The Taming of the Shrew Study Guide

The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Shakespeare is thought to have written *The Taming of the Shrew* between 1590 and 1594, although the only version that has survived is the one published in the First Folio in 1623. It appears to have been staged several times during Shakespeare's lifetime at both the Globe and the Blackfriars theaters, and a sequel written by John Fletcher between 1604 and 1617 attests to its popularity. It was also produced in 1633 at the court of Charles I.

The play has a complex structure. It begins with a two-scene "Induction" or introductory segment, which concerns an elaborate practical joke played by a nobleman on a drunken tinker. At the end of the Induction the various characters settle down to watch a play. This "play within a play," which in turn consists of a main plot and a complex subplot, constitutes the main action of *The Taming of the Shrew.*

Shakespeare appears to have drawn on many sources in writing the play. The character of the "shrew"-a word used to indicate an opinionated, domineering, and sharp-tongued woman-is found in the folklore and literature of many cultures. The earliest example in English drama is thought to be the character of Noah's wife in the medieval mystery plays. In the sixteenth century shrewish wives were featured in a number of plays, many of which depicted cruel physical punishments for the shrew. The principal source of the Bianca-Lucentio subplot is George Gascoigne's play *Supposes* (1566). Gascoigne's play was itself de rived from an Italian play, Ludovico Ariosto's *I Suppositi* (1509), and many of its elements can be traced back to the classical Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence. As for the Induction, the story of a poor man tricked into thinking he is a nobleman was common in Europe and Asia in the sixteenth century, and is at least as old as the story of the Caliph Haroun Al Raschid and the beggar Abu Hassan in *The Arabian Nights.* In addition, an anonymous play entitled *The Taming of a Shrew* and published in 1594 is generally thought to be either a pirated copy of Shakespeare's play or an inaccurate copy of an earlier play that may have been another source for Shakespeare's version. While the action of *The Taming of a Shrew* is very close to that of Shakespeare's play, both the language and the names of the characters are different. One interesting difference between the two plays concerns the Induction. In Shakespeare's playas we have it, the characters in the Induction are not mentioned in the text after the end of Act I, scene i. In *A Shrew,* on the other hand, the story line of the Induction is brought to a conclusion at the end of the play. Some modern productions of Shakespeare's *Shrew* incorporate material from *The Taming of a Shrew* in order to complete the story introduced in the Induction. Others eliminate the Induction altogether.

Plot Summary

Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker, is expelled from a tavern and falls asleep on the ground. He is discovered by a Lord and his huntsmen. The Lord orders his men to dress Sly in fine clothes and put him to bed in the best chamber. When Sly awakes, Lord and servants conspire to convince him that he is really a nobleman. The Lord's page (a young male attendant) dresses like a woman and pretends to be Sly's wife. After some initial confusion, Sly appears convinced that he is a nobleman. He is told that a comedy will be played for him to aid his recovery. Sly will comment briefly on the play at the end of Act I, scene 1, then disappear from the text.

Characters

Baptista:

Baptista is a wealthy landowner in Padua. He has two daughters, Bianca and Katherina/Kate. The younger daughter, Bianca, is much sought after, but Baptista has resolved that she should not marry until her older sister, Kate, is married. He is firm with Bianca's suitors, Hortensio and Gremio, on this point and insists that Bianca devote her time to study until he finds a suitable husband for Kate. Kate accuses Baptista of favoring Bianca over her, but, actually, Baptista demonstrates that he wants the best for both his daughters. He spends much of his time in the play haggling over his daughters' dowries, trying to insure that both Bianca and Kate are provided with material comforts. He even conducts a kind of bidding war between Gremio and Tranio, who is pretending to be Lucentio, for Bianca's hand in marriage. He also insists that his daughters' husbands have appropriate pedigrees. He is extremely upset when Petruchio shows up for the wedding dressed in wild attire, but since he knows Kate to be a terrible shrew, one for whom it will be difficult to find a match, his desire to see Kate married overrides his fear of public ridicule. His opinion of Kate does not change after she is married; at the end of the play, he even bets that Kate will lose the contest to see which wife is the most dutiful to her husband. It is true that Baptista does not consider his daughters' affections for the men with whom he arranges their marriages, but he has determined that the best marriages are those with a secure financial future, reflecting the beliefs of the time period during which the play was written.

Bianca:

Bianca is Baptista's daughter and the younger sister of Kate. Apparently she is quite attractive. Both Hortensio and Gremio are actively courting her, and Lucentio falls in love with her at first sight. Lucentio calls Bianca a "young modest girl" (I.i.156) and tells Tranio, "Sacred and sweet-was all I saw in her" (Li.176). Part of Bianca's attractiveness must be that she is a gem of modesty set against the foil of Kate's outspoken and grating disposition. Bianca takes full advantage of the contrast which her suitors perceive between herself and Kate. When Baptista pronounces that she must avoid the company of men and devote her time to academic pursuits, Bianca is the model of feminine modesty and duty. She tells her father, "Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe" (I.i.810). But Bianca also has a selfish streak. Just before her submissive response to her father, she has told Kate, "Sister, content you in my discontent" (I.i.80). Bianca resents that Kate's willful behavior prevents her from enjoying the attention her suitors wish to shower upon her. That resentment comes fully into the open when Kate strikes Bianca for suggesting that Kate is envious of her.

We get a somewhat different picture of Bianca at the end of the play. Petruchio proposes that Bianca, Kate, and the widow be called by their husbands to see which of the three responds most readily. Biondello is sent to fetch Bianca for Lucentio and reports back that Bianca has claimed to be too busy to respond to her husband's desire. Only Kate responds promptly, and Lucentio loses his wager. When he tells Bianca that she has cost him the wager, she says, "The more fool you for laying on my duty" (V.ii.129). Apparently, different sets of rules exist in marriage and courtship. Once Bianca has landed Lucentio, she no longer needs to make him the center of her attention as she did in the secret confines of her cloistered cell. As a married woman, she is free to indulge her own desires.

Biondello:

Biondello is Lucentio's servant. Since the stage directions refer to him as a boy, it can be assumed that he is younger than Tranio. When Lucentio takes on the disguise of Cambio and pretends to be a schoolmaster so that he can get close to Bianca, Lucentio tells Biondello that he has killed a man in a quarrel and Tranio has disguised himself as Lucentio to save Lucentio's life. Biondello must now treat Tranio as Lucentio and serve him. Biondello never really believes the story Lucentio has made up, and he quickly learns the plan that is actually afoot. When the need arises, he is given the task of finding a person who might convincingly impersonate Vincentio, Lucentio's father, and he selects the pedant, "In gait and countenance surely like a father" (IV.ii.65). He serves as a messenger for Tranio and is so involved in the intrigue set in motion by Lucentio and Tranio that he even denies knowing Vincentio when the latter recognizes him outside of Tranio's lodging. At the end of the play, Biondello is sent to fetch Kate, Bianca, and the widow for their husbands.

Cambio:

See Lucentio

Christopher Sly:

See Sly

Curtis:

Curtis is a servant at Petruchio's country house. He tries to get information from Grumio, another of Petruchio's servants, when the latter arrives in advance of the newly wedded Kate and Petruchio with the order to make the house ready. When Grumio finally gets around to telling Curtis how Petruchio and Kate have been acting on their journey from Baptista's home, Curtis summarizes Petruchio's behavior. He says, "By this reck'ning he is more shrew than she" (IV.i.85). Curtis calls Petruchio's other servants□Nathaniel, Philip, Gregory, Nicholas, and Joshua□together and sees that they are ready for the

arrival of their master and new mistress. Later, Curtis informs Grumio that Petruchio is in Kate's chamber, lecturing her about the need to abstain from sexual activity, while poor Kate does not quite know what to make of the lecture.

Gremio:

Gremio is a wealthy suitor to Bianca, competing with Hortensio for her hand in marriage. When Baptista refuses to allow either of them to court Bianca until Kate is married, the two are quite amicable about the competition, both realizing that neither can succeed with Bianca until Kate is married, and they openly agree to work together toward that end, if possible. Secretly, both plot a way to stay close to Bianca in the interim. Gremio, following Baptista's suggestion, recommends Cambio as a schoolmaster to Bianca, unaware that Cambio is Lucentio in disguise. In return for the recommendation, Gremio expects that Lucentio will act as a gobetween and advance Gremio's suit for Bianca, which, of course, Lucentio does not do since he is advancing his own suit. After Kate and Petruchio are married and the competition for Bianca opens once again, Gremio feels he should be allowed to marry Bianca because, as he tells Baptista, "I am your neighbor, and was suitor first" (II.i.334). Baptista does, in fact, tend to favor Gremio because of his greater material wealth, but, to be fair, Baptista opens the bidding, Bianca going to whomever offers the largest dowry. Tranio, disguised as Lucentio and presumably acting on his behalf, accuses Gremio of being too old for Bianca, while Gremio counters with the charge that Bianca could never be attracted to one so young and immature as Tranio. Tranio exaggerates Lucentio's wealth and outbids Gremio, who resigns himself to the fact that he will never have Bianca. At the end of the play, Gremio, with no hope of finding a mate in the group assembled at Lucentio's house, joins the party only to enjoy his share of the feast.

Grumio:

Grumio is Petruchio's main servant, accompanying Petruchio on his trips back and forth between his country house and the town of Padua. Grumio is a clown and a jokester who seems to enjoy being obstinate and acting thick headed. Language is always a problem with Grumio because he always plays on vagaries and claims not to understand what is being said unless it is spoken in the clearest and most direct terms. For example, when Petruchio first arrives in Padua to visit his old friend Hortensio, he asks Grumio to knock on Hortensio's door. Grumio pretends to understand that Petruchio wants him to knock either Petruchio or someone who has offended him. It is only when Petruchio refers specifically to knocking on the gate (I.ii.37) that Grumio understands fully what Petruchio has requested. Again, when Grumio answers the question posed to him by Curtis concerning the attitudes of Petruchio and his new bride on their trip home from Padua, Grumio is purposefully evasive. He grows annoyed with Curtis and strikes him, claiming that had not Curtis annoyed him he would have heard the details in full. Grumio then goes on to relate the details in full, contradicting what he has just said. Grumio mimics his master, dressing outlandishly for Petruchio's wedding and going along with Petruchio's scheme to delude and humiliate Kate.

Haberdasher:

The haberdasher shows Kate a hat he has been commissioned by Petruchio to make for her. In front of Kate, however, Petruchio pretends that he is very displeased with the hat, calling it too small and too unfashionable for Kate. Even though Kate likes the hat and insists that she will have that one or none at all, Petruchio has refused it for her, and the haberdasher exits.

Hortensio:

Hortensio is a friend to Petruchio and is engaged in a somewhat good-natured rivalry with Gremio to win Bianca for a bride. When Baptista cuts Bianca off from her suitors until Kate is married, Hortensio guardedly mentions to Petruchio that he knows an eligible woman with money; the only problem is that she is an intolerable shrew. To Hortensio's surprise and in answer to his prayers, Petruchio is interested and wants to go propose to Kate immediately. Hortensio, then, goes along with Petruchio and disguises himself as Litio, a music teacher, so that he might get a head start on Gremio in wooing Bianca. But Hortensio soon becomes engaged in a contest with another suitor. Cambio, who is really Lucentio, vies with Hortensio for Bianca's time. It soon becomes clear to Hortensio that Bianca prefers Cambio to himself. He wants to share his new misery with other company. He brings Tranio, whom he believes to be Lucentio, to observe that Bianca is enamored of her tutor Cambio. Hortensio is upset that Bianca favors one whom he believes is of a lower class than himself that he swears to quit pursuing the love of Bianca. He accepts the consolation prize and vows to wed the widow he has known for only a brief time. During the gathering at Lucentio's house at the end of the play, Hortensio, along with Lucentio and Baptista, loses money when he wagers that Kate will be the least dutiful of all three wives, the widow included.

Hostess:

The hostess appears briefly at the beginning of the Induction. She scolds Christopher Sly and asks whether or not he intends to pay for the glasses he has broken while getting drunk. When he informs her that he, indeed, does not intend to pay, she leaves to get the sheriff, intending to have Sly arrested.

Huntsmen:

The huntsmen appear in the Induction. They return from hunting with the lord, discussing the attributes of several of the hunting dogs. When that lord discovers Sly asleep outside the tavern, the huntsmen carry Sly up to the lord's chambers and agree to join in the trick the lord intends to play on Sly.

Katherina:

Katherina, or Kate as she is called throughout the play, is Baptista's daughter and Bianca's older sister. Baptista has forbidden Bianca to marry until Kate is married, but marrying Kate off is a problem for Baptista because she is outspoken and willful; in short, she is a shrew. At least, that is the reputation she has throughout Padua. Kate has a mind of her own and does not like to be told what to do. After Baptista sends Bianca into the house and away from her suitors, he tells Kate she can stay while he goes to speak more with her younger sister. Kate says, "Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not? / What, shall I be appointed hours, / as though, (belike), I knew not what to take, / and what to leave?" (Li. 102-04). Kate wants nothing more than to be heard on matters that concern her. Instead of allowing this, Baptista arranges to wed Kate to Petruchio, a man she initially describes as "... one half lunatic, / A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack" (II.i.287-88). When Petruchio is late for his wedding to Kate, she further expresses to Baptista her dissatisfaction with the match, complaining that her father has seen her betrothed to a wild and crazy man who never had any intention of marrying her. We can feel sympathy with Kate in her situation and hear a good deal of disappointment in her rebuke of Baptista and Petruchio.

Kate's relationship with her sister also suffers as the result of her reputation for being shrewish. Bianca resents Kate because she thinks her older sister is preventing her from getting married. Kate feels Bianca's resentment in every recriminating glance. After the two sisters quarrel, Kate striking Bianca and Baptista intervening between them, Kate can no longer tolerate those looks from her younger sister. She attacks her, saying, "Her silence flouts me, and I'll be reveng'd" (II.i.29). Kate also accuses her father of favoring Bianca, suggesting that he cares not about the feelings of his elder daughter. Petruchio, however, treats Kate differently than do Baptista and Bianca. Although he involves her in situations that are humiliating, he, at least, makes her the center of his attention. When he deprives her of food, refuses to buy her finery, and makes her mimic his ludicrous assertions, he does so with protests of love and devotion. Kate seems to be attracted to Petruchio because he shows interest in her, and perhaps she attempts to please him because doing so pleases her.

In the last scene of the play, Petruchio bets that Kate will answer his summons when the wives of Lucentio and Hortensio will not. He wins the bet. Kate then delivers a speech to Bianca and the widow, a speech that stresses the importance of wives' submission to their husbands. "Such duty as the subject owes the prince, /Even such a woman oweth to her husband" (V.ii. 155-56). Kate mouthing such sentiments, it seems that Petruchio has reduced her to an automaton, a mere shell of her former independence. But perhaps she has learned to play Petruchio's game and is now the master of that game. She learns that she has power in a limited sphere, and that power is the ability to please Petruchio. He is her audience, an audience she has never had before. In the last line of the play, Lucentio says to Petruchio,'" Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so" (V.ii. 189). Lucentio, perhaps, has assessed the situation correctly: Kate has willed the taming, not Petruchio. She has allowed herself to change

outwardly, but we might suspect that inwardly she is the same spirited, willful and opinionated Kate.

Litio:

See Hortensio

Lord:

This lord appears in the Induction. He stumbles over Sly's prostrate body and is at first upset that such a drunkard has passed out near his estate. He then decides, for his own amusement, to delude Sly into thinking that he is a proper lord when he awakes.

Lucentio:

Lucentio is Vincentio's son. With Vincentio's permission, Lucentio is travelling abroad in order to expand his horizons and pursue his education. He has stopped in Padua on his way from Pisa to Lombardy and decides to remain in Padua for a while, exploring what that town has to offer. He must feel that Padua offers more cultural depth than Pisa because he says,

... I have Pisa left

And am to Padua come, as he that leaves

A shallow plash to plunge him in the deep

And with saciety seeks to quench his thirst.

(I.i.21-24)

The comparison he makes between Pisa and Padua is, perhaps, like the comparison between a small town and a big city. He will "quench his thirst" for knowledge in the rich center of learning that is Padua. He is no great and intense scholar though. When Tranio says, "Let's be no Stoics, nor no stocks" (I.i.31), Lucentio readily agrees. He will pursue only those forms of education which offer entertainment, nothing tedious or demanding. But before Lucentio can embark on this quest for higher learning, he sees Bianca and falls in love with her at first sight. Her father, Baptista, has removed her from the company of men, with the exception of her male teachers. The only way Lucentio can get close is by adopting the disguise of Cambio, a schoolmaster. It is not clear why Lucentio insists that Tranio wear his clothes and impersonate him. He has already told Tranio that they should "take a lodging fit to entertain / Such friends as time in Padua shall beget" (I.i.44-45). Since he does not already have friends in Padua, there is

apparently no need for Tranio to maintain Lucentio's presence and make it known that Lucentio is there.

This desire to develop or maintain his reputation bespeaks a certain arrogance in Lucentio. He leads a life full of class privilege, and things come easily for him. He has seen Bianca with her two suitors, Hortensio and Gremio, yet he believes he can impose himself between their suits and win Bianca for himself. She must see some inherent virtues through his disguise as Cambio, a lowly schoolmaster, for he does, in fact, win her rather easily. Lucentio deceives Baptista by marrying Bianca without his knowledge, and he places his own father in some humiliating circumstances. Yet he easily wins the blessing of both men when he pleads for mercy and asks their forgiveness. He does not offer-any legitimate excuses; he only presents himself as one with a nature deserving of forgiveness. The only thing that Lucentio does not win is the contest at the end of the play. When Bianca does not come at his beck and call, he loses his wager. Lucentio can only congratulate Petruchio for having so thoroughly tamed his shrewish wife.

Page:

The page appears in the Induction. His name is Bartholomew, and he is a page to the lord who is setting Sly up as an unwitting actor in some amusing entertainment. The page is directed to clothe himself in the fashion he has seen his mistress and other ladies of noble station adopt. He is to pretend that he is Sly's wife. When Sly informs the page that the servants have told him he has been in and out of consciousness for fifteen years, the page says, "Ay, and the time seems thirty unto me, / Being all this time abandon'd from your bed" (Induction.ii. 114-15). This is precisely the wrong thing to say to Sly, who wants to be intimate with his wife right away. The page has to think quickly. He asks that he might abstain from Sly's bed yet awhile because the doctors have cautioned that sex might return Sly to his former illness.

Pedant:

The pedant is chosen by Biondello to impersonate Vincentio, Lucentio's father, because, according to Biondello who has been sent to find a likely candidate for the role, he bears himself like a father would. When Tranio asks Biondello about his choice, Biondello says he is either "a mercantant, or a pedant, / I know not what ..." (IV.iii.63-64). Tranio tells the pedant, who is from the town of Mantua, that the Duke of Padua has determined that any merchant from Mantua apprehended in Padua should be put to death, a proclamation stemming from a recent quarrel between the two towns. Tranio suggests that, to insure his safety, the pedant disguise himself as Vincentio. Pedants were often the objects of ridicule in Elizabethan drama because of their narrow mindedness and lack of creativity. True to that Elizabethan stereotype, the pedant in this play throws himself into the role of Vincentio and does it "by the numbers." Although he conducts the

negotiations with Baptista convincingly enough, when confronted with the real Vincentio, he does not have the presence of mind to abandon his persona in precarious circumstances. He proclaims that he is, indeed, Vincentio and forces Tranio and Biondello to deny Lucentio's real father to his face.

Petruchio:

Petruchio arrives in Padua to visit his friend Hortensio. His father, Antonio, has died, and Petruchio has been forced to seek his fortune "farther than at home" (I.ii.51). His father has left him with a home, its goods, and some money, but Petruchio wants to see the world. But mainly, Petruchio wants to marry a rich woman and assure himself of a solid financial future. Moreover, he does not care if that woman is old or ugly, so long as she has money. Hortensio tells Petruchio about Kate, informing him that she is well off financially but horribly shrewish in her demeanor. But Kate is neither old nor ugly; she is, according to Hortensio, "young and beauteous, / Brought up as best becomes a gentlewoman" (I.ii.86-87). Petruchio wants to see her right away. He wants to marry Kate for her money, assuring Hortensio that he will be able to cure Kate of her shrewishness. When Petruchio tells Baptista that he does not have time to engage in an extended courtship with Kate, Baptista grants him an immediate audience with her. Petruchio proposes marriage to Kate and steamrolls over her objections to marriage and her ridicule of him. To everyone's surprise, he announces that the wedding day will be the following Sunday. No one, perhaps, is more surprised than Kate herself. Petruchio takes his leave, but when he next appears, he engages in a series of bizarre behaviors designed to cure Kate of her ill humor.

He shows up for the wedding dressed preposterously, believing that humiliating Kate will make her relinquish some of the pride he feels is responsible for her intolerance of others. He acts strangely during the wedding ceremony and carries her away from the wedding reception, insisting that she is now his sole property. At his country house, he is nasty and short tempered with the servants, demonstrating, for her benefit, how uncomfortable that kind of behavior makes others feel. He refuses all the food brought to her, claiming it is unfit, slowly starving her to make her more manageable. Again working on her pride, he refuses to buy the hat offered by the haberdasher and the dress offered by the tailor, even though she much admires and desires them. On their way to visit Baptista, Petruchio forces Kate to agree with every wild and illogical statement he makes. If she does not, he threatens to return home and forego the visit to her father.

At first glance, Petruchio's treatment of Kate seems somewhat harsh, but we might imagine (and Petruchio is usually portayed this way on stage) that he does all he does with a smile on his face. Whatever he does, he insists that he loves Kate and has her best interests at heart. More importantly, we might imagine that Kate allows him to do what he does. Knowing her reputation as we do, it is hard to imagine that Kate could not get out of this situation if she so chose. She protests, but not too loudly, possibly because, despite his original intentions, he is the first man to show a sustained interest

in her. Kate and Petruchio seem to have genuine affection for one another. This affection is especially evident when Petruchio insists that Kate kiss him in public. At first, she resists but then says, "Nay, I will give thee a kiss; now pray thee, love, stay" (V.i.148). And when Kate wins for Petruchio the wager placed on the wife proving most manageable, Petruchio again says, "Come on, and kiss me Kate" (V.ii.180).

Players:

The players appear in the Induction. They arrive at the lord's house as he is planning the elaborate hoax on Christopher Sly. The players are enlisted in that hoax and are instructed by the lord to perform for Sly, providing a fit entertainment for the sophisticate Sly is supposed to be. The lord cautions the players to restrain themselves in front of Sly because he has never seen a play before. What he really means is that they are not to make fun of Sly when they see what a rustic clown he is. The players comprise the cast of characters in the inset play.

Servants:

There are several groups of servants in *The Taming of the Shrew.* In the Induction, the servants to the lord participate in the ruse foisted on Sly. They call him by exaggerated titles when he wakes and lead him to believe that he is a nobleman suffering from a delusional malady that makes him lose consciousness for long periods of time. In addition to Grumio, Petruchio has several servants at his country house. (See Curtis.) They bring food and drink to Kate, all of which is dashed from their hands and proclaimed unfit for Kate by Petruchio. Apparently they, with the exception of Grumio, are not aware of Petruchio's tactics for taming Kate. They marvel at their master's odd behavior. Baptista also has servants at his home. One of those servants is directed to escort Hortensio and Lucentio, in their disguises of schoolmasters, into the presence of their pupil Bianca.

Sly (Christopher Sly):

Christopher Sly is the main character in the Induction, or frame story. He falls asleep outside an Inn after drinking too much and arguing with the hostess there. A passing lord discovers Sly's drunken form and decides to make Sly believe that he is rich. That lord has his huntsmen carry Sly up to a richly appointed bedroom, dress him in fine clothes, and pretend that he is the sophisticated lord of the manor when he wakes. The essence of the joke is that no one could be less sophisticated than Sly. When he wakes up, the first thing he calls for is "a pot of small ale" (Induction.ii.l). He is offered a glass of sack but denies having ever drunk that in his life, the distinction between the two drinks probably like that between beer and champagne. When the servants address him with "your lordship" and "your honor," Sly tries to maintain his identity and describes who he really is: "Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a

pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker?" (Induction.ii.17-21). Sly does not seem to be convinced totally by the servants' story that he has been suffering from delusions for years. True to his nature, Sly only becomes interested in assuming the role of the lord of the manor when he is told that he has a wife, the lord's young page disguised. He wishes immediately to gratify his sexual desire, but the Page puts him off with the excuse that the doctors have prohibited such activity because it will only make Sly's condition worse. When it is proposed that Sly watch a play put on specifically for his amusement, he further shows his lack of sophistication. He asks whether the play "Is not a comonty a Christmas gambold or tumbling trick?" (Induction. ii.l 37-38), the forms of dramatic entertainment with which he is most familiar. The Page tells Sly "It is a kind of history" (Induction.ii.141), and Sly agrees to see the play. But at the end of the first scene, Sly is already nodding off. He is not heard or seen again, and the elaborate frame story is never resolved even though the audience expects to see Sly acquainted with the joke and returned to his former self at the end of the play.

Tailor:

The tailor has been commissioned, like the haberdasher, to make a dress for Kate. When he shows that dress to her, a displeased Petruchio mocks both the style of the dress and the tailor himself. The tailor protests that he has made the dress according to Petruchio's exact specifications. Petruchio has the tailor read the list of those specifications, but when he reads " 'The sleeves curiously cut'" (IV.iii.143), Petruchio says, "Ay, there's the villainy" (IV.iii.144). The direction for cutting the sleeves of the dress is just ambiguous enough for Petruchio to object that he will not purchase it for Kate. Petruchio is only trying to teach Kate a lesson, not punish the tailor: he has Hortensio take the tailor aside and promise to pay him for his goods.

Tranio:

Tranio is Lucentie's servant. He and Lucentio witness the scene of Baptista cloistering Bianca, cutting her off from her suitors. Tranio and Lucentio also overhear Baptista's remark that Bianca will only be allowed the male company of her schoolmasters, and they simultaneously conceive the same plan: Lucentio will disguise himself as one of those schoolmasters in order to court the woman with whom he has instantaneously fallen in love. Tranio will wear Lucentio's clothes, which bear the distinction of a higher class than those usually worn by Tranio, and will maintain Lucentio's presence in Padua. Tranio adjusts to his new role quite readily. It is hard to determine which of the subsequent intrigues are suggested by Lucentio and which are orchestrated by Tranio on his own initiative. He introduces himself to Baptista and the company of Bianca's suitors as Lucentio and proclaims his desire to court Baptista's younger daughter. He engages in an outrageous bidding contest for Bianca, pledging a dowry of greater wealth than that promised by Gremio. He enlists the pedant to impersonate Vincentio and guarantee the preposterous material possessions Tranio has claimed to have. He conducts the marriage negotiations with Baptista, and even directs Lucentio to stop at

the church and marry Bianca before bringing her to those negotiations. Tranio is so good at playing his role that it almost seems as if Tranio has become Lucentio and Lucentio become the servant. Tranio's fall from that higher social position, though, is sudden. Vincentio exposes him as Lucentio's servant, a reality of class distinction Vincentio knows well, having raised Tranio since he was three years old.

Vincentio:

We learn from Lucentio at the beginning of the play that his father, Vincentio, is "A merchant of great traffic through the world" (I.i. 12). He has taken up residence in Pisa and has encouraged Lucentio to travel and pursue his education away from that town. On their way to Padua to visit Kate's father, Petruchio and Kate encounter Vincentio, who tells them, "And bound I am to Padua, there to visit / A son of mine, which long I have not seen" (IV.v.56-57). The play is vague about how much time has elapsed since Lucentio and Tranio arrived in Padua, but, apparently, Lucentio has been away from home long enough for Vincentio to miss him. Vincentio thinks the behavior of Petruchio and Kate is odd. Petruchio describes Vincentio to Kate as a young maid, and Kate agrees with that assessment; then, Petruchio asserts that Vincentio is a grisled old man, and Kate agrees again. Despite this bizarre episode, Vincentio accepts their offer to lead him to Lucentio's house in Padua. Once there, Vincentio is confronted by the pedant who claims to be Lucentio's father. At first, Vincentio is only confused, but when he recognizes Tranio and Biondello and they deny knowing him, he becomes outraged, especially when Tranio calls out to have Vincentio arrested. He is used to being treated with respect and deference by Lucentio's servants. When they do not do so, he wants desperately to exercise his power and punish them. He says, "I'll slit the villain's nose, that would have sent me to jail" (V.i.131-32). He is still upset, even after Lucentio has arrived to explain the whole affair and has asked Vincentio to pardon Tranio. In the end, Vincentio displays his generous and gracious nature, assuring Baptista that he will be fully compensated for Lucentio's deception in secretly marrying Bianca.

Widow:

After Hortensio realizes that Bianca is lost to him, he resolves that, within three days, he will marry the widow who has loved him as long as he has loved Bianca. In the final scene, Petruchio suggests to the widow that Hortensio is afraid of her. She tells Kate, "Your husband, being troubled with a shrew, / Measures my husband's sorrow by his woe" (V.ii.28-29). She means that Petruchio assumes all wives are shrews because his own wife is one. But, ultimately, the widow proves to be a less manageable wife than Kate is. The widow fails the test; she does not come when she is called.

Character Studies

Katherina

Katherina is established as a "shrew"-a loud, unmanageable, bad-tempered woman-by her own behavior and by the comments of other characters, who repeatedly characterize her as ill-tempered and unreasonable. Unlike the stock character of the shrew found in many plays from Shakespeare's time, however, Katherina emerges as a complex individual who engages the audience's sympathy and concern. Baptista's obvious preference for her sister, Bianca, his crassly materialistic approach to his daughters' marriages, and the shallowness and rudeness of the Paduan suitors suggest possible reasons for Katherina's shrewish behavior. Her "shrewish" remarks are generally also clever and to the point, suggesting that she is more intelligent than most of the other characters in the play. Moreover, despite her shrewishness she is capable of concern for others, repeatedly trying to shield the servants from Petruchio's violent displeasure.

Katherina first appears in Act I, scene i, where she vigorously protests both Baptista's decision not to allow Bianca to marry until a husband is found for Katherina, and the insulting remarks of Gremio and Hortensio. This leads Tranio, who is looking on with Lucentio, to comment that she is "stark mad or wonderful froward [disobedient, unmanageable]." After Baptista and his daughters leave, Hortensio and GremIO continue to comment on Katherina's bad temper and the near-impossibility of any man agreeing to marry her.

At the beginning of Act II, Katherina enters with Bianca, whose hands are tied, and strikes her when she denies any preference for either of her suitors. When Baptista scolds her for her behavior toward her sister, Katherina accuses him of favoritism. Later in the same scene, in her first meeting with Petruchio, she meets his initial overture with hostility and insults. He responds with sexual innuendos. After he makes a particularly obscene remark, she strikes him. When her father enters, she denounces Petruchio as "one half lunatic" and responds to his insistence that they have agreed to be married on Sunday by commenting, "I'll see thee hang'd on Sunday first." But when Petruchio claims that she is only pretending to oppose the marriage and Baptista agrees to the match, she exits without saying anything further.

In Act III, when Petruchio at first fails to show for his wedding, Katherina complains bitterly: not only has she been forced against her will to accept "a mad-brain rudesby full of spleen," but now she is being made a fool of. She exits weeping. Reporting on Petruchio's outrageous behavior during the marriage ceremony, Gremio remarks that in response to the groom's behavior the bride "trembled and shook." Nonetheless, when Petruchio insists that they leave immediately after the ceremony, Katherina resists, first entreating Petruchio to stay, then firmly refusing to leave. When Petruchio insists on his right to make her leave and threatens violence against anyone who tries to stop them, she goes with him without further comment.

At the beginning of Act IV, Grumio reports on his trip to Petruchio's country house with Petruchio and Katherina. After Katherina's horse fell on her, Petruchio began to beat Grumio, and Katherina "waded through the dirt to pluck him off." Grumio's account leads Curtis to remark that Petruchio "is more shrew than she." When at the country house Petruchio upbraids and strikes the servants, Katherina defends them and urges him to be patient. After the couple retires to their chamber, Curtis tells the other servants that Petruchio is lecturing his bride on self-restraint, while she "Knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak, / And sits as one new-risen from a dream." In subsequent scenes, Petruchio repeatedly imposes his will despite Katherina's resistance and verbal protests. In Act IV, scene v, as they return to Padua for Bianca's wedding, Katherina again contradicts Petruchio, saying that the sun is shining when he has commented on the brightness of the moon. When he refuses to go on unless she agrees with him, she gives in, only to have him insist that it is indeed the sun. Commenting that "the moon changes even as your mind," Katherina gives in, agreeing to call it whatever he chooses. Hortensio tells Petruchio that "the field is won." Katherina's acceptance of Petruchio's will at this point is generally seen as a turning point in their relationship, although critics have offered varying opinions as to Katherina's mood at this point as well as the meaning of this turning point. When the travelers meet Vincentio on the road, Katherina easily falls in with Petruchio's joke of addressing the old man as if he were a young woman.

In Padua, as the Bianca-Lucentio subplot comes unraveled, Katherina wants to follow the other characters to see the outcome. Petruchio insists that she first kiss him publicly, and after a brief resistance, she complies. At Bianca's wedding banquet, Katherina becomes involved in an argument with the widow when the latter refers to Katherina's reputation as a shrew. Later, when Petruchio, Lucentio, and Hortensio place bets on their respective wives' obedience, Katherina is the only wife to come when summoned. She obediently brings in the other wives, and when Petruchio tells her to take off her cap and stamp on it, she complies. When Petruchio orders her to instruct the other wives on their duty to their husbands, Katherina responds with a long speech advocating wifely obedience. Emphasizing the "painful labor" a husband takes on to ensure the security of his wife, she states that wives owe husbands a "debt" of "love, fair looks, and true obedience." She remarks that women are "soft" and "weak," and urges them to give up their pride, "for it is no boot" [there is no remedy]. In her final words in the play, she offers to place her hand under Petruchio's foot, to "do him ease."

Directors and actresses have adopted a variety of approaches to Katherina's final speech, depending on their interpretation of the play's meaning. Sometimes it is delivered ironically, as if Katherina does not mean what she says and is either humoring Petruchio or treating his wager as a joke. When the speech is delivered seriously, the tone adopted may vary from one of joyful acceptance to one of despair and resignation.

Petruchio

The traditional interpretation of the character of Petruchio sees him as a romantic and dashing figure, sweeping Katherina off her feet with his manly energy, intelligence, and

determination. His displays of violence and bad temper are then presented as merely a ploy, intended either to show Katherina the absurdity of her own violence and bad temper, or to shock her out of her habitual contrariness. While this remains the most common dramatic interpretation of the role, more recently literary critics and some productions of the play have portrayed Petruchio as a less than ideal man. These interpretations present his violent, domineering, and frequently unreasonable behavior as an intrinsic part of his character, rather than as an affectation assumed for Katherina's benefit. They also tend to stress the crudity of many of his comments about marriage and about Katherina.

Petruchio first appears at the beginning of Act I, scene ii, when he and his servant, Grumio, arrive in Padua from Verona to visit Petruchio's friend Hortensio. Petruchio is quickly involved in a heated misunderstanding with Grumio and ends up wringing the servant's ear. When Petruchio tells Hortensio he has come to Padua to seek a wife, Hortensio tells him he knows of a woman who is very wealthy, but shrewish. Despite warnings from both Hortensio and Gremio about Katherina's temperament, Petruchio insists that he will woo her, claiming that wealth is his sole requirement in a wife and that he will not be frightened off by mere noise.

In Act IT, Petruchio presents himself to Baptista as a suitor for Katherina. At Hortensio's request, he also introduces Hortensio as Litio, a music teacher, leading Baptista to engage Hortensio to instruct his daughters. Brushing aside both Baptista's invitation to dinner and the older man's doubts about Katherina's acceptability, Petruchio immediately opens negotiations about the amount of money to be settled on Katherina. He and Baptista swiftly reach agreement. When Baptista stipulates that Petruchio must first obtain Katherina's love, Petruchio replies that "that is nothing," adding that he is "as peremptory as she proud-minded" and predicting that she will "yield" to him. When Hortensio enters bleeding and reports that Katherina has broken the lute over his head, Petruchio calls her "a lusty wench" and expresses eagerness to meet her.

