

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

The Taming of the Shrew

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

William Shakespeare

Edited by
CEDRIC WATTS



WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

Readers who are interested in other titles from
 Wordsworth Editions are invited to visit our website at
www.wordsworth-editions.com

For our latest list and a full mail-order service contact
 Bibliophile Books, 5 Thomas Road, London E14 7BN
 TEL: +44 (0)20 7515 9222 FAX: +44 (0)20 7538 4115
 E-MAIL: orders@bibliophilebooks.com

First published in 1993 by Wordsworth Editions Limited
 8B East Street, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9HJ

ISBN 1 85326 079 7

Text © Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2004
 Introduction, notes and all other editorial matter
 © Cedric Watts, 2004

Wordsworth® is a registered trademark of
 Wordsworth Editions Limited

All rights reserved. This publication may not be
 reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or
 transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic,
 mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
 without the prior permission of the publishers.

Typeset by Antony Gray
 Printed in Great Britain by
 Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

CONTENTS

<i>General Introduction</i>	6
<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>Further Reading</i>	16
<i>Note on Shakespeare</i>	18
<i>Acknowledgements and Textual Matters</i>	19
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW	23
<i>Appendix: The 'Christopher Slie' Material</i>	103
<i>Notes on The Taming of the Shrew</i>	111
<i>Glossary</i>	131

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the Wordsworth Classics' Shakespeare Series, the inaugural volumes, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Henry V*, have been followed by *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello* and *King Lear*, and further editions will ensue. Each play in this Shakespeare Series is accompanied by a standard apparatus, including an introduction, explanatory notes and a glossary. The textual editing takes account of recent scholarship while giving the material a careful reappraisal. The apparatus is, however, concise rather than elaborate. We hope that the resultant volumes prove to be handy, reliable and helpful. Above all, we hope that, from Shakespeare's works, readers will derive pleasure, wisdom, provocation, challenges, and insights: insights into his culture and ours, and into the era of civilisation to which his writings have made – and continue to make – such potentially influential contributions. Shakespeare's eloquence will, undoubtedly, re-echo 'in states unborn and accents yet unknown'.

CEDRIC WATTS
Series Editor

INTRODUCTION

'*The Shrew* . . . is a macho fantasy for an alcoholic yob.'
'Shakespeare's sympathy with and almost uncanny
understanding of women characters is one of the
distinguishing features of his comedy . . .'¹

I

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*² is a lively, vigorous and much-adapted play. There have been numerous modern versions for radio, the cinema and television; it has prompted operas, a ballet by John Cranko, the musical comedy *You Made Me Love You* and, of course, *Kiss Me, Kate*, the famous Cole Porter musical for stage and screen; and it has influenced such diverse films as John Ford's *The Quiet Man* and Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate about You*. It is also a surprisingly ambiguous and highly controversial work. Accordingly, Part 2 of this introduction, after discussing source-materials, summarises a case that could be made against the play; Part 3 offers a defence; and Part 4 provides a conclusion.

2

The Taming of the Shrew is certainly one of Shakespeare's early comedies; possibly, according to some scholars, his earliest.³ It may have been written between 1590 and 1592. Shakespeare used a variety of source-materials for the play. The deception of Sly has numerous precedents and analogues: for instance, the Arabian anthology, *The Thousand and One Nights*, contains the story of a drunken man who is drugged, taken to a palace, and convinced for a while that he is the ruler.⁴ (In Shakespeare's version, when

we first meet Sly, he has been vigorously ejected from a tavern by its hostess, which sheds an ironic light on the display of masculinity in the drama that follows.) The shrew-taming plot derives from a folk-tale tradition. Traditional elements included: a prosperous father with good and bad daughters; warnings to the suitor about the shrew; bizarrely unconventional behaviour at the wedding; the process of taming; a journey to the home of the shrew's father; and the laying of a wager on the bride's conduct.⁵ All these elements re-emerge in the play. The plot-material concerning the rival suitors of Bianca derives partly from the Roman comedies of Plautus and Terence, transmitted via Ariosto's *I Suppositi* (1509) and George Gascoigne's *Supposes* (1566). The names 'Grumio' and 'Tranio' can be found in Plautus's *Mostellaria*, while *Supposes* provided the names of Petruchio and Licio. In Act 5, scene 1, of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Vincentio is denied access to his son by an impostor, a pedant posing as Vincentio and abetted by a servant. Precedent for this is found in *Supposes*, Act 4, scenes 4 and 5; and an ancient analogue is provided by Plautus's *Amphitryo*, when the eponymous Amphitryo knocks at the door of his own house and is not allowed to enter: a situation also exploited in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. Predictably, *The Taming of the Shrew* employs some perennial 'stock characters': for instance, the clever servant (Tranio), the cheeky page (Biondello), and the elderly suitor or 'pantaloon' in the tradition of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* (Gremio).

