

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 23 times

Date: Thu Sep 4 2003 3:12 pm**Author:** Ottenhoff, John <ottenhoff@alma.edu>**Subject:** Getting into Taming

Modify

Remove

As I mentioned in class, I'll start this discussion about *The Taming of the Shrew* but I hope you'll quickly ask your own questions and not limit our forum conversation to the questions I've posed. This is an important and delicate point: I want to be helpful in guiding the discussion, but I also want you to make this your own. As I promised, I hope to make myself scarcer in this forum as the semester proceeds.

The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's earlier works and shares a simplicity of language and construction with comedies such as *Love's Labors Lost* and *2 Gentlemen of Verona*. Just how "simple" it is, though, depends on us as we construct interpretations. One might well claim that this play more closely resembles modern television sitcoms than great "classics" of English literature--and that should raise an ongoing point of discussion for us about "popular" vs. "classic lit. Critics have pointed out how it resembles farce more than it does the complex comedies of Shakespeare's middle period. Yet *Taming* has interesting complexities and is a good starting point for this course because it raises the kinds of questions we'll encounter throughout the term. For me, the questions include the following:

1. Shakespeare uses a framing device in this play and several others. What should we make of the Christopher Sly frame? How important is it in performing the play (would you include it in your production of *Taming*?). What light does it shed on the main plot--the story of Kate and Petruchio?

And what do we do with the absence of Sly at the end of the play? Did Shakespeare forget about him? Did he originally write a Sly epilogue (as in

The Taming of a Shrew, a related play)? What difference does the loss make? (The mediocre production I saw at Stratford, England, this April had no Sly. But Stratford paired the production with the hilarious John Fletcher play *The Tamer Tamed*.)

2. The center of the play, of course, is in the interplay between Kate and Petruchio; most readers agree on that point but on very little else about these two characters. We can ask a host of questions about how to construct these characters:

- Can we construct a version in which they in fact come to love each other? (What does "love" mean?)
- Can Petruchio be seen as a sympathetic character? (One critic says "he simply offers Kate a picture of male strength that can elicit the respect without which she cannot love; ...the heart of his method is a love which begets love.")
- Does Petruchio in any sense "tame" Kate? Is he in fact brutal and fierce in trying to "break the spirit" of his wife? Or could we instead claim that Petruchio is the one to be tamed--that Kate finally wins mastery in the relationship?
- Along those same lines--and perhaps most important--how should we interpret the ending of the play? Does Kate say what Petruchio wants to hear with a wink to the audience and a clear signal that she's not serious? Or do we see a broken Kate at the play's end?
- What might Shakespeare have in mind by calling upon the literary tradition (stereotype?) of the shrew? What should we make, intertextually, of this convention? (Remember Noah's wife in the mystery plays?)
- Is this simply a brutal play that asks us to laugh at the unfunny spectacle of domestic violence?

3. All of those questions about our responses to Kate and Petruchio raise for us important issues about how to read Shakespeare. To what extent must we suppress our modern sensibilities, our tendency to value equality and democracy, as we read a 400-year-old play? To what extent must we keep our modern feminist sensibilities out of Shakespeare's world? Or can we? Can we ever avoid the perspectives of our own age as we read Shakespeare? What do you make of the fact that John Fletcher's play seems to poke fun of Petruchio as "tamer," offering a world in which women teach him a lesson?

We might also try to learn more about Shakespeare's culture. Most critics assume that Shakespeare believed in the subordination of wives--as we would expect a man in the late-16th century to believe. But does the play, perhaps, undermine that position? We can't ever know what Shakespeare *really* thought, but can we can a reasonably good idea of his culture's attitudes? And if we do, can we then make good judgments about the play?

4. Let's not forget the subplot of the play--Bianca and her many suitors. Some critics have observed that Bianca and Kate trade places at the end of the play, with the younger sister becoming the "shrew." Can this interpretation be supported? We might ask in an even broader way what purpose the subplot serves and whether, finally, the three strands of the play--Sly, K & P, and Bianca--come together in any kind of unity.

I'm sure we'll find much more to talk about, but these are some good starting points. Again, please, please ask your own questions and steer this discussion in the directions you think it should go.

(A note about films: Our library owns the very interesting 1929 version of *Taming* (starring Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks) and the 1967 Richard Burton-Elizabeth Taylor Hollywood extravaganza. Both take lively liberties with the text. We also have the BBC version of the play, starring, of all people, John Cleese as Petruchio. And, for a few laughs, check out the 1953 film version of Cole Porter's musical *Kiss Me Kate*--Hollywood does Shakespeare.)

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Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Sun Sep 7 2003 9:18 pm

Author: Ryan, Colin <05cwryan@alma.edu>

Subject: Any shrews in the audience?

Remove

Looks like I'm the first one here. Well, to't then.

Well, I've finished Shrew, and I just have a few starting thoughts. I was kinda bugged by the whole Sly thing. What the hell happened to him? I did read the intro, but it still bugged me. You can out me with all the people who dislike that aspect of the play.

As for what exactly Shakespeare intended with Shrew...well, I don't think hye was promoting domestic violence at all. Nor do I think it's fair to say that it's a sexist stance he takes. One look at the strong female characters in his other plays shows that he was a lot more egalitarian than that.