In a soliloquy in Act II, scene i, just before his first meeting with Katherina, Petruchio describes his plan for dealing with her. Whatever she does, he will act as if she has done the opposite: If she is verbally abusive, he will praise her sweet voice; if she refuses to speak, he will applaud her eloquence; If she refuses to marry, he will ask her to set a date. When Katherina enters, they become embroiled in an exchange of insults that soon turns to sexual innuendo. When she strikes him after he makes a particularly obscene comment, Petruchio threatens to strike her back if she hits him again. Despite Katherina's hostility when Baptista returns Petruchio says they have agreed to marry. When Katherina protests, Petruchio claims they have agreed that she will continue to behave shrewishly "in company." Baptista agrees to the marriage.

On the day appointed for the wedding, Petruchio arrives late and dressed in rags, defending his inappropriate attire by saying that Katherina is marrying him, not his clothes. HIS behavior at the ceremony, which takes place off-stage, offends Gremio, who subsequently describes it: Petruchio swore in church, struck the priest, guzzled the wine and threw the remainder in the sexton's face, and kissed the bride noisily. After the ceremony, Petruchio insists that he and Katherina must leave immediately. He overrides

Katherina's objections by announcing that he "will be master of what is [his] own" and pretending to protect her against the others' desire to detain her.

When Petruchio and Katherina arrive at his country house at the beginning of Act IV, Petruchio verbally abuses and beats the servants and sends the dinner back uneaten, telling Katherina it is burned and bad for their health. In the bridal chamber, he treats her to a lecture on self-restraint. In his second soliloquy, Petruchio likens Katherina to a wild falcon that must be prevented from eating and sleeping until it is tamed. Subsequently, he repeatedly frustrates Katherina's needs and desires, all the while insisting that he does so for her own good.

He also insists that Katherina agree with him even when he contradicts the most obvious realities, leading even his friend Hortensio to comment on his unreasonableness. Late in Act IV, as Katherina and

Petruchio prepare to return to Padua for Bianca's wedding, he argues with Katherina about the time of day, insisting that they will not leave until "It shall be what a'clock I say it is." Later, on the road to Padua, he repeatedly changes his opinion as to whether the sun or the moon is shining and refuses to continue until Katherina agrees with him. Her eventual statement that "What you will have it nam'd, even that it is" is usually regarded as marking her capitulation to Petruchio. When they meet Vincentio on the road, Katherina plays along with her husband's joke when he pretends to think the old man is a young woman.

Through the remainder of the play Petruchio repeatedly tests Katherina's compliance. When they reach Padua, he threatens to return home unless she kisses him in the street. At Bianca and Lucentio's wedding banquet, a number of the other guests imply that Petruchio has failed to get control over Katherina. Petruchio proposes a wager on which of the three new wives-Katherina, Bianca, or the widow Hortensio has married-Is most obedient. When Katherina is the only one of the three wives to come when summoned, Petruchio sends her to fetch the other wives, then tells her to take off her cap and stamp on it. Finally, he orders her to "tell these headstrong women / What duty they do owe their lords and husbands." At the end of Katherina's long speech in favor of male authority and female obedience, Katherina offers to place her hand under her husband's foot, to "do him ease." Petruchio praises her, kisses her, and takes her off to bed, suggesting as they leave that Hortensio and Lucentio have a hard road before them in their marriages.

Critical commentary and productions of the play reflect a wide diversity of opinion regarding both the nature of Petruchio's treatment of Katherina and his reasons for it. Motivations ascribed to his character range from love for Katherina to a will to dominate, from self-interest to a simple enjoyment of a challenge. Similarly, a wide variety of interpretations have been put forward regarding the dynamics of his relationship with Katherina. Some see him as bullying his wife into submission; others claim that he insightfully leads her to an acceptance of her "true" nature and of her rightful role in society. Still others claim that in the course of the play, Katherina and Petruchio

negotiate a mutually acceptable mode of co-existence within the limits imposed by their society.

Conclusion

Like Shakespeare's other plays, *The Taming of the Shrew* lends itself to a variety of interpretations, both on stage and in the field of literary criticism. Moreover, modern interpretation of the play is complicated by the centrality to the play of issues that are hotly debated in our own time-in particular, the question of what roles men and women can and should play in society and in relationship to each other. Is Petruchio a loving husband who teaches his maladjusted bride to find happiness in marriage, or is he a clever bully who forces her to bow to his will? Does Katherina's acquiescence in playing the part of obedient wife reflect a joyous acceptance of her assigned role as a married woman and the beginning of a fulfilling partnership with her husband? Does it, instead, mean that she has learned to play the obedient wife in public so as to get her own way in private? Or does it reflect the defeat of a spirited and intelligent woman forced to give in to a society that dominates and controls women and allows them only very limited room for self-expression? Our own answers to these questions may have less to do with the play itself than with our attitudes towards the issues and ideas it explores. (See also *Shakespeare Criticism,* Vols. 9, 12, and 31)

Themes

Gender Roles

Nearly all critical commentary on *The Taming of the Shrew* deals to some extent with the play's treatment of gender roles: that is, what it has to say about socially accepted definitions of appropriate male and female behavior. On the surface, the play appears to confirm a very traditional view that men should dominate women and that women should submit to male authority. All of the characters except Katherina agree throughout the play that her initial rebellious, self-assertive, "shrewish" behavior is not acceptable. In the end, Kate has apparently come round to this position as well, giving a long speech p *ro* claiming the rightness of male dominance an female submissiveness.

Until fairly recently, few people challenged this view of the play. In fact, the play knew centuries of popularity with audiences who found Petruchio's "taming" of Katherina both inoffensive and amusing. In the late nineteenth century, however, commentators began to express uneasiness with the way Katherina is treated, and directors began to experiment with various "ironic" readings of the plays. In the twentieth century, debate over the play's attitude toward gender roles has produced a wide variety of interpretations.

The play's treatment of gender goes well beyond its basic plot. Unlike most playwrights who wrote plays about "shrews" in the early modern period, Shakespeare suggests possible motivations for Katherina's shrewishness: her father clearly favors her sister, Bianca; the prospective suitors are shallow and rude; father and suitors alike tend to treat marriage as a purely commercial transaction. Katherina's relationship with Petruchio is complex. Their early verbal exchanges suggest a certain equality of intelligence. Although the text of the play leaves room for a wide variety of theatrical interpretations of the relationship, the traditional and most common approach emphasizes a strong sexual attraction between Katherina and Petruchio as well as a growing comradeship. Moreover, although Petruchio seeks to control Katherina, he appears to admire and value her spirit.

The relationship between the play's main plot, subplot, and Induction also affects its depictions of gender roles. A struggle for power between men and women is introduced as an issue from the beginning of the play, when, in the Induction, a woman-the Hostess-ejects a drunken Christopher Sly from the tavern. In the course of the Lord's practical joke, one of his young male attendants dresses like a woman and pretends to be Sly's noble, soft-spoken, and obedient wife. The practical joke itself can be seen as a parallel to Petruchio's efforts to reform Katherina, as both involve attempts to transform one sort of character into another. For some critics, the Lord's inability to effect a convincing change in Sly's character contrasts with Petruchio's "successful" transformation of Katherina in the main plot. For others, however, the obvious artificiality of both Sly's transformation into a nobleman and the page's transformation into a woman are meant to indicate that Katherina's transformation is equally artificial.

Critics' examinations of these various aspects of the play have led to no consensus as to the play's attitude toward gender roles. A number of critics continue to maintain that the play ultimately accepts and reinforces male dominance of women. Many of these critics also argue, however, that while accepting male dominance the play emphasizes the need for mutual affection, cooperation, and partnership in marriage. Another view maintains that Katherina's final speech should be read ironically, with the implication that she will pretend to defer to Petruchio in public while ruling the household in private. Yet other commentators argue that the play ultimately undermines male dominance of women by showing this dominance to be artificial and illogical. Directors of modern productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* have also offered a wide variety of interpretations of this issue.

Appearance vs. Reality

Confusion between appearance and reality is a principal source of humor in *The Taming of the Shrew.* In the Induction, Sly is misled by carefully orchestrated appearances into believing that he is really a wealthy nobleman rather than a poor tinker. The subplot likewise depends on the confusion of appearance and reality as various characters practice elaborate deceptions. Hortensio pretends to be the music teacher Litio. Lucentio poses as the schoolmaster Cambio. He and Bianca use Latin lessons as a cover for their courtship, and they deceive her father by eloping on the eve of her planned betrothal to another man. Lucentio's servant, Tranio, pretends to be his master and persuades an elderly scholar to pose as his master's father.

In the main plot, the difficulty of distinguishing between appearance and reality is emphasized in various ways. Petruchio's servant Grumio often misinterprets his master's instructions, with comic results. More crucially, Petruchio's strategy in dealing with Katherina often involves replacing the most apparent of realities with something more to his own liking. "Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain / She sings as sweetly as a nightingale," Petruchio resolves before his first meeting with Katherina. Although she insists she wants nothing to do with him, he tells her father they have agreed to be married. At his country house and on the road back to Padua he insists that it is morning when it is afternoon and that the moon is shining in broad daylight. When Katherina finally gives in to him, her surrender is signaled by her acceptance of his version of reality, in defiance of appearance: "What you will have it nam'd, even that it is, / And so it shall be so for Katherine."

The various deceptions in the Induction and the subplot seem to poke fun at social distinctions, suggesting that the difference between a servant and a master, or between a poor Latin teacher and a wealthy merchant's son, is merely a matter of appearance. This idea is echoed in the main plot by Petruchio when he appears at his wedding in rags and says of Katherina, "To me she's married, not unto my clothes," or when he tells Katherina not to worry about the way she is dressed because "'tis the mind that makes the body rich."

The theme of appearance and reality is also related to the play's treatment of gender roles. Some commentators maintain that Petruchio transforms Katherina by refusing to accept her appearance of shrewishness as reality. Instead, he sets up a sort of alternate reality, insisting that she is really lovable and obedient until she accepts his view of her identity. Other people argue, however, that the continual confusion of appearances and reality in the play undermines the concept of male dominance. They suggest that with so much deception going on in the play, the audience should be suspicious of taking Katherina's transformation at face value. Perhaps she is merely pretending to give in to Petruchio. Or perhaps-as other critics have maintained-male supremacy itself is shown to be merely an illusion.

Games and Role-Playing

Closely related to the theme of appearance versus reality is the play's emphasis on games and role-playing. It has been suggested that Petruchio treats social conventions-including the conventions governing relations between men and women-as a sort of game. The airy cynicism with which he discusses his search for a wife contrasts with both Lucentio's romanticism and Baptista's businesslike materialism. He treats the marriage ceremony itself as a joke, arriving late and poorly dressed, insulting the clergy, and forcing the bride to leave early. He seems to welcome Katherina's "shrewishness" as an interesting challenge, and compares his efforts to "tame" her to a sportsman's taming of a hawk. According to this view, Petruchio's strategy in "taming" Katherina is to convince her to Join in this game with him. This strategy seems particularly clear during the journey back to Padua in Act IV, when Katherina finally decides to go along WIth Petruchio's assertions contrary to fact and joins him in pretending that the aged Vincentio is a young woman. Katherina's final speech to the other wives *is* then seen as marking her agreement to play the role of obedient wife, secure in the knowledge that she and her husband both know this is merely a role.

Role-playing and play-acting also figure prominently in *The Taming* of *the Shrew.* The play-within-a-play structure emphasizes to the audience that what they are about to see is a performance-not reality, but someone's interpretation of reality. Many of the characters "become" actors in the play: Tranio plays the role of Lucentio, Lucentio poses as Cambio, Hortensio poses as Litio, and so on. Thus, for instance, a single actor might appear as one of the "players" in the Induction, as Tranio at the beginning of Act I, and later as Tranio-playing-Lucentio. Petruchio himself often seems to be playing an exaggerated role for Katherina's benefit. Recently, several critics have pointed out that Shakespeare also draws attention to the Elizabethan practice of using boys to play women's parts. This is especially true in the Induction, where the page Barthol'mew pretends to be Sly's wife.

Critics draw widely different conclusions from the play's emphasis on its own theatricality. Some suggest that it points up the extent to which the ability to lead a happy and productive life depends on one's ability to adapt to the roles one is required to play in society. Others argue that the play's treatment of role-playing undermines

social conventions-particularly those governing relationships between men and women-by suggesting that they are merely artificial "roles" that people feel obliged to accept.

Imagery

Of particular importance in *The Taming of the Shrew* is Shakespeare's use of animal and other types of imagery in portraying various characters' attitudes toward other characters, toward women in general, and toward marriage.

The play is especially rich in animal imagery, beginning with the traditional use of the word "shrew" to describe a willful and quarrelsome woman. When Katherina and Petruchio first meet, their rapid exchange of insults is rife with references to animals, as is the exchange of jests by the wedding guests in the final scene of the play. Dogs and horses figure prominently in the play, and several characters are compared to animals. In Act IV, Petruchio likens his handling of Katherina to the methods used in taming hawks.

In many cases, the use of animal imagery to describe a character is clearly demeaning, as when Gremio refers to Katherina as a "wild-cat" (I.ii.196), or Hortensio describes Bianca as a "proud disdainful haggard [untamed hawk)" (IV.ii.39). In other cases, the effect is more complex. While some critics see Petruchio's use of animal imagery in referring to Katherina as indicative of a desire to subdue and control her, others have argued that Petruchio's likening of Katherina to a falcon, for instance, reflects a recognition that a successful marriage requires two minds working in partnership.

Much of the play's animal Imagery is also part of the imagery 0 games and sport. Early in the Induction the Lord arrives from hunting, and subsequently hunting is used to typify both the pursuit of women by the play's various suitors, and the behavior of women toward each other.

Clothing and entertaining, particularly dining, also figure prominently in the play. Petruchio's strategy for subduing Katherina involves both his refusal to dress as expected when he arrives at their wedding poorly dressed, and his refusal to allow Katherina to purchase the clothes she wants. Clothing is also important to the various deceptions in the Induction and the subplot. At various points in the play, Katherina's exclusion from or participation in banquets or dinner parties becomes an issue. Petruchio prevents her from taking part in the banquet at her own wedding, and later allows her to Join him and Hortensio at dinner only after she has thanked him for providing food. Towards the end of the play he threatens to keep her from Bianca's wedding banquet unless Katherina kisses him in public. Finally, it is at that banquet that Katherina makes the public display of obedience that convinces the other guests that she has truly been "tamed."

Modern Connections

Modern audiences are typically troubled by two problems in *The Taming of the Shrew.* The first is the problem of Christopher Sly's disappearance. Shakespeare sets up an elaborate frame story for presenting *The Taming of the Shrew,* but, then, seems to abandon the frame story, that of Christopher Sly, at the end. As part of the trick the lord and his servants are playing on Sly, the latter is positioned to watch the inset play *(The Taming of the Shrew).* Sly watches for a while but then becomes disinterested and is not heard from again. The audience fully expects that the joke on Sly will be revealed to him when he is forced to assume, once again, his real identity. When Shakespeare's play fails to supply this closure, the audience is somewhat disappointed.

A play contemporary with Shakespeare's, *The Taming of a Shrew,* does provide this closure, Sly critically commenting on the action of the inset play throughout and resuming his normal life at the end. *The Taming of a Shrew* is thought, alternatively, to be a source for or an imitation of Shakespeare's play. It is also conjectured that *The Taming of a Shrew* might be a bad quarto version of Shakespeare's play or a play relying on the same source as *The Taming of the Shrew.* Regardless of the exact relationship of the two plays, the overriding questions are these: might Shakespeare have written Sly into the ending of the play, that ending becoming lost somehow in the printing process, or does Shakespeare intentionally eliminate Sly before the ending for some other purpose? Since Shakespeare's Christopher Sly, unlike his counterpart in *The Taming of a Shrew,* never expresses much interest in the play, it is likely that Shakespeare never intended to resolve the Sly frame story. The transformation of Sly back to himself is left to the imagination of the audience, and, in doing so, the audience might well imagine the transformation of the one character in the inset play who is not returned to her "true" self. That character is, of course, Kate.

Perhaps more troublesome to modern audiences is the question of Kate's true identity. As we might imagine, many who read *The Taming of the Shrew* are disturbed by Petruchio's harsh treatment of Kate. Although Petruchio usually seems less harsh on stage than he does in the stark black and white of print□on stage the actors playing Kate and Petruchio often convey an affection that many believe exists between the two characters□he still humiliates and starves her, forcing her to agree with whatever nonsense he chooses to utter. It is somewhat unsettling to see Kate, a feisty and outspoken woman, reduced to a shell of her former self at the play's end, a kind of puppet whose only intent is to please her husband. But why should we imagine that Kate has changed completely and irreversibly when all the other characters give up the disguises for which they are ill-suited and resume their real identities?

Lucentio adopts the disguise of Cambio, a schoolmaster, and Bianca falls in love with him, prompting Hortensio to give up his own disguise as the music teacher, Litio. Hortensio expresses his disgust with Bianca for being attracted to such a base fellow, scorning her that "leaves a gentleman, / And makes a god of such a cullion" (IV.ii. 19-20). Lucentio must abandon that disguise and display the true worth of his birth in order to be accepted by Bianca's father, Baptista. In V.ii.65-70, Vincentio calls attention to

Tranio's affected style of dress, absurd in that Vincentio knows him to be a servant of his son. The pedant, one who by definition is a stickler for petty detail, is patently inappropriate to play Vincentio, a father who should display love and concern for his son, emotions completely opposite to a pedant's passionless existence. Even Petruchio gives up his role of shrew tamer and resumes what the audience presumes to be his real identity of the witty, game-playing courtier. Yet, while each of these characters has only temporarily stepped outside of his natural and proper self, it seems as though by outward appearances that Kate changes completely, her outspoken, self-assertive nature lost and unrecoverable.

Modern interpretations of the play which argue against Kate's complete transformation do so believing that Elizabethan audiences would have applauded Petruchio's taming of Kate and his making of her something she is not by nature. Although it is true that Elizabethan audiences would have found the topic of silencing women in public more humorous than we tend to do nowadays, both Elizabethan and modern audiences might be expected to imagine a life after the play for both Sly and Kate. Perhaps Kate has not been tamed anymore than Sly has become a lord, Lucentio a schoolmaster, Tranio his master, or the pedant Lucentio's father, Vincentio. After all, if the men believe Petruchio when he overcomes Kate's early protests by saying "'Tis bargain'd 'twixt us twain, being alone, / That she shall still be curst in company" (II.i.304-05), why should the audience believe those same men when they celebrate Kate's display of the "properly" (by Elizabethan standards) subservient attitude at the end of the play? Kate might be deceiving them in the same way Petruchio has done.

The Taming of the Shrew may inspire modern readers to recall times when they, like many of the characters in the play, have taken on roles themselves, hiding their true identities, in order to achieve certain goals (romantic or otherwise). How often do people pretend to be something they aren't in order to get something they want, or think they want?

Overviews

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6
- Critical Essay #7
- Critical Essay #8
- Critical Essay #9
- Critical Essay #10
- Critical Essay #11
- Critical Essay #12
- Critical Essay #13
- Critical Essay #14
- Critical Essay #15
- Critical Essay #16

Critical Essay #1

Source: "'Kate of Kate Hall,'" in *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare,* Methuen, 1980, pp. 37-52.

[Nevo provides an overview of the action and structure of The Taming of the Shrew, *concentrating on the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio. Citing with approval Michael West's observation that Shakespeare's focus here is not "women's rights" but "sexual rites, " Nevo sees the playas a rollicking depiction of the battle between the sexes. Kate, she suggests, iS shown to be so fearful of not being loved, and so accustomed to being told she is unlovable, that she has come to behave as if it were true. Petruchio appears as a master psychologist whose "instructive" and "liberating" methods free Kate from her mistaken idea of her identity and enable her to find her true self. Rather than breaking Kate's spirit, Nevo argues, Petruchio uses his superior will and intelligence to convince Kate to enter into an alliance with him. For further commentary on the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio, see in particular the excerpts by H. J. Oliver in this section and in the section on Petruchio, the excerpts by George Hibbard, Coppelia Kahn, and Shirley Nelson Garner in the section on Gender, Robert Ornstein's excerpt on Katherine, and Ralph Berry's discussion in the section on Games and Role-Playing.]*

A more gentlemanly age than our own was embarrassed by *The Shrew.* G. B. Shaw announced it 'altogether disgusting to the modern sensibility'. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch of the New Shakespeare [1928], judged it primitive, somewhat brutal stuff and tiresome, if not positively offensive to any modern civilized man or modern woman, not an antiquary. . . . We do not and cannot, whether for better or worse, easily think of woman and her wedlock vow to obey quite in terms of a spaniel, a wife and a walnut tree-the more you whip 'em the better they be.

It will be noticed, however, that Q's access of gallantry causes him to overlook the fact that apart from the cuffings and beatings of saucy or clumsy *zanni* which is canonical in Italianate comedy, no one whips anyone in *The Taming of the Shrew,* violence being confined to Katherina who beats her sister Bianca, and slaps petruchio's face. Anne Barton [in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* 1974] has done much to restore a sense of proportion by quoting some of the punishments for term-agent wives which really were practised in Shakespeare's day. Petruchio comes across, she says, far less as an aggressive male out to bully a refractory wife into total submission, than he does as a man who genuinely prizes Katherina, and, by exploiting an age-old and basic antagonism between the sexes, manoeuvres her into an understanding of his nature and also her own.

Ralph Berry reads the play rather as a Berneian exercise in the Games People Play, whereby Kate learns the rules of Petruchio's marriage game, which she plays hyperbolically and with ironic amusement. 'This is a husband-wife team that has settled to its own satisfaction, the rules of its games, and now preaches them unctuously to friends.' [See Berry's excerpt in the section on Games and Role-Playing below.] In our

own day, the wheel, as is the way with wheels, has come full circle and the redoubtable feminist, Ms Germaine Greer, has found the relationship of Kate and Petruchio preferable to the subservient docility of that sexist projection, the goody-goody Bianca [in *The Female Eunuch,* 1970].

With all this fighting of the good fight behind us, we may approach the play with the unencumbered enjoyment it invites. As Michael West has excellently argued [in an article in *Shakespeare Studies,* 1974], 'criticism has generally misconstrued the issue of the play as women's rights, whereas what the audience delightedly responds to are sexual rites'. Nothing is more stimulating to the imagination than the tension of sexual conflict and sexual anticipation. Verbal smashing and stripping, verbal teasing and provoking and seducing are as exciting to the witnessing audience as to the characters enacting these moves. It is easy to see why *The Shrew* has always been a stage success, had so far from this being a point to be apologized for it should be seen as exhibiting Shakespeare's early command of farce as the radical of comic action, a mastery temporarily lost as he struggled to absorb more rarefied material in *The Two Gentlemen* and only later recovered. The mode, however, of the sexual battle in *The Shrew* is devious and indirect and refects a remarkably subtle psychology. Petruchio neither beats his Kate nor rapes her-two 'primitive and brutal' methods of taming termagant wives, but neither is his unusual courtship of his refractory bride simply an exhibition of cock-of-the-walk made dominance to which in the end Katherina is forced to submit. Michael West's emphasis upon wooing dances and the folklore of sexual conquest is salutory, but Petruchio's conquest of Kate is far from merely a 'kind of mating dance with appropriate struggling and biceps flexing'. Nor is she simply'' 'a healthy female animal who wants a male strong enough to protect her, deflower her, and sire vigorous offspring'.

Only a very clever, very discerning man could bring off a psychodrama so instructive, liberating and therapeutic as Petruchio's, on a honeymoon as sexless (as well as dinnerless) as could well be imagined. Not by sex is sex conquered, nor for that matter by the withholding of sex, though the play's tension spans these poles. Christopher Sly, one recalls, is also constrained to forgo his creature comforts, a stoic *malgre lui* [French: in spite of himself], and thereby a foil and foreshadower of the self-possessed Petruchio.

In the Induction, the page Bartholomew plays his part as Lady Sly to such effect that Sly pauses only to determine whether to call the lovely lady 'Alice madam, or Joan madam?' (Ind.ii.110) or plain 'madam wife' before demanding 'Madam, undress you, and come now to bed' (Ind.ii.117). Bartholomew must think fast, of course, and does: '[I] should yet absent me from your bed', he says, lest '[you] incur your former malady', and hopes that 'this reason stands for my excuse' (Ind.ii.124). Sly clearly has his own problems: 'Ay, it stands so that I may hardly tarry so long. But I would be loath to fall into my dreams again. I will therefore tarry in despite of the flesh and the blood' (Ind.ii.125-8). But Christopher Sly's 'former malady' is, of course, an imposed delusion: it is not as an amnesic lord that he is himself but as drunken tinker. Katherina's, we will finally learn to perceive, was self-imposed, and requires the therapies of comedy' which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life'-not the tumbling tricks of a 'Christmas gambold' for

its cure. This lower level functions as foil to the higher yardstick and guarantor of the latter's reality.

The play's formal *telos* [Greek: ultimate end] is to supply that which is manifestly lacking: a husband for the wild, intractable and shrewish daughter of Baptista. But how shall Katherina herself not perceive that this husband is sought in order to enable her younger sister to be happily married to one of *her* numerous suitors? The situation of inflamed and inflammatory sibling rivalry which the good signor Baptista has allowed to develop between these daughters of his is suggested with deft economy. Her very first words:

I pray you, sir, is it your will
To make a stale of me amongst these mates?
(I. i. 57-8)

speak hurt indignity, an exacerbated pride. Her response when Baptista fondles and cossets the martyred Bianca:

A pretty peat! it is best
Put finger in the eye, and she knew why.
(I. i. 78-9)

indicates her opinion that if Bianca is long suffering she is also extracting the maximum benefit and enjoyment from that state. Nothing that Baptista says or does but will be snatched up and interpreted disadvantageously by this irascible sensitivity:

Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not? What, shall I be appointed hours, as though (belike) I knew not what to take and what to leave? Ha!
(I. i. 102-4)

These first glimpses already invite us to infer some reason for the bad-tempered, headstrong, domestic tyranny Kate exercises, but when we find her beating her cowering sister, screaming at her for confidences about which of her suitors she most fancies, and turning on her father with

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.
(II. i. 31-6)

we surely do not require inordinate discernment to understand what ails Katherina Minola. It is a marvellous touch that the pious Bianca, defending herself from the wildcat elder sister (with no suitor), says:

Or what you will command me will I do
So well I know my duty to my elders.
(II. i. 6-7)

Bianca, it may be supposed, is not the only younger sister who has got her face scratched for a remark like that.

All of Padua, we are given to understand, is taken up with the problem of finding someone to take his devilish daughter off Baptista's hands, leaving the field free for the suitors of the heavenly Bianca. And this is precisely a trap in which Kate is caught. She has become nothing but an obstacle or a means to her sister's advancement. Even the husband they seek for her is in reality for the sister's sake, not hers. When she says: 'I will never marry' it is surely because she believes no 'real' husband of her own, who loves her for herself, whom she can trust, is possible. How indeed could it be otherwise since patently and manifestly no one does love her? Because (or therefore) she is not lovable. And the more unlovable she is the more she proves her point. Katherina of Acts I and it is a masterly and familiar portrait. No one about her can do right in her eyes, so great is her envy and suspicion. No one can penetrate her defenses, so great her need for assurance. So determined is she to make herself invulnerable that she makes herself insufferable, and finds in insufferability her one defence. This is a 'knot of errors' of formidable proportions and will require no less than Petruchio's shock tactics for its undoing.

The undoing begins with the arrival of Petruchio, to live it wealthily in Padua. No doubts are entertained in Padua about the benefits of marriage where money is, but it will be noted that no one is banking on a rich marriage to save him from the bankruptcy courts. All the suitors are wealthy; Lucentio, potentially at least. The contrast that Shakespeare sets up between Petruchio and Lucentio is an interesting ironic inversion of that obtaining in the Terentian tradition. In Terence the second (liaison) plot entailed tricky stratagems for acquiring money in order to buy (and keep) the slave girl. The main (marriage) plot on the other hand hinged upon the fortunate discovery of a true identity, which meant both legitimizing the affair and acquiring the dowry. Here, in the case of Bianca and Lucentio the mercenary mechanics of match-making are masked by Petrarchan ardours on Lucentio's part (or Hortensio's, until the appearance of the widow):

Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,
. . . let me be a slave, t' achieve that maid
Whose sudden sight hath thrall'd my
wounded eye.
(I. 1. 155; 219-20)

and by angelic docility on Bianca's part; while Petruchio's affairs are deromanticized by the unabashed, unmasked worldliness of his motivation:

I come to live it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
(I. ii. 75-6)

and the formidable temper of Kate.

To Petruchio's incontinent and precipitate request to draw up the 'covenant' between them, Baptista demurs:

Ay, when the special thing is well obtain'd,
That is, her love; for that is all in all.
(II. i. 128-9)

and the reply is unequivocal:

Why, that is nothing; for I tell you, father, I am as peremptory as she proud-minded; And where two raging fires meet together,
They do consume the thing that feeds their fury.
Though little fire grows great with little wind, yet extreme gusts will blowout fire and all;
So I to her, and so she Yields to me,
For I am rough, and woo not like a babe.
(II. i. 130-7)

And again: 'For I will board her, though she chide as loud / As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack' (I. ii. 95-6). Final recognitions will reverse these evaluations: the nakedly mercenary relationship will prove itself productive of affection and of spirit as well as sheer animal spirits; the romantic will prove hollow, its Petrarchanism a mere mask.

In *The Shrew,* Shakespeare's characteristic handling of multiple levels is already to be discerned. The main protagonists are the agents of the higher recognitions, the middle groups function as screens on which are projected distorted mirror images of the main couples-images in a concave mirror; while the lower orders ridicule the middle by the parody of imitation, and act as foils for the higher by providing a measure of qualitative difference.

Though *The Shrew* fads to integrate Christopher Sly satisfactorily and indeed abandons him altogether after Act I, such a function for him, as I have already indicated, is adumbrated. Shakespeare, It seems, felt more comfortable with the playlet-within-the-play of *Love's Labour's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for his clowns, or WIth the parenthetic internal comment of a cunning and a foolish servant combination like Grumio/Tranio or Launce/Speed than with the clown-frame, to which he does not return. But the flurry of disguisings and contrivings, 'supposes' and role-playings in Baptista's middle-class household, resolved finally by nothing more complex than natural selection and substantial bank balances, do set off admirably the subtler, more complex and interiorized transformations of the Petruchio-Katherina relationship.

Petruchio's first speech in reply to Katherina's haughty insistence on her full name, is richly expressive:

You lie, in faith, for you are call'd plain
Kate,
And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the
curst;
But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom,
Kate of Kate-Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all Kates, and therefore,
Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation
Hearing thy mildness prais'd in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty
sounded,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am mov'd to woo thee for my wife.
(II. i. 185-94)

Ironic, mocking, amused and appreciative, it invites us to infer a certain relief, to say the least. Though he has stoutly affirmed his priorities:

Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,
As old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrowd
As Socrates' Xantippe, or a worse. . .
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
(I. ii. 69-71; 75-6)

the spirited, bonny dark lass Baptista's terrible daughter turns out to be cannot but cause him a lift of the heart. She, for her part, does not of course respond immediately to his good-humoured teasing, but we may surely assume a certain vibration to be caused by this note of a tenderness which her obsessive fear of not finding has consistently put out of court. But she has built up sturdy bastions and will certainly not imitate her conciliatory sister. Combat is her chosen defence, and that these two are worthy opponents the set of wit which follows shows. Then comes the cut and thrust of the clash between her proud-mindedness and his peremptoriness. She misses no ploy, is outrageously provocative and brazenly impolite, verbally and even physically violent. He trips her up with a bawdy pun, she dares him to return a slapped face, and it is by no means certain to anyone that he will not. His strategy of mock denial:

'Twas told me you were rough and coy and
sullen, And now I find report a very liar; For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous...
(II. *i.* 243-5)
contains an infuriating sting in its tail:
But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time

flowers.
(II. i. 246)

so that she is criticized for being what she most prides herself on not being, and consoled by being told she is what she most despises. Again:

Why does the world report that Kate doth
limp?
O sland'rous world! Kate like the hazel-tWig Is straight and slender, and as brown in hue
As hazel nuts, and sweeter than the kernels.
O, let me see thee walk. Thou dost not halt.
(II. i. 252-6)

And poor Kate must be beholden to him for patronizing defence against the alleged detractions of a despised world, and finds herself judiciously examined for faults much as if she were a thoroughbred mare at a fair. It is no wonder that in reply to his

Father, 'tis thus: yourself and all the world, That talk'd of her, have talk'd amiss of her. If she be curst, it is for policy,
For she's not froward, but modest as the
dove;
She is not hot, but temperate as the morn; For patience she will prove a second Grissel,
And Roman Lucrece for her chastity;
And to conclude, we have 'greed so well
together
That upon Sunday is the wedding-day.
(II. i. 290-8)

she can only splutter 'I'll see thee hanged on Sunday first'; a response which is immediately interpreted by Petruchio, for the benefit of the spectators, as a secret bargain between lovers:

'Tis bargain'd 'twixt us twain, being alone,
That she shall still be curst in company.
I tell you 'tis incredible to believe
How much she loves me. 0, the kindest
Kate,
She hung about my neck, and kiss on kiss
She vied so fast, protesting oath on oath,
That in a tWink she won me to her love.
O, you are novices! 'tis a world to see
How tame, when men and women are alone,
A meacock wretch can make the curstest

shrew.
(II. i. 304-13)

Round one thus ends indeed with 'we will be married a 'Sunday'.

Sunday, however, brings not the marriage that has been prepared for in the Minola household, but a mummer's carnival. Petruchio arrives inordinately late, and in motley. Of the uproar he produces in the church we hear from Gremio, in a lively description containing the shape of things to come:

Tut, she's a lamb, a dove, a fool to him! I'll tell you, Sir Lucentio: when the priest should
ask if Katherine should be his wife, 'Ay, by gogs-wouns,' quoth he, and swore so loud
That all amaz'd the priest let fall the book, and as he stoop'd again to take it up,
This mad-brain'd bridegroom took him such a cuff
That down fell priest and book, and book
and priest.
'Now take them up,' quoth he, 'if any list.'
Tranio What said the wench when he rose
again?
Gremio Trembled and shook; for why, he
stamp'd and swore
As if the vicar meant to cozen him.
But after many ceremonies done,
He calls for wine. 'A healthl' quoth he, as if
He had been aboard, carousing to his mates
After a storm, quaff'd off the muscadel,
And threw the sops all in the sexton's face. . .
This done, he took the bride about the neck,
And kiss'd her lips with such a clamorous
smack
That at the parting all the church did echo.
(III. ii. 157-73; 177-9)

All of this is prologue to the first open clash of wills between these fiery newly-weds. He will instantly

away, she 'will not be gone till I please myself':
The door is open, sir, there lies your way;
You may be Jogging whiles your boots are
green.
(III. ii. 210-11)
Father, be quiet, he shall stay my leisure.
Gentlemen, forward to the bridal dinner. I see a woman may be made a fool,
If she had not a spirit to resist.
(III. ii. 217; 219.21)

This is Petruchio's cue:

They shall go forward, Kate, at thy
command.
Obey the bride, you that attend on her.
But for my bonny Kate, she must with me. Nay, look not big, nor stamp, nor stare, nor fret,
I will be master of what is mine own.
She is my goods, my chattels, she is my
house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing;
And here she stands, touch her whoever
dare,
I'll bring mine action on the proudest he That stops my way in Padua. Grumio,
Draw forth thy weapon, we are beset with
thieves;
Rescue thy mistress if thou be a man.
Fear not, sweet wench, they shall not touch
thee, Kate!
I'll buckler thee against a million.
(III. ii. 222-3; 227-39)

And he snatches her off, sublimely indifferent to anything she says, insisting upon his property rights, benignly protective, mind you, of his bonny Kate, turning all her protests to his own purposes and depriving her of any shred of self-justification by his indignant defence of her.