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare was ambitious in combining such diverse materials, but the process of transmission has not served his endeavours kindly. This comedy has survived in only incomplete form: we lack, for example, the conclusion of the Christopher Sly material. A different work, *The Taming of a Shrew* (note the 'a'), does complete the Sly sequence: see the Appendix in this volume. (*The Taming of a Shrew* seems to be a garbled version of Shakespeare's play, a product of recollection and rewriting by others.) Furthermore, a person or persons involved in the copying and/or printing of *The Taming of the Shrew* apparently suffered from deafness to rhythm, and consequently marred the metre of numerous lines. They limp and stumble, when it would have been so easy to keep them steady or put them right. By the way, when confronted by the diversity of suitors, disguises and

deceptions in the Bianca plot, you may occasionally become bewildered. If that happens, don't worry: you are not alone. There are signs that Shakespeare himself occasionally got into a muddle, as the notes to this edition demonstrate.⁶

The most controversial part of the work is undoubtedly the 'taming' plot. On the basis of the divisions among its critics, *The Taming of the Shrew* probably deserves to be classed as one of the 'problem plays' of Shakespeare. In 1978, when reviewing a new production, Michael Billington in *The Guardian* referred to the play's 'moral and physical ugliness' and asked 'whether there is any reason to revive a play that seems totally offensive to our age and our society'.⁷ Even in Shakespeare's lifetime, this work was evidently disturbing, for it provoked a counterblast from John Fletcher, whose play *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed* (c. 1611) shows the taming of Petruchio by his second wife. The moral, says its epilogue, is that the two sexes should learn 'to love mutually'.⁸ Down the centuries, *The Taming of the Shrew* – particularly Katherina's speech advocating submission to the husband – has offered challenges to directors and critics. In the 18th century, David Garrick influentially adapted the play so that Petruchio renounces 'all Rudeness, Wilfulness, and Noise' and commends 'one gentle Stream / Of mutual Love, Compliance, and Regard'.⁹ (Garrick's adaptation, *Catharine and Petruchio*, 1754, appears to have prevailed in England for ninety years.) In 1897, the astute left-wing dramatist, George Bernard Shaw, said of *The Taming of the Shrew*'s last scene:

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.¹⁰

You can easily see that numerous features of the play could give offence. Petruchio arrives 'to wive it wealthily in Padua': he plans to marry for money ('As wealth is burden of my wooing dance'), even if his bride be ugly or old. On hearing that Katherina will bring a rich dowry, he is set on marrying her, although he has not yet seen her. She is termed a 'devil', a 'fiend of hell' and 'the devil's dam'. His wooing, like the wedding, veers between the farcical and the brutal. Since she freely accepts him at the ceremony, the

subsequent 'taming' seems gratuitous. Petruchio proceeds to bully and starve his wife, repeatedly contradicting her wishes. If he does not actually hit her, he hits others and frighteningly displays his readiness to be physically violent; and, sickeningly, his wealth and social status enable him to be aggressive with impunity. Katherina is rendered submissive by various forms of intimidation, torture and humiliation. She is deprived of food, of sleep, and of independent thought. If Petruchio says the sun is the moon, she must agree. Eventually, he publicly displays her as a bride who will obey his every whim – so that, after trampling her hat at his command, she makes the long speech which urges all wives to revere their lords and masters. It may bring to mind the Elizabethan 'Homily on Marriage' which Anglican priests read to their congregations and which asserts: '[Y]e women, submit your selues unto your owne husbandes, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the wiues head, euen as Christ is the head of the Church . . .'.¹¹ Katherina says:

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee
And for thy maintenance . . .
Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
Even such a woman oweth to her husband; . . .
I am ashamed that women are so simple,
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
Where they are bound to serve, love and obey.

