat's sexuality is the "prime identifying marker" in her scene at Club Skunk, Patrick's dance on the bleachers has "nothing to do with his sexuality" (Pittman 147). The lack of sexualization or objectification even while Kat and her entire soccer team are watching Patrick demonstrates the difference between the male and female gaze in the film. Additionally, while instances of the male gaze usually include women unaware of how they are being perceived (such as Kat dancing without realizing that Patrick is watching), this instance of the female gaze was initiated by Patrick himself. He purposely draws attention to himself, and plans the entire grand gesture with the expectation that Kat and her friends will all be watching him. These stark differences between how the male and female characters are depicted from the other gender's perspective demonstrates the power and dominance of the male gaze.

As mentioned previously, the use of the male gaze is not always overtly acknowledged. Because it manifests in the films through the camera angles and shots, it is easy for the audience to view the film without realizing that the women are depicted through a male perspective. However, in *She's the Man*, the film exhibits a moment of clarity, when it humorously acknowledges the significant influence of the male gaze in the story's plotline. After Viola

realizes that “everybody thinks [she is] a huge geek loser deviant,” her friend Paul comes up with a plan to “show everybody the man that [she is]” (Clip 11). In a staged scene at Cesario’s, Viola’s friends Kia and Yvonne take turns fawning over “Sebastian,” pretending that they are in love with him, while Viola acts cool and aloof. The two girls are very deliberate and overt in the way they talk about Sebastian’s popularity: with Duke and his friends just a few feet away, Yvonne describes how Cornwall “lost its top gun, Sebastian Hastings,” while Kia confesses, “I miss you Sebastian. Especially at night.” In this scene, both of Viola’s friends dress up in makeup and short skirts, purposely presenting themselves as objects of desire. Knowing how they will be perceived by Duke and the other boys, they then position themselves as one of many girls chasing after “Sebastian,” in order to improve Viola’s popularity and perception amongst the boys. As mentioned previously, *She’s the Man* presents girls as trophies to be won. Since Viola (dressed as Sebastian) seems to be chased by multiple beautiful girls, yet still seems disinterested, Viola’s social status is immediately elevated to a higher level of “coolness.” Thus, Viola is able to take advantage of the boys’ preconceived notions of what it means to be cool and popular, and twist them around so that she can benefit from them. Even though her dialogue and mannerisms are still strange and awkward, Viola knows that having popular girls fawn over her has much more social weight, and she will immediately be perceived as more “manly” because of it. The plan works: just as Viola dismisses Yvonne as “needy” and walks away, Duke turns to his friends and says, “Okay. We might need to do a little reevaluating here.” Then, as Andrew sees a pretty girl walk by their table, he attempts to use Sebastian’s pickup line: “Hey there, pretty lady.” As expected, the girl (who happens to be Monique) is disgusted, and immediately rejects him. But what makes this exchange so notable is the immediate shift in the way Duke and his friends regard Viola. After seeing multiple girls come and confess their love for Sebastian,

the boys decide that they must have made a wrong judgment. Instead of relying on their own reason and intuition, they use girls' romantic interest as a way to measure coolness. Because Viola and her friends realize this about the boys, they are very deliberate in the way that they frame Viola and her personality. One exchange between Viola and Yvonne is particularly interesting:

Viola: Well, a time comes for a man to move along, Yvonne.

Yvonne: I know, Sebastian. In the end, I wasn't woman enough for you.

Viola: No, you weren't.

Yvonne: And that's just something I'll always have to live with. It just hurts, that's all.

Viola: Love is pain.

When considering this scene, it seems ridiculous that Duke and his friends would believe this conversation to be genuine. Yvonne's regret that she "wasn't woman enough" is not something that a girl would actually say; instead, it caters precisely into what she thinks the boys would want to hear. In fact, the entire exchange between Yvonne and Viola is heavily sarcastic, poking fun at the inflated male ego and the ridiculous nature of not being "woman enough." Yet somehow, the boys believe them, thereby proving Yvonne and Viola's point—that the boys' understanding of romantic relationships is heavily skewed, often inflating male egos while diminishing female autonomy. Also, the phrase "wasn't woman enough" is interesting to consider, especially since its counterpart is the more common phrase. The fear of not being "man enough" is connected to an insecurity about one's own masculinity, a sentiment that often occupies the mind of male characters in *She's the Man*. Thus, the sarcastic use of not being "woman enough" is ironic, as none of the female characters in the movie actually struggle with

their femininity, while the male characters who are listening to this conversation actually have more difficulty in this area.

The concept of a female character being “woman enough” is also interesting to consider in relation to an insecure male partner. In *She's the Man*, the conversation between Yvonne and Viola implies that masculine men need women who are “woman enough.” While this term is difficult to measure, its context suggests that being “woman enough” is connected to a woman’s femininity, just like being “man enough” is connected to masculinity. In an article that discusses how cisgender females help co-construct their trans male partners’ gender through gender labor, the writer describes what she calls “the labor of being ‘the girl’” (Chess 150). In order to help bolster her trans masculine partner’s gender, a femme partner “develops or exaggerates her own gender performance to supplement and enhance her partner’s” (Chess 150). This concept is directly connected to the scene at Cesario’s in *She's the Man*. It provides the perfect explanation of why Yvonne and Kia dress in revealing clothes and high heels at Cesario’s, acting more flirtatious and feminine than in previous instances in the movie. In this scene, Kia and Yvonne are playing “the girl,” exaggerating their own femininity to enhance Viola’s masculinity. Additionally, Yvonne’s comment that she wasn’t “woman enough” despite her femininity causes Viola (dressed as Sebastian) to seem much more masculine.

A few seconds earlier, when Yvonne walks into the room, the camera first begins at Yvonne’s feet, then slowly pans up while the music begins playing and the singer says, “Aww, yeah.” From her entrance into the scene, Yvonne is being seen through the male gaze. She is immediately sexualized, and her following actions are judged according to that first impression. Thus, when she laments that she wasn’t enough for Sebastian, Duke and his friends (who see her as a desirable object to be attained) are impressed by Viola’s high standards.

This scene, where Viola brushes off the affection of multiple girls while Duke and his friends watch in shock, demonstrates the central and influential position of the male gaze in the storyline. This entire scene was created to be viewed and admired by the boys, and Viola succeeds in catching their attention and changing their mind. This marks a pivotal moment in the film, where Viola suddenly becomes very popular when word about her situation with Kia and Yvonne spreads throughout Illyria High. From this instance on, Viola begins on an upward trend, as she feels more accepted at Illyria socially and begins to improve in her soccer skills on the field. In most cases in *10 Things* and *She's the Man*, the male gaze demeans and devalues the female characters. In this particular case, Viola and her friends take their understanding of the male gaze and the social values of high school boys and manipulate them so that she is able to benefit from them, rather be hurt by them.

