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Educated Shrews: Shakespeare, Women's Education and Its Backlash

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Although *The Taming of the Shrew* and its many adaptations have been enjoying a ceaseless popularity on stage,[1] its critical reception has always been tinted with embarrassment if not outright condemnation. In his introduction to the Arden's edition Brian Morris reminds us that the play provoked an unprecedented response during Shakespeare's own lifetime. In Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed* (ca. 1611) the original plot is inverted and Petruchio, the male protagonist of Shakespeare's play, is widowed and tamed by his new wife Maria, perhaps offering a corrective[2] to what Pepys, writing of *The Shrew* in 1667, deemed "a mean play" (Morris 1981: 89). In her introduction to *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition Ann Thompson goes so far as to assume a "positive conspiracy of silence" of the critics between 1830s and 1950s (and beyond), who opted to censor the play "by omission", or, if forced to deal with the play, would admit the problem, "attempting to excuse the author" (Thompson, 2003: 25). It seems almost inevitable that the final critical blow to *The Shrew* should come from feminist readings, claiming it off and beyond redemption. As summarized by Paul Yachnin: "it can no longer be said to be a work of literature which might be saved in one way or another by virtue of the presence of a knowing author; instead it is of the nature of a joke whose spirit has long since vanished, the dead letter of an outmoded misogynist culture" (Yachnin, 1996: par. 23).

However, recent enquiries into various manifestations of shrew narratives, like the ones in *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700*, edited by David Wootton and Graham Holderness, are extending the semiotic and chronological range of the term *shrew* and its uses, arguing the insufficiency of attempts "to locate, within a single play-text, fixed

and consistent views on matters of gender and sexuality, when the reader is confronted by a much more diverse body of cultural production, often inter-related in conversational or dialogue form as are *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tamer Tamed*" (Holderness 2010: 9). As such, they aim "to recuperate Shakespeare's play and its associates for new kinds of historically and politically-informed readings" (ibidem). Several of these studies, not just in the collection mentioned above, start by observing that the word *shrew* was initially a gender-neutral term, applicable to both men and women (e.g. Madelaine 2010: 71; Pikli 2010: 235; Kamaralli 2012: 3); and while they acknowledge Shakespeare's application of the term to Petruchio, some are quick to note how in Shakespeare's other plays the term is reserved to female characters only (Kamaralli 2012: 3, 3n8)[3] or how Shakespeare's plays, being "inalienable part of English Cultural memory, canonised and thus stabilised the first meaning of the 'shrew' as a forward woman or wife, up to our day" (Pikli 2010: 238).

My own attempt at broadening the scope of the play's historical and political reading will revisit the concept of shrewishness with a special focus on learning and education. As such, it will pay just a modicum attention to the doubtlessly most problematical issue of the play, namely, the interpretation of Katherina's final speech/sermon.[4] Instead, I will highlight a detail of the play related to the education of Bianca and Katherina, explore it within the broader context of early modern education of women, and its connection to shrew-narratives, arguing that the taming of the female shrew can be seen as a backlash response to her learning. Ultimately, I will pursue the lingering echoes of the taming topos in our contemporary concerns related to women's right and education, and their implication on contemporary attitudes toward otherness.

Tranio: Faith, he is gone unto the taming-school.

Bianca: The taming-school? What, is there such a place?

Tranio: Ay, mistress, and Petruchio is the master,

That teacheth tricks eleven and twenty long,

To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue. (IV.ii.54-8)[5]