Stage-manager and chief actor, master of homeopathy-'He kills her in his own humour' as Peter says

Petruchio's play-acting, his comic therapy, provides the comic device. One of a long line of Shakespearean actor-protagonists he holds the mirror up to nature, and shows scorn her own image. The tantrums that she has specialized in throwing he throws in super-abundance, forcing her to see herself in the mirror he thus holds up.

Grumio's tale of the saga of the journey:

. . . hadst thou not cross'd me, thou shouldst have heard how her horse fell, and she under her horse; thou shou!dst have heard in how miry a place, how she was bemoil'd, how he left her with the horse upon her, how he beat me because her horse stumbled, how she waded through the din to pluck him off me; how he swore, how she pray'd that never pray'd before; how I cried, how the horses ran way, how her bridle was burst; how I lost my crupper, with many things of worthy memory, which now shall die in oblivion, and thou return unexperienc'd to thy grave.
(IV. i. 72-84)

prepares for the continuing hubbub in the Petruchean dining-hall. That Petruchio's strategy has the additional advantage of an austerity regime as far as food and sleep

and 'fine array' is concerned is all to the good. Petruchio is canny and will leave no stone unturned. Also, he has tamed hawks. But it is not physical hardship which will break Kate's spirit, nor does he wish it, any more than a spirited man would wish his horse or his hound spiritless. And Petruchio, we recall, wagers twenty times as much upon his wife as he would upon his hawk or his hound. Significantly, Kate's recurrent response to his carry ing on is to fly to the defence of the cuffed and chivvied servants. Crossing her will, totally and consistently, under the guide of nothing but consideration for her desires, confuses and disorients her, as she complains to Grumio:

What, did he marry me to famish me? Beggars that come unto my father's door
Upon entreaty have a present alms,
If not, elsewhere they meet with charity; But I, who never knew how to entreat,
Nor never needed that i should entreat,
Am starv'd for meat, giddy for lack of sleep,
With oaths kept waking, and with brawling
fed;
And that which spites me more than all
these wants,
He does it under the name of perfect love;
(IV. iii. 3-12)

Katherine gets the point, but fails to get from Grumio even one of the mouth-watering items from a hearty English menu with which he tantalizes her. When she, listening hungrily to Petruchio's 'sermon of continency', and knowing not 'which way to stand, to look, to speak,' is 'as one new-risen from a dream', she might well rub her eyes and say, with Christopher Sly, . . . 'do I dream? Or have I dream'd till now?' (Ind. ii. 69).

What subtle Dr Petruchio has done is to drive a wedge into the steel plating of Kate's protective armour, so that he speaks at once to the self she has been and the self she would like to be; the self she has made of herself and the self she has hidden. The exchange of roles, with herself now at the receiving end of someone else's furies, takes her, as we say, out of herself; but she also perceives the method of his madnesses. Petruchio's remedy is an appeal to Kate's intelligence. These are not arbitrary brutalities, but the clearest of messages. And they are directed to her with undivided singleness of purpose.

In Act IV the remedy comes to fruition and Kate enunciates it:

Then God be blest, it [is] the blessed sun,
But sun it is not, when you say it is not;
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it nam'd, even that it is,
And so it shall be so for Katherine.
(IV. v. 18-22)

And then it is enacted, with considerable verve, as she addresses Vincentio, on cue from Petruchio, as 'young budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet' and then promptly

again, on cue, undoes all. Kate has yielded to a will stronger than her own and to an intelligence which has outmanoeuvred her, but the paradoxical, energizing and enlivening effect of the scene is that the laughter is directed not against her as butt or victim, but, through her prim performance, towards the disconcerted Vincentio. The *senex* [Latin: old man] is made fun of, in effect, by a pair of tricksters in some subtle alliance with each other not clear to him, but clear to the audience. Partly this response is structured by New Comedy paradigms. As Grumio puts it in Act I: 'Here's no knavery! See, to beguile the old folks, how the young folks lay their heads together!' (I. ii. 138-9). But mainly I believe it is due to our sense of liberation from deadlock. Petruchio has enlisted Kate's will and wit on his side, not broken them, and it is the function of the final festive test to confirm and exhibit this. It is also to be noted that the arrival in Padua of Vincentio 'exhausts' Lucentio's wooing devices, just as Petruchio's taming device exhausts its function; and it is a dexterous turn of composition which balances the mock non-recognition of Vincentio on the way to Padua, and his encounter with his Mantuan proxy, with the unmasking and recognition of the true Katherina, and the true Bianca, at the banquet.

That Kate is in love by Act V, is, I believe, what the play invites us to perceive. And indeed she may well be. The man she has married has humour and high spirits, intuition, patience, self-command and masterly intelligence; and there is more than merely a homily for Elizabethan wives in her famous speech:

A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled, Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty,
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty Will deign to slip, or touch one drop of it. Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for
thee,
And for thy maintenance; commits his body To painful labor, both by sea and land;
To watch the night in storms, the day in
cold,
While thou li'st warm at home, secure and
safe;
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks, and true obedience
Too little payment for so great a debt.
(V. ii. 142-54)

She wins her husband's wager but the speech bespeaks a generosity of spirit beyond the call of two hundred crowns. We have just heard Bianca snap at Lucentio mourning his lost bet: 'The more fool you for laying on my duty', and it seems that the metamorphosis of folly into wisdom which the comic action performs makes an Erastian reversal. More fool the Paduans indeed, in their exploitative hypocrisies and meannesses, than this madcap pair. . . .

Critical Essay #2

Source: An introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew,* Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1982, pp. 1-75.

[Oliver suggests that understanding The Taming of the Shrew *is made difficult by a contradiction between the genre of the play and Shakespeare's development of Katherina's character. The play, he points out, is a farce, and a farce can succeed only when the characters are* so *flat and unrealistic that the audience does not feel obliged to take them seriously. Oliver suggests that in creating the character of Katherina, Shakespeare could not resist the temptation to investigate what might make a woman a shrew. Because Katherina is a realistic and sympathetic character, Oliver argues, the audience cannot but feel uncomfortable with Petruchio's treatment of her. Oliver's view of the play contrasts with that of Nevo, above. For further commentary, see in particular the excerpts by George Hibbard, Coppelia Kahn, and Shirley Nelson Gamer in the section on Gender Roles, Robert Ornstein's excerpt on Katherina, Oliver's own comments in the section on Petruchio, and Ralph Berry's discussion in the section on Games and Role-Playing.]*

Literary tradition perhaps prepared Shakespeare's audience, going to *The Taming of the Shrew,* to expect a farce; the Induction certainly did not invite them to become deeply involved with the characters of the inset play; the very costume worn by the boy playing Katherine may have identified her as nothing but a shrew: in short, there may have been as much likelihood of the audience's sympathizing with Katherine, when she first appeared on the stage, as there is of a twentieth-century music-hall audience's feeling sorry for a mother-in-law. The very first words addressed to Kate also take It for granted that she has no humanity: Gremio's reply to Baptista's invitation to court his elder daughter is 'To cart her rather. She's too rough for me'-which virtually calls Kate to her face a prostitute; Hortensio classes her among 'devils'; Tranio can believe only that she is 'stark mad, or wonderful froward'; Gremio brands her a 'fiend of hell'. Yet already a modern audience, at any rate, has made a mental reservation. Kate's own first words, to her father, 'I pray you, sir, is it your will / To make a stale of me amongst these mates' -with their resentment at Gremio's insult and their feeling that a father might well resent it too-seem reasonable enough and, what is more, deserving of sympathy.

That, in brief, is the main problem in understanding or interpreting the play. It is as if Shakespeare set out to write a farce about taming a shrew but had hardly begun before he asked himself what might make a woman shrewish anyway-and found his first answer in her home background. Just as, later, his portraits of Capulet, Lady Capulet, and the Nurse were to serve to arouse pity for the young Juliet, tragically thrown back on her own resources, so here the sketches of the spoilt younger daughter and of the father lacking in discernment (but perhaps not in good will one may agree with R. B. Heilman that Baptista is not the villain of the piece) help the audience to understand what Baptista does not-and *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.* We sympathize with Katherine-and as soon as we do, farce becomes impossible. . . .

[In] *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare] was dramatizing material from unrealistic literature that was perfectly acceptable on the level of the Punch and Judy show but ran the risk of embarrassing as soon as it rose above that level. We may laugh at Punch's hitting Judy on the head in the puppet play but it is not so easy to laugh at Petruchio's taming of Katherine. As M. R. Ridley put it [in *William Shakespeare. A Commentary,* 1936] if it were all farce 'our subtler feelings would lie contentedly quiescent. . .. But Shakespeare, being Shakespeare, cannot restrain his hand from making Petruchio more of a man, and Katharine more of a woman, than from the artistic point of view was wise; and so Petruchio's bullying of Katharine, funny though it would be if they were mere manonettes, and effective and indeed salutary though it is in its results, leaves a slightly unpleasant taste in the mouth. It is not necessary to agree with this in detail-for example, about Petruchio-in order to agree with it in general. In other words, Shakespeare was already too good a dramatist for the material he was dramatizing: characterization and farce are, finally, incompatible.

Finding itself in this dilemma, the average audience seems to decide to get as much enjoyment as it can from the farce-trying, as it were, to keep its sympathy with Katherine in a state of suspense (paradoxically, a suspension of belief, in the interests of enjoying what is not to be believed). And on the level of farce, *The Taming of the Shrew* is, generally, superb; and in so far as one can put sympathy aside and watch the taming of Kate as one might watch the taming of a falcon or wild beast (although even that presents problems to an audience more sensitive than Shakespeare's to cruelty to animals), one can 'enjoy' Petruchio.

Critical Essay #3

Source: An introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew,* by William Shakespeare, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 1-41.

In a review of the stage history of The Taming of the Shrew, *Thompson suggests that the play has always "been disturbing as well as enjoyable" and that its "'barbaric and disgusting' quality has always been an important part of its appeal." Until the middle of the nineteenth century, she points out, the play was almost always produced with considerable modifications to Shakespeare's text. Many of the changes increased the roughness oj Petruchio's behavior, while others, often in the same version, "softened" the play, making it explicit that Katherina is in love with Petruchio and that Petruchio's domineering behavior is only a ploy. More recently, as women's rights have become an issue, directors have tended to give their productions an ironic tone. Usually this is done by making it appear that Katherina's submission is not to be taken seriously, although sometimes productions* go *to the other extreme and imply that Katherina has been brainwashed. Thompson concludes that contemporary social and political attitudes will continue to color productions of the play.]*

When the Royal Shakespeare Company staged *The Shrew* in Stratford in 1978, Michael Billington, reviewing the production in *The Guardian* on 5 May, was very anxious to let his readers know that, although he had found the evening theatrically successful in many ways, he had not enjoyed himself at all. He had in fact found the experience so distasteful that he ended by advocating censorship, questioning 'whether there is any reason to revive a play that seems totally offensive to our age and our society' and recommending that 'it should be put back firmly and squarely on the shelf'. Nevertheless he praised the director, Michael Bogdanov, for the honesty of his approach to this 'barbaric and disgusting' play: 'Instead of softening its harsh edges like most recent directors, he has chosen to emphasize its moral and physical ugliness.' This 'ugliness' is particularly apparent to modern audiences, especially when, as on this occasion, the play is performed in modern dress, but the stage history of the play shows that its 'barbaric and disgusting' quality has always been an important part of its appeal and that from the very beginning it has been disturbing as well as enjoyable. In what follows, given the limitations of space, I intend to concentrate on this problem and to examine how adapters and directors have dealt with it. This inevitably involves a stress on the taming plot to the exclusion of the rest of the play, but such an imbalance is not inappropriate since the Induction and the sub-plot were entirely banished from the stage for a hundred years while Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio* was preferred; even now when they are performed they are often Ignored by reviewers, whereas the crises of the taming plot, especially the wooing scene (2.1) and the last scene, are usually described in detail. . . .

Alone among Shakespeare's plays, *The Shrew* provoked a theatrical 'reply' in his lifetime in the form of Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed,* written and performed around 1611, a sequel in which Petruchio, now a widower, marries again and is himself tamed by his second wife. In writing this sequel Fletcher was in effect putting

the play into its traditional context of the war of the sexes, a context in which normally, as in the stones of Boccaccio and Chaucer, a story about a husband outwitting or triumphing over his wife is capped or balanced by one in which a wife outwits her husband, the overall moral being that, despite a theoretical and practical male supremacy, the best marriages are those based on equality and mutual respect, as Fletcher claims in his epilogue:

The Tamer's tam'd, but so, as nor the men
Can find one just cause to complain of,
When
They fitly do consider in their lives,
They should not reign as tyrants o'er their
wives.
Nor can the Women from this president Insult, or triumph; it being aptly meant, to teach both Sexes due equality;
And as they stand bound, to love mutually.

If played straight, with a minimum of interpretative direction, Shakespeare's play contains no such indication of a comfortable, egalitarian compromise but rather leaves its audience with the impression that a woman's role consists in graceful submission. Perhaps this is one reason why, despite a long and vigorous stage tradition, it has probably been played straight less often than any other play in the canon. From *The Taming of a Shrew* in 1594 up to the 'free adaption' made by Charles Marowitz in 1975 it has been constantly altered and adapted. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the adaptations involved drastic cutting and wholesale rewriting, whereas in more recent times the overt meaning of the text has been undercut or contradicted by details of performance and stage business-what Michael Bil1ington calls 'softening the edges'.

Of course, the adaptation has not all been in one direction. Many version have actually played up the brutality, a tradition which began as early as *A Shrew* with its stage direction *Enter Ferando [petruchio] with a peece of meate uppon his daggers point* in the equiva lent of 4.3, where the author apparently draws on Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (Part 1, 4.4) to emphasise the savagery. In the late seventeenth century, John Lacey's *Sauny the Scott, or The Taming of the Shrew* (c. 1667), which supplanted Shakespeare's text on stage until it was replaced in 1754 by David Garrick's version called *Catharine and Petruchio,* inserts an additional scene in which the husband pretends to think that his wife's refusal to speak to him is due to toothache and sends for a surgeon to have her teeth drawn. This episode is repeated with relish in the eighteenth century in James Worsdale's adaptation, *A Cure for a Scold* (1735). In Garrick's version, which held the stage until the mid nineteenth century, we find an O1ninous addition to the dialogue when one of Petruchio's servants says his master 'shook his Whip in Token of his Love' (p. 24). When John Philip Kemble performed Garrick's text in 1788 he wrote the words 'whip for Petruchio' opposite the hero's entrance in the wedding scene, and it is possible that Garrick also used a whip from this point. At all events it became an almost obligatory stage property for countless subsequent productions.

Curiously, we find that this exaggeration of the play's brutality is often being done at the same time as an attempt is made to soften it, illustrating the thoroughly ambiguous appeal of the whole business. The role of Katherina is constantly adjusted: she is given more motivation for her behavior in accepting Petruchio in the first place, and her major speech in the last scene is cut, rewritten or apologised for. Even *A Shrew* motivates her somewhat clumsily by giving her an aside in the wooing scene:

she turnes aside and speakes
But yet I will consent and marrie him,
For I methinkes have livde too long a maid,
And match him too, or else his manhoods
good.
(scene v, 40-2)

Thus it is made explicit that (a) Katherina can see some positive advantage in marrying Petruchio, and (b) she is going to relish competing with him. It is interesting that Garrick's additions to this scene are very similar: his Catharine also has an aside in the midst of the insults:

A Plague upon his Impudence! I'm vexed
I'll marry my Revenge, but I will tame him.
(p. 14)

Then at the end of the scene she confirms this hint of a reversal of roles and adds further motivation in her closing soliloquy:

Sister *Blanca* now shall see
The poor abandon'd *Cath'rine,* as she calls
me,
Can hold her Head as high, and be as proud,
And make her Husband stoop unto her Lure,
As she, or e'er a Wife in *Padua.*
As double as my Portion be my Scorn;
Look to your Seat, *Petruchio,* or I throw you. *Cath'rine* shall tame this Haggard;-or if she fails,
Shall tye her Tongue up, and pare down her
Nails.
(pp. 16-17)

What Garrick has done here is to transfer some of Petruchio's taming rhetoric ('stoop unto her Lure', 'tame this Haggard') to Catharine in an attempt to redress the balance between them. . . .

Garrick's treatment of the heroine's big speech is also interesting. Catharine speaks the first nineteen lines of the speech (as written by Shakespeare) with a few brief interruptions from Petruchio ('Why, well said *Kate')* and Bianca ('Sister, be quiet-'), but then Petruchio makes his own

Kiss me, my Kate; and since thou art become So prudent, kind, and dutiful a Wife, *Petruchio* here shall doff the lordly Husband; An honest Mask, which I throw off with Pleasure.
Far hence all Rudeness, Willfulness, and
Noise, And be our future Lives one gentle Stream Of mutual Love, Compliance and Regard.
(p. 56)

Finally, Petruchio *'Goes forward with* Catharine *in his Hand* ' and delivers the next section of her speech himself (Shakespeare's 5.2.155-64), ending the play on the statement that women are 'bound to love, to honour and obey', significantly altered from Shakespeare's 'bound to serve, love and obey'. When Kemble played Garrick's text he restored these lines to Catharine, but the general effect either way was that the playas staged made a gesture towards an ethic of balance or equality between the sexes which is simply not present in the original text.

Garrick's version (which omits the Induction altogether and disposes of the sub-plot by presenting Bianca as one 'new-married to *Hortensio'* at the beginning) proved so popular that the full text had to wait for performance until 1844, in England and 1887 in the United States. It was in fact the last of Shakespeare's plays to be restored to the stage in its original form when J. R. Planche produced it in an Elizabethan style for Benjamin Webster at the Haymarket Theatre, London, in 1844. It is interesting that when Augustin Daly did stage the original play in New YorK in 1887, despite much publicity about the fullness and purity of the text, his two major alterations (apart from some cutting and considerable rearrangement) were in the wooing scene and the last scene. In both cases he followed Garrick, inserting Katherina's threat to tame Petruchio in 2.1 and Petruchio's promise to 'doff the lordly Husband' in 5.2. He cut Katherina's speech as Garrick had done and he ended the play on the same line, though Katherina spoke it, as she had done in Kemble's production.

Since the late nineteenth century the movement for the liberation of women has done for *The Shrew* what reaction to the anti-semitism of our time has done for *The Merchant of Venice:* turned it into a problem play. It is no longer fashionable to rewrite the text or interpolate lines, so modern directors and reviewers have had to grapple with the 'barbaric' original delivered more or less as it stands. (Film directors, however, have allowed themselves more liberty with the text: Sam Taylor's 1929 film uses Garrick's version and Franco Zeffirelli's 1966 one modernises freely and adds some new dialogue.) As in earlier centuries, the tone of the play has proved to be difficult, and the last scene in particular has become something of a touchstone for the liberal (or otherwise) sympathies of all concerned Since at least 1897, when George Bernard Shaw wrote

No man with any decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without being extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman's own mouth.

Several directors have tried to overcome the problem by insisting on a jolly, farcical atmosphere throughout, but Katherina's final speech is simply too long and too serious to be buried under a welter of comic stage business, and has even been thrown uncomfortably into relief by such attempts. This apparently happened when Edith Evans played Katherina in 1937 and again when Peggy Ashcroft played her in 1960. When performed relatively seriously the play has inevitably provoked topical references, especially in the 1920s and 30s and again in the 1970s and 80s. When Eileen Beldon played Katherina in modern dress in 1928, for example, she is said to have delivered her speech with 'a beautiful sincerity', but one reviewer was moved to comment

It was, I thought, a severe criticism of the modern dressing that while one was listening to the lady announcing her shame, one's mind instantly reverted to the proposal that the word 'obey' should be abolished from the Marriage Service.

When Sybil Thorndike gave a similarly 'sincere' performance in 1927, *The Stage* commented on her 'air of conviction' in the last scene which would obviously not commend itself to the out-and-out feminists of the Women's Federation League or the generality of the shingled and Eton-cropped sisterhood.

And one mid-1930s reviewer came up with an interesting explanation for the great popularity of the play in the years immediately preceding the First World War:

That *The Taming* was presented [at Stratford] for eight years in succession from 1909 onwards may perhaps be accounted for in some measure as being clue to the activities of the vote-hungry viragoes who from 1910 to the eve of the War were breaking windows, setting fire to churches, chaining themselves to railings, and generally demonstrating their fitness to be endowed with Parliamentary responsibility. Katherina's 'purple patch' concerning the duty of women. . . was a smashing rejoinder to the militant Furies who were making fools of themselves in the ways indicated.

A different kind of topical reference was evoked in 1939 when the *Glasgow Herald's* reviewer commented on Wolfit's production, 'If the whip and starvation business has a distasteful touch, it has also the saving grace of being applied with an un-Nazi sense of fun.' The play seems to have been 'saved' by a sense of fun rather frequently in the 1970s, as for example in 1973 when, despite a serious programme note by the well-known feminist Germaine Greer, most critics found Clifford Williams's production farcical and jolly, and one newspaper headlined its review 'And never a whisper of Women's Lib'.

As in earlier centuries, the play is still 'softened' by careful, but by now more subtle, adjustments in the wooing scene and the last scene. Twentieth-century actresses restricted to the authentic text in the wooing scene have often motivated Katherina by making It abundantly obvious that she falls in love with Petruchio at first sight. Sometimes, however, it has been difficult for reviewers to agree on whether this happened or not. Janet Suzman's 1967 performance, for example, was apparently ambiguous in this scene, with some reviewers convinced that she was attracted to Petruchio from the beginning but others claiming that love blossomed out of initial

antipathy. *If* Kate does fall in love in the wooing scene (2.1), the director and actress can achieve the same effect as earlier generations achieved by interpolating lines; it may undermine the tension of the next two acts but It helps to make the taming process more tolerable for the audience. At the same time, it has often seemed necessary for Katherina to undercut her speech in the last scene in some way. When Mary Pickford played the part in the 1929 film version of the play (the first sound film of any of Shakespeare's plays) we are told that 'the spirit of Katherina's famous advice to wives was contradicted with an expressive wink', beginning (apparently) a new tradition of ironic or ambiguous performances. These could be executed with varying degrees of good humour: when Sian Phillips played the role in 1960 'her delivery of the concluding sermon on how good wives should submit to their husbands was made with tongue slightly in cheek', a limited qualification of a basically generous submission, but when Joan Plowright played it in 1972 one reviewer commented

I certainly didn't believe a word of it [the final speech] when uttered by Joan Plowright with a slightly sarcastic inflection to her voice which undermines totally any possible virtue the entire exercise might have had-that the two in the end find real love and understanding.

The nadir of bitterness and resentment was perhaps reached in Paola Dionisotti's performance in 1978:

Kate's famous speech. . . is delivered in a spiritless, unreal voice and received without much appreciation by the men, and with smouldering resentment by the women. The main feeling is of shame-and that the systematic deformation of Kate's character (the deformIty of submission on top of spite) is being revenged in the weariness and boredom of the men. When Petruchio says 'we'll to bed' it sounds as if they have been married for years. It is an interesting and courageous (not to say feminist) way to interpret the play.

This was another time when the critics disagreed. Michael Billington wrote that Dionisotti delivered the speech 'with a tart, stabbing irony' *(The Guardian,* 5 May 1978), but I saw this production three times myself and agree with the *TLS* reviewer, Lorna Sage, that the tone was 'spiritless' and 'unreal'. Many reviewers felt on this occasion that it might have been more logical not to .present Shakespeare's text at all (one review was headlined 'The Shaming of the True'), but to put on an adaptation such as that of Charles Marowitz (1975), in which the text is cut, rearranged and interspersed with scenes from a modern courtship in order to transform it into a treatise on sadism and brainwashing. In this version Petruchio drives Katherina mad and finally rapes her. She enters in the last scene wearing 'a shapeless institutional-like garment' and delivers her speech 'mechanically' and as if she has 'learnt it by rote'.

Of course not all modem Katherinas have been bitter, but it has often seemed the case that a straightforward and apparently sincere delivery of the final speech has provoked as much topical thoughtfulness in reviewers (and presumably audiences) as the more subversive mode. Barbara Jefford apparently 'comes as near as any Katherina ever will to making the final abject speech of the changed shrew sound plausible', while Jane

Lapotaire 'gives the speech full value, touches us deeply, and leaves us to sort out our feelings about women's lib as best we may'. Vanessa Redgrave's performance seems to have been a complex one, enabling one reviewer to remark

The delicious touch of irony which she adds to this speech amplifies the suggestion that she submits to Petruchio, not because woman must submit to man as her natural master, but because she loves him.

Another critic thought, however, that 'she shows us a woman discovering that the delivery of a grovelling and submissive speech can actually give her a special new sensual kick'. Obviously the interpretation of this speech can lie as much in the mind of the reviewer as in the intention of the director or the performance of the actress.

Thus throughout its stage history *The Taming of the Shrew* has probably received fewer completely straight performances than any other Shakespearean play of comparable popularity on the stage. The apparently unrelieved ethic of male supremacy has proved unpalatable, and generation after generation of produc ers and directors have altered and adapted the text in more or less flagrant ways in order to soften the ending. Of course, responses to the play are bound to be affected by the status of women in society at any given time and by the way that status is perceived by both men and women. Reading through the reviews, one sees the playacting as a kind of litmus paper, picking up worried and embarrassed reactions from men who were probably just as committed to male supremacy as they take the play's hero to be but whose methods of oppressing their women were less obvious and more socially acceptable. Productions of the play have frequently attracted whatever thoughts were in the air on the perennially topical subjects of violence and sexual politics, and this tendency can hardly fail to increase in our own time. The play may indeed become less popular on the stage than it has been in previous centuries as it becomes, rightly, more and more difficult to put on productions of it which are simply rollicking good fun.

Critical Essay #4

Since Katherina's shrewish behavior constitutes the central problem of the play, it is not surprising that most critical commentary on *The Taming of the Shrew* deals to some extent with its vision of the relative roles of men and women. Until well into the nineteenth century, audiences and critics alike seem to have accepted at face value what appears to be the play's central assumption about gender roles: that male dominance and female submission constitute the right and natural relationship between the sexes. In this context, Petruchio's "taming" of Katherina was generally seen as innocent fun. By the end of the century, however, critics were beginning to show an element of discomfort with the relationship between Petruchio and Katherina. The Irish playwright and critic Bernard Shaw, writing in 1897, described the last scene of the playas "altogether disgusting to modern sensibility." He found the concept of male domination implicit in the wager and explicit in Katherina's final speech so offensive that no man "with any decency of feeling" could watch the scene "in the company of a woman without feeling extremely ashamed."

Subsequently, many critics have sought to defend *The Taming of the Shrew* against charges of sexism by contending that the play takes a tongue-in-cheek view of traditional gender roles. In the 1950s, critics such as Nevill Coghill, Harold C. Goddard [in the section on KATHERINA], and Margaret Webster argued that Katherina's submission is not to be taken seriously. In this view, the audience is meant to perceive that Katherina will dominate the marriage by allowing Petruchio an outward show of mastery. More recently, several commentators have suggested that the play ultimately undermines conventional social and gender roles. In an article excerpted below, Coppelia Kahn argued that Petruchio's exaggerated behavior and irrational demands dramatize the absurdity of the concept of male superiority. Karen Newman, in an article published in 1986, pointed out that the play continually draws parallels between the theatrical role-playing of the stage and the real-life role-playing of social superiors and inferiors and of dominant husbands and obedient wives. In this way, she argued, it reveals that these real-life roles are not inherent in the nature of the individuals who play them, but rather are imposed by social and cultural constraints. In making a similar argument about the impact of the play, both Michael Shapiro and Juliet Dusinberre (1993) focused on the Elizabethan practice of using boy actors in female roles. By frequently calling attention to this practice, both critics suggested, the play underlines the artificiality of conventionally "feminine" behavior.

Many critics, however, reject an ironic reading of Petruchio's subduing of Katherina. In 1951, George Ian Duthie maintained that *The Taming of the Shrew* reaffirms the Elizabethan view that a husband stands in relation to his wife as a king to his subjects. In a 1960 article, Derek Traversi asserted that the play defends the view that there is a "right" order of things according to nature requiring that women be subject to their husbands. Many of these critics have emphasized the "gentleness" of Petruchio's behavior in comparison to the brutality displayed in earlier "shrew taming" plays. In 1963, Cecil C. Seronsy (in the section on APPEARANCE VS. REALITY) suggested that Petruchio draws Katherina into enthusiastic acceptance of the role of obedient wife by

"supposing" the existence in her of the qualities he desires and gradually assimilating her to the image he has willed. Margaret Loftus Ranald (in the section on IMAGERY) claimed that Shakespeare's use of images drawn from falconry portrays a model of matrimony based on "mutuality, trust, and love." Five years later, Marianne L. Novy suggested that by presenting conventional gender roles as a game, Petruchio makes it possible for Katherina to participate with him in developing a mutually satisfying accommodation to the ru!es of society. The complementarity of the relationship between Katherina and Petruchio is also stressed by Ruth Nevo (in the OVERVIEWS section) and Joan Hartwig (in the section on IMAGERY). Some commentators, however, see the relationship in a less positive light. In her article excerpted below Shirley Nelson Garner argued that the humor of the play rests on a misogynistic joke, and that it portrays marriage as an institution that can work only at the expense of woman's independence of thought, speech, and action. H. J. Oliver (in the OVERVIEWS section and the section on PETRUCHIO) and Robert Ornstein (in the section on PETRUCHIO) also maintain that Katherina is forced into a submission that diminishes her character.

A number of commentators have related the p lay's treatment of courtship and marriage to social concerns and cultural practices current in England at the time the play was written. In the section below,

George Hibbard relates the play to various Elizabethan views of marriage. Irving Ribner, in a 1967 essay (in the APPEARANCE VS. REALITY section), saw the playas ridiculing two common Elizabethan views of relationships between men and women, one based on romantic love and the other based on domination of one partner by another. Work on this topic has also been done by such critics as Carol Heffernan (1985) and Linda Boose (1994).

Source: "'The Taming of the Shrew': A Social Comedy," in *Shakespearean Essays,* edited by Alwin Thaler and Norman Sanders, The University of Tennessee Press, 1964, pp. 15-28.

[Hibbard suggests that The Taming of the Shrew *contrasts opposing views of marriage that co-existed in Elizabethan England. He asserts that in the last decades of the sixteenth century, the tradition of parents arranging their children's marriages was being challenged, while a new ideal of mutual love between partners was taking root.* The Shrew *satirizes the old, mercenary order, Hibbard maintains, especially in the scene where Baptis ta appears to auction off Bianca to the highest bidder. But it also rejects the romantic view of marriage depicted in the Bianca-Lucentio subplot in favor of matches such as Katherina and Petruchio's, based on "real knowledge and experience." The critic calls attention to the directness and honesty of the conflict between the latter couple and contrasts it with Bianca and Lucentio's reliance on ploys and deceptions. For another View of the play's treatment of Elizabethan marriages, see the essay by Irving Ribner in the section on Appearance vs. Reality.]*

A case, of sorts, can be made out for the view that *The Shrew* is designed to bring out and contrast the two opposed attitudes to marriage that existed at the time when It was written: the idea of marriage as a purely business matter, which may be called realistic

since it corresponds to the facts, and the idea of it as a union of hearts and minds, which may be called romantic. That some kind of contrast is intended is evident from the conduct of the two plots, which alternate with each other in a regular and contrapuntal fashion until the final scene, where they come together and are rounded off. In this reading of the play the realistic attitude is embodied in Petruchio who makes no secret of his mercenary intentions. To Hortensio, who asks him why he has come to Padua, he replies:

Antonio, my father, is deceased,
And I have thrust myself into this maze,
Haply to wive and thrive as best I may.
[I. ii. 54-6]

A few lines later he clinches the matter when, having said that the age and appearance of the lady are of no importance so long as she is rich, he adds:

I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
[I. ii. 75-6]

He plainly belongs to the old conservative school of thought, and his views on Wives and their place are in keeping. In III. ii, having married Katharina, he pretends to defend her against her friends and kinsmen, ostensibly telling them but in fact telling her:

Nay, look not big, nor stamp, nor stare, nor
fret, I will be master of what is my own. She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house, My household stuff, my field, my barn, My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing.
[III. ii. 228-32]

The words are substantially a version of the tenth commandment and they serve as a forcible reminder of the weight of authority and tradition behind the attitude to woman which they express. In accordance with this same body of ideas, Petruchio feels that his wife should be in complete subjection to him; uses the appropriate means to subdue her to his will; and having achieved this purpose, explains its significance to Hortensio in V. ii by saying:

Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet
life, An awful ru!e and right supremacy;
And, to be short, what not, that's sweet and
happy.
[V. ii. 108-10]

In contrast to this story, in which the woman is treated as a chattel, enjoys none of the pleasures of courtship and is humiliated and subdued, there runs alongside it the tale of Bianca. She enjoys the pleasures of being wooed by no fewer than four men, of making her own choice from among them, of deceiving her father, of stea!ing a runaway marriage, of having it approved of by both the fathers concerned, and, most important of

all, of continuing to get her own way with her husband after marriage as well as before it.

Put in these terms, *The Shrew* looks like an argument for the romantic attitude. But this conclusion only has to be stated for it to be found unacceptable. The scenes involving Petruchio and Katharina have much more vitality than those involving Bianca. We are left at the end with the conviction that the arranged match is a far more durable and solid thing than the romantic one. The most eloquent speech in the whole play is Katharina's, extolling the principle of male dominance and female subjection as a law of nature, and it follows on Petruchio's triumph over Lucentio in the matter of the wager. The main interest of the play is in Petruchio and Katharina, not in the rest.

Does this mean, then, that Shakespeare has come down on the side of the arranged marriage and the old order? In general terms it would seem unlikely, for in his subsequent comedies love is the central value. More to the point, however, such an inference will not square with the evidence of the second half of II. I, which is a pointed and effective piece of comic satire on the marriage market. In the first half of the scene Petruchio has wooed Katharina and the match between them has been fixed. Petruchio makes his exit saying:

Father, and wife, and gentlemen, adieu, I will to Venice-Sunday comes apace
We will have rings, and things, and fine
array,
And kiss me, Kate, we will be married 0'
Sunday.
[II. i. 321-24]

The way is now open for Baptista to dispose of his younger daughter and he wastes no time in setting about It. The scene that follows, between him and Gremio and Tranio, is conducted on a blatantly commercial level. Baptista's opening words, referring to the match that has just been concluded between Katharina and Petruchio, set the tone:

Faith, gentlemen, now I play a merchant's
part,
And venture madly on a desperate mart.
[II. i. 326-27]

Tranio catches the allusion at once, and endorses it by saying:
'Twas a commodity lay fretting by you,
'Twill bring you gain, or perish on the seas.
[II.i. 328-29]

Both of them regard Katharina as a questionable piece of goods that Baptista has done well to get off his hands. At this point Gremio puts in his claim for the hand of Bianca and Tranio promptly asserts his counterclaim. Both begin by saying that they love her, but the statement really amounts to nothing-in any case Tranio is only standing in for

Lucentio-and Baptista immediately brings the whole thing down to the only terms that matter when he stops the incipient quarrel with the words:

Content you, gentlemen, I will compound
this strife.
'Tis deeds must Win the prize, and he, of
both, That can assure my daughter greatest dower,
Shall have Bianca's love.
[II. i. 341-44]

The dower involved here is the money the husband assured to his wife on marriage, in order to provide for her widowhood if he should die before her. It was an essential part of the marriage contract in Shakespeare's England. *Deeds* in this context mean, not the service with which the lover of romance won his lady, but property and cash. There is surely a pun on the sense of *tale-deeds.* Bianca's fate is to be settled by an auction, not by a knightly combat. Gremio makes his bid; Tranio puts in a better; Gremio increases his offer; Tranio outbids him once more, and actually uses the word "out-vied" to describe his success. The satire is unmistakable. It is clinched by Baptista's weighing of the two offers and settling, with a careful proviso, for the higher. Turning to Tranio, he says:

I must confess your offer is the best,
And, let your father make her the assurance, She is your own-else, you must pardon me, If you should die before him, where's her
dower?
[II.i. 386-89]

But, being a good businessman, he keeps the second customer in reserve. If Tranio's father fails to back up his son's offer, Bianca will be married to Gremio after all.