However, *She's the Man* makes it clear that Viola and her two female friends are not the ones who come up with this plan. Paul Antonio, Viola's hairdresser and friend, creates the scheme and sets the stage. As the scene in Cesario's begins, the camera first rests on Paul, who is sitting in the corner with a baseball cap pushed down to hide his face. He is hunched over, trying to conceal himself, and says into a walkie-talkie, "Go Viola." With his words, Viola walks into the restaurant, and the scene begins to unfold. Throughout the scene, the camera occasionally returns to Paul, as he whispers instructions to the girls and directs their actions. At one point, he even lip-syncs along as Kia talks to Viola, signifying not only that she is reciting lines, but also that those lines were written by him. While Viola, Yvonne, and Kia were the ones acting out the plot, Paul created and directed the entire ploy. His active involvement in the scheme reveals a subtler message in *She's the Man*: even in a moment where the female characters victoriously claim back their agency by using the male gaze in their favor, they are incapable of doing so

without a man's direction. Interestingly enough, Paul's involvement throughout the scene, from creating the idea to directing its execution, serves as an allusion to the male playwright. Like Shakespeare, Paul is the mastermind behind a performance that entertains his audiences and brings them to applause.

The male gaze is just one way that the creators of *10 Things* and *She's the Man* present a postfeminist attitude. But while this is just one of many, the male gaze is worthy of in-depth study. Both films are targeted at teenage girls who are still trying to understand the unspoken social rules of the world around them. While the main purpose of these movies is general entertainment, they are also able to influence their audience's perspectives and beliefs. Both *10 Things* and *She's the Man* are, to some extent, aware of their power, and attempt to convey a "Girl Power" message as their main theme. However, the subtle choices that the films make subvert this original intention. The male gaze is an example of such a choice, where underneath the uplifting "Girl Power" attitude lays a wealth of instances where women are objectified, sexualized, or dismissed. To young, impressionable girls watching these movies, the male gaze is not necessarily an identifiable aspect of the film that can be picked out. Rather, the use of the male gaze in these movies becomes a damaging way that female teenagers understand how they are perceived by the world around them. Since the films sexualize and objectify their heroines, why wouldn't the same occur in real life? The male gaze not only sends the wrong message to its audiences, but also inadvertently teaches young girls to adopt that point of view for themselves.

### **Stereotypes**

While the male gaze is an essential way in which the two films present a conservative understanding of male-female relationships, the use of stereotypes is another strategy that the films use to create distinct lines within gender and sexuality. By enforcing stereotypes that the

audience is likely aware of from previous experience, the films encourage allegiance to previously created tropes that often involve a flat or simplistic characterization rather than introducing new nuanced or complex portrayals. Especially since these films are catered towards teenage audiences, this use of stereotypes can be detrimental since audiences are encouraged to accept the stereotypes at face value, rather than consider the complexity and fluidity that exists when distinct lines are not drawn.

In *10 Things I Hate About You*, stereotypes are presented to the audience from very early on in the film. The Stratford sisters, the main protagonists in the movie, each fall into different female stereotypes. Bianca, the younger sister who is first introduced in the film, is portrayed as a pretty but dumb blonde, popular amongst her peers but struggling in school. In contrast, her older sister Kat is depicted as an angry feminist and “man-hater” (Friedman 45), who spouts feminist theory in response to the derision of her classmates. For a film that is catered towards young teenage girls, neither of the Stratford sisters seems immediately relatable. However, as the story progresses, both sisters break the mold of their stereotypes. Bianca slowly reveals that she is more intelligent than she lets on, and finally embraces her identity as more than just a “dumb blonde”; meanwhile, Kat softens her demeanor and falls in love, finally allowing her hatred for men to dissipate. Although these slow transformations create more nuance in both of the characters, the initial stereotypes that they embody never completely fade away. Bianca was popular and pretty in the beginning of the movie, and she is popular and pretty at the end. Although she undergoes some character development, she is no more relatable at the end of *10 Things*. The stereotype of being a pretty, popular blonde remains intact, and distances Bianca from audience members who do not share her experience. Similarly, Kat’s stereotype of being an angry feminist never completely fades either. While Kat’s character progression is more complex

and problematic due to its adherence to the original play's "taming" storyline, the movie ends with her still planning to go to Sarah Lawrence College and pursuing the same interests.

Unlike Bianca's generally innocuous depiction, Kat's stereotype of being an angry feminist and "ice queen" is detrimental and counterproductive. While *10 Things* is marketed as a "Girl Power" movie, the portrayal of Kat as a feminist who is angry and intimidating does not provide an accurate or positive portrayal of feminism. Kat is unpopular with her peers, constantly snapping at others and speaking condescendingly to her classmates. Also, the film later reveals that Kat's feminism comes from a strong reaction against a boy who had hurt her in the past, rather than a belief formed completely out of her own volition. In many instances in the movie, her feminism seems to be less of a belief, and more of an excuse to treat male characters poorly and complain about various aspects of high school. By depicting Kat as this angry yet hypocritical feminist stereotype, the filmmakers waste an opportunity to create an accurate, positive, and nuanced portrayal of feminism.

The other major characters in the film also fall into various romantic comedy stereotypes. Patrick is the mysterious bad boy; Joey is the handsome popular jerk; Cameron is the nerdy but eventually victorious underdog. These stereotypes, along with Bianca and Kat's portrayals, all present predictable depictions of romantic comedy characters. As one critic notes, the "stereotypes that are presented are meant to be accepted and laughed at" (Pittman 152). Since the film portrays these flat depictions as something that should be embraced and enjoyed, the audience follows suit, unaware of the dangers that come from placing all characters into such narrow characterizations.

While *She's the Man* has plenty of characters that also fit in specific stereotypes, the most consistent use of stereotypes in the film is through its gendered language. Since the premise of

the story is Viola's attempt to take her brother Sebastian's place at Illyria High, the movie spends much of its attention depicting her attempts to fit in with other male students. In an effort to create comedy through this storyline, Viola struggles constantly, alternating between her male façade and her female instincts. In the film, this is depicted through gendered language and stereotypically "male" or "female" dialogue and actions.