Although the above quotation and the preceding soliloquy of Petruchio articulating his taming *ars poetica* (with the famous falconry analogy) comes quite late in the play (IV.i.175-98), the audience and/or the reader is already groomed by the title to embrace it as the centrepiece of the play (cf. Morris 1981: 250). Not only does it provide a framework (besides the Induction) for much of the plot in the main part of the play, it also explains Petruchio's over the top insistence at the end of the play to "show more sign of her [Katherina's] obedience, / Her new-build virtue and obedience" (V.ii.118-9), although he has clearly already won the wager in that his wife was the only one of the three to heed her husband's call. The ostentatious display of Katherina's submissiveness, her rounding up of the absent wives and her public sermonizing to them – so galling to female audiences/readers/critics and uncomfortable to many male ones – is the very proof of Petruchio winning not just the bet but his self-proclaimed challenge at the end of his soliloquy: "He that knows better how to tame a shrew / Now let him speak: 'tis charity to show" (IV.i.197-8). The irony of his words evoking the solemnization of matrimony is that his taming intention, instead of providing a "iust cause, why they may not lawfully be ioned together" (cf. Morris 251n198), is perceived as a private matter, the grievance of which (particularly on the part of the wife) should be dealt with in private if not out of the public eye. The charity to show is therefore aimed at other husbands, seeking to tame their unruly wives, but more importantly, it is an ostentatious display of bragging rights for Petruchio, the master of his taming-school.

However, Petruchio's method is far from being unique, as it is both followed and preceded in contemporary writings on shrew-taming. While both authors I am about to

reference in the following sections (Taylor and Erasmus) use the term *shrew* in reference to men and women alike, there is a notable difference in the method applied in taming the former and the latter.

In John Taylor's *A iuniper lecture with… the authors advice how to tame a shrew, or vex her* (1639), the advice to husbands reads:

> If you perceive her to increase her language, be sure you give her not a word, good or bad, but rather seeme to slight her, buy doing some action or other, as singing, dancing, whistling, or clapping thy hands on thy sides; *for this will make her vex extremely, because you give her not word for word* (…) but if all will not serve that you can doe, to stop her rage, but she will thus every day claomour, then I wish you to buy a Drum into your house, and locke it up in some private roome or Study, that shee may not come at it, and when she doth begin to talke aloft, doe then begin to beate a loud, which shee hearing, will presently be amazed, hearing a louder voice than her owne, and make her forbeare scolding any more for that time.
>
> (Taylor, 2005: 226-9, *italics added*)

The principal aim described above is the vexation and unbalancing of the wife by "not giving her word for word," which Petruchio resolves to accomplish by subverting all of Katherina's claims (cf. II.i.168-180, the succeeding banter scene, and their subsequent interactions in Act IV). The effect is amply summarized by Curtis' words about Katherina: "she, poor soul, / Knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak, / And sits as one new risen from a dream" (IV.i.171-3) – or from a nightmare more likely. And while in *A iuniper lecture* there is no direct suggestion that physical violence should be used, the implications of beating a drum are quite clear, even without the accompaniment of one of the suggested ditties, "Dub a dub [the sound of the drum], kill her with a Club, / Be thy wives Master: / Each one can tame a shrew, but he that hath her" (Taylor, 2005: 230-1).[6]

A similar behaviour of a husband is described in Erasmus' marriage counsel, one of his most popular colloquies, translated into English and published in 1557 as *A Merry Dialogue Declaring the Properties of Shrewd Shrews and Honest Wives*.[7] The colloquy is a dialogue between two married women, Eulalia and Xanthippe, and although the latter's name is in reference to Socrates' notoriously querulous wife (and the epitome of shrewishness),[8] the principal shrew of the dialogue is Xanthippe's husband.[9] When Eulalia asks how Xanthippe's husband reacts to her brawls, her response describes a behaviour reminiscent of Petruchio's, albeit with dubious results:

> Eulalia: What does he do all this time?
>
> Xanthippe: Do? Sometimes he sleeps, the lazy lout. Occasionally he just laughs; and at other times grabs his guitar, which has hardly three strings, and plays it as loud as he can to drown out my screaming.
>
> Eulalia: That infuriates you?
>
> Xanthippe: More than I could say. At times I can hardly keep my hands off him.
>
> (Rummel, 1996: 133)

Here too, the husband does not respond to his wife's complaint (for according to the context her scolding is due to his lazy and drunken ways), disregarding it with a behaviour guaranteed to vex her and sometimes resulting in mutual blows. This short exchange between the women serves as an introduction to Eulalia's art of taming a shrewish husband which comprises the rest of the dialogue. The short excerpt I am to quote has two aspects that highlight the radical difference of man-shrew taming: first, the art of it should be kept secret, contrary to the women-shrew taming which, apparently, should be advertised and proclaimed far and wide; second, the animal imagery it employs reveals a hierarchical dynamic diametrically opposed to the falcon taming analogy used in Petruchio's speech.