The scene leaves one in no doubt about the play's attitude to the marriage market. With it in mind, it is now possible to go back to the two contrasted plots and to consider them afresh. The fundamental difference between them in terms of their construction has been well analyzed by Bertrand Evans, who shows that while the Blanca story is developed through an intricate series of deceptions and disguises, there is no deception whatever in the Katharina-Petruchio story. Petruchio is told in no uncertain terms about Katharina's character before he meets her, and he, in turn, tells her, at their first meeting in II. i, that he intends to tame her. To use Evans's own words:

The Taming of the Shrew, then, is unique among Shakespeare's comedies in that it has two distinct plots, one relying mainly on discrepant awarenesses, the other using them not at all.

This contrast is more than a matter of the mechanics of plotting and of exploiting two different kinds of awareness in the audience. It is functional, springing from the contrasted characters of those involved in the two actions and from the antithetical attitudes to life and marriage that are presented through them.

Viewed in relation to the characters of the sisters, the two plots develop along the same lines, each containing a complete reversal. At the opening Bianca appears to be everything that the age thought a girl ought to be, obedient to her father, submissive to her elder sister, modest, unobtrusive and quiet. Katharina is her opposite, disobedient to her father, tyrannical towards her younger sister, aggressive, rebellious and noisy. In each case, however, these initial impressions are misleading. As the play goes on the two girls change places, as it were, until, at the end of it, Katharina is revealed as the perfect wife and Bianca as the difficult and troublesome one. Each has, in fact, shown herself as she really is. Nor has the change been an arbitrary one; it has been implicit from the beginning, where there are clear indications that things are not as they seem. Baptista's initial offer in I. i to allow Gremio and Hortensio to court Katharina, if they wish, terrifies Gremio. His answer is an outraged recoil:

To cart her rather: she's too rough for me . . . There, there, Hortensio, wi!! you any wife?
[I. i. 55-6]

Carting was, of course, the punishment inflicted on harlots. As well as being treated like a chattel by her father, Katharina is being grossly insulted by the old pantaloon. Her vigorous complaint to Baptista is fully justified:

I pray you, sir, is It your will
To make a stale of me amongst these mates?
[I. i. 57-8]

Stale has a double meaning. Primarily in this context it signifies "a laughing-stock," but it also carries the sense of "whore." Katharina is a woman of independent spirit revolting against a society in which girls are bought and sold in marriage. Moreover, the word *mates,* which she uses of Gremio and Hortensio, is also carefully chosen. It means "vulgar fellows of no real worth," and its accuracy is borne out by their reactions to her contempt and her threats. "From all such devils, good Lord deliver us!" says Gremio, to which Hortensio adds, "And me too, good Lord!" [I. i. 66, 67]. They are both poor-spirited creatures, with no vigour or masculinity about them. Instead of standing up to Katharina, they are cowed by her. And she knows it. As Petruchio shrewdly remarks in II. i, "If she be curst it is for policy" [II. i. 292]. Her shrewishness is not bad temper, but the expression of her self-respect. Indeed, it even looks like a deliberately adopted form of self-defence, a means of testing the quality of the men she meets, in order to ensure that she has some say in the matter of marriage and is not sold off to a wealthy milksop. She is certainly not opposed to the prospect of marriage. The opening of II. i makes this plain enough, for in it she ill-treats Bianca for being so successful with men, and, when her father seeks to restrain her, she cries out in a jealous fury:

What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I
see
She is your treasure, she must have a
husband, I must dance bare-foot on her wedding-day And for your love to her lead apes in hell.
[II. i. 31-4]

She detests the idea of being an old maid and of her younger sister preceding her in marriage. She is attached to traditional notions of order and fitness. Provided that she can find a man who will stand up to her and earn her respect, she is ready and even eager to marry. Her subsequent behaviour, including her final speech, is all of a piece with her character and attitude as revealed in these two appearances and in the analogy drawn by Petruchio at the end of IV.i between the process by which he tames her and the methods used to tame a haggard, for the Elizabethans believed that falcons and the like were really of an affectionate nature and could be brought to love the man who trained them. Gervase Markham, for example, after listing the various kinds of hawks, adds these words: "all these Hawkes are hardy, meeke, and louing to the man" [in his *Country Contentments].* Moreover, in his subsequent directions for training them, he lays great stress on kindness, writing as follows:

All Hawkes generally are manned after one manner, that is to say, by watching and keeping them from sleep, by a continuall carrying of them upon your fist, and by a most familiar streaking and playing with them, with the Wing of a dead Foule or such like, and by otten gazing and !ooking of them in the face, with a louing and gentle Countenace, and
so making them acquainted with the man.
"Hardy (i.e. bold), meeke, and louing to the man" is a very accurate description of Katharina's real character.

At this stage in the action it is not yet clear what Bianca's nature is. We still do not know whether Katharina's hearty dislike of her is the result of jealousy, or whether it rests on other and more creditable grounds. Her role so far has been a passive one, thogh it is already evident that she is her father's favourite and knows that she can rely on his support. In III. i, however, she appears in a new situation, and much that has hitherto been obscure ceases to be so. Alone with two of her suitors, Lucentio, disguised as a teacher of Latin, and Hortensio, disguised as a teacher of music, Bianca discards the submissive mask she has worn in the presence of her father and shows her true disposition. As the two lovers dispute over which of them shall give his lesson first, she asserts her authority, saying:

Why, gentlemen, you do me double wrong,
To strive for that which resteth in my
choice:
I am no breeching scholar In the schools, I'll not be tied to hours nor 'pointed times, But learn my lessons as I please myself.
And to cut off all strife, here
Sit we down: Take you your instrument, play you the
whiles
His lecture will be done ere you have tuned.
[III. l. 16-23]

The kitten shows her claws. She is in complete control of the situation enforcing her will on both men, and she remains in control of It for the rest of the play. Her refusal in V. ii, after she has married Lucentio, to come at his bidding is already implicit in this scene.

The differences between the two sisters are more than differences of character, they also have a representative quality which is reflected in the way the two plots are conducted. In a society where the subjection of women is taken for granted two courses are open to the woman who does not accept this assumption: she can either resort to open revolt, or she can take the more devious, and usually more effective, line of apparent acquiescence and submission as a means to getting her own way through deception, intrigue and petticoat government. Katharina and Bianca embody these two different kinds of reaction to the existing situation; and so do the two plots, the one proceeding openly through a conflict of wills and tempers, the other moving to its end through a complicated tangle of misdirection and disguises. *The Taming of the Shrew* is an incisive piece of social criticism as well as an amusing play.

The scope of this criticism is widened and enriched by Shakespeare's presentation and handling of the men. Here again the main instrument is contrast. As I have pointed out, the men of Padua, with whom Lucentio may be included though he comes from Pisa, are a poor-spirited lot, content to play the marriage game along the conventional lines of dowries and intrigue. Petruchio, however, is something quite different. From the moment that he enters the play, at the opening of I. ii, his masculinity is emphasized. He is violent and aggressive, thoroughly enjoying the row with his servant, Grumio. He is always frank and honest, with himself as well as with others. He resorts to no subterfuges, but states his motive in coming to Padua so openly and unashamedly that it sounds like a challenge to instead of an acceptance of, the conventions:

I come to wive it wealthlly in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.

He bursts in on the intrigues rather like an Elizabethan buccaneer descending on a civilized but effete Mediterranean city. He brings a breath of fresh air with him; his very language is boisterous and blustering. . .

Petruchio's other great asset is his confidence in himself and his sportsman's love of risk. Audacity is the keynote of his wooing. Recognizing Katharina's spirit he deliberately engages her, through his calculated familiarity and impudence, in a battle of wits that leads on to a physical struggle and a battle of wills. She cannot resist the challenge he throws down; and the whole affair is conducted like a game within the limits supplied by certain rules which are tacitly accepted by both. She oversteps those rules when she strikes him, but the warning he gives: "I swear I'll cuff you, If you strike again" [II. i. 220], is enough to make her realize that the rules must be kept. Neither of them must injure the other's self-respect and, once he has released her, there must be no further resort to direct physical force. The engagement-in the military as well as the marital sense of the word-that follows is really a process by which each of them comes to know and to appreciate the other fully. And it is very significant that although they are married in III. ii they do not seem to go to bed together to consummate their marriage until the very end of the play, by which time they are allies and lovers, for Katharina has kissed Petruchio in the street at the end of V. i.

It is their knowledge of, and their trust in, each other, which have grown out of experience, that give this pair such an advantage over the other two pairs at the end of the play. Hortensio and his widow do not know one another, nor do Lucentio and Bianca. How should they? Hortensio has married on the rebound, and Lucentio's wooing of Bianca has been conducted in terms that allow of no real engagement of heart or head. The stratagems that have led to his success have not been his own but Tranio's. It is Tranio who gets rid of Hortensio as a rival wooer, who instructs the Pedant in his part and who tells Lucentio when and how to steal the marriage. Lucentio is depicted throughout as a man besotted by love of a rather fanciful kind and, consequently, incapable of initiating any action. The brittle, bookish, artificial style of his language as a lover is an effective criticism of his shortcomings as a man. He has nothing of Petruchio's independence, self-reliance and grasp on essentials. His lyrical description of Bianca in V. i. when he refers to her as "the wished haven of my bliss" [V. i. 128], is a convincing proof that he has not so much as noticed the pointers to her true nature which are set out so clearly in III. i.

That *The Shrew* is a gay, high-spirited, rollicking play, full of broad farcical scenes and richly comic narrative passages is self-evident. What I have tried to show is that it also has a serious side to it. Underneath the comic exaggeration it is basically realistic. It portrays the marriage situation, not as it appeared in the romances of the day, but as it was in Shakespeare's England. And the criticism it brings to bear on it is constructive as well as destructive. Baptista, the foolish father who knows nothing about his daughters yet seeks to order their lives, is defeated all along the line. So is Gremio, the old pantaloon, who thinks he can buy a wife. The play's disapproval of the arranged match, in which no account is taken of the feelings of the principals, could not be plainer. Within the framework of marriage as it existed at the time, it comes out in favour of the match based on real knowledge and experience, over against the more fanciful kind of wooing that ignores facts in favour of bookishly conventional attitudes and expressions of feeling. Paradoxically enough it is Katharina and Petruchio, for each of whom it is the other, as the other really is, that matters, who embody the new revolutionary attitude to marriage, rather than Lucentio and Bianca.

Critical Essay #5

Source: "'The Taming of the Shrew': Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage," in *Modern Language Studies,* Vol. V, No.1, Spring, 1975, pp. 88-102.

[Kahn interprets The Taming of the Shrew *as a farce that relies on exaggeration to at once indulge and undermine the male fantasy of mastery over women. Shakespeare, she asserts, set out to Write a comedy that would both critique and celebrate marriage and resolved this apparent contradiction through an ironic portrayal of Katherina in the final scenes of the play. Kahn compares Petruchio's violence and Katherina's shrewishness, remarking that while society accepts the violence of men as normal male behavior, it condemns forceful self-assertion by women, even when it serves as a psychological defense or arises from real provocation, as it does in the play. The critic further notes that Petruchio's view of Katherina as his property and his comparison of her to a hawk that must be tamed by deprivation are devastating evidence that "male supremacy in marriage denies women's humanity. She adds that Petruchio's attempt to make Katherina see the world through his eyes emphasizes the absurdity of the principle of male dominance. On the road back to Padua, Kahn suggests, Katherina adopts a pose of submissiveness that her husband correctly understands as a signal for compromise. Prom this point on, Katherina develops a practice of "satirical exaggeration» that allows Petruchio to appear dominant, yet still permits her to retain a small measure of psychological independence.]*

As Robert Heilman demonstrates [in an article in *Modern Language Quarterly,* 1966] the taming is best viewed as a farce which "carries out our desire to simplify life by a selective anesthetizing of the whole person; man retains all his energy yet never really gets hurt." Farce, according to Heilman, deals with people as though they lack normal physical, emotional, and moral sensitivity, and are capable only of mechanical responses. In making Kate react almost automatically to the contradictory kinds of treatment Petruchio administers (flattery before the wedding, and force afterwards), Shakespeare molds her to the needs of the farce. In the first three acts, before the taming begins in earnest, she is portrayed in terms of her resistance to male efforts to dispose of her in marriage. Our strongest impression of her is that she fights back. But though she declares she'll see Petruchio hanged before she marries him, marry him she does, and though she flatly refuses to obey his first command to her as a wife, she exits mutely with him at the end of Act III. Contrary to our expectations, she doesn't retaliate with all the shrewish weaponry said to be at her disposal. In the end, as I shall show, she subverts her husband's power without attempting to challenge it, and she does so in a gamesome spirit, without hostility or bitterness. Thus Shakespeare allows the male to indulge his dream of total mastery over the female without the real-life penalties of her resentment or his guilt.

But the farce has another purpose which Heilman and other critics fail to see. It exaggerates ludicrously the reach and force of male dominance and thus pushes us to see this Wish for dominance as a childish dream of omnipotence. In short, the farce portrays Petruchio's manliness as infantile. A 1904 editor of the play [R. Warwick Bond]

roundly declared, "It will be many a day. . . ere men cease to need or women to admire, the example of Petruchio." How pitiable that we should still need and admire it, almost seventy years later. That we do is revealed by the prevailing tendency of criticism to justify Petruchio's methods in Petruchio's terms, endorsing that version of masculinity which the farce undercuts as well as indulges. Though it has long been recognized that Shakespeare gives Kate's "shrewishness" a psychological and moral validity lacking in all literary predecessors, critics still argue that Petruchio's heavy-handed behavior is merely a role briefly assumed for a benign purpose. They claim that he is Kate's savior, the wise man who guides her to a better and truer self, or a clever doctor following homeopathic medicine. They have missed the greatest irony of the play. Unlike other misogynistic shrew literature, this play satirizes not woman herself in the person of the shrew, but *male attitudes toward women.* My purpose is to reveal the ways in which Shakespeare puts these attitudes before us.

Long before Petruchio enters, we are encouraged to doubt the validity of male supremacy. First of all, the transformation of Christopher Sly from drunken lout to noble lord, a transformation only temporary and skin-deep, suggests that Kate's switch from independence to subjection may also be deceptive and prepares us for the irony of the denouement. More pointedly, one of the most alluring perquisites of Sly's new identity is a wife, and his right to domineer over her. As Scene 1 of the Induction begins, Sly suffers public humiliation at the hands of a woman when the Hostess throws him out of her alehouse for disorderly conduct. After he awakens from his sleep in the second scene, it is the tale of his supposed wife's beauty and Penelope-like devotion and patience that finally tips the balance, convincing him that he really is the aristocrat of the servants' descriptions. . . .

The humor lies in the fact that Sly's pretensions to authority and grandeur, which he claims only on the basis of sex, not merit, and indulges specifically with women, are contradicted in his real identity, in which he is a woman's inferior. Similarly, as I shall argue later, Petruchio seems to find in Kate the reflection of his own superiority, while we know that he is fooled by a role she has assumed.

In the main play, the realistic bourgeois ambiance in which Kate is placed leads us to question the definition of shrewishness which the characters take for granted. In medieval mystery plays and Tudor interludes, shrews were already married to their pusillanimous husbands and were shown as domestic tyrants. Male fears of female freedom were projected onto the wife, who was truly a threatening figure because she treated her husband as he normally would have treated her. When the husband attempted rebellion, he usually lost. Shakespeare departs from this literary tradition in order to sketch Kate as a victim of the marriage market, making her "the first shrew to be given a father, to be shown as maid and bride" [according to M. C. Bradbrook in an article in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch,* 1958]. At her entrance, she is already, for her father's purpose, that piece of goods which Petruchio declares her to be after the wedding. Baptista is determined not to marry the sought-after Bianca until he gets an offer for the unpopular Kate, not for the sake of conforming to the hierarchy of age as his opening words imply, but out of a merchant's desire to sell all the goods in his warehouse.

His marketing technique is clever: make the sale of the less popular item the prerequisite of purchasing the desirable one. As Tranio sympathetically remarks after Kate's marriage is arranged, "Twas a commodity that lay fretting by you" [II. i. 328]. Knowing that Gremio and Hortensio are interested only in Bianca, Baptista tactlessly invites them to court Kate, and does so in her presence. The two suitors then begin to insult her. Gremio refers to her as a prostitute by offering to "cart" her through the streets, a punishment for prostitutes, instead of to court her. When she indignantly asks her father, "Is it your will, sir, to make a stale of me amongst these mates?" [I. i. 578], she is only reacting to the insult and aptly characterizing her situation as that of a whore being loosed to anyone who'll have her for the best price.

That money, not his daughter's happiness, is Baptista's real concern in matchmaking becomes evident when Petruchio brusquely makes his bid for Kate. Previously, Petruchio's desire to marry solely for money, even though he had inherited his father's fortune, was comically exaggerated. The rhetorical

. . . if thou know
One rich enough to be Petruchio's wife -
As wealth is burden of my wooing dance
Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,
As old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrewd
As Socrates' Xanthippe or a worse,
She moves me not, or not removes, at least,
Affection's edge in me, were she as rough
As are the swelling Adriatic seas.
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
[I. ii. 66-76]

Both Petruchio and Baptista p retend to make Kate's love the ultimate condition of the marriage, but then Petruchio simply lies in asserting that she has fallen in love with him at first sight. Her father, though he doubts this far-fetched claim ("I know not what to say" [II. I. 318]) claps up the match anyhow, for on it depends Bianca's match as well. Both marriages provide insurance against having to support his daughters in widowhood, promise grandsons to whom he may pass on the management and possession of his property, and impart to his household the prestige of "marrying well," for the wealth of the grooms advertises Baptista's own financial status. Petruchio's and Tranio ! Lucentio's frequent references to their respective fathers' wealth and reputations remind us that wealth and reputation pass from father to son, with woman as mere accessory to the passing. . . .

Even the Bianca plot emphasizes heavily the venal aspects of marriage, though it is usually characterized as romantic, in contrast to the realism and farce of the taming. In Act II, scene 1, Baptista awards Bianca to Tranio / Lucentio solely because he offers more cash and property as "widowhood" (that is, claims to have more total wealth) than Gremio does. As George Hibbard has shown, the scene satirizes the hard-headed commercial nature of marital arrangements. Baptista's chivalric "'Tis deeds must win the

prize" [II. i. 342] puns on title deeds to property, and the length and specificity of each suitor's inventory of wealth calls inordinate attention to the fact that dutiful, submissive Bianca, courted in high-flown style by the ardent Lucentio, is still a piece of property, to be relinquished only with the guarantee that Baptista will profit if the groom expires. Always the clever businessman, Baptista accepts Lucentio's bid pending his father's assurance of his fortune, but keeps Gremio in reserve should the deal fall through.

It is time to turn with Kate from the father to the husband. From the moment Petruchio commands his servant "Knock, I say" [I. ii. 5], he evokes and creates noise and violence. A hubbub of loud speech, beatings, and quarrelsomeness surrounds him. "The swelling Adriatic seas" and "thunder when the clouds in autumn rack" [I. ii. 74, 96] are a familiar part of his experience, which he easily masters with his own force of will or physical strength. Like Adam, he is lord over nature, and his own violence has been well legitimized by society, unlike Kate's, which has marked her as unnatural and abhorrent. But let us examine the nature of Petruchio's violence compared to Kate's.

The hallmark of a shrew is her scolding tongue and loud raucous voice-a verbal violence befitting woman, since her limbs are traditionally weak. It is interesting that Kate is given only twelve lines in her entrance scene, only five of which allude to physical violence:

I' faith, sir, you shall never need to fear: Iwis it [marriage] is not halfway to her heart.
But If It were, doubt not her care should be
To comb your noddle with a three-legged
stool
And paint your face and use you like a fool
[1. i. 61-5]

Here she threatens Hortensio in response to his greater threat, that no man will marry her. These lines have a distinctly defensive cast; Kate refers to herself in the third person, and denies any interest in a mate because two prospective mates (Hortensio and Gremio) have just made it clear that they have no interest in her. Kate's vision of breaking furniture over a husband's head is hypothetically couched in the subjunctive. Yet later Tranio describes her speech in this scene as "such a storm that mortal ears might hardly endure the din" [I. i. 172-73]. Throughout the play, this kind of disparity between the extent and nature of Kate's "shrewish" behavior and the male characters' perceptions of it focuses our attention on masculine behavior and attitudes which stereotype women as either submissive and desirable or rebellious and shrewish. Kate is called devil, hell, curst, shrewd (shrewish), and wildcat, and referred to in other insulting ways because, powerless to change her situation, she *talks* about it. That her speech is defensive rather than offensive in origin, and psychologically necessary for her survival, is eloquently conveyed by her own lines:

My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, Or else my heart, concealing it, will break, And rather than it shall I will be free
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.
[IV. iii. 77-80]

Though she commits four acts of physical violence onstage (binding and striking Bianca, breaking a lute over Hortensio's head, hitting Petruchio and then Grumio), in each instance the dramatic context suggests that she strikes out because of provocation or intimidation resulting from her status as a woman. For example, the language in which her music lesson with Hortensio is described conveys the idea that it is but another masculine attempt to subjugate woman. "Why, then thou canst not break her to the lute?," asks Baptista. "I did but tell her she mistook her frets / And bowed her hand to teach her fingering," replies Hortensio [IT. i. 147, 149-50]. Later Petruchio explicitly attempts to "break" Kate to his will, and throughout the play men tell her that she "mistakes her frets" -that her anger is unjustified.

On the other hand, Petruchio's confident references to "great ordnance in the field" and the "Loud 'larums, neighing steeds, trumpets' clang" of battle [I. ii. 203, 206] bespeak a lifelong acquaintance with organized violence as a masculine vocation. The loud oaths with which he orders his servants about and startles the priest in the wedding service are thus farcical exaggerations of normal masculine behavior. In its volume and vigor, his speech suggests a robust manliness which would make him attractive to the woman who desires a master (or who wants to identify with power in its most accessible form). Grumio characterizes his master in terms of his speech, in lines which recall the kind of speech attributed to Kate:

0' my word, and she knew him as well as I do, she would think scolding would do little good upon him. She may perhaps call him half a score of knaves or so-why, that's nothing. And he begin once, he'll rail in his rope-tricks. 1'll tell you what, sir, and she stand him but a little, he wi!! throw a figure in her face and so disfigure her with it that she shall have no more eyes to see withal than a cat. You know him not, sir.
[II. ii. 108-16]

If Petruchio were female, he would be known as a shrew and shunned accordingly by men. Behavior desirable in a male automatically prohibits similar behavior in a female, for woman must mold herself to be complementary to man, not competitive with him. Indeed, if manhood is defined and proven by the ability to dominate, either in battle or in the household, then a situation which does not allow a man to dominate is existentially threatening. When Petruchio declares, "I am as peremptory as she proud-minded" [II. i. 131], he seems to state that he and his bride-to-be are two of a kind. But that "kind," bold, independent, self-assertive, must only be male. Thus his image of himself and Kate as "two raging fires" ends on a predictable note:

And where two raging fIres meet together They do consume the thing that feeds their fury.
Though little fire grows great with little
wind,
Yet extreme gusts will blowout fire and all.
So I to her, *and so she yields to me,*
For I am rough and woo not like a babe.
[II. i. 132-37; emphasis mine]

His force must necessarily triumph over Kate's because he is male and she is not. Those critics who maintain that his is acceptable because it has only the limited, immediate purpose of making Kate reject an "unbecoming" mode of behavior miss the real point of the taming. The overt force Petruchio wields over Kate by marrying her against her will in the first place, and then by denying her every wish and comfort, stamping, shouting, reducing her to exhaustion, etc., is but a farcical representation of the psychological realities of marriage in Elizabethan England, in which the husband's will constantly, silently, and invisibly, through custom and conformity, suppressed the wife's.

At the wedding in Act III, scene [2], Petruchio's behavior travesties the decorum, ceremony and piety which all those present feel ought to accompany a marriage. It is calculated to deprive Kate of the opportunity to enjoy the bride's sense of triumph, of being the center of admiration and interest; to humiliate her in public; to throw her off her guard by convincing her he is mad; and to show her that now nothing can happen unless and until her husband pleases. The final effect of the wedding scene, however, is less comical than the rhetorically delightful accounts of Petruchio's off-stage antics. When all the trappings are stripped away (and they are, by his design), the groom is simply completing the legal arrangements whereby he acquires Kate as he would acquire a piece of property. When he declares he'll "seal the title with a lovely kiss" [III. ii. 123], he refers not just to Kate's new title as his wife, but also to the title-deed which, sealed with wax, passed to the purchaser in a property transaction. (The pun recalls Baptista's "deeds," a similar play on words discussed above.) Tranio remarks of Petruchio, "He hath some meaning in his mad attire" [III. ii. 124], and he is right. When Petruchio says "To me she's married, not unto my clothes" [ITI. 11. 117], he assumes a lofty morality, Implying that he offers Kate real love, not just its worldly show. This moralistic pose becomes an important part of his strategy in Act IV when he claims to do nothing that isn't for Kate's "good." But in the brutally plain statement he delivers at the conclusion of the wedding scene, he momentarily drops this pose:

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my
house, My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.
[III. ii. 230-32]

His role as property-owner is the model for his role as husband; Kate, for him, is a thing. Or at least she will become a thing when he has wrenched unquestioning obedience from her, when she no longer has mind or will of her own. It is impossible that Shakespeare meant us to accept Petruchio's speech uncritically: it is the most shamelessly blunt statement of the relationship between men, women, and property to be found in the literature of this period. After the simple declarative statements of possession, quoted above, which deny humanity to Kate, the speech shifts to chivalric challenges of imaginary "thieves" who would snatch her away. Is she goods, in the following lines, or a medieval damsel?

. . . Touch her
whoever dare,

I'll bring mine actIOn on the proudest he
That stops my way in Padua. Grumio,
Draw forth thy weapon, we are beset with
thieves
Rescue thy mistress, If thou be a man.
[III. ii. 233-37]

The point is that Petruchio wants to think of her in both kinds of terms. The speech concludes grandly with the metamorphosis of Petruchio into a knight-errant:

Fear not, sweet wench; they shall not touch
thee, Kate.
I'll buckler thee against a million.
[III. ii. 238-39]

The modulation of simple ownership into spurious chivalry reveals the speaker's buried awareness that he cheapens himself by being merely Kate's proprietor; he must transform the role into something nobler.

Petruchio's thundering oaths and physical brutality reach a crescendo at his country house in Act IV, when he beats his servants, throws food and dishes on the floor, stomps, roars and bullies. These actions are directed not against his bride but at his servants, again in the name of chivalry, out of a fastidious devotion to his bride's supposed comfort. But his stance is rooted realistically in his status as lord of a manor and master of a household which is not Kate's but his. He ordered her wedding clothes, chose their style and paid for them. Kate wears them not at her pleasure but at his, as Grumio's jest succinctly indicates:

Petruchio. Well, Sir, in brief, the gown is not
for me.
Brumio. You are i' th' right, sir; 'tis for my
mistress.
[IV. iii. 155-56]

In the famous soliloquy which opens "Thus have I politely begun my reign" [IV. i. 188-211], Petruchio reduces Kate to an animal capable of learning only through deprivation of food and rest, devoid of all sensitivity save the physical. The animal metaphor shocks us and I would suggest was meant to shock Shakespeare's audience, despite their respect for falconry as an art and that reverence for the great chain of being emphasized by E. M. W. Tillyard. I suppose Kate is actually being elevated in this speech, in view of previous references to her as her husband's horse, ox, and ass, for a falcon was the appurtenance of a nobleman, and a valued animal. But the blandness of Petruchio's confidential tone, the sweep of his easy assumption that Kate is not merely an animal, but *his* animal, who lives or dies at his command-has a dramatic irony similar to that of his exit speech in the wedding scene. Both utterances unashamedly present the status of woman in marriage as degrading in the extreme, plainly declaring her a sub-human being who exists solely for the purposes of her husband. Yet both offer this

vision of the wife as chattel or animal in a lordly, self-confident tone. Urbanity is superimposed on outrage, for our critical scrutiny.

Shakespeare does not rest with showing that male supremacy in marriage denies woman's humanity. In the most brilliant comic scene of the play (IV. 5), he goes on to demonstrate how it defies reason. Petruchio demands that Kate agree that the sun is the moon in order to force a final showdown. Having exhausted and humiliated her to the limit of his invention, he now wants her to know that he would go to any extreme to get the obedience he craves. Shakespeare implies here that male supremacy is ultimately based on such absurdities, for it insists that whatever a man says is right because he is a man, even If he happens to be wrong. In a male-supremacist utopia, masculinity might be identical with absolute truth, but in life the two coincide only intermittently.

Why does Kate submit to her husband's unreason? Or why does she *appear* to do so, and on what terms? On the most pragmatic level, she follows Hortensio's advice to "Say as he says or we shall never go" [IV. v. 11] only in order to achieve her immediate and most pressing needs: a bed, a dinner, some peace and quiet. Shakespeare never lets us think that she believes it right, either morally or logically, to submit her judgment and the evidence of her senses to Petruchio's rule. In fact, the language of her capitulation makes it clear that she thinks him mad:

Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,
And be It moon or sun or what you please.
And if you please to call it a rush.candle,
Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me. . . .
But sun it is not when you say It is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
[IV. v. 12-15, 19-20; emphasis mine]

At this point, Hortensio concedes Petruchio's victory and applauds it; Petruchio henceforth behaves and speaks as though he has indeed tamed Kate. However, we must assume that since he previously donned the mask of the ardent lover, professing rapture at Kate's rudeness, he can see that she is doing the same thing here. At their first meeting he turned the tables on her, praising her for mildness and modesty after she gave insults and even injury. Now she pays him back, suddenly overturning his expectations and moreover mocking them at the same time. But he is not fooled, and can take that mockery as the cue for compromise. It reassures him that she will give him obedience if that is what he must have, but it also warns him that she, in turn, must retain her intellectual freedom.

The scene then proceeds on this basis, each character accepting the other's assumed role. Kate responds to Petruchio's outrageous claim that the wrinkled Vincentio is a fair young maiden by pretending so wholeheartedly to accept it that we know she can't be in earnest. She embroiders the fantasy in an exuberant declamatory style more appropriate to tragedy than comedy:

Young budding virgin, fair and fresh and
sweet,
Whither away, or where is thy abode? Happy the parents of so fair a child!
Happier the man whom favorable stars
Allots thee for his lovely bedfellow!
[IV. v. 37-41]

Her rhetoric expresses her realization that the power struggle she had entered into on Petruchio's terms is absurd. It also signals her emancipation from that struggle, in the terms she declared earlier: " . . . I will be free / Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words" [IV. iii. 79-80].

Of course, a freedom that exists only in words is ultimately as limited as Petruchio's mastery. Though Kate is clever enough to use his verbal strategies against him, she is trapped in her own cleverness. Her only way of maintaining her inner freedom is by outwardly denying it, which thrusts her into a schizoid existence. One might almost prefer that she simply give in rather than continue to fight from such a psychologically perilous position. Furthermore, to hold that she maintains her freedom in words is to posit a distinction without a difference, for whether she remains spiritually independent of Petruchio or sincerely believes in his superiority, her outward behavior must be the same-that of the perfect Griselda, a model for all women. What complicates the situation even more is that Kate quite possibly has fallen in love with her tamer, whose vitality and bravado make him attractive, despite his professed aims. Her failure to pursue her rebellion after the wedding or in the country house supports this hypothesis as does the tone of her mockery in Act IV, Scene 5, and thereafter, which is playful and joyous rather than bitter and angry as it was in the first three acts. . . .

In the last scene, Shakespeare finally allows Petruchio that lordship over Kate, and superiority to other husbands, for which he has striven so mightily. He just makes it clear to us, through the contextual irony of Kate's last speech, that her husband is deluded.

As a contest between males in which woman is the prize, the closing scene is analogous to the entire play. It was partly Petruchio's desire to show his peers that he was more of a man than they which spurred him to take on the shrew in the first place.

Gremio refers to him as a Hercules and compares the subduing of Kate to a "labor. . . more than Alcides' twelve" [I. ii. 255-56]. Hortensio longs but fails to emulate his friend's supposed success in taming. Lucentio, winner in the other wooing context, fails in the final test of marital authority. Petruchio stands alone in the last scene, the center of male admiration.

As critics have noted, the wager scene is punctuated by reversals: quiet Bianca talks back and shrewish Kate seems to become an obedient wife. In a further reversal, however, she steals the scene from her husband, who has held the stage throughout the play, and reveals that he has failed to tame her in the sense he set out to. He has gained her outward compliance in the form of a public display, while her spirit remains

mischievously free. Though she pretends to speak earnestly on behalf of her own inferiority, she actually treats us to a pompous, wordy, holier-than-thou sermon which delicately mocks the sermons her husband has delivered to her and about her. It is significant that Kate's speech is both her longest utterance and the longest in the play. Previously, Petruchio dominated the play verbally, and his longest speech totalled twenty-four lines, while Kate's came to fifteen. Moreover, everything Kate said was a protest against her situation or those who put her in it, and as such was deemed unwomanly, or shrewish. Petruchio's impressive rhetoric, on the other hand, asserted his masculinity in the form of command over women and servants and of moral authority. Now Kate apes this verbal dominance and moralistic stance for satirical effect.

In content, the speech is thoroughly orthodox. Its sentiments can be found in a dozen treatises on marriage written in the sixteenth century. . .. Kate offers them with complete seriousness, straightforwardly except for a few verbal ironies, such as the reminder of her husband's rhetorical patterns in "thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign" [V. ii. 146-47], which echoes his "my goods, my chattels; . . . my house, / My household stuff, my field, my barn, / my horse, my ox, my ass, my anything." The grave moral tone of the speech, as I have noted, comes from Petruchio also, but its irony emanates primarily from the dramatic context. First, it follows upon and resembles Kate's rhetorical performance on the road back to Padua. It is a response to her husband's demand that she demonstrate her obedience before others, as she did then before Hortensio, and as such it exceeds expectations once more. It fairly shouts obedience, when a gentle murmur would suffice. Having heard her address Vincentio as "Young, budding virgin," we know what she is up to in this instance. Second, though the speech pleads subordination, as a speech-a lengthy, ambitious verbal performance before an audience-it allows the speaker to dominate that audience. Though Kate purports to speak as a woman to women, she assumes the role of a preacher whose authority and wisdom are, in the terms of the play, thoroughly masculine. Third, the speech sets the seal on a complete reversal of character, a push-button change from rebel to conformist which is, I have argued, part of the mechanism of farce. Here as elsewhere in the play, farce has two purposes: it completes the fantasy of male dominance, but also mocks it as mere fantasy. Kate's quick transformation perfectly fulfills Petruchio's wishes, but is transparently false to human nature. Towards the end of her lecture, Kate hints that she is dissembling in the line "That seeming to be most which we indeed least are" [V. ii. 175]. Though she seems to be the most vocal apologist for male dominance, she is indeed its ablest critic.

On one level, the denouement is the perfect climax of a masculine fantasy, for as Kate concludes she prepares to place her hand beneath her husband's foot, an emblem-book symbol of wifely obedience. On a deeper level, as I have tried to show, her words speak louder than her actions, and mock that fantasy. But on the deepest level, because the play depicts its heroine as outwardly compliant but inwardly independent, it represents possibly the most cherished male fantasy of all-that woman remains untamed, even in her subjection. Does Petruchio know he's been taken? Quite probably, since he himself has played the game of saying-the-thing-which-is-not. Would he enjoy being married to a woman as dull and proper as the Kate who delivers that marriage sermon? From all indications, no. Then can we conclude that Petruchio no

less than Kate knowingly plays a false role in this marriage, the role of victorious tamer and complacent master? I think we can, but what does this tell us about him and about men in general?

It is Kate's submission to him which makes Petruchio a man, finally and indisputably. This is the action toward which the whole plot drives, and if we consider its significance for Petruchio and his fellows we realize that the myth of feminine weakness, which prescribes that women ought to or must inevitably submit to man's superior authority, masks a contrary myth: that only a woman has the power to authenticate a man, by acknowledging him *her* master. Petruchio's mind may change even as the moon, but what is important is that Kate confirm those changes; moreover, that she do so willingly and consciously. Such voluntary surrender is, paradoxically, part of the myth of female power, which assigns to woman the crucial responsibility for creating a mature and socially respectable man. In *The Taming of the Shrew,* Shakespeare reveals the dependency which underlies mastery, the strength behind submission. Truly, Petruchio is wedded to his Kate. . . .

