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Paper Title: "The Search for the Perfect Shrew: Education and the Elizabethan Ideal Woman (and Why Shakespearean Men Don't Want Her)"

ABSTRACT:

*The Taming of the Shrew* generates a good deal of debate. The misogyny of Petruchio and the apparent shrewish-ness of Kate have been popular topics of argument, discussion, and theatrical entertainment. Almost to a fault, discussion of these topics centers on the "change" seen in Kate at the end of the play. Most recent scholarship involving the apparent titular character begins with the final, transformational speech and works backwards through the rest of the play. My paper is instead focused on the earlier scenes of the play, specifically the individual tutoring scenes involving Bianca and Kate's disastrous lute lesson described by Hortensio. Bianca's scenes, as shown by recent scholarship by Patricia Parker and Carolyn Brown, portray Bianca as being more of a shrew than she appears. The lute lesson, however, has been largely ignored. By analyzing the lute lesson through the lens of Renaissance pedagogical theory--specifically the work of Richard Mulcaster--symbolic iconography, and comparative textual analysis, my paper will show that Kate can be interpreted as being the antithesis of a shrew--something closer to the definition of the ideal Renaissance woman. By using pedagogical theory to draw this interpretation out from Shakespeare's words, *Shrew* can be interpreted as being not so much a masterpiece of misogyny, but as more of a mirror on the hypocrisy of the Renaissance male. It is an interpretation that draws out and satirizes the difference between the ideal as defined by Renaissance thought, and the ideal as defined by masculine action.