That's my \$0.02 for now.
C'Ya

-Colin AKA Token

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Sun Sep 7 2003 9:23 pm

Author: Ryan, Colin <05cwryan@alma.edu>

Subject: Latin

Remove

I'm posting this on a seprate thread so we can keep these complaints seperate from any others.

Was anybody else bugged by the enourmaous amount of Latin in the text? I can speak and read Spanish more or less fluently, and I had a lot of trouble with it. Granted, there were footnotes in our book, but as a Theatre person, I tend to think of all these plays in terms of a performance, and I get bugged when I have to stop and read some stupid footnote.

Anyone else have any thoughts on this?

-Colin AKA Token

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Sun Sep 7 2003 11:35 pm

Author: Sarver, Alainna <04arsarv@alma.edu>

Subject: Initial Thoughts

Remove

Here are my thoughts on the play.

The Inductions- I was wondering what the point of the outside story was. I can see the connections between the changing of identities in Sly and the Lords in the Bianca plot. If Shakespear intended to do it this way, why did he leave the ending of the framing story off of this version? Could the play within the play, the Kate and Petruccio story, stand on it's own? I would think that with a framing story, that is watching the other story take place in the form of a play, that there would be more comments as to what is going on and what the characters, like Sly, would think about it.

The Shrew- The interaction between Kate and Petruccio was nice. It didn't seem like he was overly harsh with her. From a modern standpoint, it would seem that he was punishing her, by refusing sleep and food, while trying to "tame" her. But I wonder what I would think coming from a standpoint of a woman of that time period. It's hard to understand what Shakespeare was trying to get at with

respect to women in this time. Was he writing social commentary or was he just including normal social habits into his story?

It also seems like he is almost poking fun at certain people in this play. I haven't really figured out who yet. Anyone have any ideas?

The Language- I didn't have as many problems understanding the language as I thought I would. This play was fairly easy to understand, as far as the plot goes. I don't know if I understood some of the puns that were, of course, aimed at a different audience, but I tried my best. Along with that, it was hard to understand some of the humor, being that it was written for an audience that existed a little over 400 years ago. I see how easy it can be to impose our 21st century lives and experiences on a play like this. I think we can to a point, but we also must look at the context from which it was written. I think looking at more of the social history of the times would help to understand this better.

Well, those are my thoughts for now.

Alainna

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 10:45 am

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Latin

Remove

There wasn't all that much Latin. Granted, the few lines that appeared did pause me a little bit, but it's not as though foreign language is anything unusual to Shakespeare. I do wonder what sort of effect the Latin (or French, or whatever else might appear) would affect an audience that didn't have a footnote of translation to read, though. Are the phrases used generally known, like many Spanish or French words today? I wonder.

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Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 10:52 am

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: Play within a play

Remove

Regarding what you were talking about in reference to Sly watching the play unfold, I have to think again about whether we should have voted to omit A Midsummer Night's Dream from the curriculum; it would have been excellent for comparison. Near the end of Midsummer, there's another Shakespearean example of a play within a play, and in that case there is much more commentary from the fictional audience. The lords and ladies make the already hilariously inept attempt of the "rude mechanicals" even funnier through their sarcastic remarks. Though without the humor, the play-within-a-play in Hamlet is also interspersed with audience commentary.

Anyone who knows what I'm talking about, or just has a theory...any ideas as to why Shrew is so different? Is it just because it was an earlier play, or what?

Reply

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Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 11:10 am

Author: Ottenhoff, John <ottenhoff@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Latin

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Who's using the Latin and in what kind of context? Is Shax using Latin to show off, or is he using it to help define characters?

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 19 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 11:12 am

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject:Why?

Remove

I can't seem to understand Shakespeare's motive behind this play. As I think Colin mentioned in his first post, many of Shakespeare's other plays are full of strong female characters. And none of them share the same fate as Kate does, even in other comedies. It seems odd to me that Kate, who is actually something of a sympathetic character at times, should be treated so poorly.

I would hardly consider myself a feminist--I want nothing but to get married and be a housewife and mother after graduation, and many modern feminists really get under my skin in that bad way. And in most literature I find it easy to accept the historical role of women without getting my nose out of joint over the lack of equality.

Yet Taming of the Shrew upsets me. I think this is because Shakespeare, even as he writes Kate as a shrew, still makes her accessible to the audience. It is easy to understand her jealousy of her younger sister; her father and every man in Padua thinks Bianca is G-d's greatest gift to mankind. If she weren't a "shrew" she might risk being forgotten altogether, as her nature will never allow her to replicate her sister's attitude completely. Then when Petrucio is so late for the wedding, she starts crying, even though she doesn't want to marry him. She's already poorly regarded in the city, and if a man she thinks is crazy stands her up on her wedding day, she doesn't even have any respect left. Finally, of course, she is deprived of everything she wants until she will bend to her new husband's will.

I don't see how anyone could see Petrucio's actions as anything BUT cruel when taking Kate's situation into account. First of all, he has no love for her, but plans to marry completely for money--though he already seems to have plenty of it. "I've come to wive it wealthily in Padua. If wealthily, than happily in Padua." In regard to his treatment of Kate, you have to really think about what she has lost. In being forced to marry Petrucio in the manner the wedding takes place, she loses a lot of respect. Then she is taken far away from her home and family, with no one she knows anywhere around. While she is already suffering these blows, Petrucio refuses her food, rest, and clothing...though not without first taunting her with them. Put in such a situation, I can potentially see myself breaking down, and the thought makes me cringe. If Petrucio really does manage to tame Kate, then she is a broken woman, part of her own soul destroyed, and that is nothing to laugh at.