We see that she, once a spirited, independent and defiant woman, is not only thoroughly tamed but also manipulated as a means to rebuke other females. She talks of the husband as the diligent and suffering breadwinner, even though, in her case, the husband (who so recently denied her a decent meal) is a rich man made much richer by her dowry. In short, feminists may well recoil from a play which seems aggressively prejudiced against women.

3

A Shakespeare play is not fixed and static; it moves through time, changing in response to changing circumstances, being revised, adapted, and sometimes transformed, by copyists, printers, editors,

directors and actors. Some productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* have evoked hostility to Petruchio by emphasising or increasing his harshness. In Charles Marowitz's free adaptation (1973-4), Katherina was driven mad and was brutally raped. Alternatively, productions have emphasised her resilience. Mary Pickford, in a 1929 film version, gave an ironic wink when delivering Katherina's speech on submission, and Vanessa Redgrave in 1961 seemed to add 'a delicious touch of irony' to it. Coppélia Kahn has argued not only that this speech is ironic but also that the play as a whole 'satirizes . . . the male urge to control woman'.¹²

One tricky pair of questions is this: does Katherina actually fall in love with Petruchio, and, if so, when? Some productions suggest that she falls in love with him virtually on sight, so that her apparent resistance can be seen in part as a delaying game entailing degrees of complicity with her wooer. Arguably, his bullying modulates into protracted teasing, as when, on their first night together in a bedchamber, he is heard '[m]aking a sermon of continency to her'. By 4.5.36-40 (when she assures old Vincentio that he will make a 'lovely bedfellow' for some lucky man), she is clearly willing to collaborate resourcefully in Petruchio's schemes of mockery. A serious undercurrent is evident there, in the readiness of both partners to mimic derisively the clichés of the flattering amatory address, as if to suggest that their own stormy progress towards mutuality may be a sounder testing-course for a relationship than is the customary idealising ritual of romantic courtship. Katherina's love for Petruchio is fully confirmed by the end of Act 5, scene 1. Here she addresses him as 'Husband' and 'love'; indeed, kissing him in the street, she says 'Now pray thee, love, stay' – thus, in symbolic harmony, completing a rhyming couplet by echoing Petruchio's 'let's away'. Germaine Greer, an eminent feminist, has commented: 'Kate...has the uncommon good fortune to find Petruchio[,] who is man enough to know what he wants and how to get it'. She adds that 'only Kates make good wives, and then only to Petruchios; for the rest, their cake is dough'. As for the controversial speech on submission, to Greer this is 'the greatest defence of Christian monogamy ever written', as it specifies the husband's rôle as protector and friend.¹³ To Marilyn Cooper and Lisa Jardine, however, the speech is extremely ambiguous, and Jardine aptly says:

Depending on how we take her tone, Kate is seriously tamed, is ironic at Petruchio's expense, has learned comradeship and harmonious coexistence, or will remain a shrew till her death.¹⁴

In Shakespeare's theatre, female parts were played by boys. If the apparently submissive Katherina is acted by a boy, does this accentuate the sense of male control (since females are not really present on the stage) or weaken it (since the voice of submission is not really that of a woman)? In 2003 a provocative cultural reversal took place: there was an all-female production at the Globe Theatre in London. Janet McTeer played Petruchio to Kathryn Hunter's Katherina. As McTeer's Petruchio swaggered, blustered and bullied, the effect was to make the play, to a large extent, a satire on aggressive *machismo*. In this case, the controversial speech provoked dawning dismay from the 'male' listeners, while Katherina became increasingly delighted by the power of her own eloquence: their approving nods and sentimental tears gave way to apprehension and alarm. (Of course, different members of an audience may respond diversely to a particular speech, and an actor's or a director's interpretation of a rôle or play may vary during the theatrical run. Nevertheless, when I saw that production, the good-humoured interaction between actors and audience notably mitigated the harsher features of the play.)¹⁵

