

BEGGARS, BRIDES, AND BARDS: THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

Stephanie Miranda Murphy, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Richard S. Ruderman, Major Professor  
and Chair of the Department of  
Political Science

Steven Forde, Major Professor

J. Michael Greig, Minor Professor

James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the  
Toulouse Graduate School

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To do justice to Shakespeare's comprehensive moral and political thought this paper seeks to discover what we can learn from the political philosophy of his largely neglected comedy, *Taming of the Shrew*. Not only does this endeavor provide a valuable forgotten link within the critical analyses of the theorists, but it also corrects the various misinterpretations of the play among contemporary critics. I argue that the play surveys various key themes that are rooted in classical political philosophy – such as education, the problems of anger, and the dynamic between nature and convention – and takes into consideration how they apply to modern man. Shakespeare borrows Plato's idea that eroticism is central to education and explicitly references Ovid's love books to reexamine our conceptions about one's formation of character, the proper standards for judging the ideal mate, and the effects of these issues on the stability of the community. I also submit an innovative explanation of the relation between the induction and the main plot. Taken together they exhibit a critique of the role of the poet and his art in modern civil society.

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## CHAPTER 1

Shakespeare was the man who of all modern and perhaps  
ancient poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul.  
-- *John Dryden*

*Taming of the Shrew* may seem a puzzling choice for our examination of Shakespeare's political philosophy. The first difficulty that arises is with the Bard himself. He wrote poetry – the art form that has been declared the greatest enemy of philosophy (*Genealogy of Morals*, III.5, *Human, All Too Human*, *The Republic*, Book X).<sup>1</sup> If we judge, as I maintain that we should, that Shakespeare is a man of wisdom on par with the greatest philosophers, it is worthwhile for us first to unravel poetry's true character, its connection to philosophy, and its value.

Of the attacks on the poets, Nietzsche's is the sharpest. The primary goal of Nietzsche's general philosophy is to put an end to the development of the widespread egalitarianism of modernity, which he argues is "an essential feature of decline" (*TI* IV.xxxvii, *TSZ* II.vii.213). Although Europeans of his day considered themselves to live in an Age of Progress, Nietzsche rejected this perspective and foresaw the eventual collapse of the idea of scientific progress. Democratic ideals assume that man in general is reasonable, and thus capable of thinking, understanding, and forming judgments by a process of logic. However, Nietzsche denies man's rationality.

At first glance poetry would seem to be the appropriate vehicle for Nietzsche's non-egalitarian enterprise. It concerns itself with distinguishing the great from the many

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, Nietzsche's works will be cited by section, part, and page number accompanied by the following title abbreviations: *Genealogy of Morals* (GM), *Human, All Too Human* (HATH), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (TSZ), *Twilight of the Idols* (TI), *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT). Unless otherwise noted, citations to Plato in this section are from *The Republic* and will be given by the appropriate Stephanus pagination, without title.

by elevating the most extraordinary human types over the merely ordinary ones. As an illustration of this point, it is not by accident that we have a Shakespearean play titled *Antony and Cleopatra* but not one called *Octavian*. But poetry is only ostensibly aristocratic. The poet is guilty of vulgarizing greatness because he makes great men accessible to the mediocre ones. The poet appeals to a wide middle class of society and devalues high culture by bringing it down to their lower level (*GM III.5*). This cheapening of admirable things perpetuates bourgeois culture and its characteristic values, such as social equality and reason-based scientific progress.

But a greater problem with the poet's depiction of greatness is that it is not true greatness at all. It is merely a manifestation of the poet's neediness and intense longing for a virtuosity he can never possess (*GM III.4.4*, 5.1; cf. *TSZ I.ii.123*, *HATH II.162*). Nietzsche asserts that the poet owes his creation to his deficiencies: "The fact is that *if* [the poet] were it, he would not represent, conceive, and express it: a Homer would not have created an Achilles nor a Goethe a Faust if Homer had been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust" (*GM III.4.3*). Achilles and Homer both share the fact that they are exceptional human beings. The key difference, however, is that artist is intellectual, and thus passive, whereas the hero is physical, and thus active. Or to state it more frankly, the poet is useless. But rather than taking action toward his desire to be more like the hero, the poet, instead, chooses only to create his ideal personage. In the end, the poet's work is solely a projection from which he can glean vicarious pleasure from the greatness of his characters, none of whom he could ever be like. It is the poet's desperate and disgusting longing to attach himself to genuine greatness. Poetry, then, is reprehensible because it allows a lower life form to overcome a higher one, which

confuses the rational order of things.

As surprising as Nietzsche's assumption seems, it actually corresponds to Aristotle's idea in the *Poetics* that poetry depicts what ought to be, rather than what has been (1415b4-6). In other words, in showing characters that possess the exceptional qualities that the poet does not have, yet feels a deep need to achieve, he is really creating an image of what he believes is a perfected being. Therefore consistent with Aristotle's definition of poetry the poet's creation reflects his notion of what man ought to be. To this end, despite Nietzsche's explicit contempt for the poet's impoverished disposition, this very neediness proves beneficial because it has led men to produce images of the highest conceivable potential for man.

Just the same, to Nietzsche the poet's neediness is additionally contemptible because it leads him to affix himself to the conventional morality of the community. He tells us that the poets are the "valets of some morality" (*GM* III.5.2; cf. *TSZ* I.vii.152, *HATH* II.176). They need to affix themselves to the general morality in order to win the city's affections. The problem with this is that the poets keep the city's theoretical rights and wrongs distinct from the practice of their own personal morality. They pursue the conventional ethical standards by devious means. They are both "cunning flatterers" who manipulate others, and weak-willed "all-too-pliable courtiers" who will conform to others' bidding (*GM* III.5.2; cf. *TSZ* II.17.239, *HATH* II.105). This means that the poet paradoxically latches on to the city's morality in the pursuit of his selfish ends, despite being (or, perhaps, *because* he is) amoral. Yet, Nietzsche warns us, "insofar as the poet really *is vox populi* he counts as *vox dei*" (*HATH* II.176). He is still able to affect the general public since he has the reputation for being the moral mouthpiece of God.

However, his influence is nothing more than common opinion tainted with common foolishness. Thus while the poet is granted authority to be the voice of pious truth, his work merely throws back to us our mistaken beliefs. To Nietzsche poetry does not teach us the truth; it perpetuates our prejudices.

But poetry's most reviling feature according to Nietzsche is a counterintuitive one. One of the prime characteristics of poetry is that it eliminates chance. Every action, every expression is a deliberate choice made by the poet. Nothing in his work is either extraneous or arbitrary. This predictable character of poetry could be conceived of as advantageous because it imposes order to what can, in nature, seem erratic and dysfunctional.<sup>2</sup> It instills a method in the seeming madness of life. The situation we see on stage is one of carefully constructed order in which the poet focuses on the critical elements of nature and where all consequences follow directly from the characters' choices so that we may come to understand something we did not previously know.

Yet to Nietzsche this orderliness is problematic because it grossly distorts reality. It depicts a world deprived of an element that he regarded as a dominant concept of our existence: chaos. Nietzsche argues that nature is not an ordered unity. Instead, it is chaotic and unpredictable. Civilization and its greatest achievements arise from man's capacity to accept chaos, rather than resist it. Poetry, however, denies chance, and thus also chaos. It implicitly presents a world governed by a natural system of justice. It superficially obscures chaos and infuses us with a false sense of hope that at all times men get what they deserve. This has affected audiences by producing weak men who are content to accept what happens or what others do, without active response or resistance. To Nietzsche, man's worst vice is to be satisfied with the state of his affairs.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Aristotle's *On Poetics*, 1450b33-1451a6



He must constantly strive for something higher than himself, higher than mere existence (*TSZ* II.xii.225-228, *TI* IX.xxxv.522-523). But in modern times man's domestication has caused him to forego his self-improving exertions with the desire to be accomplished – leaving him in a comfortable position in which he “is no longer able to despise himself” (*TSZ* I.iii.125, v.129). Thus Nietzsche attacks poetry so severely because it diminishes the presence of chaos and dramatically tempers our souls.

But Nietzsche was not the first philosopher to recognize the problems of poetry. Plato's Socrates laid out the original and most famous critique of the poets. In the *Republic* Socrates and his interlocutors begin with a harsh attack in Book II on Homer's speeches about the gods, and then again return to their negative attitude toward all poetry later in Book X. In the end, unlike Nietzsche who sternly banishes the poet from the city, Socrates, by contrast, offers a more forgiving, albeit austere, perspective by seeking to reform the poets so that they conform to the strict demands of justice. To Socrates the poets can stay because although dangerous, they nevertheless prove useful to the city.

The first menace posed by poetry is that it is too honest. It reveals that the gods become “easily angry with one another” and “plot against them and have battles with them” over “many diverse disputes” about “the battles of giants” (378c1-3). In other words, the gods are irrational beings that give in to their passions and fight amongst themselves over insubstantial issues. The poets' depiction of the gods' tempestuous side is problematic because people take these divine beings as the models for the city's moral standard. If the general public, especially the warrior class (378c2), knows that the gods go to war with each other over arbitrary, irrational differences of opinion, then

they are likely to conclude that this infighting is acceptable. Or to state it more bluntly, Socrates makes the extreme suggestion that poetry's open presentation of the gods' violent hostility toward one another may provoke civil war.

Thus to maintain peace within the city Socrates advocates censoring the poets. The lawmakers must compel them to "make up speeches" (378d2). This is done for two stated reasons. First, the populace must be persuaded that the gods do not act on their anger. The suggestion is that they naturally *are* inclined to subordinate their reason in a moment of passion. For this reason human beings must be compelled to believe otherwise. The law effectively causes each one to surrender the natural use of his body to the will of the state. But even so, the laws that regulate men are limited. While the lawmakers can decide the proper way to make use of one's body, they cannot obtain absolute control over how each person actually uses it. The city's laws can neither eliminate its people's passions, nor the possibility that they will act on them. For this reason, the poet must censor his works for a second reason: to prevail upon the people that infighting would be unholy (378d1). If the will to maintain a calm disposition does not have its roots in nature, it must at least be thought to have an attachment to the divine. It is odd that Socrates' solution is a circular one that calls on one's piety to maintain piety. But what is even more remarkable about this strategy is that it also reveals that the best the lawmakers can do is appeal to their citizens' religious dedication in the hope that it will prevent them from disrupting the city. Socrates lets slip to his interlocutors that the legislators inconsistently treat piety lightly as a second-rate political tool, all for the sake of demanding a most serious reverent devotion to the gods from their citizens. In brief, the just city is guilty of not practicing what it preaches.

For all this, Socrates eventually discloses that the poets are not as honest as they first seem. He says that their works are “made with a hidden sense” (378d6). In other words, poetry conceals a teaching for which the presentation of the gods’ conflicts is just a cover up. Poetry, then, speaks esoterically. Nevertheless, Socrates insists that the poet still be censored because the young men of the city “cannot judge what is hidden sense and what is not” (378d7-8). That is to say, the majority of men do not have the capacity to discover the part of a poet’s work that is the obscure teaching. Most are attentive only to what is most obtrusive. This inability is particularly harmful because it will not discourage men from nevertheless continuing to form unsubstantiated opinions on what they *think* the poet is saying, which “become hard to eradicate and unchangeable” (378e1).<sup>3</sup> Poetry, as Nietzsche also noted, contributes to the prejudices of society. Men begin forming their opinions from a young age and hold steadfastly to them – even if they discover that they are wrong. Therefore from Socrates’ perspective, men are perpetually prejudiced either because they initially cannot hold the right opinion or because later they refuse to do so. This is likely so because we all deeply invest our entire way of life on the beliefs we have about the world. If we admit that those opinions are wrong, then so is our way of life. The greatest implication of Socrates’ remark is that our opinions are fundamentally important to the stability of the city. To keep peace and order the city cannot hold a tolerable, relativistic acceptance of multiple viewpoints. Right and wrong must be clearly and uniformly defined and defended. It may seem odd, then, that Socrates wishes to censor poetry so that it does not depict the gods fighting with each other due to their dedication to their opinions (378c5-6). However, the real

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<sup>3</sup> Note that Socrates says men’s opinions are “hard” to eradicate, but not impossible. This is a skeptical, but not a fatalistic view of mankind.

issue is that for the city to be truly stable, men cannot remain free to form their own views. Their opinions must be shaped wholly by the city's legislators and the poets who advocate their laws. Socrates' goal is not to exchange false opinion with knowledge, but to instill a uniform opinion, whether true or false, for the sake of the city's good.