However, I think the tune of the play could be changed depending on the way in which it is performed. Especially in the last few scenes, if the actress portraying Kate says her lines in such a way, it will seem as if Petrucio has won. However, if she says and acts a different way, it becomes clear that Kate has really figured out how to manipulate her new husband. Whole meanings can be changed based on the way a play is directed, and I find this especially true in Shakespeare.

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Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 1:15 pm

Author: Sova, Alice <04aesova@alma.edu>

Subject: A True Taming?

Remove

Okay, I have to admit, I am not the Shakespeare buff the rest of you seem to be, judging by your responses and comparisons to other plays, but I'll give this a shot...

The first thing that struck me was, as others have pointed out, the disappearance of Sly. The play stands well without bringing him back at the end. It's almost as if the audience forgets he was there to start with because the "play within the play" takes over. Maybe that was Shakespeare's intention. The main focus seems to be the relationship between Kate and Petruccio (look at the title). The introduction with Sly is merely a secondary, framing aspect. So, what does Shakespeare accomplish by framing the real theme? By creating this extra play within the play, Shakespeare distances his audience even farther from these characters than they would be if they were part of a play without the framing. (Which brings me to the second idea that I wanted to discuss.) Perhaps the way in which Petruccio treats Kate is too harsh, even for the time period in which the play was written. Yes, wives were more submissive to their husbands, but the man was responsible for the well being of his wife. A woman submits knowing that her husband will take her best interests into consideration. Petruccio does not marry Kate to take care of her and love her and respect her. He marries for money, period. So, the actual taming process almost seems void. Why would she submit to someone who has no interest in her besides the dowry that she comes with? Shakespeare creates a semi-unrealistic context and distances it from his audience to poke fun at a realistic situation--husbands dealing with shrews. The audience can laugh at the situation, but also see some truth behind it. So, what about Bianca and her suitors? Again, an addition for comic purposes. She was the ideal woman every man sought after, but no woman is perfect, right?!

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Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 2:05 pm

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: A True Taming?

Remove

I think Alice makes a good point in mentioning what women and marriage meant back in those days. If a man's wife "misbehaved," the husband was the one who got the guff about it. The man was supposed to be somewhat "in charge" of his wife and her mannerisms. And in that respect, although the "taming" is in no way justified, it does make some sense considering how marriage was looked at back then.

More to be added later...just commenting right now =o)

Shannon

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 23 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 2:30 pm

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: Help

Remove

First of all, I would like to start by saying that I had an eloquently stated response to Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew," that of which I managed to close out without submitting. Needless to say, I am reluctant to try again to sort out my thoughts on this play, because it was challenging enough the first time. (*On a side note, professors are professors for a reason, and the idea of typing a response in a word processing program and then transferring it to blackboard is really the way to go. I will be doing that from now on, and you, too, may really want to consider that option.)

As I have mentioned previously in class, my experience with Shakespeare is quite minimal. This being said, it will not be hard to understand my confusion and possible alternate views of what Shakespeare may be trying to portray in his writing. I am also not ashamed to admit that the help of a friend and the Hollywood version of the "Shrew," "Ten Things I Hate About You," actually did help me gain a better understanding of the main story line. Their obvious similarities, though weak at times, at least gave me somewhat of a framework to help me in my understanding.

That said, I was unclear on the significance of the Induction portion of the play, and I still am to a degree. However, I did begin to come up with a thought on what Shakespeare may have been trying to portray. His writing, in this case at least, seems very satirical, and his characters could almost be described as making fun of themselves. I sense a very big theme in this work is that of "identity." Beginning with the title, "The Taming of the Shrew," first of all, is in regards to identity or attempting to change an identity. Many of the characters throughout the play are either attempting to change something about themselves or someone else, and in the extreme case, they are portraying people that they are obviously not.

This very point brings me to a possible connection between the Induction and the inner plot. The ridiculous idea of pretending that the drunk beggar, Sly, could be a Lord sets up the stage for an interesting storyline involving different identities. Shakespeare makes him look like a fool, which might possibly lend meaning to the inner plot, where the characters also might seem foolish. My first glimpse of this idea came to me after reading the section in 4.3 on page 183 where Horenio admits that he cannot pretend to be someone he is not. I had not thought of the described identity issues until that point and I am sure that there are other connections...I just wanted to make sure I submitted this one before I lost it and my mind again.

PS...I am confused about some of the line spacing issues within the play (ie p 165, beginning at line 230)...is there a reason for starting lines at different margins?

PPS...The "Help" title I chose is not as much a cry for help as a description of what my face might look like during subsequent discussions in class...however, I am much less apprehensive now than I was when I purchased the book.
More to follow...

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

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Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 5:12 pm

Author: Druskinis, Stephanie <05sadrus@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Latin

Remove

The use of the Latin the first time didn't really bother me, but it did the next few times. I didn't really see the relevance of the Latin at the time being, but I'm thinking that more people were fluent in Latin when the play was written. I agree with Sara that it would be interesting to see/hear reactions of this play performed live, when people do not have notation that translates the Latin for us.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 24 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 5:35 pm

Author: Druskinis, Stephanie <05sadrus@alma.edu>

Subject: Still trying to figure this out...