Critical Essay #6

Source: *"The Taming of the Shrew:* Inside or Outside of the Joke?" in *"Bad" Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon,* edited by Maurice Charney, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988, pp. 105-19.

[Unlike the majority of contemporary critics, who argue on various grounds that The Taming of the Shrew *subverts or critiques traditional gender roles, Garner contends that the play's assumptions about women and sexuality are fundamentally misogynistic, and that it is directed towards an audience that believes it is both right and necessary that men should exercise control over women. In developing her argument, Garner examines the attitudes about women expressed both in the Induction and in the main part of the play. In particular, she looks closely at the language and imagery used to describe Katherina. Garner also analyzes the character of Petruchio and the methods he uses to subdue Katherina.]*

If you had grown up hearing that Shakespeare is the greatest writer in the English language (or at least one of the two or three greatest) and that he is a "universal" poet, who speaks across time and national (even cultural) boundaries, you-especially if you were a woman student-would be shocked to study him in a college or university in the 1980s and to read *The Taming of the Shrew* for the first time. My own students-particularly my women students, though sometimes the men in my classes as well-often exclaim in dismay, "I can't *believe* Shakespeare wrote this!" A graduate student, rereading the play with only a faded memory of having read it before, commented that it was commonly her experience now to read something that she had once enjoyed only to find it disappointing. That was what happened when she read *Taming of the Shrew,* and it gave her a sense of loss. Reading the play from a woman's perspective, she could not help but be a "resisting reader." Even if teachers of literature offer an ingenious reading of the play, their students will probably not be seduced into a very happy view of *it.* They will know in their hearts that-at the least-there is something wrong with the way Kate is treated. And they will be right.

I am not sure that anyone except academics who have invested much-perhaps all-of their professional lives in studying Shakespeare would need to debate whether *Taming of the Shrew* is good or bad. The best that can be said for the play is [as Peter Berek concludes in an essay in *"Bad" Shakespeare,* ed. Maurice Charney, 1988] that it shows Shakespeare had suppler attitudes toward gender than his contemporaries and that it "may have been a valuable, even necessary, stage in moving toward his astonishing expansion of the possibilities of gender roles." This argument makes the play *interesting,* but it does not make it *good.*

The Elizabethans probably considered the play "good." Attesting to the popularity of its main idea, numerous shrew-taming stories exist as well as another version of the play, evidently, acted close to the time of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew.* The values that underlie the story are obviously those of a patriarchal society, in which the desirability of male dominance is unquestioned. When patriarchal attitudes are called

into question, as they have been in our time, it becomes a more delicate matter to put an "uppity" woman in her "proper" place-on the stage or off-and she becomes a less easy mark for humor. *Taming of the Shrew* read straight, then, must seem less "good."

Interpretations of the play that stress its farcical elements or view the ending as ironic are often efforts, I think, to keep the play among the "good," to separate Shakespeare from its misogynist attitudes, to keep him as nearly unblemished as possible. These efforts to preserve *Taming* suggest that in our time it has become one of the problematic plays in Shakespeare's canon. They demonstrate how relative to time and place are the Ideas of "good" and "bad." What I wish to argue here is that no matter how you read the ending, no matter how you define the genre of the play, it is still a "bad" play. . .. [It] is clear that some people still like the play, still count it among the "good," or "more good than bad." This fact suggests that "good" and "bad" are also relative to the pleasures of the particular members of an audience. I would also argue that whether you see the playas "good" or "bad" depends on where you see yourself in terms of the central joke. If you can somehow be "in" on it, the play will undoubtedly seem better than if you cannot be.

The central joke in *The Taming of the Shrew* is directed against a woman. The play seems written to please a misogynist audience, especially men who are gratified by sexually sadistic pleasures. Since I am outside the community for whom the joke is made and do not share its implicit values, I do not participate in its humor. Because the play does not have for me what I assume to be its intended effect, that is, I do not find it funny, I do not find it as good as Shakespeare's other comedies.

The Induction makes immediately clear the assumptions about women and sexuality that are at the core of *Taming.* When a Lord, a character named only according to his rank, imagines and creates for Christopher Sly a world like his own (though more romantic), the "woman" he peoples it with suggests a sixteenth-century ideal: gentle, dutiful, utterly devoted to her husband. He directs his serving-man to tell Bartholomew, his page, how to play the part of Sly's wife:

Such duty to the drunkard let him do
With soft low tongue and lowly courtesy,
And say, "What is't your honor will
command
Wherein your lady and your humble wife
May show her duty and make known her
love?"
And then, with kind embracements, tempting
kisses,
And with declining head into his bosom,
Bid him shed tears, as being overjoyed
To see her noble lord restored to health
Who for thIs seven years hath esteemed him
No better than a poor and loathsome beggar.
(2.114-23)

Surface manner, "With soft low tongue and lowly courtesy," defines inner character, marks the "lady" as "feminine." The importance of soft-spokenness as an essential attribute of femininity is suggested by King Lear's lament over his dead Cordelia: "Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman" (5.3.274-75). In a culture that tended to see things in opposition, to split mind and body, virgin and whore, the quiet woman represented the positive side of the opposition. The woman who spoke up or out, the angry woman, represented the negative side. At a moment when Hamlet feels the greatest contempt for himself, he mourns that he "must, like a whore, unpack. . . [his] heart with words / And fall a-cursing like a very drab" (2.2.592-93). When Bartholomew appears dressed as a lady and Christopher Sly wonders why the page addresses him as "lord" rather than "husband," Bartholomew answers:

My husband and my lord, my lord and
husband,
I am your wife in all obedience.
(Ind. 2.106-7)

The male fantasy that underlies this exchange is that a wife will be subject, even subservient, to her husband in all matters.

More subtly suggested as attractive in the Induction is a notion of sexuality associated with the violent, the predatory, the sadistic. The Lord immediately directs that the drunken Christopher Sly be carried to bed in his "fairest chamber," which is to be hung round with all his "wanton pictures" (Ind. 1.46-47). After Sly is promised all the requisites for hunting, including hawks that "will soar / Above the morning lark" and greyhounds "as swift / As breathed stags, . . . fleeter than the roe" (Ind. 2.43-48), he is offered the most desirable paintings. The movement from hunting to the predatory sexuality imaged in the pictures makes obvious the association between hunting and the sexual chase. Sly is promised by the Second Serving-man:

Adonis painted by a running brook
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
Which seem to move and wanton with her
breath
Even as the waving sedges play with wind.

And the other men join in the game, revealing their own erotic fantasies:

Lord. We'll show thee of as she was a maid
And how she was beguiled and surprised,
As lively painted as the deed was done.
Third Servingman. Or Daphne roaming
through a thorny wood,
Scratching her legs that one shall swear she
bleeds, And at that sight shall sad Apollo weep, So workmanly the blood and tears are

drawn.
(Ind. 2.50-60)

Suggestions of violence, particularly of rape, underlie all of these images. The figures the paintings depict are among the familiar ones in Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* Adonis, the beautiful, androgynous youth gored to death on a wild boar's tusks; 10, a maid Zeus transformed into a heifer in order to take her; and Daphne, who was changed into a laurel tree to prevent Apollo's raping her. The images of violence intensify, as though each character's imagination sets off a darker dream in another. Interestingly enough, the story of Adonis is drawn the least bloody though it is inherently more so. It is Daphne, the innocent virgin, who bleeds. It would seem that the most predatory and sadistic impulse calls forth the most compelling eroticism for those who participate in the shared creation of these fantasies.

It is appropriate that *The Taming of the Shrew* is acted for the male characters of the Induction, for its view of women and sexuality is attuned to their pleasure. Underlying the notion of heterosexual relationships in *Taming,* especially marriage, is that one partner must dominate. There can be no mutuality. The male fantasy that the play defends against is the fear that a man will not be able to control his woman. Unlike many of Shakespeare's comedies, *Taming* does not project the fear of cuckoldry (though perhaps it is implicit), but rather a more pervasive anxiety and need to dominate and subject. In taming Kate, Petruchio seems to give comfort to all the other men in the play. Before Hortensio marries the Widow, he goes to visit Petruchio, to see his "taming school," which Tranio describes to Bianca:

Petruchio is the master,
That teacheth tricks eleven and twenty long
To tame a shrew and charm her chattering
tongue.
(4.2.56-58)

However pleasant the idea of a "taming school" may be for men, the attitude it implies toward women is appalling.

From the outset, Kate is set up so that her "taming" will be acceptable, will not seem merely cruel. This strategy serves as a means to release the play's misogyny just as madness al!ows Hamlet, Othello, and Lear to castigate the women who love them-their mothers, daughters, lovers, wives-and rail against them and women in general in shocking ways. In the play's only soliloquy, Petruchio delineates his plan to subject Kate:

Thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And 'tis my hope to end successfully.
My falcon now is sharp and passing empty,
And till she stoop she must not be fun
gorged,
For then she never looks upon her lure.

Another way I have to man my haggard,
To make her come and know her keeper's
can,
That is, to watch her as we watch these kites
That bate and beat and
Win not be obedient.
She eat no meat today, nor none shall eat.
Last night she s!ept not, nor tonight she shall
not.
As with the meat, some undeserved fault
I'll find about the making of the bed,
And here I'll fling the pillow, there the
bolster,
This way the coverlet, another way the
sheets.
Ay, and amid this hurly I intend
That all is done in reverent care of her,
And in conclusion she shall watch all night.
And if she chance to nod I'll rail and braw!
And with the clamor keep her still awake.
This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,
And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong
humor.
He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak-'tis charity to show.
(4.1.182-205)

Petruchio's stringent mode is just that used to tame hawks; it might well come from a manual on falconry. The notion behind this central metaphor of the play is that a shrewish woman is less than human, even less than a woman, so may be treated like an animal. Only the audience's acceptance of this premise allows them to feel the playas comic.

Critics' efforts to dismiss the play's harsh attitude toward women, to disclaim its cruelty, have led them to emphasize that *Taming* is a farce and not to be taken with the kind of seriousness that I am taking it. In other words, to pay attention to its cruelty, to give credence to its misogyny, is to misread its genre. Though *Taming* does not feel to me like farce, I do not wish to argue about its genre. Accepting it for the moment as farce, I would ask rather: Could the taming of a "shrew" be considered the proper subject of farce in any but a misogynist culture? How would we feel about a play entitled *The Taming of the Jew* or *The Taming of the Black?* I think we would be embarrassed by anti-Semitism or racism in a way that many of us are not by misogyny. I do not think critics could imagine writing about those fictitious plays a sentence comparable to this written of *The Taming of the Shrew* [by Robert B. Heilman, in an introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew]:* "Once she [Kate] was naturally and unquestionably taken to be a shrew, that is, *a type of woman widely known in life* and constantly represented in song and story *[italics mine]."*

To be sure, Kate is an angry woman. She threatens violence to Hortensio; ties Bianca up and strikes her; breaks a lute over Hortensio's head when he, in disguise, is trying to teach her to play it; beats Grumio; and strikes Petruchio. Yet what is said about her makes her worse than angry. When Hortensio refers to her as "Katherine the curst," Grumio echoes him and makes clear how intolerable a "shrewish" woman is to the men in the play:

Katherine the curst!
A title for a maid of all titles the worst.
(1.2.128-29)

Gremio refers to her at various moments as a whore (1.1.55), a "fiend of hell" (1.1.88), and a "wildcat" (1.2.196). The other men repeat his sentiments. "Shrewd," "curst," "froward," Kate is mainly noticeable for her "scolding tongue." Many of the impressions of Kate are rendered through Gremio and Hortensio, who are the most threatened by her. Gremio insists that no man would marry her, only a devil would, and asks incredulously, "Think'st thou, Hortensio, though her father be very rich, any man is so very a fool to be married to hell?" When Hortensio affirms that there are "good fellows in the world" who will marry her for enough money, Gremio replies, "I cannot tell, but I had as lief take her dowry with this condition, to be whipped at the high cross every morning" (1.1.123-34). Hortensio confesses to Petruchio that though Kate is young, beautiful, and well brought up,

Her only fault-and that is fault enough
Is that she is intolerable curst!
And shrewd and froward, so beyond an
measure
That were my state far worser than it is,
I would not wed her for a mine of gold.
(1.2.87-91)

Even Baptista accuses Kate of having a "devilish spirit" (2.1.26).

We come to understand, perhaps, that Kate does not deserve this kind of denunciation, that the male characters rail so against her because she refuses to follow patriarchal prescriptions for women's submission to men. When Bianca, so praised and desired for her "beauteous modesty" (1.2.233-34), rejects Hortensio, he immediately denounces her as a "proud disdainful haggard" (4.2.39). This sudden reversal suggests that the men see women only in relation to male desires and needs and describe them accordingly. Yet we only glimpse the way their bias works. Shakespeare does not reveal it so obviously as he does in, say, *Antony and Cleopatra,* where the men who degrade and insult Cleopatra are clearly threatened by her and jealous because she is able to seduce Antony away from them.

Shakespeare also adumbrates circumstances that account for Kate's anger. The preference of everyone around her, including her father, for a quiet woman (in other words, a woman without any spirit) is enough to provoke her. She undoubtedly

understands the high value placed on women's silence, which Lucentio reads, in Bianca for example, as a sign of "maid's mild behavior and sobriety" (1.1.70-71). She, of course, understands Bianca's competitiveness with her, which is acted out with passive aggression: "Her silence flouts me and I'll be revenged" (1.1.29). She also chafes at her certain sense that she is men's possession, a pawn in the patriarchal marriage game. She reproaches Baptista about Bianca:

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.
(2.1.31-36)

Though Baptista tells Petruchio that he must obtain Kate's love before he will give his permission for the two to marry (2.1.128-29), when it comes down to it, Kate is simply married off, bargained over like a piece of goods:

Baptista. Faith, gentleman, now I playa
merchant's part
And venture madly on a desperate mart.
Tranio. 'Twas a commodity !ay fretting by
you; 'Twill bring you gain or perish on the seas.
Baptista. The gain I seek is quiet in the
match.
(2.1.319-23)

She is not a woman to accommodate easily an economy that makes her a possession of men, in which a husband can say of a wife:

I will be master of what is mine own.
She is my goods, my chattels; she is my
house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.
(3.2.229-32)

Shakespeare also allows Kate to claim her anger and gives her a moving explanation of her outspokenness:

My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,
Or else my heart, concealing it, will break,
And rather than it shall I will be free
Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.
(4.3.77-80)

Yet what is said or shown to extenuate Kate does not weigh heavily enough to balance the condemnation of her, which is an effort to prepare us to accept Petruchio's humiliation of her as a necessity, or "for her own good."

Kate and Petruchio are both strong-willed and high spirited, and one of Petruchio's admirable qualities is that he has the good sense to see Kate's passion and energy as attractive. When he hears of her tempestuous encounter with Hortensio, he exclaims:

>Now, by the world, it *[sic]* is a lusty wench! I love her ten times more than e'er I did.
O how I long to have some chat with her!
(2.1.160-62)

Presumably Petruchio puts on an act to tame Kate; he pretends to be more shrew than she (4.1.81). As one of his servants says, "He kills her in her own humor" (4.1.174). But Kate's "shrewishness" only allows Petruchio to bring to the surface and exaggerate something that is in him to begin with. When we first see him, he is bullying his servant-wringing him by the ears, the stage direction tells us-so that Grumio cries, "Help, masters, help! My master is mad" (1.2.18). It surprises only a little that he later hits the priest who marries him, throws sops in the sexton's face, beats his servants, and throws the food and dishes-behaves so that Gremio can exclaim, "Why, he's a devil, a devil, a very fiend" (3.2.154). When he appears for his wedding "a very monster in apparel," we learn that his dress is not wholly out of character; Tranio tells Biondello:

'Tis some odd humor pricks him to this
fashion,
Yet oftentimes he goes but mean-appareled.
(3.2.72-73)

The strategy of the plot allows Petruchio "shrewish" behavior; but even when it is shown as latent in his character and not a result of his effort to "tame" Kate, it is more or less acceptable. Dramatically, then, Kate and Petruchio are not treated equally.

In general, whatever is problematic in Petruchio is played down; whereas Kate's "faults" are played up. For example, we tend to forget how crassly Petruchio puts money before love at the beginning of the play since he becomes attracted to Kate for other reasons. He speaks frankly:

I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
(1.2.4-75)

And Grumio assures Hortensio in the most negative terms that money will be Petruchio's basic requirement in a wife:

Nay, look you Sir, he tens you flatly what his mind is. Why, give him gold enough and marry him to a puppet or an aglet-baby or an old trot with ne'er a tooth in her head, though she have as many diseases as two-and-fifty horses. Why, nothing comes amiss

so money comes withal.
(1.2.76-81)

No one in the play speaks against this kind of materialism; indeed, it seems to be the order of the day.

Kate's humbling begins from the moment Petruchio meets her. Petruchio immediately denies a part of her *self,* her identity as an angry woman. Just as the Lord of the Induction will make Christopher Sly "no less than what we say he is" (Ind. 1.71), so Petruchio will begin to turn Kate into his notion of her. Yet because her will and spirit meet his, the absurdity of his finding Kate "passing gentle" (2.1.235-45) and his elaboration of that idea is more humorous than not. It is when Petruchio begins to give Kate ultimatums, which I know he can and will enforce, that the play begins to give me a sinking feeling:

Setting all this chat aside,
Thus in plain terms: your father hath
consented
That you shall be my wife, your dowry
'greed on,
And will you, nill you, I will marry you.
For I am he am born to tame you, Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate Conformable as other household Kates.
(2.1.261-71)

The reason I begin to lose heart at this point is that I am certain Kate will not be able to hold her own against Petruchio. The lack of suspense is crucial to my response. I know that an angry woman cannot survive here. When I read or see *Macbeth* or *The Merchant of Venice,* though I know the witches' prophecies will come true to defeat Macbeth and that Portia will trick Shylock out of his pound of flesh, I always feel the power of the contest. But not in *Taming.*

After Kate and Petruchio are married and go to Petruchio's house in act 4, the play loses its humor for me. The change in tone follows partly from the fact that Petruchio's control over Kate becomes mainly physical. In Padua, the pair fights mainly through language, a weapon that Kate can wield as well as Petruchio. When Kate strikes Petruchio in the City, he swears he will hit her back if she does it again (2.1.218). Though he deserves slapping in the country, she cannot risk that there. While Petruchio never strikes her, he tries to intimidate her by hitting the servants and throwing food and dishes at them. The implication is that if she does not behave, he will do the same to her. Petruchio's physical taming of Kate is objectionable in itself; it is particularly humiliating because it is "appropriate" for animals, not people. Petruchio's description of his plan to tame Kate has no humor in it; related in soliloquy, it has the sound of simple explanation.

Kate's isolation in the country among Petruchio and men who are bound to do his bidding creates an ominous atmosphere. Her aloneness is heightened by the fact that

even Grumio is allowed to tease her, and her plight becomes the gossip of Petruchio's servants. Her humiliation has a sexually sadistic tinge since there is always the possibility that Petruchio will rape her, as he threatens earlier:

For I will board her though she chide as
loud
As thunder when the clouds in autumn
crack.
(1.2.93-95)

Petrucho's notion of sexual relations here is worthy of Iago, who says of Othello's elopement, "Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land carack" *(Othello* 1.2.49). Grumio immediately tells Hortensio, "'A my word and she knew him as well as I do, she would think scolding would do little good upon him. . .. I'll tell you what, sir, and she stand him but a little, he will throw a figure in her face and so disfigure her with it that she will have no more eyes to see withal than a cat" (1.2.107-14). He suggests that Petruchio can out-scold and outwit Kate, but he also implies, through particularly violent imagery, that Petruchio will use force if necessary. Petruchio even tells Baptista, "I am rough and woo not like a babe" (2.1.137).

When we hear that Petruchio is in Kate's bedroom "making a sermon of continency to her" (4.1.176), I imagine that he is obviously acting contrary (his favorite mode), preaching abstinence when he might be expected to want to consummate his marriage. I have also wondered whether we are supposed to imagine that Kate has hoped to please him by offering herself sexually. Or does she actually desire him? Is the play reinforcing the male fantasy that the more a man beats and abuses a woman the more she will fawn on him? But the episode is probably related mainly to assure us that Petruchio does not rape Kate, since we have been led to think he might. A play within a play, *The Taming of the Shrew* is enacted to crown Christopher Sly's evening. I think it is intended to have the same salacious appeal as are the paintings proposed for his enjoyment.

Kate and Petruchio's accord is possible only because Kate is finally willing to give up or pretend to give up her sense of reality-which *is* reality-for Petruchio's whimsy. He will do nothing to please Kate until she becomes willing to go along with him in everything, including agreeing that the sun is the moon. When she will not, he stages a temper tantrum: "Evermore crossed and crossed, nothing but crossed!" (4.5.10). Eager to visit Padua, she gives over to him in lines that can only be rendered with weariness:

Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,
And be it moon or sun or what you please.
And if you please to call it a rush-candle,
Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me.
(4.5.12-15)

What follows is one instance after another of Petruchio's testing Kate's subjection to him.

One of the most difficult aspects of the play for me is the way the women are set against each other at the end. Kate and Bianca have been enemies from the beginning, but now the Widow takes sides against Kate, calling her a "shrew" (5.2.28). Kate's famous speech on wifely duty is addressed to the widow as a reproach. The men use their wives to compete with each other:

Petruchio. To her, Kate!
Hortensio. To her, widow!
(5.2.33-34)

Betting on whose wife is the most obedient, the men stake their masculinity on their wives' compliance. A friendly voice will be raised against this kind of wager in *Cymbeline,* but not here. Only the Widow and Bianca, who will subsequently become "shrews," demur. When Kate throws her cap under foot at Petruchio's direction, the Widow remarks, "Lord, let me never have a cause to sigh / Till I be brought to such a silly pass"; and Bianca queries, "Duty call you this?" When Lucentio reproaches Bianca for costing him five hundred crowns, she replies, "The more fool you for laying on my duty" (5.2.123-29). Though the Widow and Bianca are hateful characters, I find myself in sympathy with them. The ending of the play simply goes awry for me.

Kate's final speech may be taken straight, as a sign that she has "reformed"; or it may be taken ironically, as though she mocks Petruchio. The happiest view of it is that Kate and Petruchio perform this final act together, to confound those around them and win the bet. Even if we accept this last interpretation, I cannot take pleasure in Kate's losing her voice. In order to prosper, she must speak patriarchal language. The Kate we saw at the beginning of the play has been silenced. In one sense, it does not matter whether she believes what she is saying, is being ironical, or is acting: her words are those that satisfy men who are bent on maintaining patriarchal power and hierarchy. For them, Kate's obedience, in Petruchio's words, bodes

peace. . . and love, and quiet life,
An awful rule and right supremacy;
And. . . what not that's sweet and happy.
(5.2.108-10)

For Kate, it means speaking someone else's language, losing a part of her identity. She no longer engages in the high-spirited play of wit that was characteristic of her when Petruchio first met her (2.1.182-259).

If I stand farther back from the play, it seems even less comic. It is significant that *Taming* is a play within a play: "not a comontie a Christmas gambold or a tumbling trick" or "household stuff," but "a kind of history" (Ind. 2.137-42). It seems to carry the same weight as *The Murder of Gonzago* in *Hamlet* or the rustics' dramatization of *Pyramus and Thisbe* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The pithy truth that *Taming* contains implies a kind of heterosexual agony. It is noticeable that just before the play begins, the Induction calls attention to the fact that the Page, though pretending to be a woman, is actually a man. Convinced that he is a lord and that the Page is his wife, Sly wants to

take his "wife" to bed. The Page begs off, claiming the physicians have said that lovemaking would be dangerous for Sly, and adds: "I hope this reason stands for my excuse." Picking up the double meaning attendant on the similarity of pronunciation between "reason" and "raising," Sly continues the phallic pun: "Ay, it stands so that I may hardly tarry so long" (Ind. 2.125-25). The source of Sly's desire is ambiguous: Is it the woman the Page pretends to be, or is it the man the Page reveals he is? Perhaps they are the same: a man in drag. In any case, the breaking of aesthetic distance here asks us to recognize that we are watching a homosexual couple watch the play. From their angle of vision, *Taming* affirms how problematic heterosexual relations are, especially marriage. The fault would seem to lie with women, who are all "shrews" at heart. If a man aspires to live in harmony with a woman, he must be like Petruchio (a comic version of Hotspur) and able to "tame" her. If he is gentle, like Lucentio, he will undoubtedly become the victim of a shrewish wife. This is not a happy view of women; it is an equally unhopeful vision of love and marriage.

Even though there may be ambiguities at the conclusion of Shakespeare's comedies, they are most joyous when couples join with the prospect of a happy marriage before them. In order for marriage to be hopeful in Shakespeare, women's power must be contained or channeled to serve and nurture men.

When it is-in *As You Like It, Twelfth Night,* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream-the* comic ending is celebratory. When it is not, in *The Merchant of Venice* or *Love's Labor's Lost,* the tone of the ending is less buoyant, even discordant. In *Love's Labor Lost,* when women remain in power and set the terms of marriage, it is implied that something is not right. Berowne comments:

Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill.
These ladles' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.
(5.2.872-74)

When the King insists that it will end in "a twelve-month and a day," after the men have performed the penances their ladies have stipulated, Berowne replies, "That's too long for a play." The final songs contain references to cuckoldry, and their closing note is on "greasy Joan" stirring the pot. What is different about the movement toward a comic ending in *Taming* is that women are set ruthlessly against each other, Kate's spirit is repressed, and marriage is made to seem warfare or surrender at too high a price.

Taming is responsive to men's psychological needs, desires, and fantasies at the expense of women. It plays to an audience who shares its patriarchal assumptions: men and also women who internalize patriarchal values. As someone who does not share those values, I find much of the play humorless. Rather than making me laugh, it makes me sad or angry. Its intended effect is spoiled. It is not only that I do not share the play's values, but also that I respond as a woman viewer and reader and do not simply respond according to my sense of Shakespeare's intention or try to adopt an

Elizabethan perspective (assuming I *could).* I stand outside of the community the joke is intended to amuse; I sympathize with those on whom the joke is played.

I understand that within the tradition of shrew stories, Shakespeare's version is more generous of spirit and more complex than other such stories. But *Taming* seems dated. I think that it is interesting historically-in tracing a tradition, in understanding sixteenth-century attitudes toward women-and that it is significant as part of Shakespeare's canon, as any work of his is. But limiting its importance this way, I imply that I find it less good than many of his comedies. And I do. If I went to see it, it would be out of curiosity, to find out how someone in our time would direct it.

Shakespeare continually depicts in comedy an infertile world in which lovers are separated; the task of the play is to restore the world by bringing lovers together. In several instances, he presents characters who are "man-haters" or "woman-haters" and unites them. Benedick and Beatrice, Hippolyta and Theseus are examples; Kate and Petruchio are forerunners of these couples. Interestingly enough, Shakespeare never again shows a woman treated so harshly as Kate except in tragedy. I think that Shakespeare either began to see the world differently or that he recognized the story of Kate and Petruchio did not quite work. Most significantly, he obviously enjoyed portraying witty women characters, and he must have seen that it was preferable to leave their spirits untamed.

Critical Essay #7

Contradictions between appearance and reality constitute a central issue in *The Taming of the Shrew* and figure in many discussions of the play's other themes and of the development of its characters. In 1963, Cecil C. Seronsy, in an essay excerpted below, asserted that its structural unity derives from the playwright's ingenious development of the theme of "supposes." Petruchio, the critic contended, succeeds in transforming Katherina by "supposing" that her appearance of shrewishness does not represent her "real" nature. Seronsy links this theme of transformation in the main plot to the string of deceptions in the subplot and the failure of the other bridegrooms to effect similar transformations in their brides. Four years later, Irving Ribner examined the play's use of contrasts between appearance and reality as 'part of his argument that in the play Shakespeare critiques two common Elizabethan views of courtship and marriage. In this essay, also excerpted below, Ribner traced the theme of "deceptive identities" in the Induction, the subplot, and the main action of the play. In the end, he contended, both the "romantic" marriage of Lucentio and Blanca and the more traditional, male-dominated relationship of Petruchio and Katherina are shown to be illusions.

Other critics who have addressed this theme in depth include Maynard Mack and Sears Jayne. In a 1962 essay , Mack asserted that Petruchio imitates Katherina's rude and willful behavior so that she may see for herself the effect it has on others. At the same time, the critic argued, Petruchio thrusts on Katherina the likeness of a modest, well-behaved young woman, so that she may recognize "what she may become if she tries." Four years later, Jayne interpreted the dramatic events following the opening scenes of the play as Sly's wish-fulfilling dream. This approach to the play, he suggested, helps explain the Induction's emphasis on dreaming, the many instances of pretense and supposing throughout the comedy, and "the extraordinarily close connection" between what Petruchio accomplishes and what the tinker himself wants: financial security and domination over women.

Discrepancies between appearance and reality also play important roles in the analyses of Harold Goddard (in the section on KATHERlNA), George R. Hibbard (in the GENDER ROLES section) and Richard Henze (in the section on GAMES AND ROLE-PLA YING). For a brief discussion of the relationship between the theme of appearance versus reality and the play's use of clothing images, see the excerpt from Norman Sanders's essay in the section on IMAGERY.

Source: "'Supposes' as the Unifying Theme in 'The Taming of the Shrew," in *Shakespeare Quarterly,* Vol. XIV, No.1, Winter, 1963, Pl'. 15-30.

[Seronsy asserts that the structural unity of The Taming of the Shrew *derives from Shakespeare's ingenious development of the theme of "supposes, " which he found in the source of his subplot. The fullest expression of this theme is in the main action, he maintains, where with unusual insight Petruchio supposes qualities in Katherina that no other character, possibly not even she, has ever suspected existed. His "shrew taming" method enables him to recov. er Katherina's "real nature." In developing his*

argument, the critiC examines parallels and contrasts between the failure of the "apparent" tutors Hortensio and Lucentio to mold their brides and the success of Petruchio, the "real" teacher of the play, in transforming Katherina.]

I believe that the unity of Shakespeare's comedy goes much deeper than the mere fitting and joining of the various plots, and I question whether the shrew theme is the principal instrument of this organization of parts. Instead, the subplot, with its theme of "supposes" which enters substantially into both the shrew action and the induction, appears to offer a better explanation-one which will account in large measure for Shakespeare's superior handling of all three elements of the plot. If one is to judge by the way the subplot has in most discussions been somewhat lightly dismissed or at least has been given relatively little emphasis, the likelihood appears that the full significance of the idea behind "supposes", with its possibilities for dramatic enlargement, has been overlooked. There is no reason to assume that the word "supposes" itself must be limited now or in sixteenth-century usage to mean only "substitutions" of characters for one another in a mere mechanical routine of outward disguise. For Elizabethans it had substantially the same values in meaning as it has for us:

"supposition", "expectation", "to believe", "to imagine", "to guess", to assume". If we keep before us this wider sense of the word, it is not difficult to see how it becomes a guiding principle of Petruchio's strategy in winning and taming the shrew, and it may well be the key to what Mark Van Doren notes as our secret occupation in observing the stages by which Petruchio and Katherina "surrender to the fact of their affection" [in *Shakespeare,* 1939].

The subplot goes back to George Gascoigne's *The Supposes,* a translation in 1566 of Ariosto's *I Suppositi* . . . . Shakespeare. . . greatly enlarges upon the game of "supposes" even in the very plot of that name derived from Gascoigne. Although Baptista in his first speech makes it clear that old Gremio and Hortensio are Bianca's only suitors, which in itself proves to be a false supposal, Shakespeare, by risking the disguising of Hortensio with all its entailing inconsistencies in plot, may have wanted to place him in a parallel situation with the other serious suitor Lucentio as a supposed tutor in order to compound the mischief, even though Horterisio does not remain long in the field and at the end of the lesson scene already gives clear signs of relinquishing his suit. (Gremio, as the *old* suitor, is obviously too much a traditionally stock comic character out of Roman comedy to enter this competition.) Both serious young rivals, Lucentio and Hortensio, deliberately make themselves supposed tutors, producing a situation that does not exist in either *A Shrew* [a play similar to Shakespeare's print ed in 1594] or *The Supposes* and thereby sustaining interest and some suspense in the subplot until the shrew-taming plot gets under way. It is this circumstance more than any other that makes Shakespeare's sub-plot so much more lively and interesting than its counterpart in *A Shrew.* And it is this emphasis upon the school administered by two lovers, supposed tutors, that by a comic irony prepares the way for the "taming school" to come, administered by Petruchio, not supposed a teacher at all. Petruchio turns out to be a real tutor, to whom Hortensio himself goes to school, as does even Lucentio in the last act of the play. And Bianca, the ready scholar in the supposed school under the

direction of the two rivals, contrasts sharply with Katharina who repulses her tutor. Yet finally Bianca, supposedly mild and tractable, also in a sense goes to school, to her sister Katharina, supposed intractable, to learn obedience. It is this fine joining of the two plots, along lines suggested by the "supposes" theme, which is missed entirely by *A Shrew.* And with it is missed this delightfully ironic turn at the close of Shakespeare's play. There is some significance too in the way Petruchio is made to link the two plots together by his sponsoring Hortensio as supposed tutor, just as Gremio sponsors Lucentio, while we are shortly to see Petruchio himself engaging in a game of "supposes" that goes much deeper than theirs. In Petruchio's "taming" of Katharina we see this game most triumphantly played.

Both Petruchio and Katharina in the process of learning from each other make subtle adjustments in attitude. His motive for marriage is at first wealth, yet, while that remains an important consideration, he comes to see that she possesses other qualities which make her worth the trouble of winning over. These evidences of Katharina's real nature as against her supposed temperament, are present in the first scene with her father. Petruchio sees these traits and hits upon a novel method of bringing them into realization. One of Shakespeare's happiest strokes. . . is to exhibit Petruchio's own system of tutoring and thus closely relate the themes of shrew-taming and supposes. Petruchio's method is to suppose (and he is correct) or assume qualities in Katharina that no one else, possibly even the shrew herself, ever suspects. What he assumes as apparently false turns out to be startlingly true. His "treatment" is a steady unfolding of her really fine qualities: patience, practical good sense, a capacity for humor, and finally obedience, all of which she comes gradually to manifest in a spirit chastened but not subdued. There can be no question about the justice of his tactics, if measured by the end product, for he enables her first to see herself as others see her, and then, her potentiality for humor and self-criticism having been brought out, she is able to discover in herself those qualities he is so sure she possesses. He is a superb teacher whose method is not unknown to many another teacher. And, since his system of make-believe is a profounder one than that effected in the more conventional, superficial, and mechanical disguises of the inherited subplot, there emerges a lively and pointed contrast between the two sets of complications. For, whereas in the subplot, although the theme of supposes is to some extent already enriched and deepened in Shakespeare's play, supposition is still based for the most part upon intrigue and the purely physical circumstances of name, situation, and the like, here in the shrew plot the supposition represents a deeper, more conscious effort, the will to believe and make real and establish beyond cavil what everyone else fails to see. The distinction is one between outer circumstance and inner conviction, a kind of triumph of mind or personality over a world of stubborn outward "fact" not quite so real as had been supposed. . . .

At her very first appearance (I. i) Katharina makes it clear that she will resist all attempts to make her anything other than what she thinks she is. Assumed to be a shrew, she will not change; so great is the power of suggestion upon her. She will not be made a "stale amongst these mates" [I. i. 58], though Hortensio punningly tells her that no mates are possible unless she becomes gentler and milder. She bitterly resents being "appointed hours" on what proves, however, to be a false supposition about her powers: "as

though, belike, I knew not what to take, and what to leave, ha?" [I. i. 103-04]. All this whets our interest in Petruchio's forthcoming tactics of transforming her. In the following scene Baptista has almost given up hope that Katharina will ever marry, "Supposing it a thing impossible" [I. ii. 123], as Hortensio says, but this turns out to be a false "suppose". On the other hand, Petruchio at that moment is just as confident that he can woo and tame her, and thereby accomplish the supposedly impossible. He who has heard the stormy sea raging like a lion and the thunder of artillery on the field of battle is not to be daunted by "a little din" [I. ii. 199] coming from a woman's tongue. His method begins to take shape even before he meets her: he will suppose the shrew's raging as negligible or non-existent simply by refusing to hear it. Soon he will meet her and then proceed from this negative mode of not positing (or supposing) *bad* traits in her to the positive supposing of such *good* traits in her as gentleness, good humor, patience, and obedience, which have not yet come to the surface. Already he seems to have an insight, lacking in her father, her sister, and others, into the potential existence of these finer qualities in Katharina.