After this discussion at the start of the interlocutors' earliest investigations into justice, they dismiss any consideration of the poets until they return to a more sustained assault in Book X. Although Socrates admits to having a life-long affection for the poets (595c), he nevertheless revives the "old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" and criticizes the poet for being an imitator who is not only misguided, but also destructive (595a, 598b-c, 607b-c).<sup>4</sup> At first poetry appears to be credible because it is concerned with the "greatest and fairest things," which include wars, politics, and education (599d-e; cf. 378c-d, *Ion* 531c, 532a-b, *Apology* 22c2). These subject matters are striking, above all, because they are the very ones discussed by the political philosopher. Socrates is surely aware of this parallel between poetry and philosophy, but he never explicitly makes the connection, and his interlocutors are not attentive enough to pick up on it. Revealing this information outright would undercut Socrates' need to compromise the poets' standing in order to construct the just city. Yet to the careful reader Socrates' mention of these political and philosophical attributes in his account of poetry stands out and makes the strict hostility of philosophy toward poetry immediately questionable.

But despite the diminished conflict between the two types of writings, the poet's discussion of serious matters is still inferior. It is merely an imitation of artifacts. The

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<sup>4</sup> The full discussion of the "quarrel" occurs at 595a-608b. And, actually, according to Socrates the poets also rank lower than just about everyone else in the city -- specifically the gods, the manual artisans, and the legislators. To be fair, though, Socrates' critique does not necessarily apply to all poets since he draws a distinction between the casual poet and the one who is "a knower of the things that he imitates" (599b), presumably the poets like Shakespeare.

poet is removed from the natural world because he imitates the craftsmen, who imitate the gods – meaning poetry is an imitation of an imitation and, thus, only a shallow representation that is “surely far from the truth” (*Republic*, 598b-d, 602c; *Apology*, 22c3).<sup>5</sup> So although the poet treats the most serious matters, what he presents is, at best, a caricature of the way things are. Unlike those whom he imitates, he and his art are simply too far removed from the real world. The greatest implication of this circumstance is that the city’s artisans seem to have a more substantial title to knowledge than do the poets.<sup>6</sup> Although they do not have an understanding of the world, the artisans, at the very least, possess a solid understanding of their specific trade. Unlike the poets, they don’t chase after abstract notions. In Socrates’ express opinion, only an intimate link to a skill grounded in reality can supply a genuine, praiseworthy knowledge.

But the poet’s supposed wisdom is not enough to justify Socrates’ harsh attack of his art since this misguided self-understanding is certainly not a feature peculiar to the poets. Rather, they are the exclusive focus of Socrates’ criticism because their false claims to knowledge pose a great danger to the city. Despite their lack of insight, the poets nevertheless are the most influential teachers of an entire city (*Republic*, 600a-601a, 606e).<sup>7</sup> They, in the service of morality as defined by the statesmen’s laws, provide the wholesale education of a society mainly due to their incredible charm (601a, 607e).<sup>8</sup> According to Socrates, the poet’s vivacious depictions allow him to use his art to

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Aristotle’s *On Poetics*, 1447a16-1447b20, 1450a16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Plato’s *Apology of Socrates*, 20c-23b. The poets, according to Socrates, know more than the legislators, who know nothing at all.

<sup>7</sup> This is not an idiosyncrasy of ancient Greece. Consider Winston Churchill’s observation: “Just as Homer was once the teacher of the Greeks, so too can Shakespeare now serve as our teacher” (1956).

<sup>8</sup> Their service to the laws of the city distances the poet even further from nature.

subvert the city's conventional order and deceive us into thinking we are learning the truth adorned with pleasure. By this standard, then, the poet is nothing but a snake oil salesman who should not belong in the city as he currently is. He merely indulges his audiences to capture their approbation. Strangely enough, in Book II the poets were first attacked because of their sincerity, and now they are considered disruptive due to their deceptiveness. If up to this point we weren't already aware that Socrates is building his arguments against the poets on shaky ground, we should start to grasp this by now. In any event, the greatest problem with their dishonesty is that because the poets serve the laws, they can never be wholly removed from the city. They remain in a perpetually awkward position neither wholly inside nor outside the city. As with every other human characteristic throughout the *Republic*, Socrates' rebuke of the poets abstracts from the emotional and intellectual pleasures, in this case of those supplied by poetry, to elevate the city's needs above those of its individual citizens.

However, this very argument that Socrates levels against the dangers of poetry not only ultimately serves as its most forceful defense, but also links it most intimately to philosophy. Unlike Nietzsche's sharp criticism of the poet as wholly useless, the more tolerant Platonic understanding ascribes to him some use. As has already been stated, the poet's influence is all encompassing. This means that his impact extends to all men, both inside and outside his particular city. It also reaches across the intellectual spectrum from the lowest sort of foolish men to the highest all-wise philosophers -- including Socrates himself (595c; cf. *Laws*, 658c-d).<sup>9</sup> This admitted connection between

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<sup>9</sup> This is especially striking because it reveals that philosophers are not wholly guided by reason -- which lends further support to Socrates' earlier admission in the *Republic* that the passions belong to the human soul by nature, and cannot be completely eliminated (see discussions of *Thymos* in Book II; *Eros* in Book V, end).

philosophy and poetry puts the poet in an intermediary position in which he holds two important functions. For one, the poet speaks to the philosopher about ordinary human things. His link to the city allows him to have both a profound understanding of the greatest human concerns as well as the opportunity to teach the philosopher, who has no real attachments to the city, about the experiences and longings of its average men. A grasp of these elements is necessary if one wishes not only to have a genuine claim to knowledge, but also to be able to properly rule over men like the philosopher as king must.

Moreover, in addition to poetry's capacity to convey information about the conventional elements of humanity, it can also speak unconventional truths to the men of philosophic understanding, all while not offending ordinary men. In other words, the poet follows the insightful observations made by Hobbes on the writings of wise men:

If then one cannot penetrate into [his writings] without much meditation, we are not to expect a man should understand them at the first speaking. Marsillunus saith, he was obscure on purpose; that the common people might not understand him. And not unlikely: for a wise man should so write, (though in words understood by all men), that wise men only should be able to commend him (1989, 584).<sup>10</sup>

Since the poet understands average men, he knows how to speak to them as well by appealing to their conventional tastes (605a). His teaching always reaches us from the mouths of his characters, and the poet never explicitly states his opinion in his own name. Thus poetry is useful because it can depict the greatest perversions of a society that need to be understood by some, but which cannot be openly expressed to all. Or to state it somewhat differently, through his art the poet is allowed to present the harshest of truths to the few who understand without fear of abuse by the many who cannot.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*, III.48; Locke's *First Treatise of Government*, § 7; Melville's *Moby Dick*, ch. 3 ¶ 1.

These provocative truths reveal themselves only to the most attentive audience members – a small exclusive class -- who must be both willing and able to uncover the message.

In this way, Socrates offers a corrective not only to his earlier attack on Homer's esotericism, but also to Nietzsche's ill-considered broadside of poetry's supposedly egalitarian position. He reaches a truly aristocratic understanding of poetry. He does so by changing the standard by which this is judged. It is not necessarily what is depicted but *how* it is presented that determines that poetry is a selective enterprise. Whereas Nietzsche correctly observes that poetry makes the acts of extraordinary men available to ordinary men, Socrates' (and Hobbes et al.'s) account suggests that this does not render such deeds prosaic. Rather, poetry's unique "most excellent and perfect kind of speaking" to a privileged intellectually superior audience affixes the art to an aristocratic ideal (Hobbes 1989, 585). Only a choice few reap the full rewards of the poet's creation, even though everyone may take away a certain pleasure from the general performance. This account regarding an opaque form of communication deviates from the traditional standard for determining the best in a community – familial assets and pedigree -- and replaces it with a new measure – individual intellectual capacity.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the best social order rewards the individual as a distinct individual, rather than as member of a family.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Note, however, that both criteria prescribed are inborn, suggesting this form of communication is not an equal opportunity one. Some sort of capacity by birth is necessary.

<sup>12</sup> We should not forget that these proposals in *The Republic* are being presented by Socrates who lived in Athens during the classical period of Greece – both the intellectual wellspring for Western Civilization and the origin of democracy. This begs an important political question: if democracy is the regime type that privileges equality, yet intellect prospers in an environment that favors recognition of the unequal talents of an individual among his community, how is it that intellectual individuality thrived simultaneously alongside democracy? It seems that this seeming contradiction was made possible by the existence of esoteric communication. It sneaks in an aristocratic refuge for an intellectual elite,



In the end, while Socrates initially censures the poet's impulse to pander to his audience as a great fault, we come to realize that poetry's compliance to custom is, in fact, a clever mechanism by which to express abrasive, but necessary, truths.<sup>13</sup> Yet it is important to realize that the communication of these truths is not limited to the men of his particular city. Rather, these teachings are concerned with man's permanent problems and can educate men across not only other places, but also other times. Ultimately, the work of the poet, much like that of the philosopher, relies on deception in order to communicate the truth about the deficiencies of society and its men. Properly understood, then, the means and ends of poetry and philosophy are not simply antagonistic, as Socrates would have his interlocutors believe. They are, in fact, quite compatible.

To this end, Shakespeare is the poet – *our poet* – *par excellence*. As a student of political philosophy of the highest order and a master communicator, he is the perfect compliment to the tradition passed down to us from the Greeks and can help us discover what the greatest men have to teach us about the greatest matters. And for this very reason a significant and growing body of scholarly criticism approaches the Bard from the perspective that his plays are best understood if we ask “the kind of questions of Shakespeare that Glaucon and Adeimantus once posed to Socrates. How should we live? Is it best to be a ruler or a poet? Can one kill a king? Should one's parents be disobeyed for the sake of love?” (Bloom 1964, 12).<sup>14</sup> If we look to

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which is particularly rewarding in a democratic society that seeks to stifle inequality. It also essentially suggests that the idea of a pure democracy is illusory, despite what the state's legal framework says. Men will always find a way to distinguish themselves.

<sup>13</sup> This factor is particularly striking considering that Socrates was executed by the city on charges related to his lack of concern for concealing harsh truths.

<sup>14</sup> Other notable criticisms in this spirit include *Shakespeare as Political Thinker* (Alvis and West 1981) and *Perspectives on Politics in Shakespeare* (Murley and Sutton 2006).

Shakespeare for guidance on these matters, not only his striking grasp of ancient and modern political concepts, but also his incredible talent for rendering these ideas with a remarkable vitality can help us recover a richer understanding of life.

Yet for all this, I admit that when we turn to *Taming of the Shrew* we come up against the most critical difficulty of the play that makes our examination of its political dimension so perplexing: Although Shakespeare's corpus is thick with depictions of kingship and law, of war and conspiracy, none of these distinctly political elements appears in this particular comedy. The play presents us with no grand political situation, no state sovereigns, no heroic figures. It shows no clear signs that Shakespeare is concerned with what is often held to be the fundamental question of classical political philosophy regarding what is the best regime.<sup>15</sup> The only obvious themes of the play are marriage and education, and its action is severely limited to the individual choices of private citizens in their private affairs. In short, a political study of *Taming of the Shrew* is problematic because the play contains none of the conventional thematic elements by which we could designate it as political.

This distinctly un-political character of the play likely accounts for its sweeping neglect among theorists. While the scholars in the literature and politics subfield have interpreted nearly all of Shakespeare's plays from the political angle, to date, they have been conspicuously silent on *Taming of the Shrew*.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunate though this may be, it is not wholly unreasonable to assume that the absence of a clearly defined political situation within the play frustrates our investigation of its political philosophy. In the *Taming of the Shrew*, it seems there is no there there.

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<sup>15</sup> *Republic*, Book VIII; *Politics*, Book IV

<sup>16</sup> Caton's (1972) article on the role of the Induction is the only exception, but it does not even consider the main plot.

In recognition of this undeniable obstacle, then, why would we bother to investigate its political dimension at all? Does the play even present any political philosophy? To these challenges I maintain that it does. But it is, in fact, precisely *because* of the clear absence of traditional politics in *Taming of the Shrew* that it is such an alluring work to examine. In this particular comedy Shakespeare takes as seriously as the ancient Greeks did the notion that domestic human relationships are an important component of a community, and he presents us with the private politics in which men participate everyday. Shakespeare brings these relations home, so to speak, by drawing clear attention to what has proven to be the most provocative issue of the play: the relationship between the sexes. Marriage, the play's central issue and a topic of concern among various political philosophers, serves a crucial political function by linking citizens not only to each other, but also to their city and, thus, marks a fundamental characteristic of the political community.<sup>17</sup> Shakespeare gives this issue its fair treatment by allowing the characters' relationships to blossom before our eyes without being upstaged by a larger civic issue.

To this end, and to do justice to Shakespeare's comprehensive account of human existence, my aim is to seek to discover what we can learn from the political philosophy of *Taming of the Shrew*. Too often Shakespeare is subjected to the fashionable critical movement *du jour*, which each manipulate his works to fit their preconceived opinions. In contrast, I examine the play in light of its permanent teachings, rather than of any literary or historical movement. This endeavor is particularly significant because it not only provides a valuable forgotten link within the

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<sup>17</sup> Aristotle's *Politics*, Book I; Rousseau's *Emile*, Book V, especially 357-364; Burke's "little platoons" in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ¶ 75.

critical analyses of the theorists, but it also, I believe, offers a more profound account of the play than those given among the other contemporary critics.