Remove

After spending countless hours reading the play, I finally finished...and since I didn't feel like I understood it, I pulled out my roomie's copy of 'Tales From Shakespeare,' in which many of his plays are written in language that an everyday, average Joe could understand. It helped greatly, though I'm still confused by a lot of things in the play.

First off, I have to mention what a lot of other people did. Where the heck did Sly end up in the end? I certainly have no idea, and I'm pretty sure that most of the audiences viewing the play even back in the day had the same question. I didn't see Sly as a very important character, and forgot about him from time to time. I can't help but wonder if Shakespeare forgot about him, too, and didn't write him into the ending. Or, maybe ol' Sly passed out from his little drinking problem while he was watching the 'play within the play,' so we don't get to know what happened from the point the play left off.

'The Taming of the Shrew' is now only the third Shakespeare play that I've read entirely, so I am nowhere near as understanding about him and his writings as some others in the class seem to be. However, I did find quite a few things to be interesting while I read it, and I do have a lot of questions about the play.

Okay, question one that comes to mind: How the heck did Katherine suddenly go from doing the wonderful job of playing a shrew, to the little obedient wife? Maybe I missed a few things, but I read about a guy who married a woman purely for money, showed up to the wedding dressed horribly, and took his new wife home only to starve her and deprive her of sleep, let alone showing her pretty dresses and denying her the chance to own them. Now, I'm not entirely sure about the time period differences here, but I know for a fact that if some guy decided to do that to me, I'd become even MORE of a shrew and let him know exactly how much I did not appreciate him doing all of that. Judging from some of Katherine's earlier responses, she sure wasn't afraid of telling people what she thought. Why did that change? Lack of food and sleep sure wouldn't make me go from fighting everything the man said, to agreeing with him that a poor old man was a pretty, young virginal woman. Maybe it's just me having this problem discovering how exactly Petruccio 'tamed' the shrew, but I sure don't think it was very realistic.

I thought that the play got a little confusing when it started showing more of the Bianca/suitors storyline. What was the real point of this? I understood what was going on, but I do think that given the sense of humor that Shakespeare had in the rest of the play, he could have made that part a lot more interesting. All the switching places in the story just ended up confusing me. In the end, when Katherine is all obedient to her new husband and Bianca ignored hers, it showed a nice bit of irony, but I really didn't understand the point of it happening. Both girls were married, the guys were rude and made bets about their wives, and I just didn't like the ending.

So that's all I've got for now, but I'm sure I'll think of more questions before Tuesday.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 20 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 7:25 pm

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: Yay for Elizabeth Taylor

Remove

Let me tell you, reading this play is no easy task...however, I have had harder ones. After reading this play, I decided to rent the movie w/ Elizabeth Taylor, to further understand who was who and what was what. The entire Sly plot was diminished. The movie began with the suitors for Bianca running about the town chasing after her--slightly confusing, but whatever. The movie was great and added a bit of emotion where I hadn't added it in the reading.

Although Petruccio didn't treat Katherine in the most admirable of ways, I think that for that time, it was not all that rare. I also think

that Katherine wasn't really "tamed" at all...I think it's part of the game. I think she just learned what to do to get what she wants. In return for giving Petruccio what he wants, she gets what she wants. In the movie it was definitely evident that they were both content with their behavior by the end.

On the Latin points made earlier, I think it might've been a part of the language anyway. Look at today, people throw in a Spanish word or French word if they're familiar with the language just for fun. Maybe in Shakespeare's time, people did the same with Latin because it was more common of a language. Am I way off here? hehe.

Ok, I'm gonna keep it at that for now. Talk to everyone soon.

Shannon

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 18 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 7:28 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: Smart women...it's something in the water.

Remove

I feel sort of silly repeating what everyone else has said about Sly, but I do not really see the point of his existence in the first place. Actually, I think this is the only time I have actually come across him mentioned, I've seen this play does once on stage and a few movie versions like the Richard Burton/Elizabeth Taylor version and of course 10 Things I Hate About You, and it seems like everyone has cut the introduction. I can see why, it's offensive, irrelevant to the play's plot, and frankly, I found it boring.

I don't agree with the way that Petruccio treated Kate, but I do think that it was acceptable behavior for the 16th Century. In response I think Kate adopted a "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" theory when it came to Petruccio's behavior toward her. By seeming to play the dutiful wife the ill treatment of her stops and she gets back the things he denied her and then some. Actually, I am also wondering how much of her shrewish behavior is out of her own personality or just wanting attention? It seems obvious to me that Bianca is the favorite daughter, maybe this is all a ploy on Katherine's part. How many kids do you know who act out to get attention from their parents? It may not be good attention, but it is still attention.

I don't really see the big deal that Petruccio was marrying Kate for money, I think they are lucky they got some choice in who they married at all. Even this late in history it was not uncommon to have people betrothed from birth, children were no more than means of doing business in some circumstances. Perhaps acting the shrew was some backhanded attempt by Kate to get some choice in who she married, she could scare off most of the yahoos who her father might pick out—maybe a reason she even decided to go for Petruccio was his persistence. She put him through the verbal wringer and he came back for more, I don't know how many men would do that.