This sharper insight emerges in (1) his first visit to Baptista and (2) his first interview alone with Katharina, both in Act II. For in his opening speech to the father, still having not yet seen the daughter (note how skillfully suspense is accumulated by allowing the audience to watch the building up of Petruchio's design), he asks [II. i. 42-3], "Pray, have you not a daughter / Call'd Katharina, fair and virtuous?" He goes on to extol the young woman for her reported beauty, wit, affability, bashful modesty, and mildness-purely fictionalized qualities as yet, so far as anyone knows. His humor is to proceed with her *as if* these *were* existent traits in her, as indeed in the testing they later prove to be. He jauntily assures Baptista that the obtaining of his daughter's love will be no task at all, and when he hears Hortensio's account of Katharina's striking him with the lute, he interprets even this action favorably, as a sign of her being "a lusty wench" and he longs "to have some chat with her" [II. i. 160, 162]. All her actions, whether or not objectionable, are to be assimilated into the image he wills and imposes. And, when alone, waiting for her to appear, he announces in soliloquy his plan of winning her by contraries, by playing a calculated game of supposes [II. i. 170-80]:

Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale;
Say that she frown; I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses new!y wash'd with dew:
Say she be mute and
Will not speak a word;
Then I'll commend her volubility,
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence:
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks,
As though she bid me stay by her a week:
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day
When I shall ask the banns and when be
married.

Then immediately upon her coming to him, he puts his system of make-believe to work. He assumes familiarity by addressing her as "Kate" and smothers her angry remonstrances by adding that his "Kate" is "plain", "bonny", "sometimes Kate the curst" [II. i. 186], but "pretty" withal, "super-dainty", and possessed of mildness. Then follows the punning wit-combat, from which it is clear that he has taken her measure, most certainly as she has not his. In this exchange the many mutual animal epithets that fly between them are a key to the extent of this understanding of one another. Her attributions are most often wrong, his are right. Thus, her "asses are made to bear, and so are you" is an inappropriate judgment proved wrong in the sequel; his "women are made to bear, and so are you" is gentler, more playful, and more nearly valid, to say the least [II. i. 199,200]. He is far from being the "jade" she calls him; and it can be held that more truly she buzzes like a bee, as he says, than that he acts like the buzzard (a useless hawk or stupid person), as she supposes. For him, Katharina is a "slow-wing'd turtle" and a "wasp". For her, Petruchio is a "coxcomb" and a "craven". The point here is not that Katharina comes off the worse in this wit-combat; indeed she carries on the battle on pretty equal terms with him. It is simply that in the choice and manipulation of epithets Shakespeare subtly suggests two sets of suppositions: Petruchio's, whose distortions and exaggerations are deliberate and cannily near the truth; and Katharina's, which are tinged with anger and show wrong judgment.

Petruchio next boldly exhibits to her his strategy of "supposes", which she has not yet grasped. This he does by presenting a fine series of contrasts between unflattering reports he has *heard* of her, though for the most part deliberately "supposed" (she is rough, sullen, frowning, limping), and what he has supposedly *found* in her (she is pleasant, gamesome, courteous, soft, affable, straight as the hazel-twig-indeed all the things he wants her to be, and which she is, in fact, capable of becoming). And after commending her as a very Diana, he announces that it is his destiny to tame her. By thus making veritable destiny out of his expectations, his "supposes", he is asserting the triumph of mind and character. This is reflected in his reply to the returning Baptista's asking him how successful he has been in his suit [II. i. 282-83]: "How but well, sir? how but well? / It were impossible I should speed amiss." He has, he says, found the daughter modest, contrary to all reports, and he has concluded in agreement with her, though that agreement is wholly his own "suppose", that Sunday will be their wedding-day. When at this point others in the company intervene on behalf of the now faintly protesting shrew, who is by this time clearly losing the fight, Petruchio "supposes" himself her defending champion against interlopers. Meanwhile, the game of supposes goes on merrily in the other plot, where at the end of the act, Tranio, disguised as Lucentio, has apparently won the field in behalf of his master, and now, being required to produce a father and prove his claim of supposedly great possessions, wittily says [II. i. 406-07], "I see no reason but supposed Lucentio / Must get a father, call'd 'supposed Vincentio'." The motif of "supposes" in both plots has thus been firmly established by the end of Act IT.

When Katharina next appears (III. ii) she still fails to see Petruchio's game as she walts for him to arrive at the wedding, falsely supposing him to be fickle, a mere jester, and a bitter one at that. When he does come late before the assembled wedding party dressed in the most outlandish way, he acts *as if* he cannot understand why they frown

at him, *as if* they saw [ITI. ii. 96] "some comet or unusual prodigy". But we see something real behind all this strange pretense in his declaration [III. ii. 117]: "To me she's married, not unto my clothes". It is as though the "suppose" he adopts serves to point up the reality that lies behind appearance and as though he here is whimsically rebuking them all for mistaking the shadow for the substance. Then, despite his unaccountably rude behavior in church, particularly his conduct towards the priest, and possibly on account of it, Katharina remains quiet throughout, and we see that his "suppose" is gradually becoming reality, as evidenced in his reference to her [III. ii. 195] as "this most patient, sweet, and virtuous wife".

Although by her compliance she has born out his hard-worked hypothesis at this point, she makes, shortly after this, a last serious attempt at a showdown, when her temper flares up at his insistence, against her inclination, upon not staying for the wedding feast. For a moment he relaxes the reins by letting her think she is gaining the ascendance, and then in mocking yet basically sound supposal of her independence of others, he orders her to command that the feast is to proceed. But the bride-who-is-to-be-obeyed has falsely supposed that she is not to be commanded by her husband, and Petruchio pulls in the reins, asserting his prerogative as master and ordering her to accompany him. Finally, at the close of the scene, he once again becomes her supposed champion, this time as her rescuer from supposed "thieves", and encourages her against a supposed fear of them. It is all a masterpiece of imposed superior will.

The game goes on in Act IV with the arrival of the newly-wedded couple at the country house. Petruchio's good-humoredly bidding Katharina to be merry at a moment when she is tired and oppressed by the cold, uncomfortable journey thither, his rejection of the meat brought in to the hungry wife on the ground that he acts thus only out of solicitude for her against "choler", his reported sermon to her on continency in the bedchamber, as if she needs to be guarded against the supposed raging passions of a body already worn out with hunger and fatigue-these are all pieces of the same device he continues to employ, all supposedly "done in reverend care of her" [IV. i. 204], as he himself puts it, and all comprising, as he later confides in soliloquy [IV. i. 208], "a way to kill a wife with kindness." Even though the shrew has not yet been wholly tamed, his supposal of patience in her has led her a little earlier [IV. i. 156] to counsel this very virtue in him when he strikes the servant. She has already learned enough of that virtue which he so ardently and uncompromisingly supposes in her to begin teaching it to him.

With Tranio's announcement to Bianca in the following scene that Hortensio, heretofore supposed Licio the music teacher, having removed himself as a rival, is now intent upon winning and mastering a wealthy widow, and for that purpose has gone to Petruchio's country house, to his "taming school", the two plots are neatly brought together again. Even the servant Grumio has learned something of his master's technique, as we see (IV. iii) when he alternately offers, then withdraws her food, as if acting out of regard for her good. Petruchio, with his newly-arrived "pupil" looking on, further displays his technique in the scene with the haberdasher and tailor, when he denies Katharina the cap and gown on a trumped-up supposal that these items are unbecoming to her.

Petruchio's triumphant strategy reaches its climax on their return trip to Padua. Here his unyielding supposal converts the sun to the moon and then reverses itself, to all of which Katharina dutifully assents, while he protests that it is *he* [IV. v. 10] who is "evermore cross'd and cross'd". Next, on meeting Lucentio's real father, who is soon to encounter an impostor disguised as himself, Petruchio "disguises" the old man by sheer supposal as a young girl, then returns him to his identity as an old man. To all of this the erstwhile shrew assents, being now completely converted to her husband's supposal of things, no matter whither it leads. She now sees as he sees, and in a triumph of comic reversal she responds with a humor that redeems her from the hint, dangerously close, of abject submission. This comes first in her well-known speech of acquiescence [IV. v. 19-22]:

But sun it is not, when you say it is not; And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is;
And so it shall be so for Katharine.

But her master-stroke comes when, in addressing the old man "restored" to his true identity by Petruchio's whim, with still finer humor she neatly ties together *both* of her husband's two feats of make-believe in a delightful, less commonly noticed pun (italics mine). Petruchio had told her earlier in the scene [IV. v. 6.7], during the sun episode,

Now, by my mother's *son,* and that's myself,
It shall be moon, or star, or what I list.
Now she brilliantly concurs [IV. v. 45-9] in his reversal of the old man's identity with
Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes,
That have been so bedazzled with the *sun*
That everything I look on seemeth green:
Now I perceive thou art a reverend father;
Pardon, I pray thee, for my mad mistaking.

The field is now won for Petruchio, as Hortensio has already perceived. It may not be altogether fanciful to see an allusion to Katharina's gradually-won perception of things, her buoyant self-discovery, in the line "That everything I look on seemeth green". In this final encounter, she enjoys more than a half-share of the honors as the two of them enter into full partnership.

The final scene of the play presents a shrew not only tamed but enthusiastically joining her husband in the game of showing the others a profitable example of what wifely obedience can be. Victory has crowned a method in which nearly all expectations, or suppositions, have been reversed except Petruchio's. Hortensio and Lucentio, supposed masters of their wives, are not masters after all. Apparently Hortensio's apprenticeship in Petruchio's taming school did not last sufficiently long, nor was it thoroughgoing enough.

Bianca and the Widow, supposedly sweet and accommodating, offer more than a trace of shrewishness themselves, whereas Katherine, the supposed shrew, is really the obedient and understanding wife. Petruchio has made of his supposal, originally fictive

but later supported by an insight into the real truth of his wife's nature, a triumphant fact. The other husbands, acting on probability, on the apparently predictable outcome, find their suppositions faulty. Petruchio's is a triumph of the imagination, of a well-worked-out hypothesis, and Theseus' comment on the artisans' play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [V. i. 211-12] applies with equal truth to the psychological facts here: "The best in thIS kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them." . . .

Critical Essay #8

Source: "The Morality of Farce: *The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *Essays in American and English Literature Presented to Bruce Robert McElderry, Jr.,* edited by Max F. Schulz with William D. Templeman and Charles R. Metzger, Ohio University Press, 1967, pp. 165-76.

[In The Taming of the Shrew, *Ribner maintains, Shakespeare presents two views of marriage and ridicules both by placing them within the dramatic context of the Induction. The critic argues that the principal issue con fronting Sly is "the identity of women and the true na ture of the seemingly dutiful and loving wife. " This theme of deceptive identity recurs throughout the Bianca.Lucentio subplot, Ribner remarks, and is most fully developed in the central action, where the effect of Petruchio's "shrew taming" is to confuse Katherina about appearance and reality. The critic sees in the final scene of the play only an apparent return to reality. In its presentation of the Widow and Bianca as the real shrews and Katherina as "the trained dog or hawk of her master, " he contends, this episode continues to offer a conventional Elizabethan view of marriage as filtered through Sly's perspective. The play's conclusion, the critic asserts, is as fanciful and idle as the tinker's sojourn in the Lord's bedchamber.]*

At the heart of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* is a coarse medieval antifeminist joke which has come down to us in several versions, the most interesting perhaps being the mid-sixteenth century ballad, *A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin for her good behaviour.* . .. Implicit in this story of wife-beating and submission is the notion of woman as subordinate to her husband, as much his property as the old plowhorse, Morel, in whose raw skin the errant wife of the ballad is finally wrapped. It is a view of woman. . . which Petruchio himself in Shakespeare's play clearly proclaims:

She is my goods, my chatte!s; she is my
house, My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ass, my anything
[III. i,. 230-32]

Most critics of the play have taken these lines as an expression of Shakespeare's moral attitude, and there is usually the lame apology that he is merely expressing the common Elizabethan view for the delight of an audience to whom it was more congenial than it may be to most of us today. Geoffrey Bullough, for instance [in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources oJ Shakespeare, Vol I,* 1957], tells us that Shakespeare's play is "as much a social comedy preaching the subjection of women as was *A Shrew,* but its effect is more witty and civilized."

With the material of his crude ballad source Shakespeare combined the Bianca-Lucentio subplot which he took from George Gascoigne's *Supposes.* . . .

In adapting Gascoigne's early play, itself based upon a sophisticated Italian original and written for an Inns of Court audience, Shakespeare emphasized even beyond anything in his source the tradition of elegant Petrarchan love-making in which Gascoigne's story had its origins. Shakespeare removes the pregnancy of Gascoigne's heroine which is an essential part of his plot, so as to suggest a more elevated kind of lovemaking in which the lady's chastity must always be preserved and which must culminate in marriage. In Shakespeare's subplot the woman is not her husband's chattel to be beaten into submission by him, but a goddess upon a pedestal to be worshiped. Love is not entirely a matter of legal possession secured by marriage contracts; it is an all-embracing passion which makes the lover the slave of his mistress and which consumes him utterly until he is united with the object of his desires:

Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio
If I achieve not this young modest girl.
[I. i. 155-56]

This, of course, is at the opposite extreme from Petruchio. The usual explanation is that the subplot was intended as a contrast which by its very absurdity enforces the contrary view of domestic felicity in the Petruchio-Kate relationship. And this view is usually regarded as fully vindicated by the supposed victory in the contest of wives with which the play ends.

Those who take this final scene in literal terms as a vindication of Petruchio's view of marriage tend to ignore the animal context in which the scene is cast. Petruchio bets upon his wife as he would upon a hawk or a hound, and his victory is that of any good trainer of dogs.

Those who might be tempted to take the Bianca-Lucentio relationship as representing a more refined view of marriage closer to Shakespeare's heart must be reminded that this marriage is based entirely upon deception and that, in spite of Lucentio's Petrarchan protestations, Shakespeare to emphasize its essential crassness must reduce it before it can be concluded to crude commercial terms not unlike those in which Petruchio courts his Kate. The supposed Lucentio, who is really Tranio in disguise, bids like a merchant against Gremio for the prize [II. i. 363 ff.]. If Petruchio is cast as the animal trainer, these lovers are reduced at last to traders at a horse sale. Bianca is merely the "commodity" which Baptista awards to the highest bidder, pending a binding legal guarantee of his bid:

I must confess your offer is the best;
And, let your father make her the assurance,
She is your own; else you must pardon me.
[II. I. 386-88]

To see in either of these love relations Shakespeare's view of marriage we must conclude that he saw the most vital of all human relations either as the act of buying an animal or as the act of beating one into submission.

But the real key to Shakespeare's moral commentary on marriage may perhaps be found in the third story with which Shakespeare combined these two. This is the old *Arabian Nights* tale of "the sleeper awakened," a folklore motif which has come down to us in many versions. What is significant about it is that it poses again the problem of the relation of appearance to reality, and this questioning of the very nature of reality in Shakespeare's play. . . is a framework in which the other two plots are set. The relations of Katherine to Petruchio and of Bianca to Lucentio are both seen as a kind of play within a play-a fantastic performance staged before an old man rendered incapable of distinguishing the true from the false. The Christopher Sly induction is absolutely essential to *The Taming of the Shrew* because it furnishes the frame of reference in which the other two plots are to be seen, and in this perspective the wooing of Kate is as absurd as the wooing of Bianca. We do not have, as some suppose, a presentation of two views of marriage, the one finally to be judged more valid than the other; we have the holding up to ridicule of two views of marriage, and as the Petruchio-Kate relation receives the greater dramatic emphasis, it is the one found most wanting.

At the same time that the Christopher Sly induction introduces its confusion between appearance and reality it relates this theme to the problem of courtship and marriage, for the most prominent thing about which Sly is confused is the identity of woman and the true nature of the seemingly dutiful and loving wife. Throughout the performance before them Sly in reality will be sitting next to Bartholomew the page who will seem to him to be the model of the loving wife ready to serve her supposed husband with

What is't your honour will command,
Wherein your lady and your humble wife
May show her duty and make known her
love?
[Induction i. 115-17]

As the play within this play opens Bartholomew appears to Sly to be all that Katherine will become as the result of her taming:

My husband and my lord, my lord and
husband,
I am your wife in all obedience
[Induction ii. 106-07]

And the theater audience's sense of Sly's delusion will prepare it to see Petruchio's supposed victory as the same kind of delusion. When the Bianca-Lucentio subplot is introduced, again the theme of false identity appears. This entire subplot will depend upon confusion of persons. Lucentio will assume the disguise of his servant, wooing under false pretense, and when he has won his lady the final scene will reveal her not as the meek young girl he had fallen in love with, but rather as a wife as willful and as disobedient as her sister Katherine had seemed at the play's beginning. The subplot consists, of course, of a whole set of "supposes" and these are linked thematically to the induction as they are to the main plot, for Christopher Sly is as uncertain of reality and of his own identity as are the characters he is watching. Only the theater audience

knows the truth, and this awareness causes it to see the self-delusion of Shakespeare's characters.

The taming of Katherine in Shakespeare's source consisted essentially of the beating of a wife into submission. In Shakespeare's play this physical element is greatly toned down, although elements of it survive. What we have instead is, in fact, the teaching of Katherine to question reality and to accept falsehood as truth, just as it is accepted by Christopher Sly. A few illustrations may suffice.

Petruchio's initial approach to Baptista is one of pretending to believe what the audience knows is false. He describes Katherine as we have already been made to see in a previous scene that she is not:

. . . hearing of her beauty and her wit,
Her affability and bashful modesty,
Her wondrous qualities and mild behaviour
[II. *i.* 48-50]

And as an opening gift he presents Baptista with a teacher to instruct Katherine, who we know is not "Licio, born in Mantua" as Petruchio calls him [II. i. 60], but simply the disguised Hortensio.

This deliberate pretense that falsehood is truth is maintained in his first encounter with Katherine herself:

. . . I find you passing gentle.
'Twas to!d me you were rough and coy and
sullen,
And now I find report a very liar;
For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing
courteous
[II. i. 242-45]

The treatment of Katherine in Petruchio's house is largely a matter of his denying what she knows to be true until she herself is confused about reality, and this process of confusion is only completed upon the road to Padua when -she is ready to agree that the sun is the moon and that a withered old man is a fair young girl, just as Christopher Sly believes that the page beside him is a loving wife.

The process of taming thus becomes a denial of truth and a destruction of that power of reason which separates man and woman from the lower animals. That its final effect is to reduce the tamed wife to the level of an animal is made clear by the very soliloquy in which Petruchio compares his "politic reign" as husband to the taming of a hawk by its master:

My falcon now *is* sharp and passing empty; And till she stoop she must not be full gorged,
For then she never looks upon her lure. Another way I have to man my haggard, To

make her come and know her keepers'
call,
That is, to watch her, as we watch those
kites
That bate and beat and will not be obedient
[IV. i. 190-96]

The animal terms of Petruchio's courtship have, in fact, been made clear from the beginning. At the end of their first encounter, he pretends to examine Kate in the terms with which a would-be purchaser would survey a horse:

Why does the world report that Kate doth
limp?
O sland'rous world' Kate like the hazel twig
Is straight and slender, and as brown in hue
As hazelnuts, and sweeter than the kernels.
0, let me see thee walk: thou doest not halt
[II. I. 252-56]

Limping is a defect one looks for in horses, not in wives. To be "brown in hue" can be meritorious only in horses, for Elizabethan women were prized for the whiteness of their skins, darkness in complexion being, in fact, regarded as a sign of a lecherous disposition. When Petruchio asks that his prospective bride be paraded before him like a horse in a ring, we are being well prepared for the crude animalism of the wife-contest of the play's final scene.

In *The Taming of a Shrew* the Christopher Sly framework is maintained throughout the play, and the final scene is a return to reality in which we find Sly again a beggar out on the street. He then announces to the tapster that he has learned how to tame a shrew and will go home to practice his lesson upon his own wife. This is a fitting conclusion for the medieval antifeminist Joke which is the substance of this play. Why this final episode is not in Shakespeare's play has been the subject of much debate. I do not think it necessary to suppose, as some have done, that our text represents a shortened version or is in some way corrupt. Richard Hosley has shown by an examination of all Elizabethan induction plays [in an article in *Studies in English Literature, 15001900,* 1961] that Shakespeare's failure to complete his was no way unusual. The answer may be that for Shakespeare to have ended his playas *A Shrew* ends might have destroyed the effect of his work which he had been building toward from the very beginning.

The complications of Shakespeare's play actually are over at the end of the first scene of the fifth act. The second scene is a kind of epilogue which serves a function similar in the total structure to what might have been served by the concluding element of the Christopher Sly story which Shakespeare omitted. It is the same kind of final summing up of the play's moral content. It is Shakespeare's substitute for a return to reality-a return to a reality which is not reality at all. The characters of the play have now seemingly abandoned their disguises, and in the contest of wives which is the chief

substance of the scene we are to see what has been the result of all the action of the play-the revelation of what a true, dutiful and loving wife should be.

And what do we find? Bianca and the widow are themselves revealed as shrews and Kate is revealed as the trained hawk or dog of her master. Is this reality? By his constant stressing of false appearance Shakespeare has led us to the point where this final revelation seems as much a fancy and an idle dream as Sly's stay in the lord's palace. We continue to see in this final scene a vision of domestic felicity such as might be seen by a beggar disguised as a lord, incapable of distinguishing man from woman and uncertain even of his own identity. Rather than the crude return to reality at the end of *The Taming of a Shrew* Shakespeare gives us a seeming return to reality which is merely the embracing by Petruchio, Lucentio and the rest of an absolute delusion. We continue to the very end of the play to see a conventional Elizabethan statement about marriage through the eyes of a Christopher Sly.

It is thus not necessary for us to forgive Shakespeare for presenting an outmoded view of marriage and to say that the play is redeemed in spite of this by its exuberance, farce, or comic characterization. The play actually ridicules two views of man's relation to woman, and in this ridicule there is important moral commentary. It is this moral commentary, in fact, which holds together the separate parts of the play and makes of it the delightful experience which it is.

Critical Essay #9

Critics have long noted the play's emphasis on role-playing; in 1839, for instance, Hermann Ulrici asserted that both the Induction and the main action of *The Shrew* dramatize the principle that people should accept the roles in life "which nature has assigned" them. More recently, Charles Brooks (1960) suggested that Katherina learns to play the role of the obedient wife not only as a way to ensure domestic harmony but also as a means by which she and Petruchio can amuse themselves at the expense of others. Richard Henze, in a 1970 article excerpted below, interpreted *The Shrew* as "a dramatic exploration of the nature of role playing in comedy and in life." Under Petruchio's expert direction, the critic argued, Katherina learns to playa variety of parts so proficiently that her role in her marriage becomes indistinguishable from her role in life. Two years later, Ralph Berry proposed that while the drama may be, in essence, "a fairly brutal sex farce," it is also a subtle portrayal of two people coming to terms with the "rules of the game" played between men and women. Alexander Leggatt, in a 1974 article excerpted here in the section on Petruchio, focused on the importance of literary and social conventions in the play, especially those of education, sport, and playacting. The lesson for Katherina, as well as for the audience, he asserted, is that humans are essentially conventional creatures for whom "order and pleasure are inseparable." Leggatt also suggested that the play's continual evocation of sports, particularly hunting, helps the audience to view the action as a game and thus makes Petruchio's often brutal treatment of Katherina seem more acceptable. In 1979, Marianne L. Novy suggested that games and role-playing help Katherina to come to terms with a social order that insists on male dominance and female submission.

Some critics, however, reject the concept that game-playing softens the impact of Petruchio's methods for either Katherina or the audience. H. J. Oliver (in the OVERVIEWS section and the PETRUCHIO section), rejected suggestions that Katherina and Petruchio are "playing a game" and contended that Katherina is a very real loser in her relationship with her husband. Shirley Nelson Garner (in the GENDER ROLES section) on the other hand, allowed in a 1988 essay that a joke lies at the center of the play. She argued, however, that this central joke is essentially misogynistic, and that the play is designed to amuse and entertain men who take pleasure in the subjugation of women.

Source: "Role Playing in *The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *The Southern Humanities Review,* Vol. 4, No.3, Summer, 1970, pp. 231-40.

[Henze regards The Taming of the Shrew *as a "dramatic exploration of the nature of role playing in comedy and in life.» Under Petruchio's expert direction, the critic claims, Katherina learns to playa variety of parts so proficiently that her role in the marriage pageant becomes indistinguishable from that in life. On the other hand, Henze contends, Sly, Lucentio, Bianca and other characters share an inability to play multiple parts, and thus each of them has only a limited capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Katherina's essential shrewishness, as well as Petruchio's inherent crudeness, do not change, the critic argues; rather, they become acceptable qualities*

because each of them is able to play, respectively, obedient wife and loving husband-complementary roles that foster harmony in their relationship.]

The relationship between induction and play proper in *The Taming of the Shrew* has always been considered one of the play's principal problems, made more vexing by the lack of an epilogue to tie up the lordship of Sly. Various critics, reacting in various fashion, have suggested that an epilogue was never necessary, that an epilogue was lost, and that an epilogue should be recreated when the play is staged. Perhaps more important than the speculation about a possible epilogue, however, has been the attempt by recent critics who regard the playas an artistic success to show that the induction, even without an epilogue, does have a clear relationship to the rest of the play, and that the play and induction have a common unifying theme. Richard Hosley, for example [in his introduction to the Pelican edition, 1964] recognizes parallels of appearance and reality between induction and play, and Cecil Seronsy says that the success of *The Shrew* "lies chiefly in the union of the three strands, in their having a fundamental likeness, the game of supposes or make believe"; all three plots involve "the inter-play of love and illusion, and transformation on varying levels." As far as I can determine, however, no one has fully heeded Sly's lady's suggestion that comedy is a kind of history and, therefore, that life is sometimes a kind of comedy, and treated the entire play, including the induction, as a dramatic exploration of the nature of role playing in comedy and in life. That I want to do in this paper. I intend to show that Petruchio teaches Kate that, as Jaques says in *As You Like It,*

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts
(II.vii.139-141)

and that he then, like an expert director, trains Kate to play roles so expertly that one cannot separate Kate's part in the pageant from Kate's function in life.

Jaques' metaphor of the World as a stage was, by the Renaissance, a commonplace idea that Shakespeare might have encountered in dozens of different places. The world was considered God's theater where men play their parts in the drama of life. . . .

In his training of Kate, Petruchio proves the metaphor by playing a series of parts, as buyer, wooer, tamer, and husband, and by directing Kate in roles as wooed maiden, wife with jealous husband, wife with tyrannous husband, and finally obedient wife with loving husband. Like Petruchio, Kate plays each part more subtly than the last until she performs so well that one, like the Lord with the actor in the induction, cannot separate actor from role:

This fellow I remember
Since once he play'd a farmer's eldest son.
'Twas where you woo'd the gentlewoman so
well

I have forgot your name; but sure that part
Was apt!y fitted and naturally perform'd.
(Ind i.83-87)

So one tends to forget that it is the shrew who is playing the obedient wife at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* exactly because the part is so naturally performed that the shrew is the obedient wife.

Before Petruchio succeeds in turning Kate into an expert actress, however, the Lord fails to make Sly a convincing actor. After the Lord finds Sly in the gutter, he decides to help Sly play the part of a Lord:

What think you? If he were convey'd to bed,
Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his
fingers,
A most delicious banquet by his bed,
And brave attendants near him when he
wakes,
Would not the beggar then forget himself?
(Ind.i 37-41)

The hunters assure the Lord that the beggar will:

2. *Hunt.* It would seem strange unto him
when he wak'd.
Lord. Even as a flatt'ring dream or worthless
fancy.
(Ind.I.43-44)

However quickly the beggar forgets himself, and Sly decides rather quickly that he is a lord indeed, we do not forget that the beggar is only a beggar. However real Sly is to himself as lord, he is not a real lord to us; his part is not "aptly fitted and naturally perform'd" (Ind.i.87) as an effective player's part should be. Sly has sufficient imagination to think himself a lord when he sees the obvious evidence; he does not have sufficient imagination to project that image so that the audience will find it credible; he remains, consistently, Christopher Sly. Even if the Lord were not to tell us, we, like Hippolyta watching Bottom's Pyramus, would find Sly's lordship a jest.

The Taming of the Shrew, acted by the players welcomed by the Lord, begins as part of that jest and as a play, a pretense, within the pretense of Sly's role as lord. But where Sly's transformation remains a jest because of Sly's inability to play aptly a lord, *The Taming of the Shrew* becomes more than a joke; it acquires substance and meaning in spite of its apparent repetition of the medieval jest about the crude taming of a shrewish wife; and it acquires that meaning not just because Blanca is wooed and won nor because Kate is tamed, but because Kate is able to become, under Petruchio's direction, a versatile, expert actress in the pageant of life, able to play her part in a comedy of marital harmony so well that one can use the role partly to characterize the

person who plays it. While watching a jest, on the other hand, one remembers an too well, even if one is not directly reminded, that the subject of the jest is being forced to playa part for which, in Sly's case especially, he may be ill-suited. That distinction between a practical joke and the comedy of life is evident not only in the contrast between Sly and Kate, who is very well-suited for her role as the obedient wife at the end of the play, but also in the contrast between Kate and Vincentio as a fair, fresh maiden and that between Kate and Bianca, the modest, shy, dutiful daughter, for all too clearly Vincentio is not a fair, fresh maiden, and Bianca, intent on playing her joke on both Hortensio and her father, is not modest, shy, or dutiful. Kate plays her obedient wife part, on the other hand, so well that one cannot say for sure whether or not she is an obedient wife at heart; one can only say that she plays the part wen enough to encourage us to imagine that she is obedient indeed. With the final success of Kate as actress and Petruchio as director, the movement of the play from jest to "a kind of history" is completed.

What Petruchio does, then, both during the wooing of Kate and the taming of Kate, is, like the Lord with Sly, to place his subject in a pageant where she will need an actor's ability to assess her role and decide how to play it. Unlike Sly, who remains a simple tinker because he lacks that ability, Kate finally learns, under the direction of Petruchio, to alter her role as the pageant of marriage and life requires.

Petruchio begins his wooing pageant by studying his role:

I will attend her here,
And woo her with some spirit when she
comes. Say that she rail; why, then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
(II.i.169-172)

Petruchio has exactly the tact that Luciana, in *The Comedy of Errors* recommends to Antipholus of Syracuse: "'Tis holy sport to be a little vain / When the sweet breath of flattery conquers strife" (III.ii.27-28); but Petruchio's words here point out more than his ability to flatter; they indicate as well his ability to playa part for the sake of effect.

Petruchio's wooing of Kate depends heavily on Irony. He finds her "passing gentle," "pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous" (II.i.244-247), although he must admit that she is "as brown in hue / As hazelnuts" (II.i.256-257). The tone is gently mocking, not harsh; the language is nearly lyrical; the pose as complimentary lover is obviously a pose. Yet the very indirectness of the approach, the fact that it depends on Petruchio's ability to deliberately play the part of lover, indicates the nature of Petruchio's treatment of Kate throughout the play; he plays roles that allow her, as a fellow actress in the pageant of life, to playa complementary role as courted maiden or to misinterpret her role and disrupt the play.

Part of Petruchio's success in his role as wooer can be attributed to his willingness to allow Kate to play face-saving roles that preserve the pageant of wooing in spite of

Kate's inability at the time to play the part of courted maiden. She is allowed the role of shy maiden who hides her affection in public beneath shrewishness:

'Tis bargain'd 'twixt us twain, being alone,
That she shall still be curst in company.
I tell you 'tis incredible to believe
How much she loves me.
(II.i.306-309)

Even in this allowance, however, Petruchio is beginning his instruction of the novice actress by pointing out to her that she may play multiple apparently contradictory roles as shrew and affectionate but modest maid without damage to her self as long as she recognizes that they are roles in a pageant.

Having completed the wooing of Kate, in which Petruchio plays roles of eager lover, tactful flatterer, and honest critic, he begins her taming: "For I am he am born to tame you, Kate" (II.i.278). Petruchio now overplays the possessive husband:

I will be master of what is mine own.
She is my goods, my chattels; she is my
house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything!
(III.ii.231-234)

The very exaggerated misapplication of the anti-coveting commandment indicates the zest with which Petruchio can playa part; the same energy he applies to his roles as tamer, wooer, and finally affectionate husband. Because Petruchio plays contradictory roles with equal effectiveness, we cannot say simply that Petruchio is a possessive husband or a tamer or a wooer any more than we can say that Kate is simply obedient or shrewish or that Baptista is simply mercenary when he holds his auction: "I play the merchant's part / And venture madly on a desperate mart" (II.i.328-329). We can say, however, that Petruchio plays each part quite well, that the roles are "aptly fitted and naturally perform'd."

On his wedding day, Petruchio plays yet another part, that of the lord turned into beggar, the reverse of Sly's role in the induction. As Tranio says, "He hath some meaning in his mad attire" (IIT.ii.126). That meaning is partly to point out to Kate that

To me she's married, not unto my clothes.
Cou!d I repair what she will wear in me
As I can change these poor accoutrements,
'Twere well for Kate and better for myself.
(III.ii.119-122)

In one sense, Petruchio can repair what Kate will have in him; he can change his role from tamer to trusting husband as she changes her role from shrew to trusting wife; and that alteration can be about as easy for an expert actor like Petruchio as changing

external clothing. In another sense, however, Petruchio cannot "repair what she will wear in me / As I can change these poor accoutrements," for beneath the parts that Petruchio plays is a rather crude quality that one may perhaps define as Petruchio himself; a Petruchio who can beat his servant and a priest, who can get vulgarly drunk, who can wear rags on his wedding day without embarrassment, who can whip a horse in the mud and curse his servants, is a Petruchio who could stand refinement. But one can accept that crudeness, as one can accept Kate's shrewishness that remains her definitive quality in spite of her apparent reformation, if that crudeness or shrewishness is sufficiently disguised by roles that permit harmonious human relationships. Petruchio may be crude and an acceptable husband if he plays the part of husband well enough. Kate may be a shrew and a desirable wife if she plays well enough the obedient and affectionate wife. It is to Petruchio's credit that he recognizes in Kate the role-playing capability that she does not herself recognize. . . .

Petruchio overcomes Kate's fear, not only of playing a role other than that of shrew, but of playing the role of wife:

Kath. Husband, let's follow, to see the end of
this ado.
Pet. First kiss me, Kate, and we will.
Kath. What, in the midst of the street?
Pet. What, art thou asham'd of me?
Kath. No, sir, God forbid! but asham'd to
kiss.
Pet. Why then, let's home again. Come,
sirrah, let's away.
Kath. Nay, I will give thee a kiss. Now pray
thee, love, stay.
Pet. Is not this well?
(V.I.147-154)

This is well. With Kate and Petruchio now playing their parts well, they are able to follow cues like expert actors on a stage. While the audience watches, Kate comes at her husband's command, tramples her cap underfoot, and fetches in her reluctant prey. The beggars have forgot themselves, but they, unlike Sly, change roles willingly and successfully. When her husband plays the role of hunter and sends for her, Kate willingly plays the part of falcon and swoops after the game. Then she plays the role of ideal wife, just one part of many that she may be called upon to play if all the world is a stage and men and women merely players; but implicit in her speech, in spite of its possible irony, is Kate's trust that Petruchio would "commit his body / To painful labour both by sea and land, / To watch the night in storms, the day in cold" (V.ii.148-150) for her if he did not have the money, property, and servants that he does have. That role he is potentially capable of playing; that much he has taught her.