*She's the Man* purposely creates clear barriers between what is "feminine" and what is "masculine" by showing how Viola constantly toes the line. Although she makes clear efforts to put on a masculine demeanor, she often slips, and reverts back to her natural, feminine tendencies. In one scene in the school gym, Duke confides in Viola (who is disguised as Sebastian), saying that he is considering asking Viola out on a date. Viola immediately sits up, saying in her normal (and thus clearly female) voice, "You were? Really?" Then, whispering under her breath with a lovesick expression on her face, she adds, "I'd love to." Confused, Duke responds, "What?" In that moment, Viola instantly realizes her mistake. She clears her throat and lowers her voice, saying, "Uh, I'd love to give her your phone number." Later on in the same scene, Duke gives Viola a hug after the coach announces that she will be playing in the first game against Cornwall. As Duke hugs her, Viola closes her eyes and her hand begins to trail down Duke's back. Forgetting her disguise as Sebastian and allowing herself to enjoy the moment in her crush's arms, Viola gets carried away until Duke panics and jumps back. Again, Viola realizes her mistake and straightens up, smoothing out her hoodie and speaking in a lower voice. Within this one scene, which only lasts for a few minutes, Viola forgets her disguise as Sebastian twice. This pattern continues throughout the whole movie, and Viola's constant blunders become a consistent source of humor. While these errors are mainly for comedic effect, they also send a clear message about the rigidity of gender: despite her best efforts, Viola cannot

be a boy. She is a girl, and any efforts to pretend otherwise are painfully unnatural and thoroughly unconvincing. Regardless of her intentions, appearance, or practice, she will always return to her “true self,” which is distinctly female (Pittman 126).

In order for Viola to maintain a male façade and accidentally default back to female tendencies, the differences between male and female must be very clear and discrete. *She's the Man* creates this distinction between the two genders by employing various stereotypical behaviors, such as differences in facial expressions, mannerisms, and voice pitch. However, one of the main and most intriguing ways that *She's the Man* distinguishes male from female is through the use of gendered language. When Viola is dressed as herself, her conversations with others flow naturally. Unlike her mother, whose sugary sweet voice is difficult to bear, Viola's regular voice is at a normal pitch, not obnoxiously feminine in any way. Although she has moments where her femininity is emphasized (such as when she discusses Olivia's “cute shoes”), Viola's disdain for dresses with ruffles and her preference for muddy soccer games paints her as more than just a “girly girl.” However, when Viola disguises herself as Sebastian and attempts to act masculine, her language changes dramatically. She begins to use words such as “homie” and “coolio,” which mystifies her peers at Illyria. In one of the first scenes where Viola asks Duke and his friends about soccer tryouts, Viola says, “So, do you play the beautiful game... bro? Brothers? Brethren?” As she continues speaking, she seems to get progressively more confused about her own terminology. Unsure of which word to use to fit in with the other boys, she begins to ramble, then gives up. In response, Duke, Toby, and Andrew look confused but amused by their seemingly eccentric new classmate.

Throughout the movie, they never explicitly ask or question Viola's word choice, but rather indicate its oddness through shared glances and short laughs. Interestingly enough, Viola's

vocabulary, chosen by her in an attempt to seem cool, has a racial edge. The use of “homie” and “brothers” to refer to close friends first originated in African American culture, and then slowly trickled into the white mainstream. While Viola’s decision to use terms with a racial dimension seems unintentional, the assumed connection between sounding black and sounding masculine is worthy of consideration. As Viola poses as a white boy, something about her life experience prompts her to believe that using such language would be appropriate. Viola’s peculiar language is a constant source of humor for the audience; however, the writers’ choice to use a kind of racial comedy rather than finding humor through another venue seems strange, especially considering that the movie only contains two non-white characters. Kia, Viola’s friend, and Toby, Duke’s friend, represent the only two attempts at creating racial diversity in the film. Given that *She’s the Man* takes place at a wealthy preparatory school, the lack of diversity is not out of the ordinary. However, the movie’s decision to incorporate vocabulary taken from African American culture and use it as a source of humor is confusing and concerning. Since Viola uses these slang words to attempt and comically fail at being masculine and cool, the underlying assumption is that African American vernacular can be appropriated in order to present a certain demeanor to others. The assumed connection between African American culture and masculinity is yet another stereotype subtly woven into Viola’s speech.

While there is much more that can be studied within the movie’s use of such language, it is also important to take a step back and realize the strangeness of this language choice. When the movie first begins, Viola is dating Justin, the captain of Cornwall’s soccer team. She also has a twin brother, Sebastian, who she talks to regularly. With both Justin and Sebastian, Viola’s conversations are perfectly normal. Yet somehow, when she pretends to be her brother, she suddenly decides that her speech needs to change drastically. Why did the filmmakers decide to

make this choice? Although it acts as a consistent source of comedy, it is both unrealistic and bizarre. From her regular exposure to other boys her own age, she knows that their vocabulary and speech does not differ much from her own. However, there is one significant benefit to including such distinct language: by giving Viola her own set of slightly strange vocabulary, the viewers are constantly reminded that she is in the middle of a performance. She is not acting like her authentic self; instead, she is putting on an uncomfortable guise by pretending to be a boy. But because she is not actually one of them, Viola inadvertently ostracizes her from the other boys with her bizarre word choice, which inevitably leads to her reputation as “a huge geek loser deviant.” Considering her popularity at her previous school Cornwall, where she led the girls’ soccer team and dated the boys’ team captain, Viola’s position as a social pariah at Illyria is ironic. Clearly, she is capable of social stardom; however, her exaggerated efforts to seem masculine have isolated her from the other boys. Although Viola’s efforts to pass as a boy are chiefly successful, as nobody suspects her true gender, she struggles to integrate socially, since she approaches masculinity by imitating extreme stereotypical behavior. Through Viola’s use of “coolio” and “homie,” the audience gains an understanding of how Viola perceives men and the way they converse with each other. To her, conversations amongst men rely on trendy slang words. Through Viola’s strange dialogue, *She’s the Man* demonstrates yet another moment of self-clarity, as it acknowledges its own heavy reliance on stereotypes as a way of approaching characters.

In *She’s the Man*, gendered language is a source of constant humor, especially since it is in such an exaggerated form. However, the gendered language and other stereotypically “masculine” actions that Viola embodies when disguised as Sebastian create an underlying assumption that language and behavior can be neatly divided into two sets: how men speak and

act, and how women speak and act. There is no sense of overlap or fluidity between the two.

This message is not only very conservative, but also quite incorrect: as proven by Viola's initial failure to befriend Duke, relying heavily on stereotypes provides an inaccurate understanding of the other person.

In the same way that the heavy reliance on stereotypes in *10 Things I Hate About You* wastes an opportunity to create a positive and accurate portrayal of feminism, the use of gendered language and stereotypical mannerisms in *She's the Man* conveys an inaccurate understanding of gender and misses an opportunity to create a complex, nuanced main character. As a film for teenage girls who are at an age where gender is an essential aspect of their social interactions, *She's the Man* conveys a disappointing message by encouraging its audience to adhere to stereotypes rather than question them. Yet again, the film demonstrates its conservatism as it emphasizes the rigidity and distinctions between male and female, while dismissing any possibility of overlap.

### **Conformity**

As mentioned previously, both *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* take advantage of the "Girl Power" movement's momentum. Both films provide protagonists that have a strong sense of self, and both films' protagonists begin their story by resisting the external pressure to conform. However, in due time, both Kat and Viola slowly conform to the expectations of others, slowly stepping into a "'proper' feminine role" (Klett 69.) Consequently, both are rewarded for their conformity with the ultimate romantic comedy reward: a happy ending with an attractive boy.

