

**HOFSTRA**  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA AND DANCE

# THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

William Shakespeare

## STUDY GUIDE

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**HOFSTRA/DRAMA**  
**1997**



A Study Guide to  
Hofstra University's  
Department of Drama and Dance  
Production  
of  
**The Taming of the Shrew**  
by  
**William Shakespeare**

March 1997

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The cover engraving is taken from James Edmund Harting's *The Birds of Shakespeare* (1871). It depicts hawks in training being carried to the field in "the cadge," carried by "the cadger." See page 8 of the Study Guide for some additional comments about falconry.

The idea and format of this study guide is by Peter Sander. He prepared and wrote the content of pp. 2-3. The material on pp. 4-5 has been adapted and rewritten from his study guide prepared for *Romeo and Juliet*, as have the questions for discussion and selected reading list. Other materials have been written or compiled by James Kolb.

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## ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

Because Shakespeare is acknowledged to be the greatest dramatist and poet in the English language, a natural and burning curiosity has fired critics, scholars, and artists from the time of his death to the present day. The complete facts of his life have eluded them all because actors and playwrights of that age were not held in high esteem, and the writing of letters and the keeping of journals were not common practice.

What can be pieced together of that life has been arrived at by painstaking detective work and educated guesses. The sources of information are scanty at best, mostly drawn from four areas: 1) documents and records of the period, such as birth and marriage certificates, deeds, legal depositions, and account books; 2) traditions, anecdotes, and recollections passed down through the years, some of very dubious validity; 3) literary references by other authors; and finally 4) conclusions that might be drawn from Shakespeare's writings themselves.

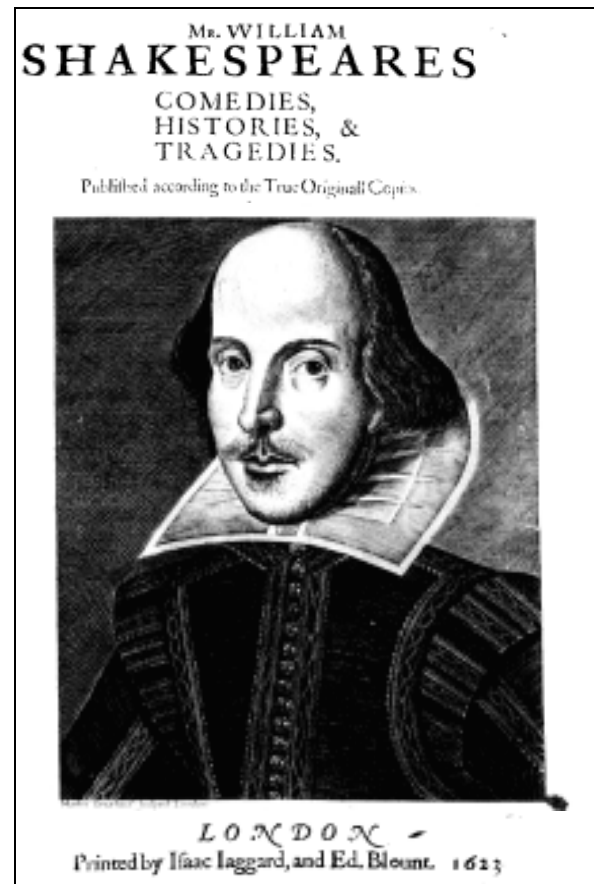
We can be relatively sure that Shakespeare was born about three days before his April 26, 1564, baptism to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden Shakespeare in Stratford-on-Avon, a market town of about 2,000 people in Warwickshire. We know that the playwright was the third child after two daughters died in infancy and that five more children followed. John Shakespeare was a wool dealer and glovemaking in Stratford who became a prominent borough official and civic leader until about 1577, when he experienced financial difficulties and dropped out of public life.

There is no secure information about Shakespeare's schooling—a sore point with many snobbish critics who cannot conceive of a person who has not gone to college writing as elegantly and knowledgeably as Shakespeare did. It is assumed that he went through the Stratford grammar school from the age of six until his sixteenth year. Days were long at school, from five or six o'clock in the morning until five in the evening, six days a week. Latin and Greek were certainly taught, and there Shakespeare must have come into early contact with the Roman plays of Seneca, Plautus, and Terence which found their way into his own works as did the poetry of Ovid, Virgil, and Horace and the histories of Caesar and Livy. By any contemporaneous or modern estimation, Shakespeare must have been an educated man. As Dryden observed, "He was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacle of Books to read Nature; he looked inwards and found her there."

The first real concrete record of Shakespeare's activities does not surface until 1582 when he was 18, at which time a marriage license was issued to him and Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years his senior from a tiny neighboring village. Five months after they were married, their first child Susannah was born, followed in 1585 by the birth of twins, Hamnet who died at the age of eleven, and Judith who died in 1662, eight years before the death of Shakespeare's last descendant.

Seven years after the birth of the twins, Shakespeare's name occurs in connection with the first of his plays produced in London. It is reckoned that he left Stratford around 1587, but what he did in those years is pure conjecture. Some legends say he was a schoolmaster; others claim he got into an altercation with a local squire for poaching deer and had to flee; still others maintain that he

went off to join a touring company of players. We shall never know.



Title page of the First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's plays with the famous Martin Droeshout engraving, 1623.

In 1592, however, in a dying warning to fellow playwrights, Robert Greene attacked Shakespeare as "an upstart crow" and firmly established him as the successful author of the three history plays, *Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three*. By then it was assumed that Shakespeare had already also written and had seen productions of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the bloody but popular tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*.

Between 1592 and 1594 the theatres were closed on account of plague, and Shakespeare turned to poetry, composing *Venus and Adonis*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, and probably the 154 sonnets.

When the theatres reopened, Shakespeare had become a stockholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, so called because it was under the patronage of England's Lord Chamberlain. It was one of London's two major theatre companies. Four years later the theatre moved to the other side of the Thames and opened the Globe, where ultimately most of the great tragedies were presented.

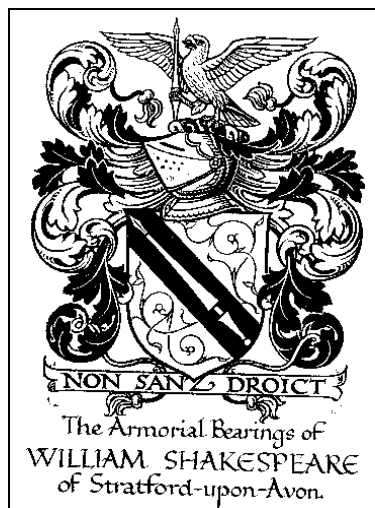
During the period 1594 to 1600, with the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as the two parts of *Henry IV*, among others, the theatre company prospered and Shakespeare became a man of means. He lived in a fine home in London and purchased the largest house in Stratford. He was granted a coat of arms acknowledging him as a "gentleman," an honor coveted but never achieved by his father because of money problems.

By the turn of the century Shakespeare had written his major romantic comedies: *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Twelfth Night*; and with the accession of James to the English throne after the death of Elizabeth in 1603, the Lord Chamberlain's Men were taken under the monarch's wing, calling themselves thereafter the King's Men. Many of the plays were then performed at Court, and in 1608 the company was able to open a second theatre, the Blackfriars, indoors and mainly for the upper classes, which allowed Shakespeare to turn to more subtle themes and pastoral romances, including *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare's reputation as a fashionable writer by then, however, was perhaps beginning to wane, or he lost enthusiasm for the bustle of London life. In 1611 he retired to Stratford returning pen to paper only to compose *Henry VIII*, a pageant, which by stage accident occasioned the burning of the Globe in 1613 at its premiere performance. He is also reputed to have collaborated in the writing of a minor play titled *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

Apparently he died on his birthday in 1616, some say as the result of contracting a "fever" after drinking with some of his playwright friends. His grave is marked by a stern and ominous warning, supposedly composed by the Bard himself, adding to the mystery surrounding his life but perhaps merely posted to keep his remains from being moved as was often done:

Good frends for Iesus (Jesus') sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed heare!  
Blest be ye (the) man yt (that) spares thes stones,  
And curst be he yt moves my bones.