> Xanthippe: But tell me please, by what arts you drew your husband to your ways.
>
> (…)
>
> Eulalia: I'll tell you, then, but only if you'll keep it secret.
>
> Xanthippe: Of course.
>
> Eulalia: My first concern was to be agreeable to my husband in every respect, so as not to cause him any annoyance. I noted his mood and feeling; I noted the circumstances too, and what soothed and irritated him [made him a shrew],[10] as do those who tame elephants and lions or suchlike creatures that can't be forced.
>
> Xanthippe: That's the sort of creature [beast] I have at home.
>
> Eulalia: Those who approach elephants don't wear white, and those who approach bulls don't wear read, because these beasts are known to be enraged by such colours. Likewise tigers are driven so wild by the beating of drums that they tear their own flesh. And trainers of horses have calls, cluckings, pattings, and other means of soothing mettlesome animals. How much more fitting for us to use those arts on our husbands, with whom, whether we like or not, we share bed and board for our entire lives. (Rummel, 1996: 134-5)

These two differences are substantial and could prove critical in our revaluation of Katherine's final speech. Secrecy and physical strength, conditioning the hierarchical dynamics between the sexes, are interrelated. Erasmus' marriage counselling colloquy makes it abundantly clear that the taming of man-shrews is done under the pretence of submission. Consequently, the taming "must" remain a secret, because it conceals the manipulative aspect of obedience and servitude, sustaining the appearance of male intellectual supremacy. But why is this perceived as a must? Frances Power Cobbe noted as early as 1878 that "the [verbal] sparring may be all very well for a time, and may be counted entirely satisfactory *if they get the better* [i.e. the men]. But then, if by any mischance the unaccountably sharp wits of the weaker creature should prove dangerous weapons, there is always the club of brute force ready to hand in the corner" (2004: 113). Cobbe wrote this when musing about the popular appeal of wife-

torturing narratives, *The Shrew* included (idem, 112), and perceived the amusement of (presumably male) listeners to steam from a secure knowledge that, should all else fail in a match of eloquence, the possessor of the superior physical strength can always resort to violence to win the argument. The taming of a man is therefore *plus ratio quam vis*, a fact that must be concealed to avoid the *ultima ratio* of clubbing. This is hardly a reassuring or empowering prospect, not just from a 21st-century perspective, but from a 16th-century one too, as evinced by Xanthippe's exclamations in response to Eulalia's advices: "I had leuer be slayne…" [I'd rather be dead] or "I could not abyde it" [I can't stand it] (Erasmus, 2004). Voicing these, Erasmus undermines the "natural" argument, namely, that the given hierarchical construction of marriage is a mirror of Nature's order, or better yet, an ordination by God, for it seems neither natural or just to women who are subjected to it.[11] Railing against it, like Xanthippe and Katherina does, seems more natural. "My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, / Or else my heart concealing it will break, / And rather than it shall, I will be free / Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words" – exclaims Kathrina in her vexation (IV.iii. 77-80). And yet, at the end both Xanthippe and Katherina acquiescent to a different approach, namely, to obedience in show.

Indeed, critics have often concluded that Katherina's final speech cannot be meant for real, interpreting it either as a foil to best Petruchio or as a collusion with Petruchio to best the others (cf. Kahn 1981: 104-118; Karmalli 2012: 89-110; Schaub 2015: 225-242). The play is truly Shakespearean in that it refuses to give a conclusive ending as there is a sense of lingering wonder at the end of the play, expressed by Lucentio's final sentence, inviting readers and audiences alike to puzzle over the outcome: "'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tam'd so" (IV.2.190). Did the shrew learn to be shrewd? Is she merely appropriating the techniques Petruchio employed in her own taming? For certainly Katherina has no Eulalia to advise her;

as a matter of fact, she is the only Shakespearean heroine without a female ally or a friend throughout the play.