In *10 Things I Hate About You*, Kat is portrayed from the beginning of the film as a smart but critical "outspoken feminist" (Bertucci 414). While all the other students in her high school

fit into one clique or another, she stands alone. Rather than being another face in the crowd, Kat is very vocal in sharing her feminist (and often, man-hating) beliefs with others. She embraces women writers while questioning male privilege, and her strong attitude makes her an intriguing protagonist for a story where the rest of her peers rely more on peer pressure than feminist theory for guidance. However, since *10 Things* follows the plot of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kat (who serves as the "shrew") is inevitably tamed. Her critical views and constant discussions on feminism lessen throughout the film, while her desire to conform and fit in with her peers increases. For example, when she initially describes Bogey Lowenstein's party to her father, she says that the 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, consumer-driven lives." However, a few scenes later, in the midst of being "tamed" by Patrick, Kat not only attends Bogey's party, but also dances on top of a table, as a crowd cheers beneath her. As the movie continues to progress, Kat becomes more similar to the average teen romantic comedy main character: she becomes more feminine and sentimental, attends prom, and pines after a boy that she likes. The original Kat—independent, spirited, and strong—begins to conform to the expectations of those around her. In the end, her transformation is rewarded: she receives her happy ending when her father consents to her dream college and she reunites with Patrick.

A similar chain of events occur in *She's the Man*. In the beginning of the film, Viola is portrayed as a driven athlete so determined to compete in soccer games that she pretends to be her brother. However, Viola's mother, who hopes that her daughter will become a "darling debutante," insists that Viola must learn how to become a proper lady. Although the main motivation of the movie's plot began with Viola's determination to play soccer for Illyria and

prove that she is just as skilled as the Cornwall boys' team, the film quickly begins to focus on the love triangle between Viola, Duke, and Olivia. Rather than soccer taking center stage, Viola's athletic ambitions become an aspect of the background, making appearances during some of the movie's montages. Soccer becomes a vehicle for interactions between Viola and Duke, but Viola's previous focus and determination on her sport has dissipated, only to be replaced with a romantic interest in Duke. By the end of the film, Viola seems like a completely transformed person: at her mother's debutante ball, she happily walks down the runway, smiling and holding Duke's hand. In comparison to the annoyance and condescension in her voice when her mother first describes the debutante, it is difficult to believe that the same character would fully embrace an event she had called "archaic" just two weeks earlier. As the movie comes to a close, a victorious song comes into the background, and Viola plays soccer with her Illyria team, thus demonstrating her success in proving her worth as an equal on the field. However, after a few seconds of kicking the soccer ball on the field, the movie closes with a freeze frame of Duke lifting Viola up in the air. This last image doesn't emphasize soccer as the victory, but instead focuses on Duke and Viola's relationship as the happy ending to the film. By acquiescing to her mother's wishes and pursuing Duke while playing soccer, Viola receives the perfect ending to her story. This last image, with Duke holding Viola above him, matches almost identically to one of the first images of the movie. As discussed previously, *She's the Man* begins in its first scene with an image of Justin, Viola's boyfriend, lifting Viola up onto his shoulder after she scores an impressive goal. Although she had just displayed her dominance over other players in the beach soccer game, Viola is still unable to overpower Justin, despite her best efforts. He physically dominates her, while she willingly submits. The end of the movie shows a similar image, where Duke also exercises his physical strength over Viola by lifting her up as she happily concedes.

This full circle ending seems fine at first—she begins in a happy relationship, and ends in a happy relationship. But considering that one of the movie's themes is Girl Power, it is concerning that this depiction of Viola in the beginning of the film does not develop any further by the end. The premise of the story focuses on Viola's efforts to fight discrimination and male superiority. However, as the movie progresses, Viola's priorities have slowly shifted away from her athletic ambitions and towards her romantic relationship. Thus, by the time the film comes to a close, the last freeze-frame of Duke lifting up Viola is unsurprising, though disappointing. Yet again, she allows a boy to assert his dominance over her, rather than claiming her own independence.

In both of these films, the main protagonist changes her beliefs and receives a happy ending as a reward. For Kat, this meant succumbing to peer pressure and becoming less vocal in her feminist beliefs; for Viola, this meant attending her mother's debutante despite initially believing it to be outdated and demeaning. By creating this arc for both Kat and Viola, the creators of the films once again adhere to a more conservative perspective by encouraging obedience to societal expectations and traditional gender roles.

### **Subtle Messaging**

While the supposedly progressive and "Girl Power" values of the two films are clearly conveyed to the audience with deliberation, the underlying conservative messages are communicated through much subtler messaging. Using humorous actions or throwaway lines, *She's the Man* and *10 Things I Hate About You* reveal their true values, which often directly contrast their allegedly progressive stance. Although both movies clearly convey specific lessons they expect their audiences to learn, these lessons are undermined by brief moments where characters embody the exact opposite values that the movies espouse. The instances of subtle

messaging in the films are short, easy to miss, and often presented as comedy. However, they hold much significance: these subtle messages reinforce certain beliefs that a truly progressive film would deconstruct. Thus, by studying the ways in which these subtle messages communicate conservative beliefs, we can come to a better understanding of the films as a whole, while also considering possible reasons why both *She's the Man* and *10 Things* fail to take a more progressive stance.

One of the main ways that subtle messaging can be seen is through the films' approach to sexuality. While both movies address the topic, sexuality is a more central subject in *She's the Man*. This is unsurprising—after all, sexuality and homoerotic desire are two main themes in the original play. The plot of *Twelfth Night* includes various relationships that feature some form of homoerotic desire, from Antonio's "willing love" (3.3.11) for Sebastian, to Olivia's surprise at "catch[ing] the plague" (1.5.301) of love for the disguised Viola. The complex web of romantic desire in *Twelfth Night* is further complicated by the play's themes of disguise and deception: rather than simply portraying unrequited love between a male and female character, the play raises questions about sexuality by depicting instances of deep affection and homoerotic desire between characters of the same gender. Although the play closes with a traditional, predictable ending, the questions raised during the play demonstrate Shakespeare's willingness to venture out of genre and societal expectations. Yet despite its status as a modern-day adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, *She's the Man* does not display the same interest in pushing the boundaries of conservative thought. Instead, it uses subtle moments in the film to reinforce traditional romantic relationships while simultaneously discouraging any display of homoerotic desire. While there are many characters that provide examples of this phenomenon, soccer captain Duke Orsino displays these subtle messages most frequently throughout the film. From the first time he