Shakespeare's comedies have a dual purpose: to arouse laughter and to teach us about the greatest human problems. I argue that *Taming of the Shrew* fulfills both of these objectives by surveying various key themes that are rooted in classical political philosophy. In particular, Shakespeare borrows Plato's idea that eroticism is central to education and explicitly references Ovid's love books in order to reexamine our conceptions about courtship, marriage, and its effects on the stability of the community.<sup>18</sup> In the end, while both Petruccio's and Lucentio's different approaches to wooing prove immediately successful, Shakespeare casts doubt that either will satisfy each man's stated long term goals. Finally, I conclude by attempting to discover the relation between the induction and the main plot. Taken together the two parts of the play offer a critique of modern man's lack of moderation, self-reflection, and serious concern for poetry.

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<sup>18</sup> For Plato's view of eroticism and education see *The Republic*, Book V, *Theages* 128b, and *The Symposium*. For Ovid's, see *Ars Amatoria*, *Heroides*, and *Metamorphosis* – the only books explicitly named in *Taming of the Shrew*.

## CHAPTER 2

### SHAKESPEARE'S SEXUAL POLITICS: EDUCATION AND PASSION

Iwis [marriage] is not half-way to her heart  
But if it were, doubt not her care should be  
To comb your noddle with a three-legged stool.

-- *I.i.62-64*

*Taming of the Shrew* is composed of two stories of disproportionate length and development. The play opens with a brief induction scene that ends abruptly and is never completed. This account is entirely replaced by an additional story commonly labeled "the taming plot," which is really a performance put on by a troop of actors within the larger context of the whole play. This second narrative is what most people have in mind when they speak of *Taming of the Shrew*, and it has garnered most of its readers' attentions. In fact, with the exception of one brief article on the induction (Caton 1972), the taming story is the only section of the play for which one can find any scholarly criticism.

In the taming plot we are introduced to Baptista, a gentleman of Padua, who finds it impossible to marry off his shrewish oldest daughter Katherine. Yet, as the sole authority of his family's order he insists that some man must take her before he will allow his sweet-tempered youngest daughter Bianca to marry one of her many suitors (I.i.48-51). The action of the play is set in motion by Baptista's resolution and the characters' judgments regarding the desirability of particular types of human beings. Everyone's dilemmas are resolved when Petruccio, an adventurous and spirited traveler from Verona, sweeps into town, marries Kate, and curbs her aggression. He does so by initiating a "taming school," which deprives his wife of food and sleep until she agrees to

submit. Petruccio's teaching method, in essence, is to fight fire with fire to consume the rage that feeds Katherine's fury. His endeavor is fulfilled when she gives her infamous final, and only, speech:

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,  
When they are bound to serve, love and obey  
....  
Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,  
And place your hands below your husband's foot. (5.2.161-64, 169-77)

An overwhelming majority of the play's critics target this speech for the starting point of their analyses.<sup>19</sup> Strangely enough, though, the very "education" that mellows Kate's temper has tended to produce the inverse effect on the play's audiences – as Katherine's outrage subsides, the typical reader's escalates. No other Shakespearean play has elicited such controversy, and the consensus among his critics seems clear: Shakespeare is a misogynist. Whether this charge is justified is our first challenge as we turn to an examination of the sexual politics of *Taming of the Shrew*.

### Shakespeare's Insupportable Misogyny

Petruccio and Kate are remarkable among the great cast of characters in the Shakespearean corpus in that they are the only ones to provoke critical replies within Shakespeare's lifetime. In 1611 John Fletcher first staged his comedic sequel to *Taming*

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<sup>19</sup> For examples, see Ruth Melinkoff, "Riding Backwards," in *Viator* 4 (1973); Kahn Coppèlia, "'The Taming of the Shrew': Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage," in *Modern Language Studies*, 5:1 (1975); Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England," in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Tita French Baumlin, "Petruccio the Sophist and Language as a Creation of Taming of the Shrew," in *Studies in English Literature*, 29:2 (1989); Linda Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42:2 (1991); Emily Detmer, "Civilizing Subordination: Domestic Violence and The Taming of the Shrew," in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 48:3 (1997).

of the *Shrew* titled *The Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tamed*, in which he reverses the sexual power dynamic when his female characters triumph over their husbands. In the play, Katherine has died, and Petruccio remarries to a woman named Maria, who is much more resilient than Kate. She not only refuses to consummate the marriage unless her husband becomes less oppressive, but also convinces the women of the town to withhold sex from their husbands as well. Ultimately, Maria triumphs, and Fletcher's Petruccio ends up entirely debased and emasculated. The source of Fletcher's spirited reaction can be pinned almost exclusively to Shakespeare's depiction of both Petruccio's iron-fisted mastery of his wife and the difficulty of Kate's infamous final speech in which she extols the virtues of wifely subservience.<sup>20</sup>

Among the more contemporary attacks on Petruccio and Kate's marriage, George Bernard Shaw's widely cited assertion that *Taming of the Shrew* is "altogether disgusting to our modern sensibility" is reflective of the typical contemporary critic's opinion (Wilson 1961, 188).<sup>21</sup> For those in this camp, women's rights are a grave concern and only a human being with a perverted morality could treat the issue so lightheartedly. The value of the play from this perspective lies solely in Shakespeare's capacity to expose us to a distant era of patriarchal rule in order to highlight the values of our present social progress – a mere reaffirmation that "formerly, all the world was mad." To Shaw and others like him, then, *Taming of the Shrew* is nothing better than evidence that supports the notion that we live in a progressively enlightened society due, in part, to the freedoms engendered by the liberal feminist movement. In this sense, scholarly criticism functions merely as an exercise in self-admiration that ends

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<sup>20</sup> For another example of a popular contemporary critique of *Taming of the Shrew* similar to Fletcher's, see *Tom Tyler and his Wife*. ca. 1578. ed. Felix E. Schelling, *PMLA*, XV.3 (1900), 253-289.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Fergusson (1958), Coppélia (1975), Boose (1991), Detmer (1997), Robertson (2010)

up upstaging the play itself.

But ultimately the arguments that *Taming of the Shrew* simply reflects not only the severe constraints placed on women in Early Modern Europe, but also Shakespeare's gross misogyny, prove untenable. For one, within the play itself, despite the common charge that Petruccio treats Katherine slavishly (Coppélia 1975, Boose 1991, Raju 2010), Shakespeare makes a clear distinction between the master-slave relationship and that of husband and wife. Our earliest image of Petruccio is one of violence. In his introductory scene set outside the house of his good friend Hortensio, whom he has travelled to Padua to visit, Petruccio bids his attendant Grumio to "knock me here" (I.ii.8). The order is a conventional usage that really means "knock here [on the door] for me." Yet Grumio misinterprets (or pretends to interpret) Petruccio's command literally to mean "strike me." As a result of his confusion, Grumio refuses to comply and states, "I should knock you first, And then I know after who comes by the worst" (I.ii.13-14). In essence he disobeys the command because he expects that his master will simply return the blow, thus unfairly punishing for him complying with his orders. In other words, Grumio presumes Petruccio is a hot-tempered man whose impulsive reaction will be violent rather than reasonable. Poor Grumio is damned if he does, and, as it turns out, he also is damned if he does not. Petruccio responds furiously to his servant's insubordination by wringing his ears and knocking him to his knees (I.ii.17), validating Grumio's presentiment about his master. While this intensely funny scene is surely notable for its lighthearted, yet acute recognition of the limits of communication and its consequences, it is also valuable for what it indicates about Petruccio's character. Shakespeare shows us that Petruccio is certainly not averse to



exerting violence on others.

Yet the careful reader will notice that, in stark contrast, at no point do we see Petruccio behave physically aggressive with Katherine – and not for want of sufficient opportunity or stimulus. At their first meeting the two enjoy a few rounds of quick-witted banter before Kate threatens to strike Petruccio after he calls himself a gentleman (II.i.214), then immediately follows through on her promise (215-216). Given that we have already witnessed Petruccio react abusively toward Grumio's mere threat of violence, we logically anticipate that he will return Kate's blows. However, he defies our reasonable expectations and maintains decorum. To be sure, Petruccio does not entirely yield to Katherine's whims. He warns her that he will cuff her if she decides to strike him again (216). Nevertheless he never acts out this oath and remains markedly nonviolent toward his wife for the remainder of the play.

Petruccio likely maintains composure because of Katherine's clever rejoinder to his returned threat. She retorts,

So may you lose your arms if you strike again.  
If you strike me you are no gentleman,  
And if no gentleman, why then, no arms. (II.i.217-219)

Her response is amusing because of her clever play on the idea of the gentleman's title. In one sense she is playfully referring to Petruccio's claim to a coat of arms, which is a sign of noble status. But in another, more serious sense, she speaks literally of the limbs attached to his shoulders. She cautions him, then, that if he hits her she will return his force with even greater violence by ripping his arms straight off of his body. Although this response is a hyperbole she will not likely carry through, it serves the purpose of reminding Petruccio that striking women is not behavior suitable of a true gentleman, as

he claims to be. Thus Kate touches something in Petruccio, as he never again physically threatens her. And while Petruccio is equally authoritative in his relationship with Katherine as he is with Grumio, he is physically aggressive only with his servant.<sup>22</sup> In Petruccio's behavior, then, we see that he maintains a courteous disposition toward women. He truly is a gentleman in every sense.

Moreover, beyond *Taming of the Shrew* it seems that Shakespeare can be exonerated altogether of the unjust charge of chauvinism if we take even a superficial glance through his complete works. The notion that the playwright held a deep contempt for women is inconsistent with his presentation of numerous characters of the fairer sex throughout his other plays. To make and hold the assertion that Shakespeare was a misogynist, we would have to strain ourselves to ignore the variety of wonderfully captivating, bold, confident women depicted throughout his plays, such as Portia, Rosalind, and *the* preeminent woman, Cleopatra. In this light, it is conceivable but inordinately unlikely that the same man would celebrate the highest virtues of woman in one turn only to pour heard-hearted scorn over her in another. We cannot, then, rightly accuse Shakespeare of being entirely hostile to the idea of a strong-minded, yet appealing, woman.

In contrast to Shakespeare's attractive female characters, Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew* is not merely, as many scholars contend, a "bold and sprightly woman" who is insensitively transformed into a servile wife (Easo Smith, 58). Properly understood, she is an intolerable virago who, until controlled, cannot interact with her fellow citizens without either verbally or physically assaulting them (I.i.61-65, II.i.21, 216, III.iii.87-88). Unlike, for instance, the daring and confident Cleopatra, Kate is both unfit to live among

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<sup>22</sup> Note that Petruccio strikes his servant again at IV.1.129, yet maintains control toward Katherine.

others and possesses none of the charms that make the infamous Egyptian queen so alluring. Whereas Cleopatra's femininity provides her the power to seduce Antony (along with every reader with a healthy sense of attraction), Kate's abrasive demeanor provides her with no power other than the laughable ability to repel everyone from her. Thus Shakespeare most certainly intends us to *want* her transformation. However, if we cut short our investigation of the play with this assessment, *Taming of the Shrew* ends up as nothing more than an amusing tale of a community that achieves smooth social relations as the proper end of one's education. This interpretation unfairly denies the play the richer understanding it deserves, which reveals itself only if we are willing to take a closer look at the often overlooked details of each individual character and the city in which they live.

To this end, despite the narrow scope of the Early- through Post-Modern feminist interpretations, they nevertheless force us to tackle two central questions we must seek the answer to if we wish to understand Shakespeare's treatment of the sexes: what is the true character of Petruccio and Kate's marriage? And likewise, what is the nature of the concurrent relationship between Lucentio and Bianca? While most scholars join Shaw's common cause and severely limit their commentary to the concern for male chauvinism and women's rights, presumably because these issues are so crucial to our existence, they are of peripheral importance to us until we can understand them in light of the particular kinds of individuals that Shakespeare has chosen to face them in his comedy. There is no single poetic work that depicts an exhaustive account of man. Rather, each one presents a specific set of human types embedded in distinct situations. With that understood, let us now turn to an exploration of the play's particular

details that go beyond the common charges of Shakespeare's misogyny.

### Philosophy, Virtue, and Gravity: Lucentio

Although marriage is the most obvious issue of the *Taming of the Shrew*, education is prominent alongside it. Throughout the play education is directly linked with character formation (IV.ii.190, III.iii.109-111), which suggests that it is the essential issue at hand.<sup>23</sup> Even a most casual understanding of the world tells us that because human beings are imperfect, no individual can ever exhibit every quality of human excellence at one time. But this seemingly mundane truism is actually important because it provokes us to ask not only which qualities are the most important ones for a human to possess, but also how do we rightly judge this. This matter involves not only self-reflection of one's own character, but also effectively judging the natures of other people.