That 2003 version eliminated the Christopher Sly material. Productions which include it add another layer of irony, since the main action is then seen as 'a play within a play', an entertainment staged by men as part of the fooling of a man, Christopher himself, who initially was humiliated by a woman, the hostess who ejected him from the tavern. For feminist observers, other complications in *The Taming of the Shrew* include Katherina's bullying of Bianca: there is little evidence of sisterly solidarity. Psychologically and physically, she belabours Bianca, evidently because of her jealous fear that her sister will soon gain a husband while Katherina 'must dance bare-foot on her wedding day' and eventually, like the proverbial spinster, 'lead apes in hell'. On the other hand, much of Petruchio's aggressive blustering is directed against men: he knocks down a priest, strikes servants, abuses the tailor and haberdasher, and generally plays the part of swaggering bully to all and sundry.¹⁶ In a morally balanced comedy, he would eventually be humbled;

in this one, he probably gets away with too much. But people who seek 'morally balanced' comedy will seldom be gratified in the theatre, whether it's the theatre of Aristophanes, of Shakespeare, or of Alan Ayckbourn. The critic Benedict Nightingale has remarked that audiences for *The Taming of the Shrew* may find 'a funny, touching, coarse, romantic, morally confusing mix of sexism and sophistication'; and he adds: 'well, isn't that better than a politically correct nothing-very-much?'.¹⁷

4

Shakespeare knew Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, that huge sequence in which the related topics of love and marriage are subject to an immensely complex discussion, ranging from the Wife of Bath's defence of her egoistic outlook to the Franklin's emphasis on the value of mutual harmony. Shakespeare, in turn, offers in his plays a wide range of attitudes. Within a few years of *The Taming of the Shrew*, he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*, a remarkably unconventional comedy in which the lords who woo the ladies are repeatedly humiliated; a comedy which finally does not end with wedding bells at all, but sees the men departing as probationers: here, 'Jack hath not Jill'.¹⁸ Shakespeare could make men seem moon-governed and changeable in their desires, in need of education by women. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's love for Juliet rapidly supersedes his love for Rosaline, and in Act 2, scene 2, when he seeks to adopt a romantically rhetorical style, he is rebuked by Juliet who, though only thirteen years old, is there more intelligent and practical than he. Whether in a tragedy (*Othello*) or a late romance (*Cymbeline* or *The Winter's Tale*), Shakespeare could show men whose love can easily be poisoned by jealousy and transmuted to murderous hatred. Sometimes a play may seem emphatic about the importance of confining sexual fulfilment to the bounds of holy wedlock: Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, strikingly, Prospero in *The Tempest* are explicit on this matter. Sometimes, however, a play may seem to celebrate the intensity of adulterous sexuality: in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* again, Titania enjoys ineffable bliss with Bottom,¹⁹ while, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the energetic power of the relationship between the two experienced lovers transcends the

cool marital relationship between Antony and his wife Octavia. Shakespeare's sonnets convey the joy and the bitterness not only of love for a man but also of adulterous love for a woman; and one poem in the sequence (number 145, which puns on the name Hathaway) is a reminder of his love for his wife. Germaine Greer has said of Shakespeare:

He projected the ideal of the monogamous sexual couple so luminously [in his writings] that they irradiate our notions of compatibility and co-operation between spouses to this day.²⁰

Nevertheless, though this may be true, other ideals and other possibilities are also irradiated by those writings. *The Taming of the Shrew* is just one part, though a vivid and important part, of Shakespeare's vast exposition of the tensions and complexities of human sexual, amatory and marital relationships.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