I think both Minola girls are smarter than we give them credit for, but to the modern reader/playgoer I think Kate is the more interesting sister. It seems like she has more of the qualities that are more sought after in modern women: intelligence, independence, and free thought. However, Bianca is no slouch either. I think she is just playing her father and all her suitors. As the banquet in 5.2 shows, maybe Bianca isn't quite as demure as she would have had us believe earlier. I think Katherine also knew this, because she seems to call Bianca out on it in the beginning of 1.2. Bianca had to be aware of what awaited her when she married, and also that she would be ruled by her husband until her husband's death. Sorry to sound the cynic but at this time marrying for love was a rare thing among the aristocracy, which is why I think Bianca chose to elope with Lucencio.

I'll probably flesh out my thoughts more later, if not I'll have more Tuesday.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 19 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 7:31 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Yay for Elizabeth Taylor

Remove

I love this version of the story. I think one of the things that makes it really good for me is the fact that Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were married when they made this movie. The intensity of their relationship certainly comes through on screen, and I just think it adds another dimnsion to the story.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 16 times

Date: Mon Sep 8 2003 7:55 pm

Author: Nieto, Marisa <04mpniet@alma.edu>

Subject: Taming of the Shrew * * * (3/5) stars

Remove

When a few people, including Dr. Ottenhoff, said that "Taming" was not the best play, I thought that the play would be long and boring and difficult to understand. I found it to be quite the contrary. I thought it was very funny and quite easy to understand. Something I was surprised about was all the sexual inuendos that Shakespeare put in this play. Did audiences seeing these plays catch on to these "word games" or was this Shakespeare's personal joke? I have read some of the other discussions and I am with everyone on, "What happened with Sly and that whole play inside a play!" I thought the idea to trick Sly was really only going to make the rich people look stupid. Here they are letting a poor man sleep, eat, and enjoy all the pleasures of a rich man. Eventually they will tell him the truth but until then he will have had the experience of a lifetime. I guess that's all for now.

MPN

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 17 times

Date: Tue Sep 9 2003 3:25 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: Elizabeth and Strong Women

Remove

This is one of the things I have been thinking about for the past day or so, I don't know if there is an official connection but it seems like Shakespeare wrote a lot of strong female characters during Elizabeth's reign. What I mean is, would these characters have appeared (if at all) if someone else were on the throne? I wish I knew the answer, but I do not know much about the theatre produced during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. (There was theatre again at this point, right?) It would be interesting to look and see how women were portrayed. Going off what I know of Henry, I am not sure how he would react to strong women characters. He might have approved since most of his wives were very strong people, and it seems like that is what caught his attention. On the other hand, in a few cases if his wives got too political or demanding they sometimes tended to lose their heads; so he might have disapproved, especially after the execution of Anne Boleyn. I suppose Edward might have liked strong women characters, he did think pretty highly of his two sisters who were educated and strong women—but he died young, if he had lived long enough to marry it would be a good indication where his views might lie.

Is it perhaps because we had Elizabeth on the throne—a woman in a man's world that Shakespeare could create these characters? Shakespeare's work came out after Elizabeth had been on the throne for almost forty years, so it was pretty obvious that she was not going anywhere, so maybe he thought he had the artistic freedom to do it. Does anyone know from other lit classes other authors portrayed women? Did the leading ladies in contemporary works have the same spirit as some of Shakespeare's ladies? I don't know if there would be a way to officially study this, to see if Elizabeth had a direct effect on how women were viewed in plays but I think it is something interesting to think about. I'll try and look into it, but I don't know how much time I'll have at the moment.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 18 times

Date: Wed Sep 10 2003 2:21 pm

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Still trying to figure this out...

Remove

I am in 100% agreement with your thought on Kate and how she just magically was "tamed" all of the sudden. Would that have ever really happened? However, then I realize that since my whole take on this story is that of the "identity crisis," this magic taming does make sense. 'Ridiculous' being the key word, Shakespeare ends his humorous tale with an ultimately ridiculous idea: that we have the ability to change others with a mere snap of the fingers. I will admit that people are capable of learning from their experiences and becoming different people because of them, however it is a process that takes much time. Anyways, that is my random spouting of thoughts...I am interested in thoughts about this...so let me know what you think.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 17 times

Date: Wed Sep 10 2003 2:27 pm

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: I second that

Remove

Hooray for Elizabeth Taylor...I too struggled with the confusion of characters and the moving in and out of plot in the written version of the play. The omittance of the Sly Induction, in the newer screen version of the play, fits in nicely with the thought I shared in class. I mentioned that the utterly laughable idea of a drunk beggar being made into a Lord must have been impossible for people of Shakespeare's times to grasp. Today, weirder things certainly have happened. Today, it is not uncommon for people to move up in the class system, where it is still thought of as such. So, possibly for our purposes, the Induction was not as necessary for the overall understanding??? Just a thought...work with me here:)

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 17 times

Date: Wed Sep 10 2003 4:41 pm

Author: Ottenhoff, John <ottenhoff@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Still trying to figure this out...