For instance in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the most famous and explicit treatment of this issue, Aristotle surveys the "praiseworthy characteristics" that we call moral and intellectual virtue "in order to become good" (1103a10, b27). But while his treatise begins with the explicit purpose of engendering one's personal improvement, Aristotle does not simply treat the acquisition of virtue as something done at the individual level. Not only do many of his virtues – such as magnanimity and friendliness -- develop one's relation to the city, but also his account ends with a description of friendship and a transition to *The Politics*, his study of human associations in the political community. Because men now rarely live in isolation, any study of character formation cannot

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<sup>23</sup> In this regard Shakespeare's approach is closer to that of the classical political philosophers who focused on character formation as the end of education (*Republic* 377b-c, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1103b7-25). By contrast, the moderns have tended to focus on the emergence of political institutions and deny the importance, and even the possibility, of proper character formation (Machiavelli's *Prince* ch. 25, Hobbes' *Leviathan*).

abstract from the city. We are born into civil society in which we interact among other human beings who influence, for better and for worse, the possibility that one may live the best way of life.<sup>24</sup> Even before a human being begins his formal education, his city and its regime type go a long way in shaping his essential nature as well as the conventions he observes. Therefore, such an association prevents one from wholly detaching oneself from the community. Or stated differently, the existence of the city makes character development an inherently political endeavor. And to this end, we must be able not only to establish the proper character in ourselves, but also to properly judge the characters of those around us. We must be both inward and outward looking beings.

What Lucentio says about himself in the opening lines of the taming story most clearly articulates the effects of the city on the primary development of his character. He is a newly-arrived visitor who possesses a “great desire...To see fair Padua,” yet affirms that his hometown,

Pisa, renowned for grave citizens,  
Gave [him his] being, and [his] father first --  
A merchant of great traffic through the world.(l.i.1-2, 10-13)

This statement on Pisa presents two conflicting self-understandings, one that is explicit and another, implicit. Most clearly Lucentio sees his city as a strongly influential place. Despite his eager longing to visit Padua, he nevertheless maintains a deep-seated affection for his native town. It has played a significant role not only in Lucentio’s own principal development, but also in that of generations of other men in his family. The roots that attach him to Pisa, then, run deep. Thus according to his stated opinion, Lucentio understands himself fundamentally as a citizen of Pisa -- a self-identification

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<sup>24</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b11, *Politics* 1253a3, Hume’s “Of the Origin of Government” l.v.1.

he seems to think is inescapable.

To understand the contrary implicit perception that Lucentio also holds of himself, let us turn to his discussion of the purpose of his journey. In spite of Pisa's ostensible stronghold on Lucentio and his father, we soon realize that the city has had another quite opposite influence on them: it has driven them to leave Pisa. He has already mentioned that his father is constantly travelling on business (I.i.12) and indicates that he, too, follows a similar life, albeit for a different reason. He tells his servant and travelling companion Tranio that he has set out to see various parts of the world. His latest journey has taken him from Pisa to Lombardy (I.i.3-4), and now to Padua where he plans to "suck the sweets of sweet philosophy" as one who "leaves/ A shallow plash to plunge in the deep" (I.i.28, 21-24). He scoffs at the "shallow plash" of Pisa and has come to Padua looking for a richer philosophical education that his hometown presumably does not offer because it is too simplistic. Thus, in the same speech he both expresses his respect for his native city's deep influence upon his character, and then denigrates it for its inability to affect him deeply enough. This understanding reveals not only that his true ties to Pisa are tenuous, but also that he possesses an incoherent self-understanding. He is a citizen of Pisa in name only. In reality, just like his father, Lucentio is a citizen of the world.

How he sees himself affects his unbalanced opinions of education and virtue. It is in the spirit of desire for a richer existence abroad, which he believes is unavailable to him in Pisa that Lucentio arrives in Padua. He is an eager student drawn to the city's intellectual atmosphere. It is a "nursery of arts" (I.i.3) renowned for its famous university, which has attracted countless young men like Lucentio from across Europe not only

because of its scholarly reputation, but also because of its spirit of intellectual freedom – reflected by its ancient motto “Universa Universis Patavina Libertas.” Lucentio, then, introduces himself as a wide-eyed young man with a zealous fervor, bordering on the fanatic, to dedicate himself wholly to philosophy.

Yet, the purpose of his education is not strictly philosophic. It is to become virtuous. He aims to “quench the thirst” of his “great desire” to receive a moral education by dedicating himself to Aristotle’s teachings on virtue (I.i.1-24, 33). And while Shakespeare never indicates the extent to which Lucentio already knows of Aristotelian moral virtue, his understanding of it nevertheless accords with the official teaching of *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I: that virtue is directed toward happiness (I.i.18; 1095a18, 1098b30). Although this parallel might seem to indicate that Lucentio is a philosophical character, it, in fact, betrays his somewhat simple, hopeful opinions about life. In the *Ethics* almost immediately after introducing happiness as the aim of a virtuous life, Aristotle contradicts this claim and, thus, casts doubt on the possibility of attaining this end.<sup>25</sup> For one, the *Ethics* essentially openly denies that virtue corresponds to happiness. Aristotle asserts,

...even excellence proves to be imperfect as an end: for a man might possibly possess it while...undergoing the greatest suffering and misfortune. Nobody would call the life of such a man happy, except for the sake of maintaining an argument. (1095b32-1096a3)

He clearly declares that one can possess virtue and misery at once – revealing, against his earlier suggestion, that virtue and happiness are not necessarily synonymous.

Then, as if to eliminate any remaining doubt regarding happiness as a viable goal

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<sup>25</sup> The best interpretation of this is provided by Robert C. Bartlett in “Aristotle’s Introduction to the Problem of Happiness: On Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52:3 (2008): 677-687.

of virtue, Aristotle raises the issue of happiness after death (Book I, chapter 11). He, in essence, asserts that any good that reaches the dead is “too small and insignificant to make the unhappy happy” (1101b35). Whether Aristotle actually believed in an afterlife in which formerly living souls experience the same passions as the living is a worthy topic, but beyond the scope of this investigation. For our present purposes, let us merely note that a belief in an afterlife, and thus of the immortality of the soul, is one of the deepest hopes among human beings. To this end, Aristotle’s claim indicates that the virtuous are not rewarded with happiness after death for the moral goodness they possess in their lifetime. Thus, people’s devotion to virtue may very well be tied with an impossible hope for guaranteed happiness in the next life, and Aristotle wants to discover a morality that is good for us in this life.

Lucentio appears to be the type of man that Aristotle had in mind when addressing the common opinions of virtue and happiness in the first part of his *Ethics*. Lucentio links attaining happiness to fulfilling “all hopes conceived” (I.i.15). Although hope is a Christian virtue, an overwhelming reliance upon it can be.<sup>26</sup> Hope exists at the midpoint between total ignorance and complete understanding. It can serve a useful purpose as the means by which men can fill in the gaps of their incomplete knowledge – thus providing the motivation to act toward a desire. However, it proves detrimental when it leads us to act toward goals that do not accord with things as they really are. Thus, hope is an unphilosophic sentiment since it can lead astray us from reality. While Lucentio’s eagerness for philosophy makes him appear open to the whole, upon closer examination his excessively hopeful motivations for happiness betray a certain narrowness of mind.

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<sup>26</sup> See Nicomachean Ethics 1117a23



Nevertheless, at present Lucentio has pledged to take an extreme path toward a goal he links to Aristotle who is, strangely enough, the author of the moderate approach (1106b12-15). And in his immoderate means toward virtue the eager young scholar forsakes all considerations of physical pleasure. To be sure, Lucentio repeatedly couches the conversation of his studies in terms of bodily satisfaction. He declares that he desires to “breathe..a course of learning” and “with satiety seeks to quench his thirst” (l.i.8-9, 24). Yet, when the young man calls for satiety he refers only to that of his mind. He speaks of the body generically and entirely forgets his own particular body. Owing to this oversight, Tranio interrupts his master’s fulsome praise of moral virtue and gently tells him that while moral discipline is admirable,

Let’s be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray,  
Or so devote to Aristotle’s checks  
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured  
...  
No profit grows where is no pleasure ta’en.  
In brief, sir, study what you most affect. (l.i.29-40)

Tranio rejects Lucentio’s zealous, immoderate endeavor and advises his master not to focus on virtue at the expense of the erotic. Man must balance his intellectual pursuits by also making time for the physical pleasures. In brief, to Tranio learning cannot be pure drudgery. Oddly enough, in abandoning a strict Aristotelian education for one that allows for erotic pleasures Tranio actually adopts a moderate approach – making his aspirations closer to Aristotle’s explicit idea of the mean than the goals pursued by his young master.

Additionally, Tranio’s advice is notable because it testifies to his recognition of a second side of knowledge that is not wholly dependent on a precise and logical education. The philosopher is not the only source of knowledge. Ovid, or the poet, can

also supply a kind of valuable wisdom.<sup>27</sup> Tranio's statement explicitly starts off the taming play by introducing his own version of the Socratic "old quarrel between philosophy and poetry." By Tranio's account, poetry differs from philosophy in its subject matter: the poet provides a statement on erotic enjoyment, while the philosopher teaches one how to restrain his sensual desires. Or stated somewhat differently, the poet provides a constructive education of what we are allowed to do, and the philosopher administers a restrictive teaching of what we should not do. Philosophy, then, is limited since it does not provide a comprehensive account of human things. It denies man's most fundamental instincts and, thus, offers only partial knowledge. To this end, Tranio plays up the importance of poetry for Lucentio in order to show his master that philosophy and poetry should be studied side by side to provide a more complete education. He places music, poetry, mathematics, and metaphysics on equal ground (I.i.37-40). To Tranio, each serves its own valuable part in completing a man's education. With this presentation of poetry's benefit relative to that of philosophy on the basis of subject matter, Shakespeare not only calls attention to this debate as something relevant to the play, but he also leads us to question whether he ultimately agrees with Tranio's account.

In the meantime, in spite of Tranio's advice, Lucentio's choice to link intellectual gratification with the satisfaction of bodily needs, right away leads us to suspect the seriousness of his longing for philosophy. Not only are hunger and thirst never permanently satisfied in any living being, but also, as Hobbes notes, "man is famished

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<sup>27</sup> Religion is glaringly absent from Tranio's sources of knowledge, and it figures an insignificant role throughout the play. This silence suggests its insignificance to the lives of this set of characters. My best guess is that this is related to the traditional hostility between academics (Padua is a famous university city) and religion. And there is at least an implicit criticism of Christian asceticism.

even by future hunger” (1978, 40). In other words, as animals our needs are never permanently met, and as humans our wants are ever perpetual. We fulfill our present desires now, already with an eye to our next wish. We get the distinct impression that philosophy and virtue may simply be the new temporary interests he, as a globetrotting young man who is off to have a cosmopolitan adventure, is trying out before moving on to the next attraction.

Our suspicions are indeed confirmed almost at once. He takes seriously Tranio’s advice about erotics and quickly trades in philosophy for love. In the middle of Lucentio and Tranio’s conversation Baptista, his daughters, and Bianca’s two quirky Paduan suitors enter the stage and draw our attention to a discussion of their own. It is at this point that Baptista states the dilemma that sets the rest of the play into motion: that he will “not bestow [his] youngest daughter before [he has] a husband for the elder” (I.i.50-51). Katherine, in her distinct style, throws a tantrum at this declaration, and Bianca’s prospective lovers take the opportunity to make a few trenchant remarks about Kate’s acidic temper. But while we are focusing on the older sister’s outbursts and the witty insults thrown at her, Lucentio’s attention strays elsewhere. Before the silent Bianca has even established her presence Lucentio gushes that in her “silence [does he] see Maid’s mild behavior and sobriety” (I.i.70-71). We have already seen his ideas about his own character. Now his reactions toward Bianca provide the first indications of how he judges the natures of the people around him. He appears spellbound by the young woman as he completely ignores the other, more obtrusive characters. Yet at this point his fascination with her is still a mystery. Bianca is the only character onstage that has neither uttered a word nor made a move and, for this reason, is the one about whom we

know the least. Nevertheless Lucentio has already decided she is worthy of his full attention.

But Shakespeare does not leave us wholly in the dark about Bianca for long. She speaks her first lines soon after. The hitherto reticent Bianca interjects,

Sister, content you in my discontent.  
[To Baptista] Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe.  
My books and instruments shall be my company,  
On them to look and practise by myself. (I.i.80-84).

She presents herself as an unfairly mistreated sister, a meek daughter, and a bookish schoolgirl. It is with this brief self-display, a mere four lines, twenty-nine words, that Lucentio falls into a lavender haze – causing him to abandon altogether his previously ardent pledge to dedicate himself to Aristotelian virtue. Not only are his motivations questionable based on his severely limited knowledge of Bianca’s character, but also his abrupt transformation betrays his flimsy commitment to the philosophic life. He exclaims, “I burn, I pine, I perish...If I achieve not this girl,” then begs Tranio to counsel him on how to reach this end (I.i.149-152). His hasty judgment of another person is behind the sudden transformation of his educational goals, which have taken a turn from the intellectual to the practical. He no longer wishes to know of the moral virtues, but only how to woo Bianca. As we suspected he might, Lucentio has moved on to a new interest, which he pursues exclusively from this moment on. Neither philosophy nor virtue are ever mentioned again for the rest of the play. We have now come to see Lucentio as a lover equipped with an incoherent self-understanding and an incomplete comprehension of the people with whom he decides to attach himself.