At this point I would like to turn to Katherina's and, by proxy, Bianca's education because it has an important role beyond the one emphasized by Thompson, namely, to provide "opportunity for all the comic disguising of the sub-plot" and allowing the contrast between Bianca's "spurious education" by her would-be-suitors and Kathrina's by Petruchio to play out (2003: 34). Thompson is quick to exclude Baptista Minola from the Shakespearean father figures who are personally invested in the teaching of their daughters, contrasting him with the father of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, of Miranda in *The Tempest* and of Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well* (32-3). And yet there are small details in the play that set Baptista and his daughters well apart from the practice of the age, namely, the topics he is allowing and encouraging his daughters to learn.

The main plot starts with Lucentio's arrival at Padua, the "nursery of arts" and his pronounced ambition, fickle as it will soon prove to be, to "breath and haply institute / A course of learning and ingenious studies" (I.i.8-9). Given this setting, the opportunity for the subplot's comic disguise is Baptista asking Bianca's erstwhile suitors, Grumio and Hortensio, to recommend tutors for his daughters. "[F]or I know she [Bianca] taketh most delight / In music, instruments, and poetry, / Schoolmasters will I keep within my house", adding that "to cunning men / I will be very kind, and liberal / To mine own children in good bringing-up." (I.i.92-99). Morris makes no remark on this, while Thompson merely notes that "[s]uch objects [music, instruments and poetry] would be studied by a very few aristocratic women in Shakespeare's time" (2003: 71). The extent of Baptista's "liberal", i.e. free of convention, approach to his daughter's education is his ready acceptance of the tutors themselves who are far from being mere music and poetry teachers (and here I do not mean the fact of them being in disguise).

Namely, Petruchio introduces Hortensio / Litio to Katherina as "[c]unning in music and the mathematics, / To instruct her fully in those sciences, / Whereof I know she is not ignorant" (II.i.55-68). The pairing of music and mathematics is remarkable in and of itself, for although girls were encouraged to learn music (particularly singing, dancing, and perhaps playing an instrument), the aim was to be cultivated for the benefit of domestic entertainment, and they were seen (even nowadays)[12] more as performers than composers / producers. However, music in Shakespeare's time was still classified by theoreticians as one branch of mathematics, and in this capacity it would eventually contribute to the emergence of the Scientific Revolution in the 16th and 17th century. It was Kepler who argued for elliptical planetary orbits "as relieving the music of the spheres from dull monotony" producing "scale passages and chords to replace the sustained tones that would inevitably result from perfectly circular motions" (Drake, 1992: 5). As such, mathematics was deemed as a highly unfitting subject for female students, whose realm of knowledge, especially following protestant humanism, revolved around the domestic sphere of virtue and housewifery (Aughterson 1995: 163). Similarly, while women were not barred from poetry either as readers or occasionally as authors themselves (although cautioned against romances that would furnish them with false ideals), their study was conducted in vernacular literature and often restricted to biblical texts for their virtue's sake. Latin education, let alone Greek, "among non-noble women was rare enough that it was remarked – 'learned beyond their sex,' the saying went", as Natalie Davis remarks (apud Sowards, 1982: 88).[13] Therefore, it is indeed remarkable that in *The Shrew* Grumio presents Cambio (Lucentio in disguise) as a tutor to the Minola daughters, describing him as a "young scholar, (…) cunning in Greek, Latin, and other languages" (II.i.78-82). Even more so, as Grumio's present is complimented by the additional material gift of a "small packet of Greek and Latin books" by Tranio (posing as Lucentio).