Modify

Remove

Critics have taken at least 3 different approaches to answering your question:

1. Kate is in fact tamed, broken, brainwashed through the torture tactics of Petruccio. What you see at the end is the obedience that comes through brutality.
2. What you see at the end is NOT taming but merely a canny performance. It represents Kate's adaptation to a situation that is difficult, but it's her victory through accommodation. One might even claim that she has found a means of taming P.
3. The ending is not a taming but a collaboration: both K and P are most of all actors, ready to put on a show and to have fun together. The turning point, one might argue, occurs when they meet the old man on the road and play with the sun and moon references.

Which do you like?

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 18 times

Date: Wed Sep 10 2003 7:16 pm

Author: Sarver, Alaina <04arsarv@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Still trying to figure this out...

Remove

I've been thinking a little bit about what Dr. Ottenhoff asked about how many lines Kate actually has in the play. When you think about it, she doesn't all that many. I'm wondering if maybe my conception of her is different because we see her mostly through the eyes of the men of the play. They are the ones that call her a shrew. And because she doesn't speak that much(although alot more than Bianca), we can't really see her full character. We only see her as the men of the play describe her. Just a thought.

Alaina

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 16 times

Date: Thu Sep 11 2003 9:44 am

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Still trying to figure this out...

Remove

I never thought of that either. Very cool perception to make--that we may see her through the men's eyes instead of her actual actions and words.

I also think that Petruccio and Kate came to more of an understanding of roles and language by the end of the play--a gained understanding of how the other one works.

[Reply](#)

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 24 times

Date: Thu Sep 11 2003 11:52 pm

Author: Druskinis, Stephanie <05sadrus@alma.edu>

Subject: So I think I understand it better...

[Remove](#)

Yes, so I think I understand the play better after going over it all week in class. We went over a lot of points that I never thought about on my own, such as Katherine putting on an act that she had been 'tamed'. I don't know why I didn't see it when so many other people in the class did, but when I was reading the play it simply did not enter my mind. After looking at all of the different scenes in class, I can definitely see how her words could be taken at that angle. I'm still not entirely sure what to think, but now I can at least see more than one interpretation of her character.

I was also surprised to notice exactly how many sexual innuendos there were in the play. Sure, I picked up on most of the ones we talked in class as I read, but when you actually go back after you're done and add them together...apparently dirty jokes were always in style, because Shakespeare sure used plenty of them.

I did like reading this play, a LOT more than I thought I would. I feel like I learned not only about the play itself, but also a little bit of what the time period actually was like, so I'm definitely looking forward to reading the next play. At least, I am until Monday when I have to post something else!

[Reply](#)

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 18 times

Date: Fri Sep 12 2003 9:44 am

Author: Sova, Alice <04aesova@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: So I think I understand it better...

[Remove](#)

First of all, I want to apologize to everyone for my tardiness on Thursday. I guess I just got confused about my schedule and thought class started at 1:30. Oops.

I am with Stephanie on the idea of many interpretations. At first I read the play thinking that perhaps Kate was truly tamed. But, after looking at certain lines and passages, especially in 4.6, I can see how her reactions to Petruccio can be interpreted in many ways. I personally like the idea that it was all a game that Kate and Petruccio played. Like when they encounter the older gentleman in 2.1. Kate is not truly "tamed" as much as she is simply aware of what is going on around her and even one step ahead of everyone else, perhaps even Petruccio. She learns his game, then beats him at it by exaggerating.

After having discussed this in class, I now can see the comic side to this play. There is humor everywhere, from the dirty jokes to simple situations, like Sly and Bartholomew in the Induction, to the "dupes" like Baptista. I can say, I really enjoy it more now that I can see the humor better!

[Reply](#)

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 20 times

Date: Fri Sep 12 2003 11:54 am

Author: Sarver, Alaina <04arsarv@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: So I think I understand it better...

[Remove](#)

I agree with everyone else so far. I definitely saw the play differently after we talked about it in class. I personally was not sure what to make of the Kate and Petruccio thing. I had a couple ideas which depended on how you looked at it. I think our discussion yesterday, when we were looking at the speeches closely, really helped me think of other ways of interpreting it. I really like the idea of Kate using the language to get her way while she gives Petruccio what she wants.

Reading this play also made me realize how much of a connection some of my other classes have with this one this term. I am taking a Sociology of the Family class. Just the other day we were learning about the structure of the family that existed in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution. A lot of what we were talking about with shrews, women's place, and especially Sarah's article, related to what we had just discussed in my Soc class. The family structure at this time was called a lineage structure. Because they wanted to keep wealth in the family, marriages were arranged so that the right person could look after that wealth. Women were supposed to bring honor to their family through the marriage they made. In this way, women were closely watched through limiting their social engagements and so forth. One thing that struck me about Sarah's article was that they mentioned the virtues that people(women) were supposed to have at that time. Chastity was especially important, because there was a high concern with legitimacy.

I am definitely looking forward to the next play. I think it will be quite a change!

Alainna

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 18 times

Date: Sat Sep 13 2003 11:00 am

Author: Wagner, Corinne <04clwagn@alma.edu>

Subject: Getting the hang of this...

Remove

So, the long and grueling Shrew-filled week is over, and surprisingly, it has left me, the Shakespeare novice, with a much better understanding of not only the play, itself, but also the idea of theater today and in the 16-17th centuries.