“Such wind as scatters young men”: Petruccio

To round out our exploration of Padua’s wooers let us now take a look at the

city's other visitor, Petruccio. He is a particularly interesting character because his unusual notions of how to interact with those whom he supposedly loves astonish us all through the play. As Kate notes, he appears senselessly to have married her merely to starve her (IV.iii.2). That is to say, Petruccio seems driven by a thoughtless fixation with unjustly tyrannizing over others. But does this view cohere with how Shakespeare presents him as well as with how Petruccio understands himself?

Like Lucentio, Petruccio is a foreigner to Padua who says that he is travelling from Verona to seek his "fortunes farther than at home" (I.ii.48). In other words, he is similarly enthusiastic about his visit for the potential benefits offered by the city that he presumes are unavailable in his native town. Any resemblance between the characters of the two young visitors, however, ends at that. Petruccio quickly reveals that his motivations are quite different from Lucentio's. His first lines inform us that the purpose of his visit is

...To see [his] friends in Padua; but of all  
My best-belovèd and approved friend  
Hortensio... (I.ii.2-4)

Friendship, then, is the first reason he has stopped by. This feature paints a very different picture of Petruccio compared to Lucentio. Whereas Lucentio is attracted to Padua as a city, Petruccio, by contrast, is drawn to its specific citizens, and not the city itself. Our first impression of the young man from Verona is not only that he makes long-term connections with other people, but also that he is a softhearted man who values these relationships.

But Petruccio's visit to Padua is not entirely sentimental. He, above all, craves adventure. He is a smug man who boasts of having lived an action-packed life sailing

the raging seas, grappling with lions, and fighting in famous wars (I.ii.193-205). He has faced thrills that far surpass those experienced by any ordinary man. His life is the stuff of epics. Nevertheless he wants more. When Hortensio questions him about what brings him to Padua, Petruccio explains,

Such wind as scatters young men through the world  
...  
I have thrust myself in to this maze  
Happily to wive and thrive as best I may.  
Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home,  
And so am come abroad to see the world. (I.ii.47-55)

He admittedly has no real connection to his native city, or any other city. He is committed chiefly to fortune hunting. The fortunes he seeks away from home are those gained by experience. Thus, as opposed to Lucentio, Petruccio's wants to acquire knowledge associated with practical contact with the real world. He is attracted neither to the theoretical life nor to certainty. To this end, he has willingly exposed himself to considerably unpredictable active pursuits: getting married and flourishing financially. Although these two goals find their end in a life of stability, until they are achieved there is no guarantee that one will ever meet his appropriate mate nor that he will prosper monetarily. The quest for these goals, then, is not entirely in one's power. They belong to the whims of chance. For this reason, Petruccio is not as driven by a strict hunger for power as we initially believe him to be. He is excited by the thrill of the chase and, thus, also by life's variability.

He soon after reveals quite frankly that his fundamental goal is wealth, and marriage is simply a means to a large dowry (I.ii.64-65, 73-74, 79,179). In fact, he is so driven by this objective that he does not even conceal it from Kate's father. Before Baptista gives his final consent to the marriage Petruccio is sure to ask him, "What

dowry shall I have with her to wife?" (II.i.118). Thus hearing of Petruccio's aspirations, Hortensio "introduces" him to Katherine. He describes her as "shrewd and forward so beyond all measure," yet "rich, And very rich" (I.ii.86, 59). Undaunted by the prospect of spending the rest of his life married to an intolerable scold, Petruccio retorts that Hortensio "know'st not gold's effect" and that he will "board her though she chide as loud As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack" (I.ii.89-92). Petruccio's statement has the effect of expressing not only that he has more concern for money than affection for any woman, but also that he haughtily considers Katherine's temper no more frightening than thunder. Just as a child fears thunder because he does not understand what it is, so Petruccio suggests that Hortensio dreads Kate because he is unaware of what she is really made of. Katherine's chiding is nothing but harmless noise – mere child's play (cf. I.ii.205, iii.70). If Kate is troublesome because she talks, that is no worry. Money talks louder.

Hortensio finally secures Petruccio's undying attraction to Kate when he divulges an additional challenge associated with the shrew: that Bianca's suitors, Hortensio included, cannot marry the youngest daughter until Kate is wed, yet they deem it "a thing impossible...That Katherina will be wooed" (I.ii.117-119). Now the challenge is not only that she is difficult company to keep, but also that she is, before all else, unattainable. The task is even likened to Hercules' seemingly impossible labors (I.ii.253). If Petruccio is driven by epic ambition, then Katherine's pursuit is set to be the grandest adventure of all. Moreover, the men of Padua openly profess that they would be indebted to Petruccio for his triumph over Katherine (I.ii.265-266, 268-270, 278). With Hortensio's disclosure of this additional setback, he not only increases the difficulty

of the endeavor, but also attaches a tangible benefit of recompense to it – thus satisfying Petruccio’s desires for both a challenging adventure and increased fortunes. By these means, then, Kate becomes Petruccio’s ideal woman because she embodies his two express goals.

Yet if Lucentio’s love for Bianca is questionable because of its hastiness and lack of information, Petruccio’s attraction to Kate is even more dubious. He occupies his whole attention on chasing after Katherine before he has even met her. What he knows of her comes simply from secondhand accounts of her. He declares to Hortensio that he “will not sleep” until he sees her (I.ii.99). Just the thought of this new challenge has put Petruccio in a state of frenzy for which he is ready to commit his attention, at the expense of all else. This decision indicates something not only of his own character, but also of how he judges others. It highlights his impetuous character and emphasizes his preoccupation with having an adventure. Ultimately he is willing to form his opinions of others based solely on hearsay, to the extent that it corresponds to his desires. He does not choose Kate for his wife based on any qualities of excellence, but rather on the excitement he thinks she can bring him.

“O this learning, what a thing it is!”: Wooing and Wedding

By the second act of the play, both Lucentio and Petruccio share the objective of a successful marriage. Each one, in his own way, achieves a kind of success -- Lucentio wins Bianca’s heart, and Petruccio tames Kate’s fury. Yet Shakespeare leads us to question whether, ultimately, the young men’s achievements are true successes. In order to make sense of their ends, though, we must first investigate their means. While both men make use of education to pursue their goals, they take different



approaches to the task: Lucentio romances Bianca under the pretense of education (III.i); Petruccio educates Katherine under the pretense of romancing her (IV.ii.184-185, iii.12).

Once Lucentio begins his earnest pursuit of Bianca, he leaves behind all considerations of moral virtue, especially those linked to conventional order. Although Bianca is free to wed after her sister is officially promised to Petruccio, Lucentio decides not to pursue her through Baptista, as the other suitors do. Instead, he bypasses her father altogether and seeks to win her over directly. He does so by posing as a tutor so that he can infiltrate her private quarters. This scene is remarkable for at least two reasons. First, it depicts teaching as an erotic art, a popular theme rooted in classical political philosophy.<sup>28</sup> It is the profession in which two people share their most personal belonging: their minds, which display the nature of their souls. For this reason, a teacher's relationship to his pupil may be thought of as even more intimate than the merely physical connection between a husband and his wife. Lucentio, however, exploits this close bond as a ploy to inveigle Bianca for his self-serving ends. His goal is not to share his soul, but to take Bianca's body.

And second, this scene reveals Lucentio's casual willingness to eschew patriarchal duty. In bypassing Baptista's blessing the young lover both ignores his fidelity to conventional order and his duty to elders, both of which he has professed to honor (I.i.13-18). In this play Baptista's position within the community conforms to the customary view on household arrangement. He is the authority figure who is supposed to judge the merits of his daughters' suitors to pair each woman with the appropriate man. By avoiding this authority Lucentio effectively questions conventional wisdom and

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<sup>28</sup> For examples, see Socrates and Alcibiades, Abelard and Heloise, St. Preux and Julie, etc.

undercuts the traditional order of the city. While most scholars pass over this scene because it first appears simply to be an amusing incident in passing, it is actually striking for its depiction of a subversion of the city's established order.

How appropriate, then, that the "education" he gives Bianca consists exclusively of poetry – the art notorious for its subversive effects.<sup>29</sup> Lucentio uses as textbooks Ovid's *Heroides* and *Ars Amatoria*, two of the poet's three books on erotics. The young lover claims that he practices the instructions in *Ars Amatoria*, which lays out the rules of seducing a mate by intrigue. In the book Ovid essentially explains that every step in the wooing process must be as artfully embroidered as a skillfully woven garment. That is to say, love is an art like any other art. It is an inorganic operation that has no basis in nature. If one wants to marry, he cannot depend on the uncertain inclinations of chance. Success in love depends on what you can do for yourself.<sup>30</sup>

Lucentio demonstrates his craft in action when he pretends to translate a part of *Heroides*, Book I in order to disclose his identity and intentions to Bianca:

*'Hic ibat,'* as I told you before – *'Simois,'* I am Lucentio – *'hic est,'* son unto Vincentio of Pisa – *'Sigeia tellus,'* disguised thus to get you love – *'hic steterat,'* and that Lucentio that comes a-wooing – *'Priami,'* is my man Tranio – *'regia,'* bearing my port – *'celsa senis,'* that we might beguile the old pantaloon. (III.i.31-36)

It is not by chance that Shakespeare has chosen this selection for his young lovers' lesson. It depicts a letter written from Penelope to her husband Odysseus, both of whom are famous for the trickery they employ as part of their romance in Homer's *Odyssey*. While Penelope pretends to endlessly weave a piece of tapestry in order to evade remarriage, Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar when he returns from the

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<sup>29</sup> See Introduction, 3-4, 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Machiavelli's *Mandragola*, V.ii

Trojan War to catch his wife's suitors off-guard and slay them. Similarly, Lucentio discloses his identity to Bianca through covert (albeit, less violent) means. In other words, he takes a move straight out of Odysseus' playbook, and manipulates his appearances for the sake of his passions. If Petruccio is the character of the play attracted to epic adventure, then Lucentio is the one enticed by epic intrigue.

Ultimately, Lucentio's scheme proves successful, and he gets the girl. Lucentio and Bianca marry in a secret ceremony, and then confess the misdeed to her father once it is done (V.i.97-99). And although Baptista rebukes the "depth of this knavery," he quickly backs down and allows the young newlyweds to celebrate their union with a festive dinner party (V.ii.114-118). Lucentio cheats and, in the end, wins the game.

But as a good poet, Shakespeare demonstrates that life is more complicated than who gets to the finish line first. In a perfect world one could underhandedly woo a woman who agrees to outwit her father and elope, yet also trust her to be honest once she commits to the marriage vows. However, at the couple's celebration dinner Bianca lets slip a quarrelsome side that is inconsistent with her hitherto docile temperament. The women step out of the room, and the remaining men place bets on which of the women will return and be most complacent. When Lucentio asks Bianca to come, she sends a messenger with the crude excuse that she will not because she is too busy (V.ii.85-86). Eventually Kate manages to bring her back in, and Lucentio speaks out against Bianca's disobedience stating that her inability to fulfill her wifely duty makes a fool out of him (V.ii.30-132). She bluntly replies, "The more fool you for [gambling] on my duty" (133). In other words, she points her finger back at her husband for staking money in a game of chance on what he mistakenly trusted would be a certainty. She

effectively tells Lucentio that she believes her obligation to him is merely illusory, just as it was toward her father. Or stated differently, to Bianca a wife's duty is rooted in convention and is, therefore, as mutable as any other customary practice. She broadsides him with her sudden defiance, and we are left to doubt whether Lucentio has found the happiness he set out to obtain in Padua and thought he'd achieve with Bianca.

Before we move on to Petruccio and Kate's courtship we should note that although *Taming of the Shrew* is rife with disguises and deception, none of these cases in the taming plot involves cross-dressing, as is typical of several of Shakespeare's other comedies.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the conventional elements of life – such as social status, career, and patriarchal order – are all depicted as fluid, whereas the natural features of man -- such as one's sex -- remain fixed. While we witness several of the characters undergo a change, they all retain their inborn traits and modify only their personalities or the city's traditions. The strong suggestion is that this play takes for granted the native qualities in human beings. What is under investigation, then, is the inconsistency of society's customary behaviors.

With that, let us now return to Petruccio and explore the schooling he gives Katherine under the pretense of courtship. Katherine's outbursts are not arbitrary. Every flare-up is due to her inability to get something she wants, such as convincing her father to allow her to remain unmarried (I.i.61-65), keeping her sister from upstaging her (II.i.1-30), or prevailing upon her husband to let her attend their wedding reception (III.iii.73-

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<sup>31</sup> See *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, *Cymbeline*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although there is a case of cross-dressing in the Induction, that instance actually accords with my point here on the lack of cross-dressing in the taming plot (see fn. 46).