The educational titbits of the Minola sisters, introducing the sub-plot, are particularly remarkable if compared to the anonymous play *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of a Shrew*, arguably a variation of *The Shrew*. The main plot's setting is similar: the location is Athens, home to "*Platoes* schooles and *Aristotles* walkes," but this is as far as education is referenced. Aurelius' (Lucentio's equivalent in *A Shrew*) has no academic ambition in visiting Athens, he is there to meet with his friend Polidor (a semi Hortensio character), and in order to infiltrate Alfonso's home (Baptista's equivalent) he will disguises himself as "a Merchants sonne of *Cestus*, / That comes for traffike [business] unto *Athense* here" (1594). Nor is there any occasion for education in David Garrick's severely cut and rewritten appropriation, *Catherine and Petruchio* (1756), admittedly the most popular adaptation of *The Shrew*, which has for almost a century and half supplanted Shakespeare's play altogether. A comedy in three acts, it completely omits the subplot of the tutors, except for a short music-master scene for the sole purpose of displaying Katherine's temper. Indeed, most of the stage adaptations leave out the scope of Katherina's and Bianca's learning as an unimportant detail and yet, to me, it seems the most unique feature of Shakespeare's play.

Not the least because of Shakespeare's reputation, courtesy of Ben Jonson, of having "small Latin and less Greek," which should definitely make the reader appreciate Shakespeare's sense of self depreciating humour, especially when remembering Portia's offhanded dismissal of her English suitor in *The Merchant of Venice*: "He hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, (…) He is a proper man's picture, but alas, who can converse with a dumb show?" (I.ii.62-5). But apart from offering tickling incongruity, the details about Katherina's education provide a more sinister take on Petruchio's taming school, namely, seeing it as a backlash to women's liberal education. This interpretative possibility is of course nowhere explicitly stated in the play itself, however, it is implied in its broader historical contexts. The relation of women's

education to shrew-taming can be better understood in the light of another colloquy of Erasmus and its echoes in a later educational treatise by Bathsua Makin.

Erasmus' *The Abbot and the Learned Lady* (1524) is a dialogue on the benefits/disadvantages of reading and whether it constitutes the source of a pleasurable/good life between Antronius, a worldly abbot, and Magdalia, an erudite woman. Although Erasmus is far more set upon ridiculing the ignorant abbot, Antronius, than advocating the education of women modelled after Magdalia, the opening dialogue is worth quoting at some length for its stance on books in Latin and Greek:

> Antronius: What furnishing do I see here?
>
> Magdalia: Elegant, aren't they?
>
> Antronius: How elegant I don't know, but certainly unbecoming both to a young miss and a married woman.
>
> Magdalia: Why?
>
> Antronius: Because the whole place is full of books.
>
> Magdalia: Are you so old, an abbot as well as a courtier, and have never seen books in court ladies' houses?
>
> Antronius: Yes, but those were in French. Here I see Greek and Latin ones.
>
> Magdalia: Are French books the only ones that teach wisdom?
>
> Antronius: But it's fitting for court ladies to have something with which to beguile their leisure.
>
> Magdalia: Are court ladies the only ones allowed to improve their minds and enjoy themselves?
>
> Antronius: You confuse growing wise with enjoying yourself. It's not feminine to be brainy. A lady's business is to have a good time.
>
> (…)
>
> Magdalia: Shrewd abbot but stupid philosopher! Tell me: how do you measure good times?
>
> Antronius: By sleep, dinner parties, doing as one likes, money, honours.
>
> (…)

> Magdalia: What if I enjoy reading a good author more than you do hunting, drinking, or playing dice? You won't think I'm having a good time?
>
> Antronius: *I* wouldn't live like that.
>
> Magdalia: I'm not asking what *you* would enjoy most, but what *ought* to be enjoyable.
>
> Antronius: I wouldn't want my monks to spend their time on books.
>
> Magdalia: Yet my husband heartily approves on my doing so. But exactly why do you disapprove of this in your monks?
>
> Antronius: Because I find they're less tractable; they talk back by quoting from decrees and decretals, from Peter and Paul.
>
> Magdalia: So your rules conflict with those of Peter and Paul?
>
> Antronius: What *they* may enjoy I don't know, but still I don't like a monk who talks back. And I don't want any of mine to know more than I do.
>
> (Rummel, 1996: 174-5)