appears on screen, Duke is intentionally depicted in a specific way. His first scene in the movie begins when Viola (dressed as Sebastian) enters their shared dormitory room and comes face-to-face with a half-dressed Duke. Viola stops in her tracks as her eyes widen. Instinctively using her female voice, she says, "Hey." Immediately realizing her mistake, she clears her throat and barks "Hey! Whaddup!" in a clearly more masculine, aggressive manner. Then, as Viola and Duke introduce themselves to each other, they shake hands and hug. But instead of quickly letting go, Viola holds onto Duke, clearly physically attracted to him. Uncomfortable with the length of their embrace, Duke begins to squirm and pushes away from Viola, saying, "Okay... okay... Okay!" Although it is understandable that such a prolonged hug would be uncomfortable during any first interaction, the discomfort Duke displays in this moment of physical closeness is a repeating motif throughout the movie. As the plot begins to unfold, Duke reveals that he is the captain of the soccer team, and has a crush on Olivia, a popular girl in school. However, in each instance when he has the opportunity to speak to her, he is at a loss for words. The creators of *She's the Man* create the character Duke specifically to appeal to the film's teenage audiences. As a shy, attractive soccer star with a sweet, sensitive side, Duke is to be admired and loved by the movie's viewers. Thus, the audience is expected to resonate with the attraction that Viola feels for him. Duke's depiction as the masculine, athletic heartthrob of the movie places him in an awkward position: although he is expected to fall in love with Viola by the end of the film, Viola is currently dressed as a man. In a film created in the early 2000s and targeted largely at teenage girls, Duke cannot possibly display any hint of homoerotic desire. He must only be attracted to girls, and the film's attempt to make this clear crosses the line from depicting a heterosexual man to portraying a homophobic one.

Through subtle actions or offhand comments, Duke not only emphasizes his disinterest in “Sebastian” romantically, but also expresses a clear discomfort with any kind of close homosocial relationship. The film features multiple instances where Viola’s increasingly obvious crush on Duke causes her to show more physical affection than appropriate for a friend. In each instance, Duke reacts much more strongly than necessary. For example, in a scene where Duke and Viola find a tarantula in their room, both of them jump onto her bed and immediately cling to each other in fear (Clip 12). After the tarantula slowly crawls away into the hall, they turn to each other and shriek, as the sudden realization of their physical closeness sends them into a second round of panic. Duke swiftly jumps off of the bed and runs across the room to the door, clearly trying to distance himself from Viola as much as possible. In contrast, Viola, who is similarly shaken by the sudden action, jumps off of the bed, but does not attempt to run to the other end of the room. By taking such significant steps to physically distance himself from Viola, Duke demonstrates the extent of his discomfort. As they begin to calm down, Duke points emphatically at Viola and says, “You! You don’t you ever, *ever* do that girl voice again! It freaked me out.” Duke’s high-pitched shrieks add humor to the scene, showing that tarantulas can terrify even the most “masculine” of men. But Duke is still embarrassed by this breach of typical masculine behavior, and he blames Viola’s “girl voice” for the chain of events that had just occurred. This is the first instance where Duke shows any fear in the film; clearly, he does not often display a softer side of himself. His discomfort covers more than just physical closeness; he also shies away from emotional vulnerability. In another scene where Duke explains to Viola (dressed as Sebastian) what he finds important in romantic relationships, he suddenly realizes that he is sharing his thoughts openly with another man and immediately changes in demeanor. The difference before and after his realization is palpable. As the camera

focuses on his face from above as he lies in bed, Duke looks relaxed and peaceful. He speaks in soft tones as he reflects on Viola's questions. But a moment later, as he realizes the emotional depth of their conversation, his facial expression changes—he blinks and becomes tense, suddenly sitting up. In a much harsher tone, he points to Viola and says, "But what I just told you is for your ears only. If you tell anyone, I'll kick your ass." As he speaks, he throws a soccer ball at Viola, then lies back down on his bed and picks up a magazine, signaling the end of their conversation. From this interaction, it is clear that Duke is capable of emotionally connecting with other men. However, he actively decides not to, and reacts poorly and defensively when he realizes that he has inadvertently broken his own rule. Duke's aversion to any kind of close homosocial interaction—whether physical or emotional—sends a subtle message to the audience that men should not share any kind of intimacy. As demonstrated by Duke's example, any type of closeness should prompt immediate discomfort, and the correct response is to create distance immediately.

Since Duke clearly dislikes physical or emotional closeness from someone he considers a platonic friend, it is unsurprising that he is even more uncomfortable in instances that involve a romantic nature. In a scene inspired by a similar one from *As You Like It*, Duke explains to Viola that he has trouble speaking to girls. She suggests that they practice, with Viola pretending to be a girl. From the initial suggestion, Duke is clearly uninterested—he immediately responds, "Eww. Do I have to?" As the scene continues and Viola speaks in her naturally high-pitched voice, Duke is clearly taken aback. At one point, he even says that Viola's voice is "creepy." Although this interaction is just role-playing between two friends, the concept of practicing a conversation with a boy that he intends to have with a girl he is attracted to makes him uncomfortable. Duke's uneasiness in pretending to be attracted to another boy is part of the

undercurrent of homophobia that subtly pervades the film. Even the pretense of homoerotic desire makes him cringe. Unlike the previous examples where Duke is uncomfortable with close homosocial relationships, this scene takes it a step further, demonstrating that Duke's actions subtly convey a disgust for homoerotic desire as well.

Throughout the film, the creators of *She's the Man* make a concerted effort to keep Duke's relationship with Viola and his relationship with "Sebastian" (Viola in disguise) very discrete. Although they are actually one person, Duke is only attracted to Viola when she is dressed as a girl. While he panics and jumps back when "Sebastian" embraces him, he is completely comfortable kissing Viola the first time he meets her. The contrast between Duke's disinterest in "Sebastian" and his attraction to Viola is yet another example of the film's subtle but insistent effort to make Duke's heterosexuality clear.

While *10 Things I Hate About You* does not contain the same emphasis on sexuality as *She's the Man*, the filmmakers are similarly concerned with clarifying any ambiguity concerning the characters' sexuality. As discussed previously, Kat Stratford is portrayed as a stereotypical feminist: angry, aggressive, and constantly making her hatred for men very clear. However, since the stereotype for feminists also includes their sexuality, the creators of *10 Things* include a scene that clears up any uncertainty over the issue, while simultaneously skirting around the topic:

Cameron: She's not a—

Bianca: k.d. lang fan? No. I found a picture of Jared Leto in her drawer once, so I'm pretty sure she's not harboring same-sex tendencies.

This scene, which happens quite early on in the movie, often slips by without much notice. The conversation between Cameron and Bianca is short, and comes to a conclusion quickly.