93). Kate's anger, then, arises from the discrepancy between her desires and her power – she wants more things than she has the capability to satisfy them. Yet, her fury is not simply a matter of selfish demands. It follows the Platonic conception of anger, as it is also a vehicle for her sense of justice. Every time she flares up it is because she believes she has been wronged. Yet her sense is not consistent. The clearest indication of this occurs in Katherine's different reactions to her marriage to Petruccio. When she believes that Petruccio has stood her up at the altar she cries,

I told you [Baptista], I, he was a frantic fool,  
Hiding his bitter jests in blunt behavior  
...  
Now must the world point at poor Katherine  
And say 'Lo, there is mad Petruccio's wife,  
If it would please him come and marry her.' (III.ii.9-25)

However, initially she was angry that she was going to wed Petruccio (II.i.277-281, 291), and now she is furious that it appears she will remain husbandless. Her first reaction stemmed from her belief that she should not have to observe her duty to her father. Her second backlash reflects her sense that she has been wronged because Petruccio has failed to honor his promise to her. She both denies duty and holds to it – all to the extent that it defends her inconsistent idea of what she believes she deserves. To this end, Petruccio's education works by depriving her of her bodily demands in order to equalize her desire in relation to her power and correct her sense of moral indignation. He enforces physical control on his wife as a means of operating on her mind. His ultimate purpose is not only to reveal that anger makes her dependent on others, but also to free her from this restrictive passion, which she does by the time she delivers her final

speech.<sup>32</sup>

The first step in his “wooing dance” is to weaken her will by making her physically vulnerable. On the newlyweds’ ride to Petruccio’s house in Verona, Kate’s horse stumbles into a puddle of mud, tosses her into the muck, and falls on top of her. Yet despite her pleas for help, Petruccio not only refuses to lift the horse off his wife, but he also beats his servant Grumio for trying to assist Katherine. She reacts, in her typical style, with extraordinary anger. In behaving as he does, Petruccio takes a chance to gain from his wife’s misfortune and demonstrate how much her anger causes her to need others. If she becomes angry because she cannot satisfy the wishes she demands of others, then anger indicates how dependent she is on others. Kate cannot make herself happy. Only those on whom she makes demands can content her. Therefore, while Kate believes that her choleric disposition affords her independence (I.i.61-65, II.i.31-36, III.iii.79-92), it actually binds her to the very people she seeks to break from. Kate does not yet recognize this conflict, but her behavior indicates how reliant she is. Grumio exclaims that she “prayed that never prayed before” (IV.i.67). Her

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<sup>32</sup> When I began this project I thought that Kate’s infamous final speech should be performed ironically with a sly wink, not straight-faced. However, my final interpretation is that her speech is actually serious for two main reasons. First, I could find no solid evidence within the text that her lines should be read in jest. In fact, up to the speech everything she says is frank, even to a fault. Moreover, she is the only of the main characters that has no asides or soliloquies. In other words, unlike the others, we never see her in a private moment of reflection to reveal any covert intentions. Everything we know about her is also known by the other characters. This strongly emphasizes that, in every sense, with Katherine what we see is what we get.

And second, *Taming of the Shrew* is a rare case in which we know how Shakespeare staged the play – not from his notes but from the public reactions of those who were present at the various productions he staged. Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed*, the most famous of the many responses, indicates that he saw *Taming of the Shrew* “acted by his Maiesties seruants at the Blacke Friers and the Globe,” the theaters where Shakespeare staged his plays during his lifetime (1611, title page). If we judge by his play’s angry reaction, then it is sensible to conclude that both of the performances Fletcher attended aggravated him. In other words, he likely saw Kate’s lines read seriously, to which he responded with his own play. While these reasons will certainly not end the ongoing debate about the last speech, it is my belief that they offer the strongest evidence for my interpretation that follows.

first impulse in her rage is to appeal to God. Praying to God for help is, in effect, a way to extend one's faculties. If you cannot obtain what you want yourself, then appealing to an omnipotent being allows one to make use of an external force for one's own ends. Yet as a man's capacity to fulfill his wishes increases, so too his desires also grow, keeping man permanently unhappy. At the end of this incident, it seems her prayers are answered – the horse picks itself up and runs off – yet she remains in a state of want – she complains that she must now walk home and covered in mud to boot. The (blasphemous) suggestion, then, is that despite the discrepancy between Kate's longings and her power to satisfy them, the answer to her problem is not merely to increase her faculties. She must also correct her sense of desire.

As her education continues, Petruccio also teaches her that she need not eliminate her desires altogether but simply moderate them. Once the couple arrives at Petruccio's house he launches into the second part of his taming school: he starves her of food and sleep. He fabricates an excuse to throw away their dinner, then sends her to her room where he "rails, and swears, and rates" all night so that Kate cannot sleep (IV.ii.165). His plan is to keep her in a constant needful state to force her to act on her needs (IV.ii.170-177). However, Petruccio does not starve her merely to torture her. His purpose is to replace feeding her body with feeding her soul. The following day, when Katherine is "starved for meat, giddy for lack of sleep," Petruccio enters with a simple plate of meat he has cooked himself, unlike the meat well prepared by his chefs the night before (VI.iii.9, 40). She responds by giving into her ravenous hunger and lowering her demands of Petruccio. In fact, she is even willing to thank her husband for his modest gesture (IV.iii.47). She learns to moderate her desires in exchange for the

simple satisfaction of her bodily needs and the greater satisfaction of peaceful social relations.

Her taming peaks in the striking scene where she yields to Petruccio's insistence that the sun is the moon. Initially she firmly persists in calling the sun by its correct name, but Petruccio retorts that "It shall be moon, or star, or what I list Or ere I journey to your father's house" (IV.vi.7-8). He, in effect, gives Kate an ultimatum: either you agree with a factually incorrect statement, or else you cannot return to Padua to see your family. Petruccio's insistence initially seems senseless. Does it really matter by what names she calls the sun and moon? But that is exactly the point. The demand teaches Katherine to forego trivial debates for more serious matters. In the end her desire to go home outweighs her irritation at whether Petruccio calls it "moon or sun or what [he pleases or]...call it a rush-candle" (IV.vi.13-14). Petruccio uses an extreme case to teach Kate to compromise. She finally understands that some battles are not worth fighting because they are ultimately meaningless and get her nowhere – in every sense of the phrase. She expresses this idea most clearly in her final speech to the other wives of Padua who defy their husbands. She states,

I am ashamed that women are so simple  
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,  
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,  
When they are bound to serve, love and obey  
...  
Come, come, you forward and unable worms,  
My mind hath been as big as one of yours  
My heart as great, my reason haply more,  
To bandy word for word and frown for frown (V.ii.165-176)

Her lecture coheres with the (until recently) orthodox idea of marriage.<sup>33</sup> But

Shakespeare does not choose to have Katherine observe tradition simply because it is

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<sup>33</sup> Ephesians 5:23-32.



tradition. Rather, she does so because it also happens to correspond to her best interests. Kate's speech directly addresses all of the problems with her character that Petruccio has corrected. In particular she confesses that she once was proud-minded because she thought that pure logic mattered above all else. Ironically, she logically deduces that although she can "bandy word for word" with her husband – meaning she *can* match Petruccio in both wit and reason – ultimately she does not gain from these battles. As an angry shrew she sought to detach from other people, yet remained in desperate need of them for her contentment. What she previously believed were her most powerful strengths, emerge as her greatest weaknesses. To this end, Petruchio's education purifies Kate's soul and keeps her from being hostile toward her fellow citizens so that she thinks of others and not just herself, yet also while being more self-aware.

Taking a closer look at the meaning of Katherine's name reinforces this idea of purification. With a careful reading we detect a prominent feature that has been routinely unnoticed by the critics that is linked to Kate's name. Bianca is often taken as the character with traits that directly contrast Katherine's qualities. Whereas Kate is aggressive and angry, Bianca is gentle and tranquil. Most often readers point to her name as evidence that highlights her kindly disposition. Bianca's name translates from modern Italian to "purity or whiteness." In other words, this is meant to signify that she is a wholesome woman, even if only nominally. Yet, when we examine the meaning of Katherine's name, we see, similarly, that her name translates from the ancient Greek to

“purity or whiteness” (καθαρός).<sup>34</sup> In effect their names share the same meaning. Yet they differ not only in their origin, but also in the degree to which the meaning is readily discernable. While a great number of readers are aware of the meaning of “Bianca,” only the few with knowledge of Ancient Greek will recognize the definition of “Katherine.” To this end, upon this revelation, we realize that Katherine has a deep link to a notion of purification that is readily available yet not immediately apparent to all. Petruccio’s taming also helps uncover this quality. He, in essence, purges her of her passionate anger to bring to light her pure side.

In the end, Katherine learns the value of a moderation of enjoyment that would be impossible with an excessively passionate disposition. Her final speech continues to explore this newfound contentment when she praises each spouse’s responsibilities in marriage. While the man provides the sustenance (V.ii.150-155), the woman provides the care (157-158). But in direct opposition to Bianca who linked marital obligations to conventional patriarchal order, Katherine links wifely duty to her nature as a female. She asserts that women are born with “soft, and weak, and smooth” dispositions and bodies that keep them from toiling like men (169). In other words, a woman is innately tenderhearted and physically delicate, rendering her unfit not only to battle with her husband, but also to support herself. But by Kate’s rationale, however, a woman’s bodily weaknesses are advantageous because they give rise to women’s greatest strengths: maintaining an agreeable disposition is a small price to pay to live a comfortable life “warm at home, secure and safe” (155). In a proper marriage as envisaged by Katherine, a woman behaves kindly so that she can count on her husband

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<sup>34</sup> It is related to our modern English word *catharsis*, which is also derived from the same Greek word. "catharsis, n.". OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28926?redirectedFrom=catharsis> (accessed March 6, 2011).

to take care of the burdensome tasks that will provide for her stability – a cooperative that lends itself to the pleasure of woman’s relaxation and freedom from toil. This perspective of women’s duties as something occurring from nature eventually leads Petruccio to win the bet, and he appears to have achieved an out-and-out victory.

But let us not forget the *Taming of the Shrew* is, after all, a comedy. Ultimately, there is still something humorously out of keeping about the play’s serious ending. Just as Shakespeare demonstrated with Lucentio that success is not so plainly simple, so too with Petruccio his conquest may be more complicated than it initially appears. The most obvious problem that arises is that Petruccio introduced himself at the opening of the play as a wild, cosmopolitan wayfarer. However, although Petruccio begins the play with the intention of growing his experiences by travelling across the world (I.ii.49,55), his union with Kate brings about the opposite effect. Not only does his marriage prevent him from travelling anywhere else further than Padua, but it also returns him to his hometown of Venice (IV.1). So despite setting out to “see the world,” Petruccio does not go very far. Therefore Kate effectively domesticates her husband. She serves as the means by which Petruccio becomes attached not only to her, but also to their cities – whether he wants that or not. Petruccio may provide Kate’s cultivation, but she gives him his roots.

Additionally, Kate’s taming may be problematic because it eliminates the one feature that most attracted Petruccio to her: the possibility of a challenging adventure. He makes her calm, which Petruccio even admits bodes “peace...and love and quiet life” (V.ii.112). Although these are the qualities desired by all the other characters of the *Taming of the Shrew*, they are the very things Petruccio set out to avoid at the

beginning of the play. Thus by achieving immediate success in the challenge of taming Kate, he ends up taming his own life as well. Without her spiritedness, we have to wonder how exciting their life together will be and whether she still possesses any features that Petruccio will find attractive.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCLUSION: ON THE INDUCTION

Of the play, the two plots are so well united, that they can hardly be called two without injury to the art with which they are interwoven.

– *Samuel Johnson*

We will conclude our exploration of *Taming of the Shrew* preposterously, in the most literal sense – by ending at the beginning. We have seen Katherine’s reformation from a spirited existence to a peaceful one, which too much passion would disrupt, and now we leaf back to the induction to investigate the transformation of the play’s other ill-tempered character, Christopher Sly.

The play as a whole is really two stories (or, rather, one and a half stories) that are fused together by the fanciful conceit of the induction. This lively opening section introduces us to an unnamed lord who chances upon Sly, a deadbeat drunk who he finds lying unconscious outside of a tavern. The lord promptly decides to play a prank by fooling Sly into thinking not only that he is a nobleman, but also that he suffers from an illness that causes him to confuse himself for a beggar. To this end, the servants dress Sly in fine clothing, present him with a sumptuous feast, surround him with erotic artworks, and disguise the young page Bartholomew as his wife. As the lord is organizing this piece of mischief, a troop of actors arrives unexpectedly (Ind.i.70-75), seeking a place to perform and lodge for the night. The lord cunningly exploits the situation and accommodates the players so that he may incorporate their performance into his “pastime passing excellent” (Ind.i.63). Sly awakens and, puzzled by his unfamiliar environment, begins to watch the play about Katherine’s marriage to

Petruccio.