Since this dialogue ridicules the wilful ignorance of Antronius, Erasmus also ridicules the commonplace objections against women's liberal learning, here voiced by the abbot: learning for wisdom's sake is not a feminine endeavour, because they are not fit for it to begin with, and should they engage in it they will end up "less tractable" and shrewish, for they will "talk back" – like the monks reading Latin – and not docilely follow imposed authority. They might even end up knowing more than their alleged superiors and, hence, becoming unable to marry (or be controlled in the case of the monks). The issue of eligibility emerges from Bathsua Makin's *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen*, in which she advocates a broader education for women, not restricted to the management of domestic chores, providing a list of prominently learned women in subjects deemed beyond their ken and answering the most common objections against women's education, the first being that "[if] we bring up our Daughters to Learning, no Person will adventure to Marry them," seconded by the objection

that "[they] will be proud, and not obey their Husbands; they will be pragmatick, and boast of their Parts and Improvements" (1673).[14] Both aforementioned texts, as well as *The Shrew* in my reading, reveal the double standard whereby cunningness is perceived as a shrewd quality in men and as shrewishness in women. Both words, *shrew* and *shrewd* have, in fact, the same etymological origin from, most likely, Middle English *schrewen* ("to curse") implying "evil, wicked person", and it is hard to resist inferring an intertextual connection with the Garden of Eden, where Eve's transgression in pursuit of knowledge resulted in a curse and an often cited reason why all her female descendants should be perceived to be cursed by their very nature, while the same pursuit of knowledge will be seen as cunning bravery in men and an ambition to be admired (despite its explicit connection to satanic hubris). Nor should this sex-typing of shrew and shrewd be seen as a practice belonging to an outmoded misogynistic culture. One only needs to remember the coverage of the last US presidential election and the way media (political preferences notwithstanding) referenced Hilary Clinton as opposed to Donald Trump. Though published in 1981, Shirley Morahan citing the paper of student Sasha Tranquili on the word *shrewd* still rings true:

> Women who have been called shrewish, step forward. Let your voices drum quietly, ceaselessly, on those men who stay out all night drinking and carousing, who take your hours of work in the home for granted, who eat your food without thanks or compliment, who fill you with babies and leave you with the responsibility of raising them, who work you into old age and demand that you be young, who push you and prod you to the point of anger and then call you "Shrew!"
>
> Women were not always shrews. Not until the middle of the sixteenth century was the word shrew ascribed specifically to women. Originally, and as early as the mid-thirteenth century, any evil person, one who stole or was a trickster was considered a shrew. How easily the slipping has been, from shrewd-evil in the thirteenth century to shrewd-clever by the eighteenth century, a forked definition to the benefit of man.

> The man, the trickster, now is considered clever, insightful and therefore admirable; he is shrewd. But the woman who is sharp with her mind and therefore her words is not admirable. She is a shrew. She has forgotten her place. She must be reconditioned, or she will be a weight the man does not deserve, an embarrassment he must suffer. I tell you, the word shrewd has come forward in time to be woman's punishment and man's reward. It is time for the next definition. (Morahan, 1981: 105-6)

Finally, I should probably qualify my earlier statement about Petruchio's taming school being a backlash to women's liberal education. It is not Petruchio's taming per se, but the whole setting that "necessitates" it. Namely, when using the term backlash, I am deliberately evoking Susan Faludi's seminal work *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women*, first published in 1991, in which she showcases the vengeful response of media to the positive advancements of 1970s feminism – women's education included. In this present context, the most telling example of that backlash would be the recurring rhetoric of how "'the hard-core feminist viewpoint' (…) has relegated educated [female] executives to solitary nights of frozen dinners and closet drinking" (Faludi, 2006: 4). In other words, their education and success in professional life amounts to nothing as they "end up without love, and their spinsterly misery would eventually undermine their careers as well" (22). A similar argument was launched at the outset of the women's movement, when a marriage study was making "rounds in 1895, asserting that only 28 percent of college-educated women could get married" (63). Faludi summarizes this aspect of the backlash as follows: "The arguments were always the same: equal education would make women spinsters, equal employment would make women sterile, equal rights would make women bad mothers" (92). So, the passages referencing the Minola sisters' education, the insistence on Katherina's shrewishness, which is often stated by other characters in the play and rarely displayed,[15] *is* the backlash itself to which Petruchio's taming is merely the redress.