Interestingly enough, although Cameron is asking Bianca about Kat's sexuality, he never fully poses a question. Instead, he implies it, and Bianca interrupts him with her response, as if to spare him the discomfort of articulating his question in words. But even Bianca's response seems to skirt around the subject: she tells Cameron that Kat is not a "k.d. lang fan," using a cultural reference rather than directly addressing her sexuality. k.d. lang, a singer-songwriter who came out as a lesbian in 1992 and was known as a gay rights activist throughout the '90s, is used in *10 Things* as a metonym so that both Cameron and Bianca are not forced to say the word "lesbian." Their discomfort and reluctance in saying the actual word "lesbian" brings to mind a similar sentiment from the coming-out episode, "The Puppy Episode," of *Ellen*. In the highest-rated episode of Ellen DeGeneres' successful sitcom, Ellen runs to the airport and comes out to another character Susan. Struggling to find the words, Ellen says, "I—I think I realized... that I am... ugh—can't even say the word. Why can't I say the word?" Finally, Ellen sums up enough courage to lean over and say, "Susan, I'm gay." While this statement is the focus of the scene, the difficulty that Ellen experiences right before she vocalizes her thoughts is the same struggle that Cameron and Bianca encounter. Like Ellen, Cameron and Bianca "can't even say the word" and instead resort to using cultural references to make their point clear. But unlike Ellen, who eventually overcomes her fear and speaks outright, Cameron and Bianca never use the word "lesbian"—the closest term Bianca uses is "same-sex tendencies." This enduring reluctance demonstrates their hesitance around the topic of sexuality, and their unwillingness to speak plainly sends the subtle message that such topics should not be discussed directly or at length. This subtle message in *10 Things* directly contrasts the message of "The Puppy Episode," where Ellen is encouraged and then celebrated for finally speaking out loud. The similarity in sentiment yet difference in message is particularly interesting to consider, given the circumstances of those

two scenes. Gil Junger, the director of *10 Things I Hate About You*, directed “The Puppy Episode” two years prior. While *10 Things* makes a reference to k.d. lang, “The Puppy Episode” guest stars k.d. lang in multiple roles throughout the two-part episode. Given these similarities, it is undeniable that the coming-out scene from “The Puppy Episode” influenced Cameron and Bianca’s scene from *10 Things*. However, despite the progressive message in “The Puppy Episode,” Junger and his team for *10 Things* seem to regress, and decide to convey a more conservative message in their film two years later.

As Friedman points out, “the film’s romantic, heterosexually-inclined conclusion forbids the choice to make Kat a lesbian” (45). Additionally, the societal expectations of a mainstream teenage romantic comedy in the late ‘90s would not accept such a character. Whether or not these deterrents played a factor in their decision, this scene shows that the filmmakers are determined to make Kat’s heterosexuality clear. Like Duke in *She’s the Man*, the deliberate effort to state the character’s sexuality calls into question whether the film possesses an undercurrent of homophobia. After all, the scene between Cameron and Bianca serves a singular use: it defines Kat’s sexuality for the film’s characters and for the audience. By choosing to create and include the scene, the creators reveal their own anxiety over the possibility of sexual ambiguity. But sexual ambiguity is only concerning if the alternative is unfavorable—in other words, it is only necessary to clearly define Kat as straight if the filmmakers are afraid of others characterizing her as gay. Since the plot eventually reveals her romantic interest in Patrick, this scene is only necessary if the creators of the film believe that any ambiguity in Kat’s sexuality needs to be cleared.

Though sexuality is one of the main areas where the films use subtle messaging, both *She’s the Man* and *10 Things I Hate About You* also use subtle messaging in its approach to

social status. Each film conveys a different message about how popularity and admiration are obtained within the school. But rather than stating this outright, the films use a variety of dialogue, setting, and plot points to present their message to the audience.

In *10 Things I Hate About You*, popularity is dictated solely by physical appearance. In one of the first scenes of the film, Michael gives the new student, Cameron, a tour around the school (Clip 7). He points out different social cliques, starting with the “basic beautiful people.” As he passes them, he comments, “Unless they talk to you first, don’t bother.” When Cameron inquires why, Michael demonstrates by smiling, waving, and saying “Hey there” to some members of the group. Immediately, one boy aggressively responds, “Eat me.” The clique of “beautiful people” look at Michael and Cameron with derision and disgust, as if his attempt to converse with them is a disrespectful faux pas. Although Michael never directly states that the “basic beautiful people” have a higher social standing in the school, this is strongly implied through subtle messaging by the way Michael swiftly walks away in fear, as the group looks on in shock and disgust. While Michael continues to lead Cameron past each of the other cliques at school, none of those groups show the same level of superiority or aggression as the “beautiful people” do. While all the other groups also seem focused on themselves, they don’t hold themselves above the rest in the same way. Thus, their superiority must come from the one factor that distinguishes them from the rest: the supposed beauty their identities are rooted in.

Moments later, this same focus on physical appearance returns to the screen. As Bianca enters, Joey is stunned, saying, “Oh my god.” His immediate interest in Bianca stems solely from her appearance—even as Michael attempts to dissuade him from pursuing her, Joey disregards him, completely entranced by her beauty. The connection between Bianca’s beauty and her popularity becomes even more clear in a later scene in the bathroom: as she sits at her vanity

mirror and brushes her hair, Bianca turns to Kat and says, “I happen to like being adored, thank you.” Through these instances, the film presents a direct connection between physical appearance and popularity.

While Bianca is pretty and popular, Kat is detested by most of her peers. She makes no effort to make herself likeable. In the same conversation with Bianca in the bathroom, Bianca recommends that Kat should “consider a new look.” In response, Kat says, “You forget, I don’t care what people think.” This conversation inadvertently suggests a direct cause-and-effect relationship of beauty and popularity—by advising Kat to change her “look” and telling her that she has “definite potential,” Bianca presents popularity as a goal Kat can attain, if only she changes her appearance.

The connection between popularity and physical beauty is not limited to the female characters of the film. Joey Donner, the “popular guy” in school, is a model. Throughout the movie, his modeling career and good looks are a constant source of pride and conversation, often monopolizing the discussion. As the main antagonist of the movie, Joey is unpleasant and rude. However, because of his good looks, he is extremely popular and considered desirable by many girls, including Bianca and her friend Chastity. Throughout these encounters with various characters, the subtle message in *10 Things* is clear: likability and beauty are closely connected.