The induction is particularly intriguing because with it we face perhaps the strangest occurrence of any Shakespearean work: none of the characters of the opening scenes outlives the play. Shakespeare takes the time to develop their story, only to have them disappear entirely before the end of the first act. This mysterious vanishing act, a device unique to this specific comedy, compels us to question not only why the induction ends abruptly, but also how it compliments the main storyline. Although the taming plot seems as though it could stand alone, Shakespeare has decided, instead, to preface it with a caricature of modern Englishmen who are chiefly tied to the extremes of their class structure. Their faults are rooted in their inability to enact a genuine change of character. With them we witness either a superficial attempt at revision or altogether unconcern with seeking improvement. The purpose of the induction, I believe, is to critique modern Christian man's lack of self-reflection, moderation, and a serious concern for the arts. Poetry, as depicted in *Taming of the Shrew* by way of the players' performance, is the greatest means by which to teach the characters about themselves. Yet it is nevertheless ineffective because the men of the induction are not attentive to serious poetry as a source for an earnest education.

#### Sly's Angry Justice

The difference in the settings of the play is the most obvious feature that invites us to draw comparisons between the induction and the taming plot. Whereas Petruccio and Kate's story takes place in Padua, Italy (I.i.2, ii.1-2, 45-46), Shakespeare sets the action of the opening section in modern Barton-on-the-Heath, England (Ind.ii.17). This fact is significant because it strongly suggests that the character depictions in the

induction are meant to bring us face to face with England's immediate state of affairs. Accordingly, Shakespeare depicts three distinct varieties of Englishmen: the beggar, the nobleman, and the performer.<sup>35</sup> Each of these character types is meant to have his fixed place in the conventional social order based not only on a class distinction, but also on a cultural one. Gentlemen are traditionally expected to have a refined taste for the arts, and the vagrants, a crude preference for vulgar things. This division most clearly occurs when Sly awakens from his nap in the middle of the players' performance and groans that "would 'twere done" (I.i.246-247). For all his lordly enhancements, the beggar's mundane tastes simply cannot be refined. And in between these extreme character types are the actors who are an unusual synthesis of the other two. While they have a strong connection to the serious arts, like the aristocrats, society relegates them to a second-rate status outside the community, like the vagrants. They belong neither wholly in the city nor wholly outside it.<sup>36</sup> Yet while these character types may be recognizably British, unless their situation is applicable to the men who live outside of their specific time and place, their significance is merely an archival one.

The clearest indication that the issues of the induction transcend cultural bounds arises when we begin to recognize that it shares more similarities with the main plot than initially appears. Its link to another location outside of its own immediate setting is crucial because it strongly suggests that, while the induction's characters likely depict Shakespeare's observations of certain types of Englishmen, their condition can be

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<sup>35</sup> While the servants also have lines in the Induction, I would argue that they are not a distinct character type because they are merely the retainers of the Lord's bidding. Thus, they are more of an extension of their master than their own person. Additionally, the beggar, nobleman, and actor are, in this play, distinctly English because the taming plot does not depict any Italian correspondents to these types of men.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. pg. 11 and Machiavelli's *Prince*, Ep. Ded.

compared to that of the men who live outside their city. In other words, their correspondence to a foreign state indicates that, with them, Shakespeare is presenting us with an ever-present human problem.

One of the most important of these matters occurs in both the opening and closing of the play as a whole. *Taming of the Shrew* is end-capped with discussions of remittance. For instance, when we first see Sly he is being threatened by a hostess who demands reimbursement for some glasses he has broken in her tavern (Ind.i.6). Similarly, at the conclusion of the play, Petruccio reminds Lucentio and Hortensio to give him his reward for winning a bet in which he wagers that Katherine can display “virtue and obedience” better than the other wives (V.ii.66-78, 120-123). Financial payments involve giving to each what is rightfully his, which corresponds to a commonly accepted basic definition of justice (*Republic* 331e3, *Leviathan*). As a result, the encapsulating scenes of monetary transactions in *Taming of the Shrew* suggest that the play is structured by a question of justice. But while it is striking that both situations clearly involve talk of monetary exchange, the substantial differences between the two circumstances are more significant.

The crucial difference between the two talks of payment that enclose the play is that, unlike Lucentio and Hortensio, Sly both refuses to accept responsibility for his errors, and he denies the hostess her restitution for the broken glassware (Ind.i.7-8; cf. V.ii.185). In doing so Sly is keeping from the hostess what is legally hers. The hostesses’ total of three lines in the play make known that she has a strong faith in the remedial power of the law. After she fails to collect the money herself, she leaves to fetch the constable, asserting that he will supply “[her] remedy” (Ind.i.9). Yet her simple



reliance on the law as a bolster for justice proves to be inadequate because, although the law determines what possessions properly belong to a man, there exists the possibility that either the law itself or one's interpretation of the law could be unjust and, thus, could paradoxically lead to injustice (331e5-332a7). Or to state it differently, laws do not necessarily operate by just means. Although the hostess is owed for the broken glasses, Sly wrongly uses the law to justify why he believes he should not pay her for them. The law, then, is an inadequate standard by which to determine justice, and a new, more stable one must replace (or supplement) it.

Sly's response to the hostess provides a clear case of the law's instability as a standard for justice. After she warns that she will fetch the constable to sort out their dispute, Sly bumptiously challenges her to call on the "Third or fourth or fifth 'borough, [he'll] answer him by law" (Ind.i.10). Now we could easily attribute this provocation to the lunacy of an incoherent drunk. And though this is a likely underlying reason for his raving, we must also recognize that Sly's anger is connected to his belief that it is *he* who has suffered the injustice. The hostess' threat to Sly consists of two parts: she warns him that she will have him put in the stocks by the authorities, and she calls him a rogue (Ind.i.2). Strangely enough, though, Sly takes offense only with the second part. He retorts:

You're a baggage. The Slys are no rogues. Look in the Chronicles<sup>37</sup> -- we came in with Richard Conqueror, therefore *paucas palabras*...Go by, St. Jeronimy! Go to thy cold bed and warm thee. (Ind.i.3-8)

Sly understands himself in terms of his legal rights of pedigree. He takes pride in his claims to a distinguished familial lineage, and, "hence, [is not] without some belief is his

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<sup>37</sup> The written histories of England, such as Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1587).

own goodness” (Caton 1972, 54). By his understanding, the present is strongly linked to the past as the distinctions of one’s relatives, no matter how distant, are passed down through the bloodline and excuse one’s current transgressions. The greatest implication of this belief is that he, in essence, recreates his own brand of punitive justice. To Sly, worth is not interpreted as something earned by a man’s own actions, but by his inheritance.<sup>38</sup> His outrage at the hostess’ threats, then, is the anger of righteous indignation, much like Katherine’s in the taming plot.

Yet Sly’s appeals to pedigree eventually reveal his foolish character and undermine his notions of justice. First, he betrays his insubstantial claim to knowledge. He possesses, at best, a crude familiarity with the contemporary theater. In his response to the hostess, he quotes (and misquotes) two different lines from Thomas Kyd’s play *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587). His injunction that the hostess limit herself to “*paucas palabras*” is a misquote of “*pocas palabras*,” which is Spanish for “few words.” And his statement to “Go by St. Jeronimy!” is yet another misquote of another popular line – “Hieronimo, beware! go by, go by!” – also from Kyd’s play. Despite his attempts to adopt a poetic fluency, his misquotations nevertheless reveal his shaky memory regarding the arts. Surely these absentminded mistakes elicit our laughter, but they also reflect a serious concern. The problem with Sly’s poor recitation is that the poet’s work becomes a tool that can be manipulated to advance arguments toward unjust ends, similar to the way in which Lucentio capitalized on Ovid’s poetry for his own purposes. And because they sound eloquent to untrained ears – i.e. the hostess’ ears – poetry can cast Sly’s illegitimate claims in a deceptively authoritative tone, thus giving them a guise of legitimacy, just as Socrates warns in *The Republic* (600a-601a, 606e).

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<sup>38</sup> cf. *Republic* 330a9-c7

Moreover, in addition to his poor recollection of theatrical lines, Sly also possesses a careless memory of history. Although he claims relation to a Richard Conqueror, if we were to search the Chronicles as Sly advises, we would be looking for quite a long time since no such person has ever existed. Most likely his historical reference is a blunder that conflates two real prominent figures: Richard the Lionheart, king of England and chief military commander during the Third Crusade, and William the Conqueror, the first Norman king of England noted for his Christian piety. Sly's reference to these historical figures by way of an imaginary one embraces a lineage that includes two of the most pious Christian figures of English history. This essentially enables the beggar to endow himself with a false moral virtue he clearly does not possess by character. Yet his errors ultimately yield the exact opposite effect of the one he presumably intends. Its inaccuracy calls attention to itself as a claim without foundation – making both one's pedigree meaningless and one's pride in such things laughable. In the end, it also means that Sly's self-righteous antagonism toward the hostess is unjustified. His peculiar sense of justice destroys itself from within, and we come to realize that his angry temperament – and his legal standard of justice -- needs correction.

#### The Lord

It is immediately after this introduction to Sly and his questionable notions of birthright that we meet the lord, whom we presume has inherited his title. His entrance is set up in such a way as to make us suspicious of his nobility. And rightfully so. Although the lord enacts Sly's much-needed transformation, unlike Petruccio to Katherine, he is not a figure of a serious enough moral character to counteract the

beggar's excessive anger. He is a foolish man who fills his time with vacuous pursuits.

The first thing that we discover about the lord is that he is obsessed with his hunting hounds. He comes onstage ordering his attendants to pamper his dogs, all of which he has named:

Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds.  
Breath Merriman – the poor cur is embossed –  
And couple Clowder with the deep-mouthed brach...  
I would not lose the dog for twenty pound. (Ind.i.12-17)

He demonstrates not only that he has an extensive knowledge of the activities of the leisure class, but also that he has plenty of free time to pursue them, since he also claims that "Tomorrow [he] intend[s] to hunt again" (Ind.i.25). But even more striking about this passage is that Shakespeare has taken the time to generate names for the dogs, yet not for the lord who, through the end of his performance, remains nameless. As we have seen in the taming plot – specifically with Katherine – the characters' names in *Taming of the Shrew* play an important role in revealing their essential identities. Their names signal to us their actual natures and take us beyond what a mere first impression suggests them to be. The lord's want of a name intimates that despite his legal title to nobility, he has a less distinct personality than every other character, including his dogs, in two senses. Most obviously, his namelessness implies that, unlike the others, the lord is a stand-in for an entire class of men. In this sense he is representative of all gentlemen, rather than any one in particular.

Moreover, his lack of identity also indicates that he is not worthy of a name. The lord's first lines are remarkable because they reveal that he is nothing like the gentleman of the ancient leisure class who had a serious high standard of morality directed toward the good of the community (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, X.9)

According to Aristotle, the many can be moved only by fear and punishment (1179b10). For this reason, the welfare of the community depends on the aristocrats' supposedly predisposed willingness to rise above their selfish interests in order to use their moral and intellectual superiority toward political ends.<sup>39</sup> But the lord, by contrast, is wholly self-serving. He possesses none of the moral seriousness of the ancient aristocrat, and, most importantly, he shows no evidence that he is concerned with his political or civic duties. Judging by the evidence of both his speech and his action in the induction, he is preoccupied strictly with hunting and playing tricks on strangers.

To this end, despite what the critics say, the prank he plays on Sly is not a sincere attempt to educate the beggar and "restore [him] or anyone like him to his rightful inheritance—to sound family life and honorable lineage" (Yaffe 2001, 2).<sup>40</sup> Rather, the whole affair is quite comical. One indication that this is so is that in the short duration of the induction, the number of years the lord and his servants claim that Sly has been sick mushrooms at an absurd rate. Initially they say that "seven years hath esteemed him" (Ind.i.118). Yet lines later it is suddenly fifteen years (Ind.ii.77), and, quickly after "the time seems thirty" (Ind.ii.110). We could certainly ascribe this change to a careless lack of coordination among the schemers. However, it is more likely a result of his cavalier attitude toward Sly and his purported illness. Moreover, although Sly is drunk when the lord comes across him, in his prank he hands the beggar even more alcoholic drinks (Ind.ii.2, 73). If the lord really is trying to enact the drunk's systematic instruction in this manner, then he has some strange notions about

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<sup>39</sup> However, to be clear, the gentleman is not Aristotle's final solution to the problems of civil society. It seems that politics, even at its best, cannot satisfy human beings, and so we require the supplement of "higher culture," especially philosophy (1252b27).

<sup>40</sup> See also Caton (1972).

education. Instead, we get the distinct feeling that the prank is frivolous pursuit done simply for a laugh and without any caring concern for benefiting the beggar.