I would argue that, as "twentieth-century feminism had the good effect of restoring the full text" (Schaub 2015: 234) of *The Shrew*, it is perhaps time for the twenty-first-century Shakespeare scholars, feminists included, to shift their focus from Katherina's last speech and facilitate a performance not excluding the educational titbits but, rather, highlight them as different, relevant interpretative possibility of the play, perhaps even by updating the tutoring subject range to include STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects – the Greek and Latin of our age. Most importantly, I would argue for the responsibility of myself and my colleagues to problematize these issues instead of merely attempting the recuperation of Shakespeare's good name (and our investment in teaching his works) from misogynistic charges, by acknowledging that Shakespeare's work too is vested in a continuous myth of transcending/overarching values preferring the institutionalization of certain interpretations, and given the complicated relation of literature and ideology, and the collusion of criticism with ideology, one should not shy away from the fact that the bard was (and presumably will be in the future) evoked as a cudgel at the service of reactionary and/or misogynistic ideas.

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[1] Brian Morris warns that claiming a ceaseless theatrical popularity for *The Shrew* might be an exaggeration because "for nearly two hundred years it was supplanted on the stage by adaptations, altered and partial versions, and its stage history cannot be said to have been an uninterrupted triumphal progress" (Morris, 1981: 88). However, his observation, though true, is not peculiar to *The Shrew* and therefore hardly conclusive. As noted by Fiona Richie and Peter Sabor, all of Shakespeare's plays "were adaptations of the originals by Restoration dramatists", achieving longevity well into the early 19th century (2012: 4-5; for more detail cf. Davidson, 2012), and while there were revisions and substantial shortenings of *The Shrew*, particularly of Kate's concluding speech, none of those revisions subvert the play to the level of surviving Romeos and Juliets, and happy ending King Lears.

[2] Anna Bayman and George Southcombe claim that Fletcher was rejecting Shakespeare's ending by referencing Kate in his play as untamed – haunting the dreams of Petruchio, so that he would "start in's sleep, and very often / Cry out for cudgels, cow-staves, anything, / Hiding his breeches, out of fear her ghost / Should walk and wear 'em yet" (I.i.31-6) –, so they interpret this rejection as something that "may have been shared by some of Shakespeare's original audience" (Bayman / Southcombe, 2010: 19).

[3] Also, Kamaralli does not seem to be taken by Holderness and Wootton's open-ended argument that a diverse body of cultural production (i.e. shrew-taming narratives) would challenge the audience's fixed and consistent view of gender and sexual dynamics in Shakespeare's plays because, as she argues, by the time Shakespeare wrote his plays, "the shrew was as familiar a theatrical archetype as the tyrant, the lover or the clown, so audiences would have been primed by convention to identify her, particularly when watching comedies, which most often made use of this figure" (2012: 3; cf. 2010: 71). I agree with her assessment, particularly in light of Stott's definition of traditional comedy as a "plot driven" play in which characterization is "usually subordinated to the demands of the plot, and therefore more effectively realized with stereotypes and one-dimensional characters than anything approaching the realistic portrayal of human emotions" (2005: 40). The comic effect relies, therefore, on recognizable character types – e.g. Petruchio as the protype of the jovial wife-beater Mr. Punch – and on the temporary subversions of social stereotypes. This of course begs the question as to whether the punch line is equally amusing to those portrayed on the receiving end of the joke (cf. Garner 1988; Carlson 1998: 91-2).

[4] Kamaralli calls it "the crux of every argument about this [*The Shrew*] play" (2012: 93).

[5] All quotations from *The Taming of the Shrew* are from the Arden Shakespeare edited by Brian Morris (1981).

[6] See the enduring significance of the drum beating topos as marker of marital problems in John Gay's *Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking in the Streets of London* (1730): "Here rows of drummers stand in martial file, / And with their vellom thunder shake the pile, / To greet the new-made bride. Are sounds like these / The proper prelude to a state of peace?" (II.17-20).

