

## ***True Love?***

Comparing “Silver Linings Playbook” and “The Taming of the Shrew”

David O. Russell’s “Silver Linings Playbook” tells the story of Pat Solitano Jr. who has just been released from a mental institution for beating a man half to death after finding him in the shower with his wife Nicki. After being released, Pat attempts to get his life back in order to win back his wife. He runs every day, tries to reconcile with people who he’s wronged, and while doing so, meets Tiffany, a widow, and a “shrew” in her own right, that is Nicki’s best friend’s sister. The two have instant chemistry and Tiffany makes a deal with Pat that if he dances with her for an upcoming dance competition, she’ll give a letter to Nicki that details how he’s doing, how much he loves her and how much he wants her back. The movie’s main plot details the building chemistry between Pat and Tiffany through joint spousal trauma, how “crazy” they both are, and training for the dance. This Academy Award winning movie features dynamic characters that draw similarities to Petruchio and Katherine in William Shakespeare’s iconic play “The Taming of the Shrew”.

This Comedy/Drama features the story of Petruchio, a wealthy man from Verona, who’s come to Padua to marry a woman with a high dowry. Katherine, the outspoken daughter of Baptista, a well endowed citizen of Padua, fits Petruchio’s parameter for a wife perfectly. The play details the acquaintance of Petruchio and Katherine and how their relationship goes from being filled with tons of arguing and manipulation to what is perceived to be love. The concept of “true love” is addressed in vastly different ways between these two stories. The love found in these stories is similarly addressed through outspoken female protagonists who are ahead of their time, but the way that these female characters arrive to this love are completely different in the way that they use timing to convince (or not convince) the audience of true love.

***“What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see She is your treasure, she must have a husband, I must dance barefoot on her wedding day And, for your love to her, lead apes in hell. Talk not to me. I will go sit and weep Till I can find occasion of revenge,”*** (Act II, Scene I, 34-39)

In this scene in Act II, Katherine is furious with her father for showing clear favoritism towards her sister in an argument with her sister Bianca about which of her suitors she loves the most. Granted, this argument was somewhat petty and may seem like a minor scene in the play, but it exposed Baptista's clear partiality toward Bianca. This scene also showed that Katherine wasn't just the shrew that many had made her out to be. It displayed how because she was outspoken, the men of her time would automatically label her as a hazardous person and not someone who can formulate well articulated arguments. This outspokenness in women isn't seen until much later in history making Katherine way ahead of her time when it comes to women speaking up for what they believe in. This theme of female characters taking charge was also evident in Silver Linings Playbook when Pat and Tiffany go on a “date” at a local diner.



***“Forget I offered to help you. Forget the entire fucking idea because that must’ve been fucking crazy because so much crazier than you... I’m just the crazy slut with a dead husband [laughs maniacally]. Forget it! Fuck you!”***

In this scene, Pat and Tiffany decide to go to a diner for what they make clear isn't a date. The two talk about various things like Tiffany's dead husband, her sexual past, and the possibility of Tiffany giving Nicki a letter from Pat that details how he's doing and how much he loves her. However, the "date" goes south when Pat implies that Tiffany is crazy. She throws a temper tantrum and throws everything off of the table onto the ground. However, this fit of rage exposes how Pat is taking advantage of her while she is standing her ground and doesn't allow him to trample all over her. She is able to assert her sexual independence at a time where such independence wasn't popular and stand her ground when Pat tried to make it seem like she was crazy in a Katherine-esk manner. However, this is where the two stories separate from each other. The two protagonists address the "true love" aspect of these stories in very different ways.

***"Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded—Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs—Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife."*** (Act 2, Scene 1, 186-188)

This scene in Act II of *The Taming of the Shrew* features Petruchio and Katherine's first real conversation together. The two protagonists go back and forth, Petruchio wanting to woo her and Katherine trying to stay away from him. However, Petruchio's perceived "love" for Katherine is a bit confusing due to the fact that she just hit his friend over the head with a lute and insulted him profusely for trying to help her. Within the span of a couple of hours, Petruchio hears about a girl who has a high dowry hovering over her head and is instantly interested by her despite the fact that he has not only heard about her sharp tongue, but is now experiencing it first hand. Nevertheless, Petruchio claims to love her and wants to marry her. The timing of his confession of love to Katherine doesn't convince the audience that Petruchio is truly in love with Katherine. Unfortunately, Katherine succumbs to Petruchio and announces her supposed love for Petruchio by the end of the play. Pat and Tiffany's final scene, on the other hand, is blunt, straight to the point, and makes logical sense knowing how much Pat clearly loves Tiffany and how candid of a character Pat is.



***Tiffany: “You love me?”***

***Pat: “Yeah, I do.”***

***Tiffany: “Ok” [kissing scene]***

In this scene, after Tiffany sees Pat talking to his ex-wife Nicki, she storms out of the hotel that her and Pat have just danced at for a competition. While she stomps away crying, Pat runs after her with a letter in his hand that confesses his love for her from the week before. He confesses his love for her in front of her saying that he fell in love with her the day they met. Despite falling in love within a couple of weeks, their love seems authentic. There are plenty of intimate moments between the two and as Pat says in the movie “your crazy matches my crazy”. Their ability to connect and empathize with each others flaws and crazy pasts makes their love story believable.

Silver Linings Playbook and The Taming of the Shrew address the formation of love through female protagonists in very different ways. In The Taming of the Shrew, Katherine seems to give up and allow Petruchio to trample all over her in the name of marriage while Tiffany gets either married or starts dating Pat and still manages to hold onto her values. The Taming of the Shrew represents the time period that the play was

written in when men could dominate their women in any way they pleased while *Silver Linings Playbook* allows both characters to be truly in love while showing that Tiffany doesn't have to let Pat rule her like a piece of property, unlike *The Taming of the Shrew*. These portrayals represent the evolution of true love throughout time. In today's world where marriage isn't arranged in most countries, men and women can find anyone they want to marry or be with and that allows them to truly create a natural bond between two people that isn't forced.

Works Cited:

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