An elaborate version of Shakespeare's coat of arms.

The motto means "Not Without Right."

### SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

It is generally acknowledged that Shakespeare's writing for the theatre falls largely into four main periods:

1) The Early Period (about 1590-1595). The plays that fall into this group reflect Shakespeare's youthful vitality and energy, both in conception and verse. Plays from this period include *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Richard III*.

2) The Middle Period (about 1595-1600). The plays emanating from this time betray a developing dark attitude about human nature, even cynicism at times. This is characterized by *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Troilus and Cressida*.

3) The Mature Years (about 1600-1607). During this period Shakespeare produced his greatest work: *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and such comedies as *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure*.

4) The Late Period (about 1608-1613). This era is marked by the playwright's concern with more mystical matters often set in pastoral surroundings. The difficult plays of this group include *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

According to Shakespearean scholar G.B. Harrison, the complete list of the plays with their approximate dates is as follows:

1591

*Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three*  
*Richard III*  
*Titus Andronicus*  
*Love's Labour's Lost*  
*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*  
*The Comedy of Errors*  
*The Taming of the Shrew*

1594

*Romeo and Juliet*  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
*Richard II*  
*King John*  
*The Merchant of Venice*

1597

*Henry IV, Parts One and Two*  
*Much Ado About Nothing*  
*Merry Wives of Windsor*  
*As You Like It*  
*Julius Caesar*  
*Henry V*  
*Troilus and Cressida*

1601

*Hamlet*  
*Twelfth Night*  
*Measure for Measure*  
*All's Well That Ends Well*  
*Othello*

1606

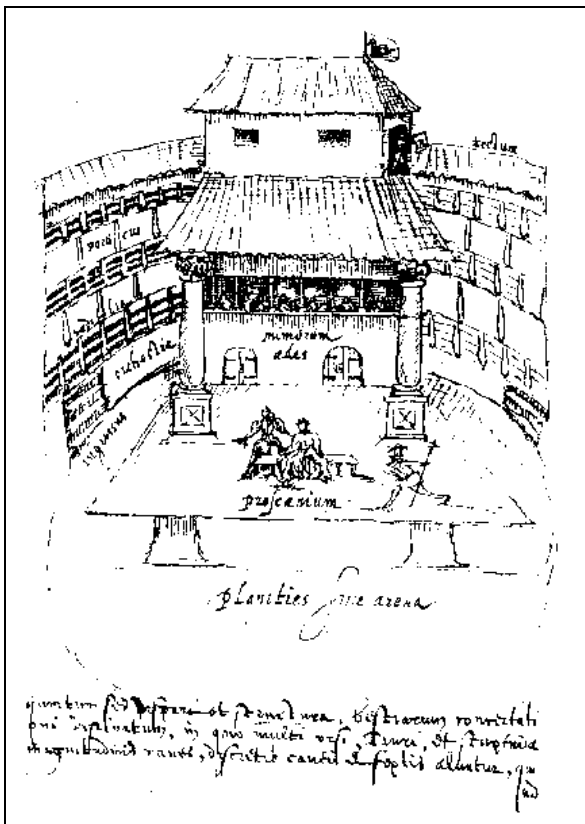
*King Lear*  
*Macbeth*  
*Timon of Athens*  
*Antony and Cleopatra*  
*Coriolanus*

1609

*Pericles*

1611

*Cymbeline*  
*The Winter's Tale*  
*The Tempest*  
*Henry VIII*



A drawing of the Swan theatre by Johannes de Witt, now in the university library at Utrecht, Holland

### SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE

With our contemporary exposure to modern theatre, television, and film, with their capacity for reproducing everyday reality so precisely and astounding us with amazing special effects, it is perhaps difficult to envision the kind of productions and the quality of imagination that Elizabethan audiences experienced when they attended a performance of *Macbeth*.

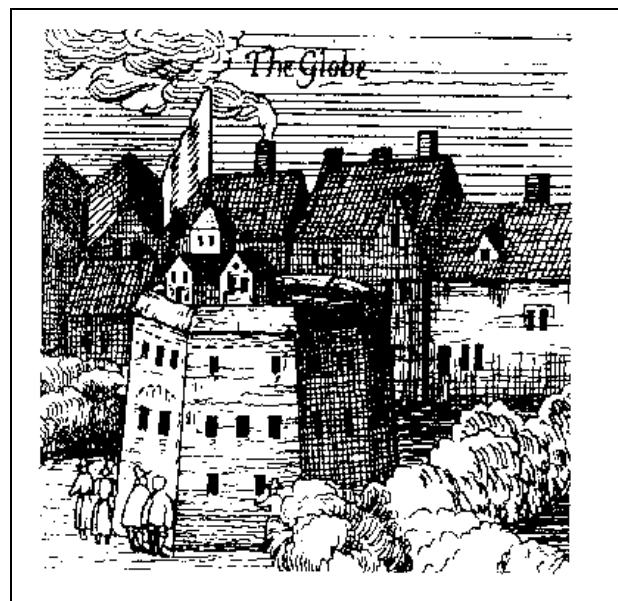
Our information about the playhouses of that time is very sketchy, derived as it is from one or two drawings, scanty stage directions, a few building specifications, contracts, and prop lists. It is clear, though, that the major plays were presented out of doors in open theatres in daylight. When nighttime scenes were called for, a few words sufficed to set the hour and the mood. Locations were also clarified by the actors' speeches. We can, therefore, assume that only the barest, most essential pieces of furniture and scenery were set—a chair, a bush, or a throne. The plays were done without intermission—many of the audience members stood throughout—and, therefore, the production had to move quickly from scene to scene in an almost cinematic way in order to achieve, as the Chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* calls for, “the two hours’ traffic of our stage.”

To accommodate tombs, beds, and balconies and to allow “dead bodies” to exit without being carried off, some device was needed to permit them to be hidden or to give them some elevation from the stage level. It is therefore conjectured that there was a curtained area somewhere on the back wall of the stage area, both on the platform level and above it. Since actors often had to traverse the playing area from one side to the other, it is likely that there were entranceways or doors on either side of the stage which also served to clarify opposing forces in a play—Montagues and

Capulets, French and English armies, or rebels and loyalists. The rest of the play was performed on a large square or rectangular (we cannot be sure) area which extended out into the audience, surrounded on three sides by the spectators.

Usually stage directions in many of the texts were added later by the editors, but an early edition of *Romeo and Juliet* gives us some clues about the theatres. After Juliet drinks the potion, the script indicates, “She falls upon her bed within the curtains,” and then one assumes they are closed. After discovering and lamenting Juliet’s supposed death, “They all but the Nurse go forth, casting rosemary on her and shutting the curtains.” Suggestions such as these are all that historians have to go on in determining how the plays were staged.

It is thought that the architecture of the playhouses was developed from touring companies who set up and performed at innyards against one wall of the building. Audiences could stand at ground level or watch from balconies and galleries on three sides. These galleries found their way into the structure of theatres built for the purpose of productions.

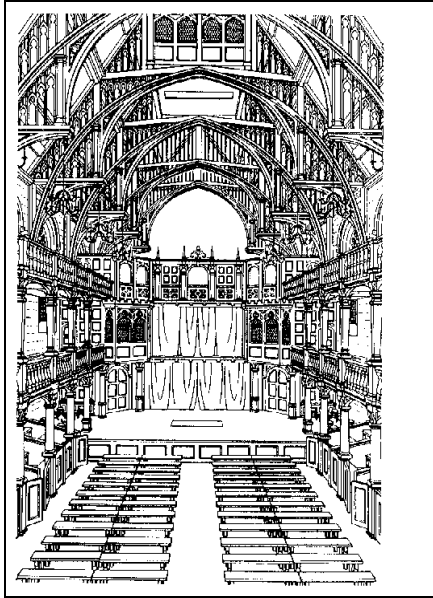


Enlarged detail of the Globe playhouse on the south bank of the Thames from a map of London published about 1625

Behind the stage was the “tiring” area (coming from the word “attiring”) where the actors could change costumes (they played more than one role because the companies were small, the casts large), where props were stored (many plays were kept in the repertory during the season and the life of the theatre), and from where music and special effects might emanate (it was a cannon explosion which started the fire that destroyed the Globe Theatre in 1613).