[7] Among other humanistic sources David Bevington and David Scott Kastan indicate Erasmus' marriage colloquy as a possible source for *The Shrew* in order to distance it from misogynistic extremes of other possible sources (Bevington / Kastan 2005: 217). A more extreme narrative is *A Merry Jest of a Shrew and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin, for her Good Behaviour* (c. 1550-1560), in which the husband beats his wife till she bleeds, wrapping her in the flayed and salted skin of his old horse, Morel. The similarity to Shakespeare's play is that here too the father has a younger, meeker daughter, whom he favours over his eldest, shrewish daughter, and will have the first married only after he gets rid of the latter. The difference, apart from the existence of a mother figure, is that the shrew wife of *A Merry Jest* is identified as such by her violent, mean attitude towards the servants, a behaviour mirrored in *The Shrew* not by Katherine but by Petruchio in Act IV (also the very reason he is named a shrew in the play). Something else worth noting is that the jest throws the challenge of a superior taming method: "He that can charm a shrewd wife / Better then thus, / Let him come to me, and fetch ten pound, / And a golden purse" (Amyot 1844: 91).

[8] Indeed, the famous chamber-pot incident is recorded in Taylor's *A iuniper lectures* too: "beware that shee doe not meete with you as Xantippe the wife of Socrates, did meet with him: for after hee had endured her railing & bitter words for two or three hours together, and slighted her by his merry conceits, she studying how to bee revenged of him, as he went out of his house she poured a Chamber-pot on his head, which wet him exceedingly; whereupon he presently said, I did think that after so great a clap of Thunder, we should have some shower of raine, and so past I off merrily" (2005).

[9] This is somewhat obscured by the fact that in the modern translation the male application of the term vanishes completely. For example, "I obserued his appetite and pleasure I marked the tymes bothe whan he woulde be pleased and when he wold be all by shrwed" (Erasmus 2004) is rendered as "I noted his mood and feeling; I noted the circumstances too, and what soothed and irritated him" (Rummel 1996: 134). In quoting Erasmus' *A Merry Dialogue,* I will occasionally resort to the English translation of 1557 (2004) for the obvious reason that it was the version readily available to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and for the word use I intend to highlight.

[10] The modern translation by Craig Thompson obfuscates the gender-neutral use of the word *shrew*, for in the 1557 English translation it reads as indicated in the parenthesis.

[11] I am particularly fond of Erasmus for Xanthippe's scepticism in response to the theological underpinnings of her friend's advices (cf. Rummel, 1996: 133). Better yet for Shakespeare because, as Thompson notes among the positives features of his approach, he blissfully avoids "that other principal weapon of the shrew-tamer or male supremacist: theology" (2003: 28).

[12] See Sara Cohen's study "Men Making a Scene: Rock Music and the Production of Gender", in Sheila Whiteley (ed.), *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (Abingdon / New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. 17-36. I am grateful to Barna Emília, whose Hungarian article in *TNTeF* vol. 7, nr. 1 (2017) has drawn my attention to this continued gendered binary dynamic in the contemporary (punk and indie) music scene.

[13] Antronius, the abbot from Erasmus' colloquy *The Abbot and the Learned Lady* (1524), will also claim that the "public agrees with me, because it's rare and exceptional thing for a woman to know Latin" (Rummel 1996: 177).

[14] Makin references Erasmus' colloquy twice in her *Essay*, the first time highlighting the underlying motive (fearmongering) that objects to women's education: "He gives her one Answer to all this, *That Women would never be kept in subjection if they were learned*; (…) Doubtless if that generation of Sots (who deny more Polite Learning to Women) would speak out, they would tell you, If Women should be permitted Arts, they would be wiser than themselves (a thing not to be endured) then they would never be such tame fools and very slaves as now they make them; therefore it is a wicked mischievous thing to revive the Ancient Custom of Educating them" (1673).

[15] After all, as Kamaralli also notes, "Katherine speaks a paltry 8 percent of her play's line" (2012: 90) and even those are mostly provoked instances.