As the "comonty" presented to Sly becomes "a kind of history" of a complicated relationship between man and woman, it escapes the bounds 0 pretense that the induction first established and becomes a comic image of life. The speech by Kate at

the end of the play is a serious statement echoing the homilies, themselves a large segment of Elizabethan life, and boding peace, love, quiet life, "an awful rule, and right supremacy, / And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy" (V.ii.109-110). As the end of the play becomes serious business, the action that has accomplished that end becomes itself more serious, hardly a joke pointing out how one may wish things were. The way to a quiet life is Petruchio's way, the play indicates, not Lucentio's or Hortensio's. Lucentio gets a hypocritical goddess; Hortensio gets a mean, rich widow; Petruchio gets a wife. As Kate kisses Petruchio once again, the kiss, that has been important throughout the play, again provides the counter image to the falcon taming. It is an image of marital agreement, of affection, and of trust, an image of a relationship between husband and wife both playing roles proper for comedy.

Once one has in mind the fact that the play is about the comedy of life, the parallels between induction and play proper become obvious. The problem that Lucentio, Hortensio, Bianca, and the widow all have in common is the problem exactly of Sly, an inability to shift roles easily as the pageant of life and human relationships requires. Just as Sly is always a simple tinker whatever the surroundings, so Lucentio is always the same Lucentio, a fairly weak-kneed, imprudent young fellow too much afflicted by love-in-idleness and repent-at-leisure. Bianca, whatever the modest exterior, is too consistently the hypocritical vixen. Hortensio is consistently second-fiddle; the widow, what we see of her, mean and self-contained. All four, unable to play the varied roles that life requires, are incapable of reacting to cues that would permit a peaceful pageant. They are actors who ignore all but their own roles, who fail to see the unity, scope, and meaning of the play, who Ignore the fact that actors need other actors. Kate, on the other hand, heeds the cue to play an obedient wife. In heeding that cue she is, in effect, an obedient wife: one's part in the theater of the world is one's function in life; but more important, she is effectively acting out a role in a play that she and Petruchio play together, the pageant of marriage. . . .

Critical Essay #10

The prevalence of animal imagery in *The Taming of the Shrew,* particularly imagery having to do with falconry and hunting, has been interpreted in various ways. Margaret Loftus Ranald examines Shakespeare's use of falconry images, while Joan Hartwig evaluates the play's many references to horses. In particular, the two critics focus on ways in which the relationship between Katherina and Petruchio is likened to that between a master and his hawk or his horse. While both writers concede that these images suggest a desire on the part of Petruchio for absolute control over his wife, they go on to argue that these images are used in the play to dramatize the desirability of partnership and cooperation in marriage.

Many other critics refer to animal or hunting imagery in developing their interpretations of the play. George Hibbard (in the GENDER ROLES section), states that Katherina's true nature is shown to be like that usually ascribed to falcons, "bold," "meek," and "loving." Alexander Leggatt suggests that the play's many references to hunting help to render Petruchio's sometimes brutal treatment of Katherina more acceptable to an audience. Katherina's "taming," the critic argues, is made to seem part of "a game-a test of skill and a source of pleasure"-in which "cruelty and violence are acceptable, even exciting." Other commentators, however, see the play's animal imagery in a less positive LIght. Irving Ribner, for instance (in the section on APPEARANCE VS. REALITY), finds the comparisons of Katherina to various animals demeaning. Coppelia Kahn (in the GENDER ROLES section), argues that while Katherina's comparison to a falcon may indicate that Petruchio values her, it still reduces her to the status of an animal and a possession.

Images having to do with clothing and various forms of entertainment also figure prominently in *The Taming of the Shrew.* Norman Sanders examines Shakespeare's use of these images in the play, suggesting that by depriving Katherina of food and appropriate clothing, Petruchio drives home to her the social and personal implications of her rejection of the accepted order. Sanders also briefly examines the function of references to music in the play.

Source: "Themes and Imagery in *The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *Renaissance Papers,* April, 1963, pp. 63-72.

[In the following excerpt, Sanders focuses on the importance in the play of clothing and images related to household management. By disrupting the conventions of dining and proper attire, the critic suggests, Petruchio drives home to Katherina the social and personal implications of her disorderly behavior. In both the main action and in the subplot, the critic maintains, clothing becomes indicative of the discrepancy that can exist between a person's appearance and his or her true identity. The critic also comments briefly on the symbolic significance of music in the play and on Shakespeare's use of imagery to achieve dramatic unity.]

Dining and entertainment are traditionally and theatrically symbols of concord, amity and respect; and thus it is that Kate's first lesson is given in a travesty of a feast. She is first dragged away from the wedding banquet where, as Petruchio says, the "honest company . . . Dine with my father, drink a health to me" (III.ii.192-95). The entertainment she experiences at her new home is rather different. Grumio enters to set the scene of the journey from which the guests are to be received: a journey of tired jades, lost cruppers, burst bridles, and foul ways, with the travellers mere pieces of ice in a cold world. The reception is equally calamitous: there is "no man at the door" to hold a stirrup or take a horse, "no regard, no attendance, no duty," and no meeting in the park by the "loggerheaded and unpolished grooms." And, as the scene proceeds, the music accompanying the meal becomes snippets of old ballads, the washing of the hands a slapstick routine, and the dishes are used as aggressive weapons on "heedless joltheads and unmannered slaves." The food itself is burnt and dried, mere overcooked flesh that "engenders choler, and planteth anger." By Petruchio's report Kate's bed of rest after the journey is to be of a piece with her other entertainment:

Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall
not:
. . . some undeserved fault I'll find about the making of the bed And here I'll fling the pillow, there the
bolster,
This way the coverlet, another way the
sheets.
(II1.iii.191-95)

Later, at a less "formal" level of entertainment Grumio is to drive home the lesson, only to be followed by Petruchio with the rituals of dining, and a speech which demands for its true effect that the meal he has prepared himself be either microscopic or quickly taken away from her.

But although by such inverted domestic rites Kate is shown the social implications of her disorder, it is by sartorial imagery that she is shown the personal ones. For clothes can be a measure of either the inward man or of the deception he practises on others or on himself. Kate's persecution of Bianca early in the play takes this form in Bianca's plea:

but for these other gawds, Unbind my hands, I'll pull them off myse!f, Yea, all my raIment, to my petticoat.
(II.i.3-5)

Once the wedding is planned, Petruchio (as well he might) sees his preparations in terms of garments: "I will unto Venice to buy apparel' gainst my wedding day . . . I will be sure my Katherine shall be fine. . . We will have have rings and things and fine array" (II.i.307 16). Bianca will not dance barefoot but will help dress her sister's chamber. However, when the day arrives this normality is transgressed by means of clothes. Biondello heralds Petruchio's and Grumio's approach in a long verbal *tour de force* describing "a monster, a very monster in apparel." Petruchio's attire is called a shame to his estate and an "eyesore to our solemn festival." But as Tranio observes he "has

some meaning in his mad attire." His dress is a parallel to Kate's equally "mad" attitude which only Petruchio sees as being something which is donned but not so easily doffed as his outlandish garb.

To me she's married, not unto my clothes.
Cou!d I repair what she will wear in me
As I can change these poor accouterments,
'Twere well for Kate and better for myself.
(III.ii.116-19)

The clothes imagery becomes physical comedy in the scene with the tailor and haberdasher. Petruchio states normal practice again.

And now, my honey love,
WIll we return unto thy father's house
And revel it as bravely as the best,
With silken coats and caps and golden rings,
With ruffs and cuffs and fardingales and
things;
With scarfs and fans and double change of
brav'ry.
(IV.i. 52-57)

But at the end of the scene, by sheer verbal pyrotechnics, he has reduced the topic of clothes and their maker to "a rag, a remnant" and mere "masquing stuff"; and he can universalize his lesson.

Our purses shall be proud, our garments
poor,
For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich;
And as the sun breaks through the darkest
clouds
So honor peereth in the meanest habit.
What, is the jay more precious than the lark
Because his feathers are more beautiful?
Or is the adder better than the eel
Because his painted skin contents the eye?
0 no, good Kate.
(IV.i.172-79)

When in the final scene it is Kate's cap that Petruchio orders her to throw as a bauble under foot, it becomes for the audience a symbol of her new realisation of what she has been but is no longer.

In the Bianca/Lucentio plot, too, clothes are used as a means of deception and the theme runs as a more conventional commentary on the more complex deceptions practised by Kate and Petruchio. Tranio takes his master's "colored hat and cloak" as a

sign of his assumption of Lucentio's role, and puts on his "apparel and countenance." Vincentio is to notice first Tranio's attire when they first meet: "0 fine villain! A silken doublet! a velvet hose! a scarlet cloak! and a copatain hat!" (IV.iv.63-64). Lucentio will put on a further change and go disguised "in sober robes, / To old Baptista" as a pedant. A true Pedant, in his turn, is clothed as it becomes him to pretend he is Vincentio; and Hortensio plays his part as a musician.

While the images of clothes and household management are used as a means of showing Kate's adJustment to society, it is the imagery of music which conveys the degree and implications of her maladjustment in the main sections of the play. I need not dwell on this, for Mr. T. W. Herbert and Mrs. T. R. Waldo have presented all the pertinent evidence in an interesting article on the subject *[in Shakespeare Quarterly,* 1959]. Although their principal aim was to prove Shakespeare's sole authorship of the play, they do make some points material to my case. They point out that man's adjustment to nature and society was frequently seen in terms of musical harmony, the cosmic expression of which was the music of the spheres; and they gather together those allusions in the play which show Kate as "anti-musical," allusions which culminate with a visual impact when she breaks the lute over Hortensio's head. However, I think we may go further and notice that while Blanca, seen by Lucentio as "the patroness of heavenly harmony," is contrasted with her sister in that she "taketh most delight / In music, instruments, and poetry," we are given a hint of her married frowardness by her rejection of music in the scene with Hortensio, and her willing association with dalliance and disguise. Thus it is ironical that whereas Kate, who at first "chides as loud / As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack," is taught to sing as sweetly as the nightingale; it is Bianca who finally causes her husband to lament of her "it is harsh hearing when women are froward."

One final point might be made about the conscious artistry and essential unity of the play. In the induction scenes all of the themes and images are mooted: from the harsh sound of hounds and hunting horns to the Lord's assurance that if Sly would have music "twenty caged nightingales do sing"; from the cold bed of rejection on which Sly sleeps so soundly to the luxurious bed of acceptance in which he wakes. The water, the conserves, the sack and costly raiment all make their appearance, and are offered to the tinker as he sits like Kate on her wedding night like one "new risen from a dream." Here we find too the wife who is no wife and absents herself from her husband's bed; but who is to all appearances a humble wife ready to show her duty and make known her love with kind embracements. And finally the Lord's whole action is like that of Petruchio an experiment in the manipulation of a human personality: for Sly, like Kate, is "monstrous"-though it is with ale rather than pride. It is for this reason too that, while admitting the final scene in *The Taming of* a *Shrew* has some attractive features, I think Shakespeare knew what he was about when he allowed Sly's "flattering dream or worthless fancy" to pass early and without note into the certainly not profound but nevertheless assured comedy of Kate's reformation.

Critical Essay #11

Source: "The Manning of the Haggard: or *The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *Essays* in *Literature,* Vol. 1, No.2, Fall, 1974, pp. 149-65.

[Ranald suggests that in The Taming of the Shrew *Shakespeare examines three types of marriage common* in *Elizabethan England. She contends that the play's falconry imagery is used* to *present the relationship of wife to husband as being similar* to *that between* a *falcon and its keeper. Petruchio uses the methods of hawk-taming, she argues,* in *order* to *bring Katherina under his control without breaking her spirit.]*

The Taming of the Shrew is, in George Hibbard's phrase [in *Tennessee studies* in *Language and Literature* 2, 1946], "a play about marriage in Elizabethan England," and also unique in the Shakespearean comic canon in dealing with the behavior of husband and wife after the marriage ceremony. At the same time it also offers a distinctly subversive approach to an antifeminist genre, that of the wife-beating farce. In this play Shakespeare has skillfully remolded his material to portray an atypical Elizabethan attitude towards marriage through the development of a matrimonial relationship in which mutuality, trust, and love are guiding forces.

Shakespeare's method at this early stage of his career makes use of the familiar device of contrast. He takes the three most frequent matrimonial situations of Elizabethan England, and indeed any time and place: a marriage arranged by parents for economic gain, marriage to a widow for her money, and a marriage of compatibility and equality. This last, the marriage of Kate and Petruchio, at first seems to be one based on economics, but by the end of the play it is shown to be the model for the others, and indeed the only one that is for more than "two months victuall'd." The play then is Shakespeare's comment on that traditionally male-oriented view of marriage which requires the molding of a wife, by force If necessary, into total submission to her husband. In *The Taming of the Shrew,* however, the action shows the failure of what would then have been considered "proper" marriages and the boisterous success of the relationship of equality between the sexes personified by Kate and Petruchio.

The imagery and method of the taming need exploration as contributing to the development of this theme, and they represent an amalgam of two approaches, those of falconry and the conduct books of Elizabethan England. Petruchio follows the principles and uses the imagery of hawk-taming while following the letter of the conservative English conduct books, but subverting their repressive intent. The principles of the conduct books and the legal position of women in Elizabethan England are developed along with the principles of training and skill by which one subdues a hunting bird, and the result is a completely different view of the "oeconomie" of matrimony. . . .

Petruchio rejoices in Kate's faults. She will be a haggard worth the taming, a good hawk for his hand:

I am as peremptory as she proud-minded; And where two raging fires meet together
They do consume the thing that feeds their
fury.
Though little fire grows great with little
wind,
Yet extreme gusts WIll blow out fire and all;
So I to her, and so she yields to me,
For I am rough and woo not like a babe.
(II i.132-38)

And further, he is a fit husband for her:

For I am he am born to tame you Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates.
(II. 278-80)

Thus at the very beginning of the play, Petruchio sees the essential similarity between the two of them. He willingly undertakes the task of taming in full knowledge of its challenging difficulty, as a falconer brings a difficult hawk to submission. Consequently the imagery of much of the play indicates a perception of the matrimonial state as similar to the compact between falcon and keeper. The falcon must be taught obedience to her master, but at the same time her wild and soaring nature must be preserved. This is a cardinal principle of hawk-taming. The bird must retain her hunting instinct; otherwise she is useless. But she must be taught to exercise her wild nature on command, to hunt under the government of her keeper/master. Accordingly, the hawking passage of IV.i.193 ff. is extremely important, as also is the image of Bianca as a "proud, disdainful haggard" (IV.ii.39).

Hortensio cannot remain with a woman who will be "ranging" abroad to cast "wand' ring eyes on every stale" (III.i.90), or lure of dead prey. This comment also gives a clue to the revelation of the shrewish Bianca beneath the appearance of conformity. But Petruchio operates differently from the money-minded Hortensio and the swooning-romantic Lucentio. He has the patience to tame his wild bird without breaking her spirit, perceiving the advantages that will accrue to him in training a good hunting hawk. While Hortensio will seek easier game and marry a wealthy widow, only to find himself discomfited, and Lucentio will find himself married to a shrew, Petruchio will preserve Kate's witty and independent nature so that in partnership they may hunt down pretension and falsehood in others.

Thus the hawking imagery carries more weight than the mere suggestion that wives and falcons are more tractable when half starved. Its real value lies in emphasizing the fact that the taming of a wild, mature falcon aims at achieving mutual respect between bird and keeper. As a result of this battle of wills, the bird learns her function and purpose, and the keeper learns that he must continually work to preserve the bird's obedience. Kate and Petruchio develop similar attitudes toward each other, and implicit in this image is that of marriage as a partnership, neither party in full control of the other, yet

each owing something to the other: respect and consideration on the part of the man, and obedience and respect on the part of the woman. As the falconer never asks the impossible of his bird, as he cherishes, feeds, and keeps it, not attempting irrevocably to alter its nature, so too should a husband behave toward his wife, taking care never to lose her friendship. And, to carry the analogy with falconry further, the keeper must expect his bird to be moody and unpredictable, and he must never relax his vigilance, for he can never be sure that he is in complete control of his hawk. Finally, the compact between master and falcon is basically a voluntary commitment. When it soars, waiting for its prey, the bird is capable of flying away free, and only the kindness of the keeper and the consequent gratitude or indebtedness of the bird can keep it under control. So too with Kate and Petruchio. . . .

Critical Essay #12

Source: "Horses and Women in *The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *The Huntington Library Quarterly,* Vof. 45, No.4, Autumn, 1982, pp. 285-94.

[Pointing out that women are compared to horses in many English Renaissance texts, Hartwig suggests that Petruchio's "taming" of Katherina is made to suggest the training of a horse to respond to its rider's commands. The critic also examines the English practice during Shakespeare's time of punishing shrewish women by forcing them to parade in public wearing a "scold's bridle," a device that forced a painful metal gag into their mouths. In contrast with such brutal methods, Hartwig argues, Petruchio's methods seem gentle and reasonable, and they result in a "complementary relationship" that benefits both man and wife.]

In a 1534 treatise on husbandry, attributed to Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, after discussing the benefits of keeping horses, cows, and sheep together in one pasture in order to get the most even grazing, the author begins a list of the properties "that a good horse hath." Of the fifty-four properties listed, two are like a man: "to have a proude harte" and "to be bolde and hardy." Then follow properties that resemble a badger, a lion, an ox, a hare, a fox, an ass, and finally the ten "properties of a woman":

The fyrst is, to be mery of chere; the seconde, to be well paced; the thyrde, to haue a brode foreheed; the fourth, to haue brode buttockes; the fyfthe, to be harde of warde; the syxte, to be easye to lepe vppon; the. vii to be good at a longe iourneye; the. viii. to be well sturryne vnder a man; the .ix. to be alwaye besye with the mouthe; the tenth, euer to be chowynge on the brydell.

Fitzherbert is quite serious about his list of properties, but it is amusing to note that the ten properties like a woman exceeds all other categories in length, and that the list begins briefly, but honorifically, with how a good horse is like a man and ends more prolixly and bawdily with how that same horse is like a woman.

That a good horse is well esteemed, as is a valued wife, may be inferred from Master Ford's expression of jealous mistrust: "I will rather trust. . . a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself" *(The Merry Wives of Windsor:* II.ii.272-75). When Hortensio and Gremio agree to find a husband for Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* so that they may both pursue Bianca, Gremio voices his willingness to pay for such a man in this measure:

I am agreed, and would I have given him the best horse in Padua to begin his wooing that would thoroughly woo her, wed her, and bed her, and rid the house of her. (I.i.139-42)

All these remarks share an assumption that a woman and a horse are commodities to be bought and sold. Petruchio's initial offer to marry Kate could not be more explicit in treating her as an object of sale:

As wealth is burden of my wooing dance-
Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,
As old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrewd
As Socrates' Xanthippe, or a worse,
She moves me not, or not removes, at least,
Affections' edge in me, were she as rough
As are the swelling Adriatic seas.
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
(I.ii.66-74)

Grumio's following remark-"Why, give him gold enough and marry him to a puppet or an aglet-baby or an old trot with ne'er a tooth in her head, though she have as many diseases as two and fifty horses" specifically links the sale of Kate with the purchase of horses. And Kate's father, following the conclusion of Petruchio's arrangement for the impending wedding and his departure to Venice "to buy apparel 'gainst the wedding-day," says: "Faith, gentlemen, now I playa merchant's part / And venture madly on a desperate mart" (II.i.328-29). Tranio's and Gremio's bidding for Bianca in such a mass of detailed wealth "Tyrian tapestry. . . ivory coffers. . . six score fat oxen. . . houses. . . two thousand ducats by the year . . . argosies" (II.i.348-82)-sounds very much like the bidding at a horse auction.

Even in Petruchio's hasty wooing of Kate they jest about their relationship in terms of the copulation of horses. When Petruchio asks her to sit on him, she replies, "Asses are made to bear, and so are you." Petruchio returns, "Women are made to bear, and so are you," to which Kate responds, "No such jade as you, if me you mean" (II.i.200-203). Hardly the enthusiasm of Cleopatra's imagination when she pictures Antony on horseback and wishes herself the horse-"O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!" *(Antony and Cleopatra:* I.v.21), but the association between women and horses is Kate's immediate thought as well. Petruchio concludes their wooing scene that employs other animal and insect analogies (the turtledove, the buzzard, the wasp, the cock, the crab) with remarks about her "princely gait" and with the assertion that "I am he am born to tame you, Kate, / And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate / Conformable as other household Kates" (II.i.261, 27880). To the buyer of horses, the gait of the horse as well as his general conformation is of utmost importance. The wildness of Kate is associated more specifically with the horse than with the other animals mentioned. Petruchio later has a long passage that evokes an analogy with taming a hawk (IV.i.177-83), but even this passage ends with reference to controlling a horse-"And thus I'll *curb* her mad and headstrong humor." Therefore, his method of taming his shrew quite appropriately corresponds with the taming of horses in the Renaissance.

Training the horse to obey his rider's signals is known as the "manage." Although today the terms of manage are usually gentle, using the hands on the reins, pressure from the legs, and placement of body weight as aids to signal the horse of its rider's wishes and reserving the spurs, whip, and voice commands for unusual circumstances, in Shakespeare's day harsher methods were employed, as Gardiner's remarks to the Lord Chancellor make clear:

For those that tame wild horses
Pace' em not in their hands to make' em
gentle,
But stop their mouths with stubborn bits and
spur 'em
Till they obey the manage.
(Hen VIII: V.ii.21-24)

Shakespeare does not always suggest approval of such measures, but in *The Taming oj the Shrew* Petruchio's harsh treatment of Kate is not out of line, if we view his taming of her as analogous to the taming of a horse, bringing both into the control of the rider. The manage includes many movements besides the normal gaits, halts, and turns, and there were different ideas of the sequence in which these movements should be taught to the horse. Of general acceptance, however, was the idea that a horse must first be "paced" and then taught to "stop." In other words, the horse must learn to travel smoothly at the desired gait and at the rider's signal and then to stop in a disciplined way. Gervase Markham [in *Cavelarice or the English Horseman,* 1607] describes the "stop" as "a suddaine and firme setting downe of all his forelegges together without any further motion." Similarly, D. H. Madden [in *The Diary of Master William Silence,* 1907] describes the "stop" as essential to another stage of teaching the manage, the "career," a fast run of eighty or one hundred yards: "the essential characteristic of the career, wherein it differed from the ordinary gallop, was its abrupt ending, technically known as 'the stop,' by which the horse was suddenly and firmly thrown upon his haunches."

Petruchio's treatment of Kate in his house and on the road back to Padua resembles the kind of exactitude and repetition of exercises that a rider requires when training his horse in the manage, including the precise stop as Petruchio requires Kate to assess the sun as moon and Vincentio as a young maiden.

Grumio's description to Curtis of the journey from Padua to Verona is not only an illustration of Petruchio's being "more shrew than she"; it is a picture of inept horsemanship and manage.

Thou shouldst have heard how her horse fell, and she under her horse; thou shouldst have heard in how miry a place; how she was bemoiled, how he left her with the horse upon her, . . . how I cried, how the horses ran away, how her bridle was burst. (IV.i.64-71)

This passage recalls Biondello's earlier description of the horse upon which Petruchio arrives for the wedding, as unsound and diseased (III.iii.47-60). Both of these passages present horses and riders in discord with each other, and thus counter the more usual image where a horse and rider in concord exemplify the harmony of man and nature.

A further aspect of the literal association between horses and women has to do with the condition that Kate herself embodies-that of the shrew or scold. Petruchio has not heard of Kate's reputation, but Hortensio assures him that she is "renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue" (I.ii.98), and the audience has enough evidence early in the play to see

how she came *by* her reputation. In two essays in *The Reliquary* (1860 and 1873), Llewellynn Jewitt describes the bridles that were common in the cure of scolds, variously called the "brank," the "Scold's Bridle," or the "Gossips' Bridle":

The Brank consisted of a kind of crown, or framework, or iron, which was locked upon the head; and It was armed in front with a gag, a plate, or a sharp-cutting knife or point, which was placed in the poor woman's mouth, so as to prevent her moving her tongue- or it was so placed that if she did move It, or attempt to speak, it was cut in the most frightful manner. With this cage upon her head, and with the gag firmly pressed and locked against her tongue, the miserable creature whose sole offending perhaps was that she had raised her voice in defence of her social rights, against a brutal and besotted husband, or had spoken honest truth of some one high in office in her town, was. . . led by a chain, by the hand of the bellman, . . . through all the principal streets of the town, for an hour or two, and then brought back bleeding, faint, ill, and degraded. Let them fancy all this, and then say whether it is not indeed a happy thing that our lot is cast in better days than those in which such disgusting public punishments could be asked for by husbands, or neighbours; inflicted by the authorities and tolerated by the people themselves.

Mrs. Eliza Gutch *[Country Folk-lore]* records more recently (1893) the practice of "wife-selling" which requires the wife to be led into the marketplace "with a halter round her neck." These literal representations of the associations assumed by English folk between women and horses from ages past make Petruchio's harsh treatment of Kate seem mild by contrast.

The "taming-school" of which Petruchio is the master and Hortensio the somewhat awed witness does effect the desired transformation in Kate by teaching her the discipline of "curbing" her will to her master's signals. His control, as she asserts in her final speech, must depend upon "honest will" rather than upon whimsy or tyranny, as some of Petruchio's stratagems may seem at the time he produces them. But seen from the metaphorical analogue of taming the wild horse to graceful "manage," his insistence on her submission seems quite reasonable.

In contrast, the apparent humanistic training of Bianca by her disguised suitors in music, Greek and Latin, and in poetry does not humanize Bianca in the least. She becomes, when released to be herself, the stubborn and willful wife; whereas Kate's apparently brutal treatment releases her into a gracefully obedient and respectful wife. Lucentio and Hortensio disguise themselves in order to tutor Bianca, and Petruchio disguises himself in order to instruct Kate. But whereas the former disguises, which present the young admirers as different people, are donned to insinuate them into where they are forbidden, Petruchio dons his disguise-changes in manner and clothing which do not change his identity-in order to lead Kate out of her father's and of her own self-inflicted prison. Lucentio and Hortensio change their outward identity to manipulate within the status quo, but Petruchio changes himself psychologically into manic tyrant in order to change the situation, the institution of marriage, and the bride into realities that do not depend upon socia! prescription. He hints at his more human form of realism when others protest that his "unreverent robes" ill befit the occasion of a wedding. Petruchio

challenges the entire social structure when he asserts, "To me she's married, not unto my clothes" (III.ii.113).

The final contest of wills between Petruchio and Kate defines the matter more explicitly. Kate wishes to follow the quarreling relatives "to see the end of this ado," but Petruchio demands a kiss. She says, "What, in the midst of the street?" And he, "What, art thou ashamed of me?" Kate's careful response is "No sir, God forbid, but ashamed to kiss." Yet when Petruchio threatens a return to Verona, she concedes to the man rather than to fear of social judgment.

The symbolic associations of the horse and rider figure are several throughout history, but the horse as appetite and passion and the rider as mind, reason holding the body under control, is an analogy pervasive from early times. Beryl Rowland, in a study of the horse and rider figure in Chaucer's works [in *The University of Toronto Quarterly* 35, 1966], observes that "under the influence of the Christian Church the significance of the figure appears to harden: the horse is equated with the body or with Woman, the evil repository of sex; the rider is the soul or Man." Rowland continues:

The less alarming analogy whereby the woman is the horse to be bridled and controlled by man is so commonp lace as to become proverbial. .. So fundamental is the analogy in our thinking that token symbols such as the bridle, harness, collar or saddle-girth are often substituted, and the symbolism persists even today in the marriage ceremony in which the ring is the halter used by the groom to harness his bride.

When the rider is able to keep his mount under his control, both the horse and rider are figures of nobility. The complementary relationship that accrues honor to both is what Petruchio and Kate have achieved at the end of the play. Even the wager that the three newly-wed husbands make on their wives resembles wagers commonly made on the performances of horses by their proud owners. That Kate wins the wager for Petruchio is no surprise, since she has learned the "manage" well. Her recognition that acceptance of her husband as her "lord" and her "sovereign" anows her to realize herself fully may seem too "conformable" for modern sensibilities. Yet the final lines of her speech recall the metaphor that has been operative throughout the play. The hand placed below the foot to "do him ease" suggests the image of a rider ready to mount his horse, using the hand instead of stirrup to ease him into the saddle. We might be reminded of the Dauphin's praise of his palfrey:

The dull elements of earth and water never appear in him, but only in patient stillness while his rider mounts him. . .. 'Tis a subject for a sovereign to reason on, and for a sovereign's sovereign to ride on; and for the world, familiar to us and unknown, to lay apart their particular functions and wonder at him. *(Hen V* , III.vii.20-37)

So Kate, as she accepts Petruchio for her sovereign, transforms from unhappy shrew into graceful woman, creating "wonder" in her world.

Critical Essay #13

Many different interpretations of Katherina's character have been put forward on stage and by the critics. An account of the various stage interpretations of her character can be found in the excerpt by Ann Thompson in the OVERVIEWS section.

One popular view sees Katherina as a miserable and maladjusted woman at the beginning of the play who by its end has been transformed into a happy wife who has learned to accept joyfully her appointed role in society. Many twentieth-century critics, including Harold Goddard as well as Ruth Nevo and H. J. Oliver (in essays excerpted in the OVERVIEWS section), have suggested that Shakespeare provides psychological insight into the reasons for Katherina's shrewishness, showing her to suffer from her father's open preference for her underhanded younger sister. Goddard characterized Katherina as a "cross child. . . starved for love" who is restored by Petruchio to her "natural self," which is "lovely and sweet." A number of other critics, including George R. Hibbard (in the GENDER ROLES section), see Katherina's "true" character as loving and amenable. Others see her as a forerunner of Shakespeare's later, more attractively drawn comic heroines, such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing.* Like them, these critics point out, Katherina possess a keen wit, a passionate nature, and a strong will. Kenneth Muir suggested that Katherina's initial hostility toward Petruchio is caused in part by a fear that he is only interested in her money. "Unconsciously," the critic wrote, "she wants to submit and to accept her femininity." Katherina's adjustment to an acceptable social role was also stressed by Richard Henze (in the GAMES AND ROLE-PLAYING section) as well as Cecil C. Seronsy (in the APPEARANCE VS. REALITY section).

A rather different interpretation also common on stage is that Katherina is not really "tamed" at all. Rather, she learns to humor Petruchio's need to feel that he is in control; she plays the obedient wife in public so as to exercise control at home. This view, an example of which can be found in the piece by Harold Goddard below, was especially popular among critics during the 1950s. Coppelia Kahn (in the GENDER ROLES section), also argued that Katherina's acceptance of the role of obedient wife is more apparent than real. Katherina's exaggerated portrayal of the obedient wife, Kahn contended, is meant to indicate both to the audience and to Petruchio that while she will submit outwardly to achieve a peaceful home life, psychologically she retains her independence. Kahn conceded, however, that this is a hollow victory; regardless of whether she really believes in Petruchio's superiority, she has tacitly agreed to tailor her behavior to his wishes.

Robert Ornstein, on the other hand, suggested that Katherina's initial shrewishness and her submission to Petruchio are motivated by her fear of remaining lonely and unmarried. Never particularly "independent" or "strong-minded," Katherina in his view submits entirely to Petruchio's "bullying." Ornstein characterized as "demeaning" both Petruchio's treatment of her and the view of women she expresses in her final speech.

Source: "The Taming of the Shrew", in *The Meaning of Shakespeare,* The University of Chicago Press, 1951, pp. 68-73.

[Goddard believes the "subterranean" meaning of The Taming of the Shrew *is that Katherina will have the upper hand in her marriage to Petruchio. Unless one sees the play in this light, he argues, or accepts it as merely a farce, it is an intolerable expression of the principle of male superiority, and there is no evidence anywhere in Shakespeare's other works that he held such a view of human relations. Goddard claims that Katherina's shrewishness is only superficial, the result of Baptista's unfair partiality toward Bianca and his neglect of his elder daughter. By wisely and lovingly treating her as if she were "a cross child who is starved for love," Petruchio transforms her back to her original good-tempered self Arguing that the Induction supports this analysis, Goddard suggests that Petruchio, like Sly, is duped into believing "that he is a great lord-over his wife.* "]

We must never for a moment allow ourselves to forget that *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play within a play, an interlude put on by a company of strolling players at the house of a great lord for the gulling of Christopher Sly, the drunken tinker, and thereby for the double entertainment of the audience. For the sake of throwing the picture into strong relief against the frame-an in a different sense in the case of *The Murder of Gonzaga* in *Hamlet-the* play within the play is given a simplification and exaggeration that bring its main plot to the edge of farce, while its minor plot, the story of Bianca's wooers, goes quite over that edge. But, even allowing for this, the psychology of the Katharine-Petruchio plot is remarkably realistic. It is even "modern" in its psychoanalytical implications. It is based on the familiar situation of the favorite child. Baptista is a family tyrant and Bianca is his favorite daughter. She has to the casual eye all the outer marks of modesty and sweetness, but to a discerning one all the inner marks of a spoiled pet, remade, if not originally made, in her father's image. One line is enough to give us her measure. When in the wager scene at the end her husband tells her that her failure to come at his entreaty has cost him a hundred crowns,

The more fool you for laying on my duty,
[V. ii. 129]

she blurts out. What a light that casts back over her previous "sweetness" before she has caught her man! The rest of her role amply supports this interpretation, as do the hundreds of Biancas-who are not as white as they are painted-in real life.

[There] is everything to indicate that Kate's shrewishness is superficial, not ingrained or congenital. It is the inevitable result of her father's gross partiality toward her sister and neglect of herself, plus the repercussions that his attitude has produced on Bianca and almost everyone else in the region. Kate has heard herself blamed, and her sister praised at her expense, to a point where even a worm would turn. And Kate is no worm. If her sister is a spoiled child, Kate is a cross child who is starved for love. She craves it as a man in a desert craves water, without understanding, as he does, what is the matter. And though we have to allow for the obvious exaggeration of farce in his extreme antics, Petruchio's procedure at bottom shows insight, understanding, and

even love. Those actors who equip him with a whip miss Shakespeare's man entirely. In principle, if not in the roughter details, he employs just the right method in the circumstances, and the end amply justifies his means.

It is obvious that his boast at the outset of purely mercenary motives for marrying is partly just big talk-at any rate the dowry soon becomes quite subsidiary to Kate herself and the game of taming her. In retrospect it seems to have been something like love at first sight on both sides, though not recognized as such at the time. Whatever we think of Petruchio's pranks in the scenes where farce and comedy get mixed, there is no quarreling with his instinctive sense of how in general Kate ought to be handled. When a small child is irritable and cross, the thing to do is not to reason, still less to pity or pamper, or even to be just kind and understanding in the ordinary sense. The thing to do is to take the child captive. A vigorous body and will, combined with good humor and a love that is not expressed in words but that makes itself felt by a sort of magnetic communication, will sweep the child off his feet, carry him away, and transform him almost miraculously back into his natural self. . .. This is precisely what Petruchio does to Kate (and what Shakespeare does to his audience in this play). She is dying for affection. He keeps calling her his sweet and lovely Kate. What if he is ironical to begin with! The words just of themselves are manna to her soul, and her intuition tells her that, whether he knows it or not, he really means them. And indeed Kate is lovely and sweet by nature. (She is worth a bale of Biancas.) What girl would not like to be told, as Petruchio tells her, that she sings as sweetly as a nightingale and has a countenance like morning roses washed with dew? She knows by a perfectly sound instinct that he could never have thought up such lovely similes to be sarcastic with if he considered her nothing but a shrew. There is a poet within him that her beauty has elicited. What wonder that she weeps when the poet fails to appear for the wedding! It is not just humiliation. It is disappointed love.

And Kate is intelligent too. She is a shrewd "shrew." You can put your finger on the very moment when it dawns on her that if she will just fall in with her husband's absurdest whim, accept his maddest perversion of the truth as truth, she can take the wind completely out of his sails, deprive his weapon of its power, even turn it against him-tame him in his own humor. Not that she really wants to tame him, for she loves him dearly, as the delightful little scene in the street so amply proves, where he begs a kiss, begs, be it noted, not demands. She is shy for fear they may be overseen, but finally relents and consents.