The stage itself was pitted with several openings (or traps) from which ghosts could emerge, in which graves could be “dug,” or characters descend. One critic suggests that the witches in their first meeting with Macbeth “vanish” through such a trap, and the apparitions in Act IV, Scene 1, appear and exit through a trap. Later in the development of the company Shakespeare worked for, an indoor theatre, the Blackfriars, was purchased. This catered to a more elite clientele, permitted performances in all sorts of weather, perhaps allowed some rudimentary lighting effects, but,

above all, acoustically gave Shakespeare the opportunity to write more subtle dialogue with more complex imagery and ideas than the direct, open, heroic speeches required by playing out of doors.



The Second Blackfriars theatre as reconstructed by Irwin Smith in *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Design*. (New York: New York University Press, 1964).

The act and scene divisions in the plays were later textual additions, but an audience usually knew when a major section had ended by the rhymed couplet which summarized or rounded out a series of dramatic events. For example, near the end of Act II, after “wooing” Katherine and arranging his marriage to her with her father, Petruchio takes his leave of future father-in-law and wife-to-be:

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 Shall be married a’ Sunday.”

Shakespeare wrote for the company of actors who made up the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, later the King’s Men. Heroic roles were fashioned around the talents of their leading actor, Richard Burbage. As he grew older, the roles conceived for him also matured so that early in his career Burbage played Romeo and Hamlet, then later he assayed King Lear, Macbeth, and Othello. Will Kemp played the lower, broader, comic roles like Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*. He apparently broke off with the theatre and was replaced by the more ethereal singer and dancer, Robert Armin. For him Shakespeare conceived a totally different sort of comic role more appropriate to his talents and temperament. He played Feste in *Twelfth Night*, Touchstone in *As You Like It*, and the Drunken Porter in *Macbeth*.

The women in Shakespeare’s plays were all played by boys, and they must have developed great acting skills to portray such complex personalities as Juliet, Lady Macbeth, and Cleopatra. Their careers, however, were short-lived since it would have stretched believability too far to have kept them in such parts after their voices had changed in about their fourteenth year.

Shakespeare himself acted in the company, his most famous role being that of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, but his

influence as a shareholder was obviously due to the enormous popularity of the plays he supplied rather than from his distinction as a performer. Tradition holds that Shakespeare played the role of Adam in *As You Like It*. It is thought by some critics that he may have performed the role of Duncan in *Macbeth*.

The demise of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre occurred when violence, sex, and spectacle were substituted for an identifiable humanity in the plays, and sentimentality replaced true feeling. The acting quality no doubt also deteriorated when companies of children became fashionable; and the death knell of the most vital theatre in world history sounded when the Puritans took over the State and closed the theatres in 1642.

## A SUMMARY OF THE STORY

A lord and his huntsmen discover a drunken tinker asleep, Christopher Sly by name. The tinker is taken to the house of the Lord and told that he is master, having lost his mind for the past 15 years. A page is costumed as his wife and a company of traveling players present *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Baptista of Padua insists his elder daughter, Katherine, the Shrew, must be married before he gives his consent to the wedding of her sister, Bianca, who has many suitors. Kate is wooed by Petruchio, an adventurer from Verona. He has two reasons, one being her dowry and the other to help his friend, Hortensio, win Bianca. Kate’s wedding day is turned into a shambles when the groom arrives very late and dressed in rags. A mad marriage ceremony follows, after which he carries her off to his home in the country and tames her by allowing her no food or sleep, and then takes her back to Padua.

There, Lucentio has pretended to be a schoolmaster and so won Bianca, and Hortensio consoles himself with a rich widow. At a feast in Lucentio’s home, Petruchio easily wins the wager as to whose wife is the most submissive.

Elizabeth Schafer offers a more succinct description of the action of *The Taming of the Shrew*: “A theatrical frame complicates an audience’s response to the definition of the rôles people play within marriage.”

## THE SOURCES OF THE STORY

Shakespeare’s genius did not usually extend to the invention of new material to accompany his rich characterizations and relationships, his clearly devised and exciting plot and structure, and his soaring poetry. He drew his ideas from Roman, Greek, and English history and mythology, other plays, and translations of continental novellas. Often he combined different tales into a new creation.

As noted in the program for a production of the play at Stratford, Canada: “The story of *The Taming of the Shrew* was taken by Shakespeare from several sources, chiefly perhaps from a translation of Ariosto’s Italian comedy *I Suppositi*. Ariosto’s play shows a young lover working with his crafty servant to outwit his rival suitors. It is firmly rooted in the Roman tradition with its stock characters and situations and its stock devices of disguise and mistaken identity. *The Taming of the Shrew* retains many of these conventional features evoking the spirit of Harlequin and Pantaloon and calls to mind the world of

strolling players and the early circus. Around and through this traditional framework Shakespeare has woven the main plot of Katherine and Petruchio.”

Under the title *Supposes*, Ariosto’s play was adapted into English prose by George Gascoigne in 1566 when it was produced both in London and Oxford. It was published in 1575. Shakespeare made use of similar disguises and mistaken identities **only** in relation to the Bianca/Lucentio/Tranio/Gremio/Hortensio plot, and he had in fact already used these devices in his reworking of the Roman comedy by Plautus into his *The Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare would subsequently use disguisings in comedies such as *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*.

As regards the Katherine–Petruchio plot no specific sources have come to light. Geoffrey Bullough observes, however, that “this is a variant of the Shrew theme common in fabliaux from classical times. In it Shakespeare carries on the idea of marriage which Luciana expounded in *The Comedy of Errors* against the nagging jealousy of Adriana.

. . . Humorous discussions about mastery in marriage had enlivened the road to Canterbury in Chaucer (e.g. The Wife of Bath, the Merchant), and the Jest Books of the Tudor age contained many stories of battle between the sexes.”



A woodcut used as an illustration in the publication of “A Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe, Lapped in Morrelle’s Skin, for Her Good Behavvour,” 1550

In addition to Chaucer and the Jest Books (frequently cited is “A Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe, Lapped in Morrelle’s Skin, for Her Good Behavvour”) there are also a number of early English plays and interludes that prominently feature shrewish or nagging wives; including *Noah’s Flood*, and *Johan, the Husband*—in both of which we find a husband enduring a nagging, shrewish wife. Even when women did not appear in a play they were still frequently depicted in a stereotypical fashion. In *The Play of the Four PP* four men meet at an inn, all members of professions beginning with the letter “P”: a Palmer, a [A]Pothecary, a Pardoner, and a Pedlar. To pass the time they take turns telling stories, or “tall tales,” or lies, with the

Pedlar as judge of the competition. After two fantastic and lengthy stories by the Potheary and the Pardoner, the Palmer easily wins the contest with an extremely short tale that ends with the claim:

I have seen women five hundred thousand,  
And oft with them have long time tarried;  
Yet in all places where I have been,  
Of all the women that I have seen,  
I never saw, nor knew, in my conscience,  
Any one woman out of patience.

To which the Potheary replies: “By the mass, there is a great lie!” The notion of the shrewish wife, the hen-pecked husband, and the need to “tame” her were proverbial by the time Shakespeare came to make use of them.

In regard to the “Induction” and Christopher Sly material, no sources have been identified, but as Bullough notes there are numerous analogous stories: “The theme of the beggar transported into luxury is found in *The Arabian Nights*, where Haroun Al Raschid plays the trick on a sleeper,” and the story was repeated by numerous other writers including Philip the Good of Burgundy and numerous English writers.