As you are all aware, my thoughts on the play and its overall ridiculous theme have been fairly consistent. (For the record, I am not snubbing drama, by calling it ridiculous, just the identity theme...so as to clear up any offences I may have caused...I have actually become a fan of this Shakespeare stuff.) However, at the same time, I have developed a much better understanding of Shakespeare and the people of his time. For years, I had been under the impression that drama was all too often, very dry and lacking humor, but after lightening up and allowing myself to find humor within the text, I see things much differently.

Another consideration I have had is in regards to the idea I brought up in class about Shakespeare and the concept of humor being "timeless." After stating this and hearing Dr. Ottenhoff's rebuttal about how we cannot truly know in what ways the people of Shakespeare's time actually saw the plays and the humor within them, it reminded me of something (in addition to my personal forgetfulness of common sociological thought) very interesting that I read in either the introduction (or the section on the Shakespearean Stage...I have searched both sections and I cannot find where I read it). What really caught my attention was the fact that other common forms of entertainment at this time included: public beheadings, public executions and public exhibitions of mentally disturbed individuals, to name a few. So this lends a whole new outlook on my thoughts of what actually is or was "ridiculous" for people of Shakespeare's time. Today, we would find such things appalling, but they used them for entertainment? I am at a loss now, because what I had assumed were standard human morals and ideas OVERTIME obviously were not and HAVE changed. So where do I go from here??? I am not entirely sure, but I do know that through this I have re-familiarized myself with some basic knowledge about history and the societies within history. We are an ever-changing world, so what I think is "ridiculous" may really have been "the way."

Ok...now that my head hurts from putting together random thoughts into my disjointed analysis, I will attempt to lend my ideas about the actual "taming" of Kate...

The "taming" of Kate, to answer Dr. Ottenhoff's question, I see as just the "playing" of a game, or an adaptation to a new way of life that she knows she is "required" to live now. It is surprising to me that even Kate, the "shrew" that she was, didn't put up a bigger fight about her arranged marriage...did any women at this time a) feel that this was an unfair concept? or b) do anything about it? You would think a character like Kate would be the first to sign up. Anyways, with this in mind, I think that it is even more likely that her games had, in some way, potential for getting back at the people who chose that life for her, whether it be her silly father or Petruccio, himself.

That's all for now....I need to save some of my thought processes for Titus.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 17 times

Date: Sat Sep 13 2003 10:40 pm

Author: White, Heather <04hlwhit@alma.edu>

Subject: Final random thoughts

Remove

I got so much out of Taming of the Shrew by discussing it than I ever did before. I still maintain that Kate and Bianca were playing their dad like a lute the whole time; of course this is only revealed at the end of the play. To me this is a "tongue in cheek" play, I mean in order for it to be considered a comedy you cannot just take things at face value. Just a random thought, I wonder how the story would have been different if Kate and Bianca's mother was in the play? I'm guessing Baptista is a widower, but would the girls have acted the same if their mother was in the picture? Some girls can walk all over their fathers, but usually they do not get so far with their mothers. Of course another question is how would their mother have acted, would she have acted like Lady Capulet, another mother who was trying to marry off her children?

I was going to try and say this in class but did not really know how to get into it. I've sort of mentioned it earlier in the post but I feel that Shakespeare's writing can be taken on two levels, reading this play has enforced that. For example you get that very serious level where you take everything on the page word for word where Kate seems to be this broken woman; on the other hand you also have the tongue in cheek level of not everything being as it seems and she is in fact the same Kate, just a slightly gentler version. I think the verbal humor in Shakespeare also has two levels, which is designed for the types of people in the audience. I'll try and explain. I cannot believe I am saying this but think of it like Looney Tunes. What I mean is on one level, the physical humor level (for the kids) you have the safe falling on Wile E. Coyote's head, but on the verbal/intellectual level (for the adults) you have Bugs Bunny joking about General MacArthur. I think Shakespeare employs similar means for his audience which could contain I suppose anyone from peasants to nobility. So I suppose he uses puns on Latin or other famous works of the day for the educated people who can pay for better seats and jokes about "dieing" or "standing" for the groundlings who were undoubtedly the peasants.

I am looking forward to reading and discussing Titus especially considering what other people have thought of it in the past.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 14 times

Date: Sun Sep 14 2003 9:20 pm

Author: Ryan, Colin <05cwryan@alma.edu>

Subject: Re: Final random thoughts

Remove

I just want to say I absolutely love it when people come to the realization that Shakespeare really is easy to get involved in. Also, when people start realizing how funny he still is, not timeless, but his humor translates into our time just as well as it did for his (just slightly differently). I think all the modern remakes we see of his plays emphasize that (even if some of them suck as films, the point is that there is a way to "modernize" the events).

Shakespeare is TOTALLY full of two-level humor, that's why he was so popular with all social classes of London in his time. And as someone mentioned about dirty jokes, well...I had a teacher in high school who discussed Much Ado About Nothing with us before we rehearsed. Let's just say it was what one would expect from Freud. Sex this, sex that. Well, that's Shakespeare for you. That was her story anyway. A lot of the out-and-out bawdy humor was for the groundlings, and the more sophisticated jokes and the irony were for the educated people. Shakespeare knew who he was writing for, he knew that people from all elements of society were his audience.