Kath.: Husband, let's follow, to see the end of this ado.
Pet.: First kiss me, Kate, and we will.
Kath.: What! in the midst of the street?
Pet.: What! are thou ashamed of me?
Kath.: No, sir, God forbid; but ashamed to
kiss.
Pet.: Why, then let's home again. Come,
sirrah, let's away.
Kath.: Nay, I will give thee a kiss; now pray
thee, love, stay. Pet.: Is not this well? Come, my sweet Kate.

Better once than never, for never too late.
[V. i. 142-50]

How this little scene is to be fitted into the traditional interpretation of the play it is hard to see.

Everything leads up to Kate's long lecture at the end on the duty of wives to their lords. What fun she has reading it to those two other women who do not know what every woman knows! How intolerable it would be if she and Shakespeare really meant it (as if Shakespeare could ever have meant it!), though there is a deeper sense in which they both do mean it. . . . The self-styled advanced thinkers of our day, who have been for obliterating all distinctions between the sexes and leveling them to a dead equality, are just lacking enough in humor to think Kate's speech the most retrograde nonsense, as indeed it would be if it were the utterance of a cowering slave.

Though actresses in the past have edged in the direction of this interpretation of Kate, a triumph still remains for one who will go the whole distance and find in her a clear first draft and frank anticipation of Beatrice [in *Much Ado about Nothing]:* Petruchio, too, must be made fine and bold, not just rough and bold, or crude and bold. And as for Bianca, you can pick up a dozen of her in the first high school you happen on, anyone of whom could act her to perfection by just being herself. . . .

In the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew,* Christopher Sly the tinker, drunk with ale, is persuaded that he is a great lord who has been the victim of an unfortunate lunacy. Petruchio, in the play which Sly witnesses (when he is not asleep), is likewise persuaded that he is a great lord-over his wife. Sly is obviously in for a rude awakening when he discovers that he is nothing but a tinker after all. Now Petruchio is a bit intoxicated himself-who can deny it?-whether with pride, love, or avarice, or some mixture of the three. Is it possible that he too is in for an awakening? Or, if Kate does not let it come to that, that *we* at least are supposed to see that he is not as great a lord over his wife as he imagined? The Induction and the play, taken together, do not allow us to evade these questions. Can anyone be so naive as to fancy that Shakespeare did not contrive his Induction for the express purpose of forcing them on us? Either the cases of Sly and Petruchio are alike or they are diametrically opposite. Can there be much doubt which was intended by a poet who is so given to pointing out analogies between lovers and drunkards, between lovers and lunatics? Here surely is reason enough for Shakespeare not to show us Sly at the end when he no longer thinks himself a lord. It would be altogether too much like explaining the joke, like solving the equation and labeling the result ANSWER. Shakespeare wants us to find things for ourselves. And in this case in particular: why explain what is as clear, when you see it, as was Poe's Purloined Letter, which was skilfully concealed precisely because it was in such plain sight all the time?

Critical Essay #14

Source: *"The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence,* Barnes and Noble, 1979, pp. 22-8.

[Disagreeing with the Views of critics who find Petruchio's behavior offensive, Muir argues that Katherina is a much happier woman at the end of the play than she is at the beginning. He cites as evidence performances in the role of Katherina by several of the best-known actresses of the twentieth century, who, he reports, clearly "enjoyed themselves in *the part." Katherina's initial hostility toward Petruchio, he suggests, is a result of pride and of fear that he is a fortune.hunter: "Unconsciously," he writes, "she wants to submit and to accept her femininity. " Muir also argues that Katherina's speech* in *favor of wifely obedience should not be taken seriously, but rather as a parody of obedience.]*

Petruchio's methods of taming Katherina have aroused the horror of many modern critics. Sir Edmund Chambers, for example, said [in *Shakespeare: A Survey,* 1925] that 'you can hardly refuse to shed a tear for the humiliation of Katherine' and that she 'stands for all time as a type of the wrongs done to her much-enduring sex'. John Masefield declared [in *Shakespeare,* 1911] that Katherina was 'humbled into the state of submissive wifely falsehood by a boor' and her sermon to the other wives is 'melancholy claptrap'. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch [in the New Cambridge edition, 1928] thought that 'any modern civilised man', reading the play, would find the whole Petruchio business tedious, and 'to any modern woman' it would be offensive as well.

It is true that Petruchio's avowed motive-and his actual motive at the beginning of the play-is to wed a rich wife; and apparently he does not mind about her character or appearance:

Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,
As old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrewd
As Socrates' Xanthippe or a worse. . .
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
(I.11 67-9, 73-4)

His method of taming Katherina is that of a bully. He uses his superior physical strength. He arrives at the wedding in absurd clothes in order to humiliate his bride; he misbehaves atrociously during the actual ceremony; he boorishly refuses to stay for the marriage feast; he uses the methods of a hawk-tamer by starving his wife; instead of consummating the marriage he preaches Katherina a sermon on continence; he tantalises her by refusing to let her have the fashionable clothes she covets; he makes her say things they both know to be fa!se; he makes a wager on her obedience, which he wins; and in the end she preaches to the other wives on the necessity of slavish obedience. A high-spirited girl has been tamed by brutal and shameful methods into accepting slavery.

Such is the complaint of some modern critics; but, of course, such an interpretation of the play is absurd. The play is a farce and Shakespeare wrote it nearly three centuries before Nora slammed the door at the end of *A Doll's House* [a nineteenth-century play by Henrik Ibsen]. On the stage, as Chambers and Quiller-Couch reluctantly admit, the play is not offensive: it is funny. The account given in the last paragraph omits some important aspects of the taming process. Apart from anything else, it is apparent that the 'high-spirited girl' at the beginning 0 the play is, whatever the reasons, impossible to live with. Miserable herself, she does her best to make others miserable. At the end of the play she appears to be much happier. The four best Katherinas I have seen in the last fifty years-Sybil Thorndike, Edith Evans, Peggy Ashcroft and Vanessa Redgrave-are not exactly submissive in temperament and they all enjoyed themselves in the part. Dame Edith played it in two different ways. On the first occasion, fresh from her triumphs in the Comedy of Manners, she played Katherina almost in the manner of a Restoration heroine and her final speech of submission was delivered ironically with a conspiratorial leer to the women in the audience. 'Men like to think they are our lords and masters', she implied, 'and I don't mind humouring them, children as they are; but, as you all realise, I can do what I like by giving Petruchio, this overgrown schoolboy, an illusion of authority.' I thought at the time that this way of delivering the speech was out of period and that Shakespeare cannot have intended it. But It has since been pointed out that Vives in *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* had remarked that 'a good woman by lowly obeisance ruleth her husband', so that Dame Edith's interpretation may well have been right. The second time she played the part, she presented Katherina as a problem child, jealous of her sly and popular sister, hating the Idea of a marriage of convenience, with its sordid mercenary basis, and not being able to find a man she could respect. She is attracted by Petruchio's virility and she submits to him only because she loves him. Dame Peggy Ashcroft and Vanessa Redgrave likewise made it plain that they had fallen in love and that they unconsciously wish to submit.

It is worth noting that Germaine Greer is one of the few women who have written in defence of Petruchio. She maintains in *The Female Eunuch* that Kate has the uncommon good fortune to find Petruchio who is man enough to know what he wants and how to get it. He wants her spirit and her energy because he wants a wife worth keeping. . . she rewards him with strong sexual love and fierce loyalty.

Her submission is 'genuine and exciting because she has something to lay down, her virgin pride and individuality'. Petruchio is 'both gentle and strong' and Kate's address to the other wives at the end of the play 'is the greatest defence of Christian monogamy ever written'. It is surely not so much a defence of Christian monogamy as of the principle, derived from the Bible and universally accepted in the sixteenth century, of wifely obedience. As we have seen, Luciana had expressed the same ideas in *The Comedy of Errors.* We cannot know for certain whether Shakespeare himself accepted this view of marriage. It was, perhaps, somewhat undercut by the sex of the reigning monarch; but there are survivals of the subordination theory when the great heiress Portia surrenders to Bassanio, even though she soon reasserts her authority. The increasing independence of the comic heroines, who all outshine the men they are destined to marry, makes it difficult for us to imagine that their submission will be more than a formality; and in the love scenes of the final plays we are conscious of the

complete equality of Florizel and Perdita, of Ferdinand and Miranda. In both cases love's service is perfect freedom.

Although Miss Greer possibly romanticises the qualities of Petruchio, Katherina is not really reduced to servitude and no audience imagines that she is. Nor do they really believe that Petruchio is a fortune-hunter, even though he starts with that ambition; and if we examine his behaviour throughout the play, we can see that those critics who write him off as a vulgar bully have missed a great deal. As soon as he hears of Katherina's reputation for shrewishness, his fortune-hunting fades into the background and he feels challenged by the task of taming her. He calls the task one of Hercules's labours. In the first wooing scene, although he indulges in plain-speaking about her reputation, he makes her know that he admires her beauty and spirit. He calls her bonny Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom and super-dainty Kate. At the end of the scene he speaks of

this light, whereby I see thy beauty,
Thy beauty that doth make me like thee well.

And, clearly, the attraction is mutual. She is attracted by his virility and humour; he is attracted by her beauty and wildness. In some ways the wooing resembles that of Beatrice and Benedick who are likewise individualists, distrusting equally the conventions of romantic love and the unromantic realities of marriages of convenience. All through the play we can see that Katherina's knowledge of her sister's character and the humiliation she feels that a husband must be found for her before Bianca can marry, drive her into impossible behaviour. At the same time she wants a husband, while doubting whether any man she respects will want to marry her, even with a dowry to sweeten the bargain. Those critics who find her degraded in Act V tend to ignore the much worse degradation of her situation in Act 1.

Her violence towards Petruchio and her attempts to dominate are, at least in part, a means of testing him. Unconsciously she wants to submit and to accept her femininity, but she is prevented at first by her pride and by the fear that Petruchio is mainly interested in her dowry. After she has been starved and prevented from sleeping, she is willing to agree that the sun is the moon; but her relief at her own submission can be gauged from the way in which she joins in the joke:

Be it moon, or sun, or what you please;
And if you please to cal! it a rush-candle, Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me
Then, God be bless'd, it is the blessed sun;
But sun it is not, when you say it is not;
And the moon changes even as your mind.
(IV. v. 13-15, 18-20)

Anyone who heard Dame Edith Evans's address to old Vincentio as

Young budding virgin, fair and fresh and
sweet,

Whither away, or where is thy abode?
Happy the parents of so fair a child;
Happier the man whom favourable stars
Allots thee for his lovely bed-fellow
(IV.v.36-40)

must have been convinced that Katherina had learned to laugh.

As G. R. Hibbard points out in his admirable introduction to the play, [in the New Penguin edition, 1968] Petruchio by his outlandish behaviour has been holding up a mirror wherein his wife can see herself. In this distorting mirror she sees how impossible her own behaviour has been. Her realisation of this can be glimpsed in her sympathy with the servant who has been unjustly struck by Petruchio (IV.i.142) and with the cook (IV.i.154). Once Katherina decides to adopt the role of the obedient wife, she plays it with zest, exaggerating and parodying it as Petruchio had parodied the role of despotic husband. This, as we have seen, is apparent in her address to Vincentio; and there is nothing improbable in the assumption that her speech to the other wives is a deliberate exaggeration, as when she urges them to place their hands below their husbands' feet. The marriage, despite appearances, is based on love, mutual respect, and a kind of equality.

Critical Essay #15

Source: *"The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *Shakespeare's Comedies: From Roman Farce to Romantic Mystery,* University of Delaware Press, 1986, pp. 63-72.

[Ornstein argues that far from being "an independent, strong-minded woman, " *Katherina takes a highly conventional view of woman's place in society and of her own identity. Pointing to evidence in the text that Katherina's primary goal in life is marriage, he suggests that her fear of remaining unmarried motivates both her initial shrewish behavior and her relatively easy surrender to Petruchio. Rejecting the assertions of other critics that the relationship between Petruchio and Katherina is one of mutuality and respect, he points out that Petruchio repeatedly "tests" Katherina's obedience even after she has stopped fighting him. Concluding with an analysis of Katherina's speech in favor of wifely obedience, the critic suggests that her words demonstrate "a demeaning view of her sex.* "]

If Kate were an independent, strong-minded woman, Petruchio's bullying would not so completely destroy her will. He is able to reduce her to abject submission because she is never unconventional or genuinely rebellious. Rather than a free spirit, she is a prisoner of insecurities that make her more sympathetic and more psychologically complex than the heroine of *A Shrew.* [a similar, anonymous play published in 1594]. She does not lash out against men because she refuses to accept the role and destiny society allots to women. Although she jeers at Petruchio's wooing, and once attempts to strike him, and swears she will see him hanged before she will marry him, she is silent when Petruchio and her father agree to the match and is wretched at the thought that Petruchio will not come to the church to marry her. Love and marriage are what she wants, and fearing that she will not be loved, she behaves in a way that makes men aviod rather than reject her. She lashes out at Blanca because she has suitors, and she complains that Bianca is her father's favorite although her behavior makes it impossible for Baptista to be close to her. Acutely self-conscious and always ill at ease, she fears that the world is pointing and laughing at her, that she will be alone and miserable while her sister is married and happy; the intensity of that fear provokes the rage that makes her a wretched outcast. And yet marriage is always on her mind: she lays hands on Bianca to make her tell which suitor Bianca loves best. It is not astonishing that Kate is so well-behaved at her wedding, even though Petruchio is an offensive lout, because marriage gives her all that she wishes-esteem, a place in society, perhaps even love. And therefore she wants to enjoy all the traditional pleasures of the wedding ceremony and the feast with family and friends. She is ready to be like other brides and other wives, but he wants something more special in a spouse and therefore the taming will proceed despite Kate's reasonableness.

Even after his insulting bully-boy conduct at the wedding, Petruchio might still turn from a frog-or perhaps a toad-into a prince of a fellow when Kate, delighted to have a husband, kisses him. When they do kiss, however, Petruchio does not reveal the true refinement and sensitivity that he hid beneath a facade of crudeness. He is the same as before, the same as he will always be: once a frog, always a frog. For only one brief

moment are he and Kate equal partners in a witty charade. When, on the road back to Padua, she joins with him in pretending that Vincentio is a fair maiden rather than an old man, they both enjoy the role-playing. But as R. B. Heilman notes [in his introduction to the Signet Classic Shakespeare edition], this mutuality does not last. When, in the next scene, Kate refuses to kiss Petruchio in the street, he cracks the whip again, threatening to drag her away from the wedding feast for her sister as he had dragged her away from her own wedding feast.

Dressed in suitable garb, Petruchio seems on his good behavior at the feast. But when Lucentio speaks of friendship and good cheer, he mutters, "Nothing but sit and sit and eat and eat." What a bore civility is. To relieve the tedium he quickly baits Hortensio about his bride, the Widow; and he shows that he is quite willing to banter with someone else's wife though he tolerates no back talk from his own. Her education complete, Kate is silent but not more confident or social. She does not join in the conversation until the Widow's sparring with Petruchio opens up the old wound of her self-consciousness. Baited by Petruchio, the Widow refers to Kate's shrewishness. When Petruchio says that Hortensio is afraid of his wife, the Widow answers:

He that is giddy thinks the world turns
round.
Pet. Round!y replied.
Kate Mistress, how mean you that?
Wid. Thus I conceive by him.
Pet. Conceives by me! how likes Hortensio
that?
Hort. My widow says, thus she conceives her
tale.
Pet. Very wen mended. Kiss him for that,
good widow.
Kath. "He that is giddy thinks the world
turns round": I pray you, ten me what you meant by that.
Wid. Your husband, being troubled with a
shrew,
Measures my husband's sorrow by his woe:
And now you know my meaning.
Kate. A very mean meaning.
Wid. Right, I mean you.
Kate. And I am mean indeed, respecting you.
(5.2 20-33)

Kate's temper is beginning to boil, and Petruchio, the famed teacher of good manners is delighted, not horrified. "To her, Kate," he yells. . . .

Petruchio suggest the wager that will confirm his genius at wife-taming. He knows that Kate will obey his commands and, like a trained hawk, show her aggressive spirit when let fly. Bianca leaves the table when Petruchio threatens to "have at her for a bitter jest or two"; naturally, she is not eager to return and replies to Lucentio's summons that she

is busy and cannot come. The Widow suspects rightly that "some goodly jest" is in hand and also refuses to return. At Petruchio's summons, Kate immediately returns to the table and goes off again to fetch the other women, by force if necessary. Although Kate wins the wager for Petruchio, he would have her perform one additional trick to "show more sign of her obedience" by stepping on her cap at his command. The Widow and Bianca are appalled by this display of something Bianca hesitates to call "duty." To Lucentio's complaint that she has made him lose five hundred crowns, she replies, "The more fool you for laying on my duty," as indeed he is. The wish is father to the critical thought that Kate's early tantrums express an intrinsic honesty while Bianca's amiableness and dutifulness are proof of a simpering, scheming hypocrisy. Other evidence, I imagine, are her love of music and poetry and her attractiveness to many suitors. The final revelation of the hardness and latent shrewishness of her nature is presumably her refusal to return to the wedding table, where she has been baited by her brother-in-law on her wedding day while her bridegroom sat silent. If her anger at her husband's wager on her obedience is reprehensible, we must rejoice in Ophelia's submission to Polonius's dictates and idealize Helena's willingness to be humiliated by Bertram□

Kate offers no metaphysical justification for wifely obedience; instead she dwells on the natural superiority of men (who are spoken of as "prince," "lord," "king," "governor," "head," and "sovereign") to women, who are described as "muddy," "ill-seeming," "thick," "froward," "sullen," "peevish" and "sour" when they disobey their husbands, to whom they owe all. Kate also reminds the brides that they are "unable worms" with soft and weak bodies.

This is not the speech of woman who has blossomed under her husband's tutelage and can confidently enjoy her femininity. Of course, some suggest that Kate speaks these lines with a knowing wink or smile to assure an audience that she does not mean what she says. No doubt the speech can be made comic by a wink or a sly manner of delivery-almost any speech can-but ironic subtlety is not Kate's distinguishing characteristic, and these lines are too earnest and weighted with conviction to be a clever gambit. She means what she says; she takes pride, if not pleasure, in stooping to Petruchio's whistle, especially when she proves herself more valuable and praiseworthy than the other wives, who have the ease and confidence she lacks. She must take a demeaning view of her sex or be oppressed by the realization of her singularly demeaning marriage.

Critical Essay #16

A key question in interpreting *The Taming of the Shrew* is whether Shakespeare presents Petruchio as an admirable character or as an offensive one. Closely related is the matter of his motives for wanting to marry Katherina and his goals in "taming" her. Productions of the play have differed widely in their answers to these questions, as have the critics.

Many writers point to Petruchio's energy, imagination, and firmness of purpose as qualities that make him an attractive character. Others, such as Cecil C. Seronsy (in the section on APPEARANCE VS. REALITY), regard him as an exceptionally perceptive man able to recognize possibilities in Katherina's character that no one else in the play suspects. Most modern critics, like Alexander Leggatt and H. J. Oliver interpret Petruchio's outrageous behavior as a role he assumes in order to shake Katherina out of her shrewishness. Leggatt portrays Petruchio's treatment of Katherina as an attempt to make her a willing participant in his "game." Similar analyses were developed in the early 1970s by Richard Henze (in the section on GAMES AND ROLE-PLAYING) and Ralph Berry. Oliver rejects this interpretation, arguing that Petruchio's methods are often unjustifiably harsh and that while Petruchio admires Katherina's spirit he is seriously intent on dominating and controlling her. Critics such as Coppelia Kahn and Shirley Nelson Garner (in the GENDER ROLES section) point out that Petruchio's violent and willful behavior is not limited to the "taming" process, but is demonstrated in the play well before he meets Katherina. Petruchio, they argue, is even more "shrewish" than Katherina, but his behavior is considered acceptable and even praiseworthy because he is a man.

Petruchio's motives have also been the subject of critical debate. In an essay published in 1897, the Irish dramatist Bernard Shaw praised Shakespeare's creation of Petruchio as a realistic portrait of a man motivated by a desire to "make himself rich and comfortable." Many other commentators, however, such as Kenneth Muir and Harold Goddard (in the section on KATHERINA), see Petruchio as being motivated by a genuine affection and admiration for Katherina. George R. Hibbard (in the GENDER ROLES section, in a 1964 essay suggested that Petruchio is at east partially motivated by "his sportsman's love of risk." Michael West, on the other hand, in an article published in 1974, saw the attraction between Katherina and Petruchio as primarily sexual. More recently, critics such as Kahn and Garner have characterized Petruchio as motivated by a desire to assert his manhood by dominating his wife.

Source: An introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew,* Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1982, pp. 1-75.

[In the following excerpt, Oliver analyzes Petruchio's suitability for the task of "taming" Katherina. The critic rejects readings that see Petruchio as motivated by love as well as evaluations that suggest Katherina and Petruchio are merely "playing a game." Instead, Oliver emphasizes Petruchio's superior maturity and experience and his ability to make a plan and stick to it as the primary reasons for his success. The critic also suggests

that Petruchio's treatment of Katherina is at times so harsh that it would have won sympathy for Katherina even from an Elizabethan audience hardened to plays about "shrew-taming. "]

[Petruchio], of course, is the 'right' man for the task-and it is difficult to understand the objections to Peter Alexander's statement [in *Shakespeare's Life and Art,* 1939] that the story is, among other things, a variation on 'the perilous maiden theme, where the lady is death to any suitor who woos her except the hero, in whose hands her apparent vices turn to virtues'. As Curtis infers, hearing of Petruchio's behaviour, 'he is more shrew than she' (4.1.75); or as Grumio puts it, 'an she knew him as well as I do, she would think scolding would do little good upon him' (1.2.107-8); as Peter sums it up, 'he kills her in her own humour' (4.1.168) (and not, surely, as the sentimental modern orthodoxy believes, by *burlesquing* her behaviour, so that she sees herself as others see her, and finally 'sees the joke', but by standing over her and proving that with him shrewishness simply will not work).

For his role as tamer, he has all the necessary attributes. For example, he is mature: 'Yet you are withered', Kate taunts him, and he replies "Tis with cares' (2.1.238)-and although in most modern productions Kate is played by a sophisticated actress in her twenties or thirties, Shakespeare may well have thought of her as about sixteen. She is older than Bianca-but then on the evidence of other Shakespeare comedies Blanca would be thought marriageable at fourteen-and Kate's tantrums as well as Petruchio's treatment of them may seem rather more credible if she, too, in her own way is a spoilt child. However that may be, she certainly thinks of Petruchio, in the line just quoted, as older than she is. He also claims-and there is no reason to doubt the claim-a wide range of dangerous experience:

Have I not in my time heard hons roar? . . . Have I not heard great ordnance in the field. . . And do you tell me of a woman's tongue. . . ?
Tush, tush, fear boys with bugs!
-and Grumio adds 'For he fears none' (1.2.196-206).
In the tradition of the best tamers, he is quite without sentiment:
I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua
(1.2.74-5)

and insists that his prospective father-in-law come to the point:

Then tell me, If I get your daughter's love,
What dowry shall I have with her to wife?
(2.1.118-19).

It is apparently not even beneath his dignity to bargain with Bianca's wooers that if they want Katherine out of the way, they shall pay the expenses of his courtship of her.

If he lacks sentiment, however, he is certainly capable of appreciating strength in a woman's character, including strength of resistance, and when he hears of Kate's breaking of the lute over Hortensio's head proclaims:

Now by the world, it is a lusty wench;
I love her ten times more than e'er I did.
O how I long to have some chat with her!
(2.1.159-61).

Love, of course, has nothing to do with the case, and there is no place for love in a farce; but he does admire, and he welcomes the challenge of prospective strong opposition. Kate is like him in that respect: the implication of their first meeting and its prolonged and rather tedious exchange of insults is that she is at least interested in him, almost in spite of herself, and welcomes his un-Hortensio-like refusal to cower.

Petruchio has one other quality invaluable in a tamer-the ability to make a plan, and to keep to it. Just before their first meeting he announces, in soliloquy, his proposed strategy of calculated opposition:

Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain She sings as sweetly as a nightingale. . .
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day
When I shall ask the banns, and when be
married
(2.1.169-79);

he tells her to her face what he proposes to do:

For I am he am born to tame you, Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates
(2.1.275.7)

and then, again in soliloquy, when the programme is in operation, explains exactly how he is carrying out the plan 'to man my haggard' (4.1.175-98). Nothing is accidental, nothing unpredicted; and Hazlitt summed it up perfectly when he said that 'There is no contending with a person on whom nothing makes any impression but his own purposes, and who is bent on his own whims just in proportion as they seem to want common sense. With him a thing's being plain and reasonable is a reason against it. . .. The whole of his treatment of his wife at home is in the same spirit of ironical attention and inverted gallantry.'

Katherine learns that it is no use hitting him, as she might hit Hortensio, for 'I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again' (2.1.222); it is no use being shrewish when he has announced that it is their agreement that she shall be so in public; it is no use refusing to go with him after the wedding when he pretends that he is rescuing her from those who might help her to stay; it is no use claiming to be the injured party when he thanks the wedding guests who 'have beheld me give away myself / To this most patient, sweet, and virtuous wife' (3.2.193-4); it is no use complaining that food is denied when it

is said to be bad for her health. Petruchio's campaign has already passed the point of possible failure when the assurance is given, in 4.1.6870, that for the first time she was more concerned with somebody else-Grumio-than with herself ('how she waded through the dirt to pluck him off me'); and soon afterwards she is seen trying to defend the servants from her husband's (feigned) anger.

There is nothing to warrant an assumption that-at this stage, at any rate-Katherine and Petruchio are merely 'playing a game'. She is being tamed, and the spectacle would be acceptable if, but only if, Katherine had no feelings and the audience had no concern for her. In fact, however, Shakespeare sometimes dramatizes Kate's genuine distress. No modem playgoer can fail to sympathize with her, part of the time at least, and-difficult as such questions are-it is not easy to believe that the Elizabethan audience was always on Petruchio's side.

A crucial scene is the wedding. Katherine's words when her bridegroom does not appear for the ceremony are bound to arouse compassion:

No shame but mine. . .
Now must the world point at poor
Katherine
And say 'Lo, there is mad Petruchio's wife,
If it would please him come and marry her'
(3.2.8-20).

Tranio is embarrassed ('Patience, *good* Katherine. . :); and Baptista for once shows fatherly understanding:

Go, girl, I cannot blame thee now to
weep,
For such an injury would vex a very
saint,
Much more a shrew of thy impatient
humour.

They are both further concerned-not least for Katherine-when Petruchio arrives in his disarray ('See not *your bride* in these unreverent robes'). Most significantly of all: Gremio admits, in his account of the riotous marriage ceremony, that Katherine is 'a lamb, a dove' compared with Petruchio, and confesses 'I seeing this came thence *for very shame'.* If even Gremio can be ashamed, the audience cannot fail to be so too; it will feel that this is indeed 'a way to *kill* a wife', and not 'with kindness'. The world of farce-for all the broad humour of Petruchio's antics-has been left behind, and Katherine has long ceased to be merely the subject of an experiment.

The audience's disquiet will probably continue in the scenes at Petruchio's house, when she is not only denied food but also allowed to be the victim of mockery by the very servants; and there will not be general agreement with the attempts by some twentieth-century critics to 'save' her by saying that she 'enjoys the game' in Act 4 Scene 5 when

she declines any longer to have an opinion different from her husband's. The mood is rather weary resignation:

. . . be it moon, or sun, or what you please;
And if you please to call It a rush
candle,
Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me
(l1. 13-15).

Petruchio's victory, if it is a victory, is a very poor one indeed-and to say this is not to agree for one minute with H. C. Goddard's desperate claim that 'the play is an early version of *What Every Woman Knows-what* every woman knows being, of course, that the woman can lord it over the man so long as she allows him to think he is lording it over her'. (As R. B. Heilman nicely put it [in a 1966 article in *Modern Language Quarterly*], 'After three centuries of relative stability, then, Petruchio has developed rather quickly, first from an animal tamer to a gentleman lover who simply brings out the best in Kate, and then at last to a laughable victim of the superior spouse who dupes him'.) In fact, Katherine never 'lords it' over Petruchio; in nearly every sense that matters she loses; and Goddard admits that his main reason for interpreting the play in this way is to bring it 'into line' with the other comedies because otherwise it would be 'an unaccountable exception' and a regression. It is not a regression but a young dramatist's attempt, not repeated, to mingle two genres that cannot be combined. . . .

Adaptations

Kiss Me Kate. MGM, 1953.

Film version of the 1948 Cole Porter musical based on *The Taming of the Shrew.* Two divorced actors can't separate their real lives from their stage lives after they are engaged to play Katherina and Petruchio in a production 0 Shakespeare's play. Distributed by MGM/UA Home Entertainment, Facets Multimedia, Inc. 110 minutes.

Kiss Me Petruchio, New York Shakespeare Festival, 1982. Documentary on the New York Shakespeare Festival's production of *The Taming of the Shrew.* Distributed by Films Inc. Video, Professional Media Service Corp., 58 minutes.

The Taming of the Shrew. Pickford Corporation, Elton Corporation, United Artists, 1929, re-edited 1966.

Earliest film version, an early talkie featuring the only pairing of real-life couple Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. Distributed by Nostalgia Family Video, Critics' Choice Video. 66 minutes.

The Taming of the Shrew. Columbia, 1967.

A lavish screen version, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton and directed by Franco Zeffire!li Distributed by Columbia Tristar Home Video, The Video Catalog, PBS Video. 122 minutes.

The Taming of the Shrew. International Film Bureau, 1974. Presents two scenes from the play: Petruchio vows to marry Katherina, and he begins the process of "taming" her. Distributed by International Film Bureau, Inc. 13 minutes.

The Taming of the Shrew. NET, 1980.

Performance by the American Conservatory Theatre at the Geary Theatre in San Francisco. Distributed by WNET/Thirteen Non-Broadcast. 120 minutes.

The Taming of the Shrew. Cedric Messina, Dr. Jonathan Miller, BBC, 1981.

Stars John Cleese and Sarah Badel. Distributed by Ambrose Video Publishing, Inc. 127 minutes.

Further Study

Literary Commentary

Berry, Ralph. "The Rules of the Game." In *Shakespeare's Comedies: Explorations in Form,* pp. 54-71. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Argues that while The *Taming of the Shrew* may be, in essence, a "brutal sex farce," It is also a subtle portrayal of two people coming to terms on the rules of the games played between men and women.

Boose, Linda *"The Taming of the Shrew,* Good Husbandry, and Enclosure." *Shakespeare Reread: The Texts in New Contexts,* edited by Russ McDonald, pp. 193225. Ithaca Cornell, 1994.

Relates the play's treatment of social and sexual hierarchy to socioeconomic changes and class conflict in early modern England.

Bradbrook, Muriel C. "Dramatic Role as Social Image: A Study of *The Taming of the Shrew." Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 94, (1958): 132-50.

Examines Shakespeare's adaptation of the traditional roles associated with characters in earlier treatments of the shrew story, focusing in particular on his development of the characters of Katherina and Petruchio.

Brooks, Charles. "Shakespeare's Romantic Shrews." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 11, No.3 (Summer, 1960): 351-6.

Compares Katherina and Blanca with other Shakespearean female characters.

Coghill, Nevil. "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy." *Essays and Studies* 3 (1950): 1-28.

One of the first essays to argue that Katherina, not Petruchio, is the one who succeeds in mastering "the art of practice of matrimony."

Dusinberre, Juliet. *"The Taming of the Shrew:* Women, Acting, and Power." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 26, No.1 (Spring, 1993): 67-84.

Points out ways in which the play calls attention to the Elizabethan practice of using boy actors in female roles and examines the effect of this practice on the play's portrayal of gender relations.

Duthie, George Ian. "Shakespeare and the Order-Disorder Antithesis" and "Comedy." *Shakespeare,* pp. 39-56, 57-88. London. Hutchinson's University Library, 1951.

Interprets *The Taming of the Shrew* in terms of Elizabethan notions of a divinely ordered hierarchy of creation.

Greer, Germaine. "The Middle-Class Myth of Love and Marriage." *The Female Eunuch,* pp. 195-215. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970.

Briefly discusses *The Taming of the Shrew* in the context of changing ideas about the nature of marriage in late sixteenth-century England.

Heffernan, Carol F. *"The Taming of the Shrew:* The Bourgeoisie in Love." *Essays in Literature* 12, No.1 (Spring, 1985): 3-14.

Analyzes the play's portrayal of the values of the emergent middle class and its critique of the materialistic nature of Elizabethan marriage arrangements.

Heilman, Robert B. "The 'Taming' Untamed, or, The Return of the Shrew." *Modern Language Quarterly* 27, No.2 (June, 1966): 147-61.

Argues against twentieth-century interpretations of *The Shrew* that turn this "free-swinging farce" into "a bitterly ironic comic drama."

Jayne, Sears. "The Dreaming of 'The Shrew'." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17, No.1 (Winter, 1966): 41-56.

Regards the dramatic events of *The Taming of the Shrew* from Act I, scene ii, onwards as Sly's wish-fulfilling dream.

Leggatt, Alexander. "The Taming of the Shrew." In *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love,* 41-62. London: Methuen, 1974.

Notes that although Petruchio appears to challenge orthodox notions of propriety with his eccentric behavior, he ultimately teaches Katherina to appreciate social amenities and to value "peace. . . and love, and quiet life" (I, ii, 108). In addition, the critic calls attention to the many images drawn from sport, especially such blood sports as "hunting and hawking," associated with Petruchio's taming of Katherina.

Mack, Maynard. "Engagement and Detachment in Shakespeare's Plays." *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig,* edited by Richard Hosley, pp. 275-96. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962.

Examines the psycho!ogical process by which Petruchio tries to change Katherina's view of her own identity.

Newman, Karen. "Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew. English Literary Renaissance* 16, No.1 (Winter, 1986): 86-100.

Argues that by emphasizing its own theatricality, *The Taming of the Shrew* undermines Elizabethan social and gender roles by revealing them to be artificial.

Novy, Marianne L. "Patriarchy and Play in *The Taming of the Shrew,"* in *English Literary Renaissance* 9, No.2 (Spring, 1979): 264-80.

Examines the relationship between game-playing and the play's reaffirmation of male authority in the play.

Ranald, Margaret Loftus. "The Performance of Feminism in *The Taming of the Shrew. Theatre Research International, n.s.* 19, No.3 (Fall, 1994): 214-25.

Provides a brief review of the play's performance history, focusing in particular in how the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio has been portrayed.

Shapiro, Michael. "Framing the Taming: Meta-theatrical Awareness of Female Impersonation in *The Taming of the Shrew. The Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993): 143-66.

Looks at how the Elizabethan use of boy actors in female roles might have affected audience perception of the play's female characters.

Shaw, Bernard. "Chin Chon Chino." *The Saturday Review* 84, No. 2193 (November 6, 1987): 488-90.

Praises the playas a "realistic comedy" but finds the final scene deplorable.

Traversi, Derek. "The Taming of the Shrew" *William Shakespeare: The Early Comedies,* pp. 14-22. London: The British Council, 1960.

Maintains that *The Taming of the Shrew* defends the view that male domination of women is ordained y nature.

Ulici, Hermann. "Criticisms of Shakspeare's Drama: 'Much Ado about Nothing'-'Taming of the Shrew'." *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art: And His Relation to Calderon and Goethe,* translated by A. J. W. Morrison, pp. 289 99. London: Chapman Brothers, 1839.

Notes relationships between the Induction and the main body of the play.

Webster, Margaret. "The Early Plays." *Shakespeare without Tears,* pp. 135-58. New York: Whittlesey House, 1942.

Sees the play as depicting an ideal couple's negotiation of a "marriage of true minds."

West, Michael. "The Folk Background of Petruchio's Wooing Dance: Male Supremacy in 'The Taming of the Shrew.'" *Shakespeare Studies: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews* 7 (1974): 65-73.

Examines similarities between the play and folk traditions of courtship in arguing that the principal source of the play's "Imaginative appea!" is its lusty depiction of the rites of sexual initiation.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Shakespeare for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Shakespeare for Students (SfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Shakespeare for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Shakespeare for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Shakespeare for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Shakespeare for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Shakespeare for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Shakespeare for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Shakespeare for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Shakespeare for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535