*The Taming of a Shrew* bears a good deal of similarity to Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. Published in 1594, and reprinted in 1596 and 1607, *a Shrew* has a fuller “Induction” and includes a final scene in which Christopher Sly awakes from his “dream.” On the other hand, the play is set in Athens, not Padua; and while there is a Kate in the play, her tamer is called Ferando. At one time this play was thought to be a principal source of Shakespeare’s play, but it is now more commonly interpreted as a “Bad” Quarto,” or a “memorial” version (reconstructed from memory) of Shakespeare’s play and that it actually comes **after** Shakespeare’s play.

#### THE DATE OF COMPOSITION AND SPECIAL PROBLEMS WITH THE TEXT OF *The Taming of the Shrew* AS RELATED TO *The Taming of a Shrew*

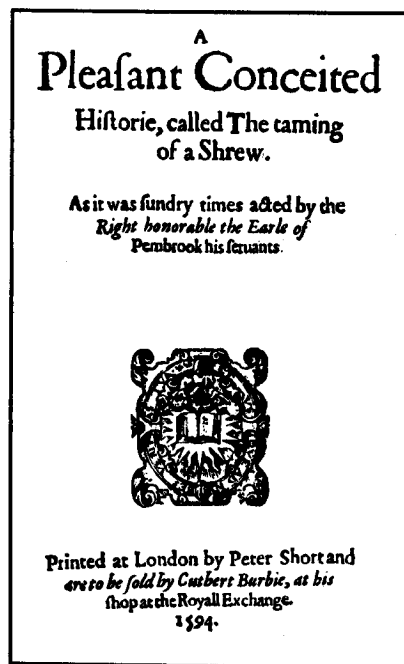
Shakespeare’s plays were written to be produced. Their publication, often in pirated editions, usually occurred much later. While *The Taming of a Shrew* was apparently a popular enough play to appear in three Bad Quartos, Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* did not see publication until the appearance of the First Folio, the first collection of Shakespeare’s “complete” works in 1623. There has been much speculation about the relationship between *The Taming of a Shrew* and Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. If *a Shrew* is in fact a Bad Quarto pirated from Shakespeare’s play than Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* needs to have been written before 1594, the year in which *a Shrew* was registered and published.

Subtle arguments are made by various editors of *the Shrew* in which internal evidence in *a Shrew* is pointed to in regard to the relationship between the two texts. It has been argued that the Bad Quarto of *a Shrew* may have been reconstructed as early as August 1592, which means that Shakespeare’s play was written before that date. Various editors have argued dates ranging from as early as 1589 to early 1592. Like much else in Shakespeare as one commentator notes: “Unless new, external evidence comes to light, the relationship between *the Shrew* and *a Shrew* can

never be decided beyond a peradventure,” and the same may be said for the dating of Shakespeare’s play.

that they are engaged in the same war which the shrew and her tamer fight openly.”

—Alvin Kernan



Title page of the “Bad” Quarto of 1594

#### A FEW CRITICAL COMMENTS

“Love and sex are the usual locomotives of romantic comedy, and they are central to Shakespearean comedy, but he uses them not only as the basis of the plot but also as entry-ways into the usually hidden, further reaches of self and nature. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1593-5), a love-friendship comedy in the manner of Lyly, the young lover Proteus, whose name suggests his potentialities, turns from a true lover and a faithful friend to a man who falls violently in love with his friend Valentine’s beloved, treacherously betrays his own love and his friend in order to have the lady, and when she denies his advances follows her to the forest and plans to rape her. The violence latent in the gentle passion sometimes takes open form as antagonism and hatred for the opposing sex. In *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593-4) Kate the shrew’s incredible violence of will, astounding perversity and rage at all she encounters, whether it threatens or tries to placate her, suggest a demonic will to power rather than any inclination towards love. Petruchio, the realist who frankly comes to wive it wealthily in Padua, understands the demon he has to deal with and sets out to tame Kate as one would a wild animal. He becomes more perverse, more irrational, more furious than she; denies her rest, food and comfort; until, exhausted and overmanned by an energy greater than her own, she capitulates and jumps through the hoops Petruchio holds out for her. Whether she finds satisfaction in this relationship, or whether she simply plays the game with tongue in cheek, certain of her own ultimate domination, or whether she has discovered—though Petruchio has not—the miraculous power of love, the play does not absolutely tell us. But it does tell us in several ways that the conflict of violent, head-strong, self-seeking personalities fought out by Kate and Petruchio is a part of what the world so confidently calls love. The other lovers of the piece simply gloss over the reality with fine words and refuse to recognize

“The three strands of the play are thematically linked by notions of disguise or transformation (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is again a key influence): Sly is transformed into a nobleman, Katherine into an obedient wife, and the subplot centering on Katherine’s sister Bianca is full of more literal disguises. Even Petruchio is playing a role, alerting the audience in advance about how he will perform towards Katherine in II.i and again in IV.i. Not surprisingly, the play is full of scenes in which various characters implicitly take over from Christopher Sly the role of on-stage audience. This emphasis on acting and role-playing has helped critics to come to terms with the play: it ends with a wager, and if we can contrive to see it as a game, we can soften the aggression which overtly dominates the play’s sexual politics.”

—Levi Fox

“It is worth questioning whether *The Taming of the Shrew* would still be in the dramatic repertoire if it did not have the magic name ‘Shakespeare’ attached to it. The story implied by its title is more thoroughly rooted in a medieval and Elizabethan way of thinking about women and their relation to the patriarchy than any other of Shakespeare’s plays (excluding the histories). Yet as soon as one begins to consider the question the answer seems obvious: *The Shrew* has remained consistently popular because it reinforces a profoundly-held belief of its audiences. In the four hundred years since Shakespeare wrote the play the patriarchal system has remained entrenched in our society, changing a little superficially, but in no way relinquishing its power. The play enacts the defeat of the threat of a woman’s revolt: it does so in comic form, and often with apparent good humour—thus it offers the audience the chance to revel in and reinforce their misogyny while at the same time feeling good. It ends happily, so all must be right with the world. Yet, looked at with sober late-twentieth-century eyes, this is a story in which one human being starves and brainwashes another, with the full approval of the community. Cruelty can be funny—it is the basis of the ‘practical joke’—as long as one is on the dominant side, and no lasting damage is done to the victim. *The Taming of the Shrew* argues that the cruel treatment is for the victim’s good, to enable her to become a compliant member of patriarchal society. Whether we in the late twentieth century are convinced of this depends on the way the play’s world is depicted, and particularly on how Kate’s astonishing last speech is spoken and received, both by her on-stage audience and by the audience in the theatre.”

—Penny Gay



"We cannot act or see Shakespeare today as the Elizabethans and the author did but we can take into account that our perception is a modern one without rewriting the plays to make them contemporary. Unable to re-create, or revisit the past as Elizabethans, we can establish a relationship to that past if we allow for differences, but this does not mean that we have to make the play's concerns identical with our own. By accepting how different the world referred to at the time of writing is from our own, similarities, in views and emotional experience, become much more striking. The plays are products of their time, and I hope that even when I have directed Shakespeare in modern or nineteenth-century dress, I have not lost sight entirely of the play's antiquity in my interpretation.

The best example of this overvaluing of our own time is shown in the American approach to Shakespeare; here I am thinking of directors like Joseph Papp. The American vice is seen most clearly in plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* which suddenly become a test case for feminism. Petruchio is portrayed as a typical male chauvinist pig, and Katharina as a bullied victim who then has to deliver her last speech, which seems to be so abjectly submissive, in a way that implies to the audience both that she is not defeated and that her submission to Petruchio is very ironic. This is sad because it demonstrates the belief that a work from the past can be performed in its afterlife only if it is made to conform to the values of the present.