That brings me to another point that I'm going to be bringing up a lot. Shakespeare was not writing literature here. He was writing PLAYS. He was writing lines meant to be spoken, and there's a lot of ongoing speculation that perhaps the actors of the day were the true authors. This may or not be true, but it emphasizes the point that the plays were meant to be performed, not just read. Shakespeare's contemporaries did not analyze his writings, they analyzed the productions.

I'm out.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 13 times

Date: Mon Sep 15 2003 9:39 am

Author: Nieto, Marisa <04mpniet@alma.edu>

Subject: Tamed or Not

Remove

One of our big discussions was whether Kate had been tamed by Petruccio. I wonder what "Taming" meant to Shakespeare. We won't ever know so how can we say if she was tamed or not? I think she was "tamed" in the way that she realized what a bitch she had been and that her behavior was unexceptionable. Therefore, she changed her way of dealing with her feelings toward other people. I think Petruccio helped her realize this. So perhaps he did, in a way, tame her. I don't think that he tamed Kate so much that she would be a

submissive wife and do everything that Petruccio asks of her. I like the idea that they were playing a game, of sorts, and knew that one would not get truly hurt by getting involved.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 14 times

Date: Mon Sep 15 2003 11:35 am

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: And now for the next play....

Remove

My final thoughts on Shrew. One thing our discussions in class helped me with was the Prologue. I can now see why productions would choose to include Sly, and what he adds to the play itself. Though it still seems odd to me that Shakespeare forgot about him by the end, I understand why he may have been written in in the first place. Also, it's not quite as clear in my mind as it was before that Kate's fate is as miserable as I had formally thought.

Something I never got to discuss is class was how the all the deceit in the play was never really excused. In other plays, disguises and lies are often explained away as "necessary," such as in Twelfth Night. However, it seems to me that all Bianca's suitors are simply selfish liars. If Lucentio is really all that rich, he should have just courted as himself and trusted his wealth to win over Baptista. Instead he goes through a lot more lying and disguise and mess. Then of course, he has to trick a poor peddler or something into pretending to be his father by threatening him with death (another lie), and thus tricking Baptista... It's a royal mess, if you ask me, and there are too many characters in the play that seem to have this attitude. In some ways it was humorous, of course, but it also upset me.

In conclusionk, I guess I'll say that although it was very interesting to discuss, and I certainly found new ways of looking at the text, Taming of the Shrew still remains one of my least favorite Shakespearean plays.

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 15 times

Date: Mon Sep 15 2003 4:08 pm

Author: Thayer, Shannon <04sjthay@alma.edu>

Subject: final thoughts...

Remove

I really liked hearing about what everyone else thought about the play versus what I thought. I am also very glad that I watched the movie after I read the play because I got to see a lot more emotion in the characters which helped me when figuring out the plot, my feelings towards the characters, and my comments in class.

I think it interesting how we discussed needing to think about the different times. For instance, needing to remember that we are the people of these times now, not when the play was written. Did Shakespeare in fact know how great he was and that his plays would be read for hundreds of years after he wrote them??? It blows my mind how different the times are from way back then.

On that note, I enjoyed the Taming of the Shrew. I think it can most deinitely be related to modern time ideas of how women and men interact. I also think that it's ok to want to be in that mother, wife role instead of being big career woman. Being a bigtime business woman is definitely an accomplishment, but not everyone want to be in that role. It's ok to be either role.

Bring on Titus...very odd story...very odd =o)

Reply

Current Forum: Taming of the Shrew

Read 15 times

Date: Wed Sep 17 2003 1:04 pm

Author: Hemmingson, Sara <05sahemm@alma.edu>

Subject: My critical essay.....

Remove

Definitely, Shannon! I mean, all I want is to be a housewife and mother. But women should have the right to have their own career if

that's what makes them happy. It's really different looking at time periods where that wasn't much of an option.

In regards to my article, I didn't really think it was very good. Sure, the guy made a few interesting points (some of which were completely off the topic, I'll come back to those...), but he didn't give a lot of text examples or explanation. He sort of said, "Kate is shamed in the public sector through her public wedding," and then moved on reminding you of how that worked. The whole article was like that.

All the same, I think he did manage to make an interesting case about the social virtues and how women were expected to act at the time. And he sure was convinced that the public and private sectors were important!... I think he best said it at the end, where he quoted another critic in pointing out that Kate's domestication is only complete when she reemerges back in the public sphere. She goes from public to private and back again, and somewhere along the way she gets tamed.

The things I found much more interesting in the article were the little tangents the author went off on. For example, he talked about the meaning behind Kate's name. He said that a "Cate" was a term for a fancy (delicate) food, and that Kate's love of such things is very representative...it also suggests that she required a lot of work and money for Petruccio to have her! An Elizabethan audience probably would have gotten the pun. I wish there had been more discussion on the meanings of the character's names, though, especially given that Shakespeare often does put meaning behind them.

Also, the article talked about how, due to "the power of the private sector," or something like that, it was inevitable that Kate truly was tamed by the close of the play, and not simply playing along. Now, if only he had explained WHY....

If you want to know about how the private and public sectors related to each other in Elizabethan England, you might want to take a look at this article. If you're looking for a lot of meaningful info on the play itself, I'd advise looking elsewhere.

Reply

OK