Although there is some overlap between the messages of *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She’s the Man*, the messages in *She’s the Man* differ by gender. Since the film focuses heavily on gender and gender differences, the depiction of “popular” girls and “popular” boys have a significantly different emphasis. In *She’s the Man*, the popularity and likeability of female characters is solely based on beauty. The movie conveys the same message for girls as *10 Things* does for all its characters, emphasizing the importance of outward appearance. However, it

exaggerates this message to the extreme as part of its comedy. Olivia, the most popular girl in school and Duke's crush, embodies Hollywood beauty with her blonde hair and blue eyes. Her natural beauty is a widely accepted fact, and has elevated her social status so much so that "she was dating [a] college guy" before the school year began. In direct contrast to Olivia is Eunice, who serves as a humorous foil. While Olivia is sought after by many boys yet seems dissatisfied with them all, Eunice is rejected by all boys and desperately chases after them. Eunice is depicted with every stereotypically unattractive trait: she wears glasses and braces, dances awkwardly, uses an inhaler, and is often caught staring at other characters with an obsessive smile on her face. Even her name, Eunice, is supposed to be unpleasant. By positioning Olivia as the "popular girl" at Illyria High and posing Eunice as her unwanted foil, *She's the Man* makes it clear that a girl's outward appearance directly affects her likability. Toby, who had been romantically interested in Eunice throughout the film, does not try to connect with her until the very end, stating that "everyone made fun of [him]" when he "wanted to ask out Eunice" previously. Despite his ability to see past her external appearance, the social pressure he received from his friends discouraged him from pursuing her further. He only unites with her at the end of the movie, as part of the film's happy ending.

While physical appearance is still an important factor, the male characters of *She's the Man* are mainly measured by their ability to date or reject beautiful girls. In the scene at Cesario's described previously in this chapter, Viola's friends Kia and Yvonne pretend to be Sebastian's ex-girlfriends to make him look more impressive in front of Duke and his friends (Clip 11). Both girls are purposely dressed to appear attractive: as Kia steps into Cesario's, the camera first begins on the ground, focused on Kia's heels. It then slowly pans up, from Kia's legs to her short skirt, and then to the rest of her body. As she walks towards Viola (dressed as

Sebastian) and greets her enthusiastically, Duke and his friends look on, interested in the new girl but confused by her connection to Viola. The combination of the camera's movement and the boys' facial expressions suggest to the audience that Kia and Yvonne are being seen through the male gaze as an attractive object that they are interested in. However, because the two girls are chasing Viola as she brushes them off, Viola asserts her superiority by seeming disinterested and gains the respect of Duke and his friends. Moments later in the same scene, Sebastian's girlfriend Monique storms into Cesario's, looking for Sebastian. Desperate and annoyed, Viola breaks up with her in front of the entire pizzeria, humiliating her and simultaneously creating a comedic spectacle. As the whole restaurant breaks into cheers and applause, Duke, Toby, and Andrew jump up and surround Viola, praising her and saying phrases such as "You the man!" and "You're officially my idol, man!" Immediately, the camera cuts to a new scene, with Viola walking up the steps into Illyria the next day. As she passes by other students, the male students applaud and pat her back, while the girls smile and flirt. Viola, whose eccentric mannerisms and outdated language often ostracize her from her peers at Illyria, suddenly becomes the most popular person in school after everyone hears about the incident at Cesario's. Suddenly, all the girls are interested in him, while all the boys admire and respect him. Overnight, Viola turns from a "huge geek loser deviant" into one of the most well-liked students in school. Even though he still continues calling the girls "lovelies" and tells the boys to "holler at your boy," they suddenly don't seem to mind anymore. His popularity and romantic prowess outweigh his social awkwardness. Viola's slow ascension to popularity suggests to the audience that the ability to date or reject beautiful girls elevates the social status of male characters.

While *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* emphasize physical appearance as important to determining a character's social status, both films also send subtle messages to their

audiences about physical appearance and body image as a general concept, unrelated to popularity. In *She's the Man*, as a new group of soccer players stand in a row before tryouts, Coach Dinklage marches across the line, assessing each of the boys. As he gets nearer to the end of the line, he slows down his pace and looks up and down one of the students. Noticing his small frame, he barks, "What are you, the runt of the family?" The boy looks away, but says nothing. Finally, the coach comes to a full stop in front of another student, one that is clearly out of shape. The coach slowly looks him up and down, assessing his frame. He then blinks multiple times, adjusts his baseball cap, and audibly sighs out of resignation. The student, who was originally smiling from ear to ear, notices the coach's reaction. His expression changes immediately, from sheer excitement to dejection. The coach's clear disdain for the two students who seem less physically fit than the rest singles them out from the crowd. By doing so, Coach Dinklage is body shaming them, in both verbal and non-verbal ways. Although the intent of the scene is to assert the coach's dominance and bring some comedy to the situation, its outcome inadvertently criticizes certain students' physical appearances and encourages image insecurity.

A similar instance occurs in *She's the Man*. In multiple instances throughout the film, Mr. Stratford is sitting in front of the television, watching commercials about hair growth products while stroking his own head. These occurrences, which usually appear at the beginning of a longer scene, are solely meant to bring humor into the situation. However, the subtle message that comes across these moments is also very critical of physical appearance. Firstly, the scene implies that any physical trait that is seen as undesirable needs to be covered up; secondly, by using the situation as a humorous introduction to the rest of the scene, it pokes fun at the idea of a middle-aged father who wants to improve his appearance. In both *10 Things* and *She's the Man*, physical appearance is considered an essential aspect of each character. Any character that

does not conform to the general expectations of beauty is mocked, criticized, or shamed.

Considering that both films are created for female teenage audiences, this subtle message is concerning and highly problematic.

Although there are many other instances of subtle messaging in the films, there are only a few significant moments where feminism or conservative beliefs are challenged. However, by focusing on those moments and highlighting their importance, the films portray themselves as bold and progressive supporters of female agency. The emphases they place on these instances are used to direct attention away from the many subtle occurrences that reflect conservative and postfeminist values.

In *10 Things I Hate About You*, these intentionally progressive messages are usually stated by characters that the audience is expected to admire. For example, in a scene where Kat and Bianca sit at their respective vanity tables, Kat has a moment of honesty and authenticity that is intended to resonate with the audience:

Kat: I don't care what people think.

Bianca: Yes, you do.

Kat: No I don't. You don't always have to be who they want you to be, you know.

Here, Kat encourages Bianca to be herself, and reject the social expectations that her peers have forced upon her. Rather than dating the most popular boy because she is expected to do so, Bianca is challenged by Kat to pursue her own desires and interests. Ironically enough, Kat does not follow through on her own advice. The premise of the adaptation's original play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, depicts the slow decline of female independence and agency. *10 Things* ultimately stays true to the play in this area, as Kat slowly acquiesces to societal expectations as her "taming" progresses.

Even though Kat's heartfelt "be true to yourself" message to Bianca seems progressive and inspirational, it does not last for long. Kat's slow yet inevitable "taming" process directly contradicts the message of this scene. Yet because the audience is focused on this particular interaction, they fail to miss Kat's slow submission to societal expectations throughout the rest of the movie.