In contrast, I think that one of the advantages of directing a play like *The Taming of the Shrew* is that it invites us to look at it on its own terms, and to see that the past is a foreign country with different customs and values from our own. The play at least offers us the opportunity to try to understand what is now the radically unvisitable past. Unlike Papp's approach to the play, my own enthusiastically recognizes Tudor social ideas of the function of the woman in the household without agreeing with them."

—Jonathan Miller

"The real problem lies outside the play in the fact that the subjection of women to men, although patently unfair and unjustifiable, is still virtually universal. It is the world which offends us, not Shakespeare."

—Ann Thompson

"When Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*, he seemed impatient with the whole business of romantic love, as though he felt that the sighing and swooning, the protestations, the lutes, handkerchiefs, potions and tokens wasted a lot of time. Bianca's suitors appear to have nothing to do but plot to outmaneuver each other, like a bunch of silly schoolgirls. Lucentio only has to see Bianca in the street to be burning, pining and perishing with passion. Gremio, who is old enough to be her father, querulously bids for her with his herd of dairy cows and his two houses. Hortensio postures as a music teacher in order to speak a word to her, although he's obviously known the family for years. Shakespeare appears to be saying that men, far from being the superior sex, behave far more foolishly than women when they're in love."

—Penelope Mortimer

"The dictionary says a shrew is 'a scolding, bad-tempered, mean-spirited woman.' There is no equivalent

label for a man, though I'm sure that there were plenty of scolding, bad-tempered, mean-spirited men around."

—Paola Dionisotti

Shakespeare sees Katharine and Petruchio as in love, almost from the first meeting. Their fights are partly a flirtatious game, partly a matter of egoism, male and female, with a good deal of bluffing on both sides. Katharine is perhaps testing Petruchio, hoping half-consciously that he will survive her impossible stunts and thereby prove to be the husband she requires. Petruchio accepts the challenge with relish; we feel some love and insight in him even as he roars at the terrible Katharine, starves her, and tramples on her tender vanities. At the end of the play, when both are for the moment exhausted, Katharine gives her famous speech on wifely duty. There is plenty of irony in this speech—which no husband in the audience can miss—but there is gratitude too. Katharine has wakened from her nightmare of the bad little girl; she has grown up; the strenuous game has, for the moment at least, a happy ending.

—Francis Fergusson

### ABOUT FALCONRY

"Because it was expensive and time-consuming, falconry was largely a sport of aristocrats. Like other forms of hunting, it became a mark of nobility. In the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, for instance, the Lord enters with two 'huntsmen' talking about their hunting dogs; the Lord's servants convince Christopher Sly that he, too, is a Lord by tempting him with the prospect of noble sports: 'Dost thou love hawking? . . . Or wilt thou hunt?' (Ind. 2.38-39). To engage in these sports, one must first own costly animals ('thou hast hawks'; 'thy hounds'). By drawing on the language of falconry to describe how he will tame Katharine, Petruchio asserts himself to be a gentleman. Like taming a wife, taming a hawk is a way not only of dominating a wild and rebellious creature (who is invariably identified as feminine) but also of distinguishing one's self from other men. Petruchio's successful program to 'man his haggard' is contrasted with Hortensio's failed attempt to woo Bianca, to whom he refers in defeat as 'this proud disdainful haggard' (4.2.39). The final scene in which the three husbands wager on their wives makes this sporting competition especially clear."

—Frances E. Dolan

"The decision as to whether to include or exclude Christopher Sly is not a matter of an ordinary playhouse cut: without Christopher Sly the *Shrew* becomes a different play. . . . The excision of the Sly-frame converts the play into a naturalistic comedy (with varying degrees of farce) in which issues of marriage and sexual politics are dramatised (with more or less seriousness) by actors presenting themselves as real characters within a convincingly realistic social and domestic setting. Retention of the Sly-frame creates an entirely different dramatic medium: for the 'inner play' is designated by that frame as an elaborate hoax—part of a series of tricks calculated to fool a poor man into a temporary illusion of riches and power; a contrived fantasy designed (unsuccessfully, as it proves) to keep a drowsy itinerant awake."

—Graham Holderness

"Ovid's shifting and elusive world appealed to and served Shakespeare in both his comic and tragic moods. The *Metamorphoses* lies behind Shakespeare's creation of a

realm in which the impossible becomes possible, in which obstacles can be overcome and wishes fulfilled, in which change is beneficent and happiness attainable. For example, *The Taming of the Shrew*, packed with Ovidian references, depicts a world that seems constant in nothing but change. In the frame story, Christopher Sly is transformed into a rich lord and Bartholomew the page into his wife; in the play proper, 'Tranio is changed into Lucentio' by means of disguise; Lucentio the student into Cambio the scholar; Hortensio the old suitor into Litio the music master, Petruchio on his wedding day into a kind of lunatic; an unsuspecting traveler into Vincentio, false father of the false Lucentio; Bianca the obedient daughter into an uncooperative wife; and, in the titular transformation, Katherina ('the curst') from an unhappy misfit into a seemingly contented spouse. Despite the heavy irony, these reversals and alterations intimate that human action is being guided by some providential force corresponding to Ovid's gods and goddesses."

—Russ McDonald

"Love stories are never so engaging as when their principals do not wish to love, and particularly when it is their power that prevents them. For one thing, we are never so sure as then that love is genuine; and for another, there is a peculiar delight in discovering that two persons have mistaken attraction for repulsion, and in listening to the reverse language of raillery which they employ in place of lisps and sighs. The best lovers are witty lovers who bury their perturbation under abuse; at least this is true for comedy, and by all means it is the case where situation is the thing."

—Mark Van Doren

"Like *Comedy of Errors*, *Taming* is concerned with defining the proper relationship in marriage. But whereas *Comedy of Errors* focuses on marriage as the root from which all others grow, as the nucleus, the foundation of an entire society, *The Taming of the Shrew* focuses on marriage as the foundation of a happy and orderly life. *Comedy of Errors* looks outward; *Taming* looks inward. Thus, in *Comedy of Errors*, many characters rebel against the social structure or experience a degree of freedom from it. Only two characters in *Taming* fully rebel against the social structure—Katharina and Petruchio (and on one occasion, Grumio)—although several experience some freedom by changing their social status (role). At the conclusion of *Comedy of Errors*, all strata of society are represented, and its lowest members, the Dromios, decide that equality, rather than hierarchy, is the happier relation. The conclusion of *Taming* is severely stratified, and more narrowly. The guests at the dinner are mainly husbands and wives; the servants—even the wonderful Tranio—are limited to serving; and Katharina gives a long sermon asserting the dependency of women (implicitly the inlaw feminine principle) upon men. In other words, the conclusion of *Comedy of Errors* emphasizes freedom and flexibility within social limitations; the conclusion of *Taming* emphasizes social limitations on freedom."

—Marilyn French

"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, judged it

primitive, somewhat brutal stuff and tiresome, if not positively offensive to any modern civilised 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 has done much to restore a sense of proportion by quoting some of the punishments for termagant 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, maneuvers her into an understanding of his nature and also her own."

—Ruth Nevo

"No lines in the play have been more variously interpreted than this final speech in which Kate advocates women's submission to their husbands' wills. Some critics have accepted Kate's speech simply as testimony that she has been tamed—others argue that it must be understood ironically as pretense, a strategy for living peaceably in patriarchal culture. Although either interpretation can be supported by the text and by a director's choices in the theater, what is perhaps most striking about Kate's final speech is that at the very moment the ideology of women's silence and submission is most forcefully articulated, we find a woman (or at any rate, a boy playing a woman's part, since on the Elizabethan stage all women's parts were played by boy actors) speaking forcefully and in public the longest speech in the play, at the most dramatic moment in the action. In short, Kate's speaking as she does contradicts the very sentiments she affirms."