- 1 Benedict Nightingale: 'The Old Trouble and Strife' in *The Times*, 18 August 2003, Section 2, pp. 8-9; quotation, p. 9. Anne Barton on *The Taming of the Shrew* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp. 106-9; quotation, p. 107.
- 2 As the play reminds us at 4.1.195-6 and 5.2.28-9, Shakespeare pronounced 'shrew' to rhyme with 'show' and 'woe'. At 5.2.188 in this edition, it is spelt 'shrow', to match the spelling used there in the earliest text, and rhymes with 'so'. (The pronunciation of 'Kate' varies between 'Kate' and 'Kat'.)
- 3 See Marcus Mincoff: 'The Dating of *The Taming of the Shrew*' in *English Studies* 54 (1973), pp. 554-65; Brian Morris: 'Introduction' to *The Taming of the Shrew* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 50-65.
- 4 See 'The Tale of the Sleeper Wakened' in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, tr. Powys Mathers, Vol. 3 (London: Routledge, n.d., rpt. 1947), pp. 323-74. Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Pt 2, section 2) reports the legend that Philippus Bonus, Duke of Burgundy, arranged for a drunken country-fellow to be conveyed to a palace and treated for a day as if he were a duke.
- 5 J. H. Brunwand: 'The Folktale Origin of *The Taming of the Shrew*' in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17 (1966), pp. 345-59, notably p. 347. See also: Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson: *The Types of the Folktale* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1964), pp. 311-12.
- 6 See, for example, the notes to 3.2.122, 4.5.61-2, and 5.2.S.D.

- 7 Michael Billington: 'A Spluttering Firework' in *The Guardian*, 5 May 1978, p. 10.
- 8 John Fletcher: *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, ed. G. B. Ferguson (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. 148. In 2004, the Royal Shakespeare Company varied its run of *The Taming of the Shrew* by including some performances of *The Tamer Tamed*.
- 9 David Garrick: *Catharine and Petruchio. A Comedy*: in *The Dramatic Works of David Garrick Esq.*, Vol. 2 (no place or publisher named, 1768), p. 202.
- 10 George Bernard Shaw: *Shaw on Shakespeare*, ed. Edwin Wilson (London: Cassell, 1962), p. 180.
- 11 The homily, as quoted here, is part of the 'Fourme of Solemnization of Matrimonie' in the *Booke of Common Prayer* (London, 1584). Though Katherina emphasises submission to the male, she does not go quite as far as to liken the husband to Christ.
- 12 Charles Marowitz: *The Shrew* in *The Marowitz Shakespeare* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978). On Pickford: E. A. Baughan: 'Doug and Mary in Shakespearean Farce': *Daily News and Westminster Gazette*, 15 November 1929, p. 7. On Redgrave: Tom Milne: 'The Taming of the Director': *Time and Tide*, 21 September 1961, p. 1,564. Coppélia Kahn: *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 104–18; quotation, p. 104.
- 13 Germaine Greer: *The Female Eunuch* (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1970), pp. 209. Her 'cake is dough' phrase wittily echoes an idiom used twice in the play.
- 14 Lisa Jardine: *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), p. 59.
- 15 I attended the *matinée* performance on 29 August 2003. The play was directed by Phyllida Lloyd. In the same year, a production at Brighton by Mark Rosenblatt allowed Katherina (played by Nichola McAuliffe) to deliver the controversial speech with evident sincerity.
- 16 To be fair to Petruchio, it should be noted that he privately tells Hortensio to pay the much-maligned tailor, which suggests that he may covertly compensate some (if not all) of his other male victims.
- 17 Nightingale: 'The Old Trouble and Strife', p. 9.
- 18 The long-lost *Love's Labour's Won* probably concluded the story of the courtships. See 'Shakespeare's Feminist Play?' in John Sutherland and Cedric Watts: *Henry V, War Criminal? and Other Shakespeare Puzzles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 174–83.
- 19 See 'Does Bottom Cuckold Oberon?' in *Henry V, War Criminal? and Other Shakespeare Puzzles*.
- 20 Germaine Greer: *Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 124.

FURTHER READING

(in chronological order)

- Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. I, ed. Geoffrey Bullough. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University Press, 1957.
- E. M. W. Tillyard: *Shakespeare's Early Comedies*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1965.
- Germaine Greer: *The Female Eunuch*. London: McGibbon and Kee, 1970.
- Ralph Berry: *Shakespeare's Comedies: Explorations in Form*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Leo Salinger: *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- Samuel Schoenbaum: *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* [1977]. Revised edition: New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. C. R. S. Lenz, G. Greene and C. T. Neely. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1980.
- Coppélia Kahn: *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Lisa Jardine: *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Brighton: Harvester, 1983.
- Marianne Novy: *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Tori Haring-Smith: *From Farce to Metadrama: A Stage History of 'The Taming of the Shrew', 1594-1983*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985.