And this notion begins to emerge even before the prank is set in motion. Just after the lord's exposition on hunting, he comes across the unconscious Sly and, without provocation, declares the beggar:

O monstrous beast! How like a swine he lies.  
Grim death, how foul and loathsome is thine image.  
Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man. (Ind.i.30-32)

Whereas his hunting dogs possess proper names and individual identities, the beggar is instead relegated to the status of a swine, which is traditionally the most contemptible and unclean of all creatures.<sup>41</sup> The obvious suggestion is that the lord clearly cares less for his fellow man than for his dogs. To this end, although the lord is supposedly a man of culture, he is rather uncivilized.

But given that we have already witnessed a bit of Sly's gross injustice, is the lord's hostility toward the unruly beggar not justified? Although Sly's behavior is offensive, the lord's hasty judgment of the passed-out drunk leads us to question whether he (and we) knows how to rightfully judge other human beings. To this end, just as with other characters in the taming play, we can turn to the meaning of Sly's first name, Christopher, to discover something of his nature that is not immediately apparent.

The principal meaning of Christopher bolsters the lord's contempt for the beggar. It also elicits a further connection between the induction and the taming plot. At this point, it will help us to recall the definition of Katherine's name. It originates from the Greek word *καθαρός*, which means "purgation or cleanliness." The word is traditionally

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<sup>41</sup> Leviticus 11:7-8, Deuteronomy 14:8

used to discuss purity not only in a physical sense, but also in a moral one.<sup>42</sup> For Katherine, this meaning spells out what she undergoes by Petruccio. He purges her of her rage so that she may enjoy the pleasures of the body and a calm marriage.

By direct contrast, the name Christopher, derived from the Greek word *Χριστόφορος*, translates to “smeared or anointed in an unguent.”<sup>43</sup> This meaning to his name is particularly striking considering the lord explicitly orders his servants to “anoint” Sly with expensive oils and waters as part of his fraudulent transformation (Ind.i.44). In the end, like Kate’s name, it could speak of both physical and moral conditions. The sense in which the beggar’s name indicates his physical uncleanness reinforces the lord’s classification of Sly as a pig. He is, after all, a derelict sleeping in the streets. Thus the implication of this meaning is that Sly is, in fact, a contemptible figure.

Nevertheless though the lord recognizes that Sly is unseemly, his prank only exacerbates the beggar’s problems. When the beggar awakens they overwhelm him with the following offers:

SECOND SERVINGMAN: Dost thou love pictures?<sup>44</sup> 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  
Even as the waving sedges play wi’th’ wind.

LORD: We’ll show thee lo as she was a maid,  
And how she was beguiled and surprised,  
As lively painted as the deed was done.

THIRD SERVINGMAN: Or Daphne roaming though a thorny wood,  
Scratching her legs that one shall swear she bleeds,  
And at that sight shall sad Apollo weep,  
So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn. (Ind.ii.47-58).

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<sup>42</sup> For the physical context see Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* X.7 in which it literally translates to “body not smeared with ointment.” For the sense of moral purity see *Republic* 496 d-e. The phrase used there is *καθαρός ἀδικίας*, which Bloom translates as “pure of injustice.”

<sup>43</sup> “Christopher, n.”. OED Online. March 2011. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/32493?redirectedFrom=christopher> (accessed March 5, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> “Probably the ‘wanton pictures’ referred to earlier (Ind.i.43)” Norton Anthology fn. 1, p 146.

Like Lucentio of the taming plot, the lord, too, picks out portions of Ovid's poetry to serve his purposes. He makes use of three stories from *Metamorphosis*. But in direct contrast to Lucentio who used (and even lightly abused) Eros as a necessary part of a genuine education, the lord's prank is entirely obscene. He neglects love for lust. The women he depicts are either being spied on while bathing, being raped by a god in disguise, or fleeing a god who is trying to rape her. Thus the lord's use of Ovid's poetry differs most obviously from Lucentio's in that it overtly pornographic. In this way, the environment he creates for Sly, compounded with the extravagant amount of food, drink, music, clothes, and the promise of sex, is a one that overly indulges his physical pleasures and contributes to the muck. Sly is faced with a sensual overload.

With this in mind, let us now turn to the moral implications of the meaning of Christopher's name. Along with referring to filth, it could also speak of a leader who is conferred divine power by God. In the ultimate sense it could refer to The Anointed One – the Messiah or, in a Christian setting, Jesus.<sup>45</sup> Since the lord speaks specifically of anointing Sly, the indication, then, is that the beggar's transformation signals that he is one of God's chosen leaders to enact a coming change for the better in the state of humanity. This notion seems particularly fitting considering that the lord refers to the present as "this waning age" (Ind.ii.61). His remark alludes to the popular belief about man's ideal beginning. According to this opinion, man started as an unspoiled being but has been degenerating into a state of moral decay since The Fall. The apparent suggestion, then, is that the world is now reaching its lowest ebb and the lord's anointing of Sly could indicate the possibility that man will be able to rise above his

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<sup>45</sup> Exodus 30:22-33, 1 Samuel 10:1-2 and John 1:41-42.



present state.

However, Shakespeare leads us to doubt this interpretation when we realize how exceedingly resistant Sly is to the changes brought upon him. At first he strongly insists that the servants “Call not [him] ‘honour’ nor ‘lordship’” because he is really a tinker and “the lying’st knave in Christendom” (Ind.ii.5, 19-22). And while he eventually accepts the lord’s assurance of his noble title (79-80, 95), Sly’s speech and behavior betray that he nevertheless remains a beggar at heart.<sup>46</sup> Not only does he continue to request cheap ale in place of the fine wine he is offered (5, 73), but he is also ignorant of the nominal terms used by lords for their wives (104-109, 136, I.i.246). Thus in the end, although he is being given the royal treatment, his alterations all prove to be merely superficial.

There are at least two major implications that follow from this. For one, it suggests that the notion of anointing one does not effect any real change. Although it claims to elevate one to holy office, any anointed man nevertheless remains a human in essence, accompanied by all his human flaws. Thus Shakespeare insinuates that the idea of a consecration is a change in name only.

The second, and related, implication expresses a conservative view of man regarding his ability to transform. Ultimately, it seems that Shakespeare agrees with Socrates’ assertion that man’s opinions are deep-rooted and “hard to eradicate and unchangeable” (378e1). But while it may seem difficult to change man, it is not

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<sup>46</sup> Sly is not the only character of the Induction hesitant to change. The one and only gender switch in the play (Bartholomew’s cross-dressing) is the one that is most forced and the least successful. Sex is the reason for his failure. In the end, Bartholomew cannot fulfill her “husband’s” request to “undress and come now to bed” (Ind.ii.113) because his transformation is superficial. His clothes have changed, but he remains a man in essence. Thus, he must strain to use additional ploys to compensate for the limitations of his male body. The most important result of this observation is that it directly opposes the assumption made by post-modernists who argue that gender differences are merely the result of arbitrary social conventions. By contrast, Bartholomew’s episode indicates that the differences between the sexes are natural, not preferential.

impossible to do so, and it seems it is easier to effect a negative change than a positive one. The stated purpose of the lord's prank is to cause the beggar to "forget himself" (Ind.i.37). And he achieves a sort of success since Sly eventually does forget himself (Ind.ii.70-74). Nevertheless the nature of the prank makes it impossible for him to forget his body. The prank's constant reminder of Sly's body serves to abstract from Sly's self-understanding. What he forgets about himself is the essential combination of qualities that form his distinctive nature – his character. The lord plays fast and loose with Sly's self-understanding. Even though Sly misunderstands himself from the start, the lord's prank worsens the situation by feeding the beggar even more false information about himself. He, then, confuses Sly and makes a farce of trying to achieve self-knowledge.

#### The Poet and the City

How, then, is our recurring discussion of the poet relevant to our overall investigation of *Taming of the Shrew*? It seems that Shakespeare's final word on this issue is not found in the statements of his characters but, rather, in the structure of his play. Ultimately, Shakespeare leaves us only with the play within the play, and we replace Sly and the lord as its only audience at the end.

The problem of the induction is that neither Sly nor the lord is sufficiently attentive to the one source with which they could directly face their problems: poetry. Man could become more completely human by being reminded of the beastly side of his nature. Shakespeare has chosen to present this issue via marriage not only because it is important politically as the foundation of the family and, in turn, the city, but also because it is a practice most dear and distinct to human beings. While all living creatures join to procreate, marriage between a man and a woman embodies an

important feature that is absent among the animals: romantic affection, as opposed to mere lustful appetite. Thus, marriage draws us to other human beings, while also distancing us from the beasts. The poet's art through the performance of the taming plot provides the potential to bring us back to a richer human existence.

Moreover, poetry also has the advantage that it travels well across two dimensions: both place and time. The players are the only characters of the induction who are outsiders. Unlike Sly who was raised in the town of his current residence (Ind.ii.17), the acting troupe is constantly "travelling some journey" (Ind.i.72, 79-80). Thus through the touring group poetry can present itself to men outside of the poet's specific city. And, moreover, because the poet's work is preserved in writing, he can also extend his teaching to an even wider audience – by reaching men outside of his own time. This notion is connected to the immortality of the soul. Not only does the poet memorialize himself, but he also becomes a part of the ongoing dialogue among philosophers about the most important human matters. It is to this end that the taming plot depicts human beings in the throes of anger, then demonstrates how and why it is valuable to domesticate such rage as well as showing us the complications of doing so.

However, despite the value of poetry, Sly and the lord deny themselves this potential by not taking seriously the presentation of these things by the poet. For one, Sly fails to make distinctions between serious plays and "a comonty, A Christmas gambol, or a tumbling trick" (Ind.ii.132-133). To him there is no difference between cheap entertainment and the highest work of art. The beggar's unrefined taste has a leveling effect on the arts. It downgrades serious poetry and casts it on equal ground with second-rate work. Additionally, Sly fails to give meaningful consideration to the

poet's art because he sleeps through entire the play. And although the servants wake him in an attempt to rouse his interest, he can muster up only an insincere enjoyment in it. He concedes that "'Tis a very excellent piece of work, madam lady." Then immediately mumbles that he wishes "Would 'twere done" (I.ii.246-247) He cannot be made to take it seriously. This response is linked to his overall attitude regarding life: "Let the world slide" (Ind.i.5, ii.137). Sly's statement echoes part of a popular saying of the time by the well-known epigrammatist John Heywood<sup>47</sup>:

Let the world slide, let the world go;  
A fig for a care, and a fig for woe!  
If I can't pay, why I can owe,  
And death makes equal the high and low. (Bartlett 1906, 9)

In essence this expresses that Sly lives his life just letting it pass him by. To him the best way of life is one in which you tune out life. Although Sly shows no indication of being a pious man, his attitude corresponds to a certain Christian perspective. He denies any serious concern for the things of this world with an eye to the things of the next world. This grim outlook calls attention to death as man's leveler. Despite any differences among men during their lives, in the end all are equal because all die, and none of their distinguishing characteristics go with them. This includes not only riches and beauty, but also knowledge. If after death you cannot bring with you what you have learned in life, then what good is any knowledge that does not contribute to your preparation for the next world. However, this is an unphilosophic perspective as it both turns man away from the quest for knowledge and makes an assertion about the world based on faith alone. The serious implication of this is that the Christian view perpetuates a world in which men's opinions are not backed by knowledge and, thus,

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<sup>47</sup> Heywood penned famous phrases still in use today such as "The more the merrier" and "All is well that ends well."

draws us away from a fuller philosophic perspective.

In addition to Sly's inattention to serious poetry, the lord also shows no real concern for poetry. The nobleman's only expressed interest in the play is in its value as something he can use as part of his prank (Ind.i.85-100). He remembers the players from a previous visit based solely on the believability of their acting so that Sly will be taken in by the rouse (Ind.i.79-83). To him, then, poetry is valued as only another extravagant ingredient in his prank on Sly. Moreover, the lord's servants, who up to this point have echoed his every opinion, tell us that they conceive of poetry as "a kind of history" (Ind.ii.135). While this opinion is more serious than Sly's perspective that the play is just a second-rate form of entertainment, it nevertheless denies poetry its full potential. Aristotle tells us that "poetry is more philosophic and of more stature than history" because the poet speaks of what should be, whereas the historian speaks only of what has been (*Poetics* 1451a37-1451b10). In other words, poetry can lead man to aim for an end above his current state by showing him the highest that is conceivable, rather than what is merely possible. However, the lord and his attendants do not see this possibility and do not recognize the extent to which the poet can provide us with a profound education.

The disappearance of the induction's characters implies that, ultimately, neither Sly nor the lord are the true objectives of the play's lesson. Rather, we are the only ones left watching the performance at the end, and the suggestion is that we replace them as the targets of its education. Thus the issue at hand is the poet's relation to *us*. Given the poet's close connection to philosophy, it is important that we revive our attachment to

him. If we are more attentive and serious to the poet, we might discover that he has something substantial to teach us.

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