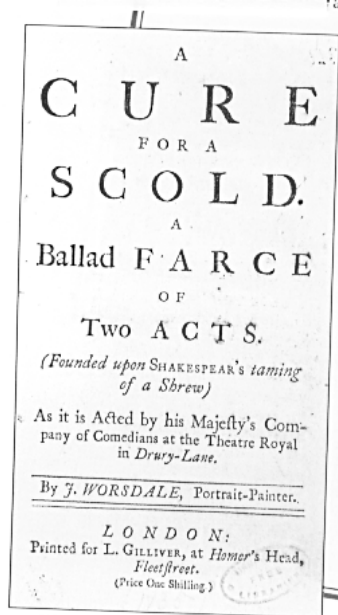
—Karen Newman

## ABOUT THE PLAY ON THE STAGE

Although *The Taming of the Shrew* was not published until the First Folio of 1623, there is evidence that the play was very popular during Shakespeare's lifetime. If it is true that *The Taming of a Shrew* is a pirated version of Shakespeare's play, then we have the title page of the Quarto of 1604 that claims the play was "sundry times acted." The fact that this quarto was reprinted in 1596 and 1607 also indicates continuing interest in the play. By 1611 the play had spawned a sequel, John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed* in which "Katherina has died and Petruchio marries again but his second wife tames him." After Shakespeare's death his company The King's Men, continued to perform the play and there is a record of it having been presented at court before King Charles in 1633. The Master of the Revels recorded in his account book that the King "Liked." For comparison, a month later *Cymbeline* was "Well liked" and shortly thereafter *The Winter's Tale* was also "liked."

In the Restoration and 18th century Shakespeare's play disappeared, being displaced by several adaptations including James Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (1667). Samuel Pepys, an avid playgoer, recorded attending the play on at least two occasions. In 1667 he found that the play "hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play" and noted that the Lacy adaptation, introducing "Sawny," the Scot, "hath not half its life, by reason of the words, I suppose, not being understood, at least by me." A few months later, Pepys saw the it again and referred to it as "a silly play and an old one." What is not clear is whether Pepys's objections were to the aspects of the play as Shakespeare wrote it or to the adaptation made by Lacy.

In 1715 the Christopher Sly material was expanded into another play called *The Cobar of Preston*, a farce adaptation by Christopher Bullock. Within weeks a second adaptation of the same name, written by Charles Johnson, was presented at Drury Lane. As late as 1817 Johnson's version of the Sly material was revived with "musical additions."



In 1735 James Worsdale wrote a "ballad farce called, *A Cure for a Scold* which was derived from Lacy's *Sauny the Scot*. In the 1750s David Garrick launched a series

of four adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as "entertainments." *The Taming of the Shrew* was adapted as *Catharine and Petruchio* (1754), placing great stress on the farcical aspects of the work, and eliminating all of the Christopher Sly material as well as the wooing of Bianca—who is already married to Hortensio (Lucentio is not included in this version)! George C.D. Odell has noted that "*Catharine and Petruchio* was one of the three Shakespearian adaptations that had a long, long life on the stage; Tate's *Lear* and Cibber's *Richard III* being the others. It deserved its great popularity as an afterpiece, and was driven from the stage only in 1886, when Daly revived *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction and all, and with the help of John Drew and Ada Rehan in the chief characters removed it from the realm of farce and restored it to a comedy plane."

Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio* was presented in New York City as early as 1766, and Edwin Booth included Petruchio among his roles in the 19th century, though using Garrick's version of the play, as altered by Booth!

In 1828 *The Taming of the Shrew* was claimed to have been revived at Drury Lane ("not acted 80 years"), but in this case it included an overture by Rossini and numerous interpolated songs!

Other English performers of Katherina and Petruchio, usually, persistently, in some variant of Garrick's version of the play, included Mrs. Clive, William Charles Macready, Fanny Kemble and Charles Kemble, Sarah Siddons, and, in 1867, Ellen Terry and Henry Irving.

It was not until 1844 that Shakespeare's play was revived more or less in its original shape; produced at the Haymarket Theatre by Benjamin Webster and J.R. Planché. According to Planché's notes, the return of an actress to the stage "suggested the idea to me of reviving *The Taming of the Shrew*, not in the miserable, mutilated form in which it is acted under the title of *Katherine and Petruchio*, but in its integrity, with the Induction. . . . It also occurred to me to try the experiment of producing the piece with only two scenes—1. The outside of the little ale-house on a heath, from which the drunken tinker is ejected by the hostess, and where he is found asleep in front of the door by the nobleman and his huntsmen; and, 2. The nobleman's bedchamber, in which the strolling players should act the comedy, as they would have done in Shakespeare's own time under similar circumstances—viz., without scenery, and merely affixing written placards to the wall of the apartment to inform the audience that the action is passing 'in a public place in Padua,'—'a room in Baptista's house,'—'a public road,' etc." In other words, Planché conceived of the production as resembling an Elizabethan neutral stage. Even after this production, Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio* persisted on the English stage down to the time of Augustin Daly's production of 1888.

In 1886-87, the American producer-director Augustin Daly also presented Shakespeare's version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and took it to London in 1888. The production ran for 120 nights in New York and was a major success in London as well. One of the chief attributes of the production was the Katherina of Ada Rehan, whose performance, according to Odell, "was at once hailed as among the very few greatest Shakespearian representations, not only of that age but of all time. Such it remains in theatrical history. . . ."



Ada Rehan, her Katherina “hailed as among the very few greatest Shakespearian representations, not only of that age but of all time.”



Julia Marlowe as Katherina

Other late 19th- and early 20th-century American actors to essay the roles included James Murdoch, Julia Marlowe, E.H. Sothern, and John Drew among many others.



James Murdoch as Petruchio



John Drew as Petruchio

Notwithstanding the obvious feminist issues that have been raised in recent decades, *The Taming of the Shrew* remains an extremely popular play in the 20th century, frequently featuring remarkable Katherinas and Petruchios. Because of the problematic issues related to the relationships between the two principal characters, numerous interpretative approaches have been taken to the play. Charles Marowitz went so far as to adapt the play as *The Shrew* which he included the rape of Katherina by Petruchio. Marowitz described his approach as a “tragedy” “played as Grand Guignol.”

A 1978 English production, directed by Peter Bogdanov, is described as depicting Padua as “a meat-market where daughters were sold into potentially wife-beating marriages. Jonathan Pryce’s Petruchio was at best a manic clown, at worst a psychopath; Katherina an assertive, intelligent woman resisting male domination up to the end, through a show of dumb insolence.” This production included a Kate who was described by one commentator as “lobotomized.”

Other somewhat earlier productions such as that featuring Peter O’Toole and Peggy Ashcroft, and the film version starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, placed a greater emphasis on the sexual chemistry and romantic elements of the play. As suggested by the titles of Jan Kott’s *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* and Gary Taylor’s *Reinventing Shakespeare* each age, indeed each generation, needs to reencounter and reconsider the substance and meaning of Shakespeare’s plays. *Henry V* during and after the war in Viet Nam was read quite differently than it was in 1944 when it was conceived as a film by Sir Laurence Olivier, and *Measure for Measure* may seem quite different in a world in which Anita Hill and Paula Jones have lodged complaints against prominent Washington males.

Nonetheless, the record of production in the current century is long and illustrious when it comes to *The Taming of the Shrew*. At Stratford-upon-Avon, for example the play has been on the boards in more than one-half of the last 100 seasons, including 5 different productions between 1979 and 1993. Prominent Katherinas in England have included Lily Brayton, Constance Benson, Edith Evans, Diana Wynyard, Peggy Ashcroft, Barbara Jefford, Vanessa Redgrave, Janet Suzman, Susan Fleetwood, Paola Dionisotti,

Sinead Cusack, Sian Thomas, Fiona Shaw, and Amanda Harris. English Petruchios have numbered Oscar Asche, F.R. Benson, Leslie Banks, Peter Glenville, Alex Clunes, Anthony Quayle, Peter O'Toole, Keith Michell, Derek Godfrey, Alan Bates, Jonathan Pryce, Alun Armstrong, Alfred Molina, Brian Cox, and Anton Lesser.



