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### Is There Female Agency in *Taming of the Shrew*?

Is conformity a choice or a cage? When looking at William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, it is hard to ignore the suffering endured by the women in the play. The play's portrayal of women as submissive often causes critics to focus on the play's problems instead of exploring its social commentary. These interpretations are often a result of a lack of consideration for the historical context of Shakespeare's time. To continue to produce art, he had to consider what would please the monarch. It is unfair to expect Shakespeare to have used his position to radically challenge preconceived notions. However, it is still possible that Shakespeare's play had more than one meaning, reflecting a complex and complicated society in need of change. A literary element that Shakespeare incorporated into much of his works was satire. Satire is a tool that uses humor to subvert the dominant structures and critique traditional norms. In a play exploring traditional roles in gender, marriage, and social classes, satire can critique and undermine the societal norms that shape these expectations. While it is important to explore the limitations of the play regarding women's roles and expectations, it is equally important to look at their strengths in pushing back against societal norms. So through the play's induction, characterization of Katharine, and the portrayal of male characters, this essay will use feminist theory to examine *Taming of the Shrew* and how it pushed the social bounds imposed on women in the 16th century.