*She's the Man* also delivers overt moments of "Girl Power." Unlike *10 Things*, which uses trustworthy characters to share bits of wisdom, *She's the Man* provides blatantly offensive lines to the worst characters, and then uses Viola to prove them wrong. In one instance, when Viola's ex-boyfriend Justin gets impatient with her refusal to take him back, he says, "No one breaks up over a stupid soccer issue, okay. Just be a girl for five seconds." Immediately, the significance of his words is "signaled by the lowered soundtrack volume and the reduction in camera movement" (Pittman 134). At the same time, Viola's expression hardens as she retorts back her response. Clearly, the creators of *She's the Man* are using a variety of signals, from camerawork to facial expressions, to demonstrate the significance of this moment. By vilifying Justin's character and emphasizing his words, the movie condemns misogynistic statements such as "just be a girl." However, as discussed earlier on in this chapter, there are many instances where Viola displays a shallow and stereotypical understanding of masculinity. This double standard reveals that *She's the Man* is not as progressive as it may seem—instead, the "Girl Power" moments are simply emphasized to overshadow the moments with conservative messages.

## Conclusion

While both *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* make self-conscious efforts to battle obvious moments of misogyny or sexism, their messages are inconsistent. Initially, both films seem to convey a message on female empowerment, as part of the “Girl Power” movement that begun approximately a decade earlier. *10 Things* and *She's the Man* both begin by depicting a strong female lead, who sets herself apart from the other characters in the film. But as the stories continue, there are many subtle instances where the films’ conservative perspectives hinder its audiences from realizing the layers of objectification or homophobia that lay underneath. Through the use of the male gaze, stereotypes, conformity, and subtle messaging, these films convey their actual message in a persuasive yet almost indiscernible manner.

Since each of the films are based on one of Shakespeare’s plays, some thematic and narrative fidelity is expected. However, it seems strange that filmmakers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, decades after the feminism movement, would still feel required to depict conservative versions of the plays—versions that are even “more tame” than the original plays (McLennan 2). All around the world, Shakespeare plays are being created and interpreted with creativity and relevance. By forcing a strict adherence to the thematic and narrative fidelity of the original play, modern adaptations such as *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are not taking full advantage of the benefits that come with time. Although they have the opportunity to weave thoughtful messages and progressive values into their script, they decide not to do so. Instead, they sit on a fine line, struggling to incorporate outdated values with modern-day expectations. Notably, this is not true of all modern-day adaptations of Shakespeare; however, the “play it safe” mentality is a common phenomenon in American adaptations. This strong sense of caution has led these modern-day adaptations of Shakespeare to lose some of the original subtleties and complexities

that make Shakespeare so masterful. In this case, *10 Things* and *She's the Man* have “glosse[d] over the complex of gender and power dynamics the rougher edges of Shakespeare's drama leave exposed” (Pittman 144). In the Hollywood of his time, Shakespeare was still able to create entertainment that asked thought-provoking questions and explored multi-faceted topics. Somehow, as filmmakers attempt to adapt his work in the present day, this central aspect of Shakespeare's work is no longer the focus.

As teenage romantic comedies produced by large Hollywood companies, both films must also consider a variety of other concerns, such as the limitations of ratings and the changing trends of romantic comedies. Both *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* are movies created for a profit; therefore, their commercial success is the main priority, above any other interest. With this in mind, the “Girl Power” message that the films attempt to embody seems like a strategic choice, rather than a moral one. Since *10 Things* was released in 1999 and *She's the Man* followed shortly after in 2006, the movies followed the rise of the “Girl Power” movement, made popular by the Spice Girls in the mid-1990s. Thus, the “Girl Power” messages in both movies are catering to a popular trend of the time, likely in an attempt to make themselves more enticing to teenage audiences. But when the layers of strategically placed moments of female empowerment are stripped away, the deeply conservative undertones of the movies reveal the true perspective of the film's creators.

While the choice to adapt the plays in a conservative manner is surprising and disappointing, the challenge with these adaptations is not just in its social or political leaning. Rather, my personal concern about the films is its deceptive nature. As these films are targeted toward impressionable young teenagers, *10 Things* and *She's the Man* can help their viewers form understandings about the world around them. These same teenagers are more likely to

consume content without questioning the validity of the claims. In contrast, if both movies were transparent in conveying their messages to the audience, teenage viewers would enter the theater with discerning and analytical minds, recognizing that the movie they are about to watch should be taken with a grain of salt. But since these films market themselves as positive, female-empowering movies, their audiences are unaware of the harmful ideas of female sexual objectification and homophobia that are hidden under the label of romantic comedy. *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man* offer a “suburban girl-power feminism” that fails to confront the “less obvious but more insidious cultural threats” (Pittman 129).

Despite their resistance to reading Shakespeare's plays in high school English classes, American teenagers still find Shakespeare's narratives compelling—especially those about love. Recognizing that there is much to gain from capitalizing on this interest, Hollywood produced a bumper crop of '90s-'00s teen-oriented Shakespeare movies like *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), *Romeo Must Die* (2000), *Get Over It* (2001), *O* (2001), and the films that are the focus of this thesis, *10 Things I Hate About You* and *She's the Man*. In addition to the topics discussed in this thesis, there are still many questions that remain about teen Shakespeare films and their creators. For example, why do adult filmmakers feel the need to create such simplistic representations of gender relations and female agency, when Shakespeare's works contain much more ambiguity and complexity? Are they underestimating teenagers' abilities of comprehension and analysis? Also, are filmmakers paralyzed by their false assumptions about the conventionality of “classic” literature, unable to see that Shakespeare provides a vision of gender roles that actually allows some flexibility for women's autonomy? While there are always more questions to discuss, it is impossible not to regret the lost opportunities in *10 Things* and *STM* to portray gender roles with complexity, in a way that gives Shakespeare, and teenage viewers, the credit they deserve.

Appendix of Clips

Clip 1: The original trailer of *She's the Man*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4OhwrMidSU&t=24s>

Clip 2: The original trailer of *10 Things I Hate About You*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWmjzCZr0Jw>

Clip 3: Joey and Bianca choose a modeling photo (begins at 0:34)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6vah2ZaITA>

Clip 4: Bianca beats up Joey at the prom (begins at 0:21)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbPsCE179Fo>

Clip 5: Viola and Olivia meet for the first time

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sk6Qf3aLooQ>

Clip 6: *She's the Man* introduction (no sound)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1s8LHVpXwQ>

Clip 7: Cameron's tour around the school/he sees Bianca for the first time (begins at 1:18)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6oU08hD3Puw>

Clip 8: Olivia buys her lunch (poor quality; begins at 0:48)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SriW3\\_SY42M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SriW3_SY42M)

Clip 9: Patrick goes to Club Skunk (begins at 0:29)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIzjPsjaPQs>

Clip 10: Patrick serenades Kat

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7N6kB11GpE>

Clip 11: Viola's scene at Cesario's

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R19vunaU7aM&t=98s>

Clip 12: Duke, Viola, and the tarantula

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntQrC5icmI>

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