Leslie Banks and Edith Evans  
as Petruchio and Katherina, 1937



Peter O'Toole and Peggy Ashcroft, Stratford-upon-Avon,  
1960



Diana Wynyard as Katherina, 1948



Center: Keith Michell and Barbara Jefford as Petruchio and  
Kate, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1954



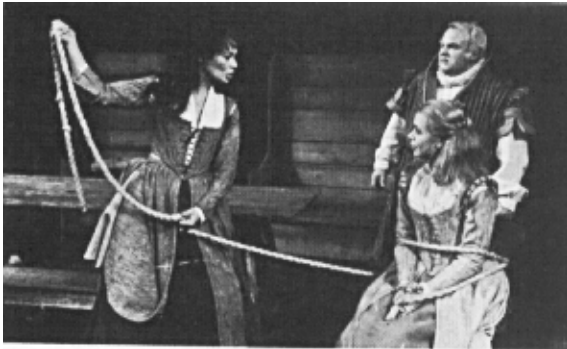
Vanessa Redgrave as Katherina, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1962



Diana Rigg as Bianca, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1962



Derek Godfrey as Petruchio, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1962



Janet Suzman as Katherina, June Watts as Bianca, and Roy Kinnear as Baptista. Royal Shakespeare Company, 1967



Alan Bates as Petruchio with Susan Fleetwood as Katherina, stooping before him, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1973.



Paola Dionisotti as Katherina and Jonathan Pryce as Petruchio, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1978



Alun Armstrong as Petruchio, David Waller as Baptista, and Sinead Cusack as Katherina, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1982.





Sian Thomas as Katherina in the Royal Shakespeare Company touring production, 1985.



Anton Lesser as Petruchio and Amanda Harris as Katherina, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1992.



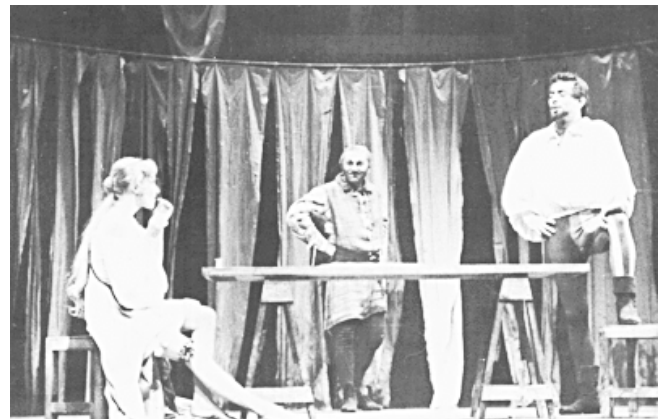
Brian Cox as Petruchio and Fiona Shaw as Katherina, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1988.



Lunt and Fontanne, Theatre Guild, 1935



Amanda Harris as Katherina threatens Rebecca Saire as Bianca, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1992.



Nina Foch as Katherina, Morris Carnovsky as Grumio, Pernell Roberts as Petruchio, Stratford, Connecticut, 1956.



Meryl Streep and Raul Julia in the New York Shakespeare Festival production, 1978.

In Stratford, Canada, *The Taming of the Shrew* has been presented on numerous occasions and has featured Barbara Chilcott and William Needles, Kate Reid and John Colicos, Pat Galloway and Alan Scarfe, Margot Dionne and Graeme Campbell, Sherry Flett and Len Cariou, and Goldie Semple and Colm Feore.



Len Cariou as Petruchio and Sherry Flett as Katherina, Stratford, Canada, 1981



Tyrone Guthrie's "Wild West" production at Stratford, Canada, 1954, with William Needles as Petruchio.



Lewis Gordon as Grumio, Stratford, Canada, 1981

#### NOTABLE LINES

I'll not budge an inch. [Sly Ind.1.13]

Dost thou love pictures? We will fetch thee straight  
Adonis painted by a running brook,  
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,  
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath.  
[Servant Ind.2.49-52]

Come, madam wife, sit by my side and let the world slip; we  
shall ne'er be younger. [Sly Ind.2.138-139]

No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en.  
In brief, sir, study what you most affect.  
[Tranio 1.1.39-40]

To seek their fortunes farther than at home,  
Where small experience grows. [Petruchio 1.2.50-51]

I come to wive it wealthy in Padua;  
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.  
[Petruchio 1.2.76-77]



Sherry Flett as Katherina, Stratford, Canada, 1981



... nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal.  
[Grumio 1.2.83]

Katharine the curst!  
A title for a maid of all titles the worst.  
[Grumio 1.2.128–129]

And do as adversaries do in law,  
Strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends.  
[Tranio 1.2.276–277]

I am as peremptory as she proud-minded;  
And where two raging fires meet together,  
They do consume the thing that feeds their fury.  
[Petruchio 2.1.131–133]

BAPTISTA: Why, then thou canst not break her to the lute?

HORTENSIO: Why, no, for she hath broke the lute to me.  
[2.1.147–148]

KATHERINA: They call me Katharine that do talk of me.

PETRUCHIO: You lie, in faith, for you are called plain Kate.  
[2.1.184–185]

And, will you, nill you, I will marry you.  
[Petruchio 2.1.268]

Kiss me, Kate, we will be married o' Sunday.  
[Petruchio 2.1.322]

Old fashions please me best.  
[Bianca 3.1.83]

Who wooed in haste and means to wed at leisure.  
[Katherina 3.2.1 1]

... a little pot and soon hot.  
[Grumio 4.1.5]

This is a way to kill a wife with kindness.  
[Petruchio 4.1.208]

He that knows better how to tame a shrew,  
Now let him speak; 'tis charity to show.  
[Petruchio 4.1.198–199]

Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor,  
For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich ...  
[Petruchio 4.3.177–78]

Why, so this gallant will command the sun.  
[Hortensio 4.3. 1 92]

He that is giddy thinks the world turns round.  
[Widow 5.2.20]

Fie, fie! Unknit that threatening unkind brow.  
[Katherina 5.2. 140]

A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,  
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty.  
[Katherina 5.2.146–147]

#### ABOUT THE PLAY IN OTHER FORMS

The works of Shakespeare have inspired numerous other artistic creations, including other plays, ballets, musi-

cals, operas, and films. *Romeo and Juliet* exists as a memorable ballet, as do *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, among others. *The Boys From Syracuse*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *West Side Story*, and *Catch My Soul [Othello]* have been successful musical theatre adaptations from Shakespeare. Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*; Verdi's *Macbeth*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*; Giannini's *Taming of the Shrew*; Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; Thomas' *Hamlet*; and Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* are just a representative few of the hundreds of operas inspired by Shakespeare's plays. From early silent treatments to Franco Zeffirelli's wide-screen versions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, and the more recent films of *Henry V* and *Hamlet* directed by Kenneth Branagh, many of Shakespeare's plays have been given film treatment, though often in too literal or stiff a fashion for the big screen.

Because of its popularity, *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted to other media on numerous occasions. A condensed, silent version was made in Great Britain in 1923. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford made an early sound version of the work in 1929, and as one might expect, given Douglas Fairbanks's film persona, the film was robust and physical in its depiction of Petruchio and Kate. In 1966 Franco Zeffirelli made a vigorous and earthy, wide-screen version, starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, who, like Fairbanks and Pickford in the earlier work, were at the time actually married to each other.



Douglas Fairbanks as Petruchio



Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor  
in *The Taming of the Shrew*

*The Shrew* has been produced for television on several occasions, including a 1956 telecast starring Lilli Palmer and Maurice Evans. In 1981 a BBC production was directed by Jonathan Miller and starred John Cleese as

Petruchio and Sarah Badel as Katherina. In 1982 a production featuring Karen Austin and Franklyn Seales was made, and in 1983 the Stratford, Canada production, starring Sherry Flett and Len Cariou, was captured on video tape.



John Cleese as Petruchio, BBC, 1981

At least 27 operas have been crafted from the materials of *The Taming of the Shrew*, including several that focus on the character of Christopher Sly. Among these are works by Dominick Argento (*Christopher Sly*), Vittorio Giannini, Herman Goetz, Vincente Martin y Soler, and Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (*Sly*). The most notable musical rendition, however, is not an opera but the musical comedy, *Kiss, Me Kate* (1948), with a book by Sam and Bella Spewack and with words and music by Cole Porter. A backstage musical, *Kiss Me, Kate* occurs on- and off-stage at Ford's Theatre in Baltimore and tells a contemporary story of a squabbling couple who happen to be the leads in a touring theatre production of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The show has an extraordinary musical score that includes "Another Op'nin', Another Show," "Why Can't You Behave?," "Wunderbar," "So In Love," "I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua," "I Hate Men," "Were Thine That Special Face," "Too Darn Hot," "Where Is the Life That Late I Led?," "Always True to You In My Fashion," "Brush Up Your Shakespeare," and "I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple." *Kiss Me, Kate* continues to see frequent revivals both in the United States and Europe, and was made into a successful MGM film in 1953.



Cole Porter



A Scene from the musical, *Kiss Me, Kate*

*The Taming of the Shrew* has also provided the inspiration for a number of ballets of the same name, including versions choreographed by Maurice Béjart (1954), Vera Untermyllérová (1961), and John Cranko for the Stuttgart Ballet (1969). In 1980 Louis Falco choreographed another version that he called *Kate's Rag*.



Marcia Haydée and Richard Cragun in John Cranko's ballet, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Stuttgart, 1969.

Further afield, the editors of a recent book on the works of Shakespeare as captured on film and video suggest that two John Wayne films, *The Quiet Man* and *McLintock!* might also be read as variations on Shakespeare's *Shrew*. Both films featured a tempestuous and knockabout relationship between the stars Maureen O'Hara and John Wayne, and the editors suggest that the films reflect "the spirit, if not quite the plot, of *The Taming of the Shrew*."

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### Before Seeing the Play

1. When we first meet Kate do you think she has reason for being angry with her father?
2. What do you think Shakespeare is suggesting about the nature of the relationship between men and women in this play?
3. Does this play remind you of any films you have seen?
4. In Act 1, scene 2 Petruchio proclaims that "I come to wive it wealthy in Padua;/If wealthily, then happily in Padua," but a few lines before he states that "Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home." What do you think Petruchio's main motive is in seeking Katherine as his wife? Money? Love? Power? Ego?
5. Numerous characters disguise themselves, and even more pretend to be someone or something they are not. What do you think Shakespeare is suggesting with all of this pretending? Are the situations believable?
6. What do you think of Shakespeare's characterization of the women in the play: Katherine, Bianca, the widow?
7. One writer offers these alternative interpretations concerning Katherine's submission at the end of the play: ". . . how to play this submission? Seriously? Ironically? As if in a playful partnership with Petruchio? As a lobotomized or bashed wife?"
8. Why do you think Shakespeare starts his play with Christopher Sly?

#### After Seeing the Play

1. Did the actors portray the characters on the stage the way you imagined them when you read the play? How were they similar? How different?
2. With whom did your sympathies lie? Did those sympathies change?
3. At what point were you most involved? At what point were you least involved? Why do you think this was so?
4. Did you find the various disguisings and pretendings easy to follow?
5. What did you find new or revealing in the play after seeing the production that you did not get from a reading of the text?
6. How do you see the play in terms of what you see on TV?
7. How do you think these actors and this production dealt with the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio? did this production treat the "submission of Kate "Seriously? Ironically? As if in a playful partnership with Petruchio? As a lobotomized or bashed wife?" Or in a different way from these?
8. How did the production make use of music to underline action?

#### A SELECTED READING LIST

##### About Shakespeare and His Plays

- Chute, Marchette. *Shakespeare of London*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1949.  
An easy-to-read absorbing biography.
- Ribner, Irving. *William Shakespeare: An Introduction to His Life, Times, and Theatre*. Waltham, Massachusetts: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1969.  
An overview of Shakespeare. Very readable.
- Schoenbaum, Samuel. *Shakespeare, the Globe and the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.  
A richly illustrated look at Shakespeare's times and his plays taken from the Folger Shakespeare Library traveling exhibit.

##### About Shakespeare's Theatre

- Beckerman, Bernard. *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599-1609*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.  
An informative account of the staging of Shakespeare's plays in his time.
- Hodges, Walter C. *The Globe Restored*. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1954.  
A well illustrated and readable attempt to reconstruct the Globe Theatre.

##### From a production point of view.

- Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*.  
[The Arden Shakespeare, edited by Brian Morris]. London and New York: Methuen, 1981.  
[The New Cambridge Shakespeare, edited by Ann Thompson]. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.  
[The Oxford Shakespeare, edited by H.J. Oliver]. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1984.  
All three editions contain fine and very extensive introductory material, excellent topic and line notes. Paperback editions.
- Dolan, Frances E., ed. *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996.  
The play text supplemented by a variety of articles from the 16th to the 20th century on topics such as "alternate endings," "marriage," "the household," "shrews and shrew taming."
- Gay, Penny. *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.  
Feminist and gender readings of the plays, with a stimulating chapter on *The Shrew*.
- Holderness, Graham. *Shakespeare in Performance: The Taming of the Shrew*. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1989.  
Excellent analysis of four recent productions—two on stage (Barton and Bogdanov), one film (Zeffirelli), and one on TV (Miller).

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# 48 Years of Shakespeare

## 1950-1997

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1950	Julius Caesar	1974	A Midsummer Night's Dream
1951	Henry IV, Part I	1975	Love's Labour's Lost
1952	Twelfth Night	1976	Much Ado About Nothing
1953	Macbeth	1977	Romeo and Juliet
1954	Much Ado About Nothing	1978	The Two Gentlemen of Verona
1955	Othello	1979	The Winter's Tale
1956	Richard III	1980	Twelfth Night
1957	As You Like It	1981	Macbeth
1958	Hamlet	1982	The Taming of the Shrew
1959	The Merry Wives of Windsor	1983	As You Like It
1960	Romeo and Juliet	1984	A Midsummer Night's Dream
1961	Love's Labour's Lost	1985	The Tempest
1962	The Tempest	1986	Romeo and Juliet
1963	A Midsummer Night's Dream	1987	The Comedy of Errors
1964	Julius Caesar	1988	Twelfth Night
1965	The Taming of the Shrew	1989	The Merchant of Venice
1966	Twelfth Night	1990	Othello
1967	Romeo and Juliet	1991	Hamlet
1968	As You Like It	1992	The Merry Wives of Windsor
1969	The Comedy of Errors and The Boys from Syracuse	1993	Measure for Measure
1970	Hamlet	1994	As You Like It
1971	The Merry Wives of Windsor	1995	Macbeth
1972	Richard III	1996	Pericles
1973	Measure for Measure	1997	The Taming of the Shrew

### HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY'S 48th ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Hofstra University's Annual Shakespeare Festival began in 1950 with a production of *Julius Caesar*. Over its 47-year history the Festival has presented a varied selection of the plays of Shakespeare, lesser-known short plays from the period, musicales, and scenes from Shakespeare's plays performed by high school groups. 1997 marks the third time that *The Taming of the Shrew* has been staged; representing one of **twenty-one** plays of the Shakespearean canon presented at the Festival.

Since 1951, the second year of the Festival, plays have been performed regularly on a 5/6 life-sized replica of the Globe stage as reconstructed by John Cranford Adams, later assisted by Irwin Smith. Dr. Adams was President of Hofstra University from 1944 to 1964. The replica was built under the supervision of Donald H. Swinney, designer and technical director in the Department of Drama. The Globe was erected each spring in the Calkins Gymnasium where the Festival was presented in its early years. Since 1958 the Festival has been held in the John Cranford Adams Playhouse. In most years the replica of the Globe has been used as the setting for the Shakespeare Festival and that will be the case for this year's production of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

### HOFSTRA/DRAMA

Hofstra University  
Department of Drama and Dance