"A spirit to resist": Women's Non-Traditional Casting and/as Feminist Intervention in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Emily Pickett
Queen's University

As Shakespeare director and scholar Sara Reimers puts it, the "very idea of a feminist *Shrew* is arguably an oxymoron."[1] For anyone familiar with the play, it is not difficult to understand how such an argument could be made. While Shakespeare's later comedies are often lauded for the liberating journeys undertaken by their heroines, *The Taming of the Shrew* can be read as a shockingly misogynistic mirror image. Although at first glance it is extremely troubling, it remains one of Shakespeare's most frequently performed plays.[2] Certainly, there have been modern productions that uncritically restage *Shrew's* early modern sexism for laughs, but thankfully most modern producers realize that Petruchio's beliefs and behaviors cannot fly as straightly-played comedy. As a result, modern Shakespeare practice has developed several strategies for staging feminist interpretations of the play that are more tolerable and useful to modern audiences, including both traditional and non-traditional casting approaches.

Performance theorist Elaine Aston describes "feminist" productions of canonical works as those which "act as a sphere of disturbance" in the play's meaning, usually by highlighting and upturning "representational systems (of gender, sexuality, class, race, etc.)."[3] Traditionally-cast modern productions of *Shrew*—where the male roles are played by men and the female roles by women with no changes made to the characters' original genders—often

Journal of the Wooden O. Vol 24, 76-90

ISSN: 1539-5758

seek to disturb the play's misogyny through subversive readings of Kate's ultimate submission, using the wiggle-room afforded by actor chemistry and line delivery to soften, undermine, or overtly condemn the patriarchal overtones of her final speech.[4] This is important work and is uplifting to see, but Reimers observes that it is still nearly impossible to achieve a "feel-good" *Shrew* for feminist audiences.[5] In an effort to push the limits even further, a few major producers like the Globe and the Royal Shakespeare Company have turned to casting women non-traditionally in their search for a feminist staging, which Peter Kirwan frames as a "turn[ing]" point in the play's interpretation.[6] I could not agree more that non-traditional casting offers avenues of interpretation that cannot be achieved through any other performance model, and the impact of these practices—especially within the rich and well-established field of feminist Shakespeare praxis—can be highlighted by exploring how they do not exist in a vacuum. It would be understandable to assume that bringing more women into the play—either by cross-gender casting[7] or genderbending—would upset the subversive readings introduced by traditional casts, but I argue that these approaches actually work together quite well.[8] The violence woven into the play means that a "feel-good" version of *The Taming of the Shrew* arguably remains out of reach. However, women's non-traditional casting can build on theatrical feminist disturbances to the play's meaning by simultaneously opening up a metatheatrical sphere of disturbance, where the system of gender signifiers—both in the play and in the real world—can be exposed and dismantled in the gaps between actor/character and character/gender scripts.

Reimers encapsulates the three major schools of feminist interpretation for traditionally-cast productions. First is the increasingly popular and deceptively multifaceted "redeemed by love" model.[9] At their most optimistic, these productions depict Kate and Petruchio as social outcasts who fall in love with each other's shrewishness, "mutually" teaming up to mess with others while Kate submits to Petruchio willingly out of love. Reimers spotlights Toby Frow's 2012 production at the Globe starring Samantha Spiro as Kate and Simon Paisley Day as Petruchio as an example of this approach.[10] In an interview with Farah Karim-Cooper, Spiro explains how she, Frow, and Day decided that "this was about two broken people that go on a journey'" where

Petruchio "feels the cruelty too and they both learn from it."[11] The mutuality that Spiro describes here is observable in the recorded performance For example, once Kate has finally relented and agreed that the sun is the moon, Petruchio invites her to enjoy this gaslit submission by commanding her to greet Vincentio as a young woman; Spiro discovers great joy in performing the prank.[12] From this point onwards, Spiro and Day shift towards emphasizing the compatibility between their characters, reframing Bianca's quip that they are "madly mated" (3.2.251) into a celebration of their mutual unconventionality.[13] Since her Kate discovers that Petruchio will permit her to embrace her shrewish instincts (so long as they are not directed towards him), Spiro plays the final speech sincerely and contentedly.[14] Spiro tells Karim-Cooper, "[Kate] is a woman that has newly fallen desperately in love. The size of that emotion is overwhelming for her and she would lay down her life for him."[15]

Spiro's interpretation of Kate does afford her a level of agency and self-fulfillment in submission but, as *Guardian* reviewer Michael Billington observes, "you can't get away from the big issue: that the action hinges on physical and psychological dominance" culminating in Petruchio's declaration "that a lasting marriage is based on 'awful rule and right supremacy.'"[16] It is important to remember that no matter how compatible they may be or how much they grow to love each other, Petruchio undeniably abuses Kate; his "taming method" involves isolating Kate from her family, starving her, demonstrating his capacity for violence on his servants (and in some productions), depriving her of sleep, and gaslighting her with mind games until she gives in and agrees to accept whatever he says is reality. In Frow's production, these situations are "laughed off"[17] as a clownishly[18] virulent battle of wills between Kate and Petruchio, and consequently, Billington concludes that it is a "conventionally jolly evening that never troubles to dig far below the play's disturbing surface."[19]

The cavalier tone of the 2012 production may indeed have been due to negligence on Frow's part, but it is worth noting that the abusive plot elements remain sticking points in most "redeemed by love" productions, even those that consider the implications of such behavior more seriously. The Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2024 production is an excellent example here, as it offered

a slightly different take on the "redeemed by love" model by ending with a moment of mutual submission between Kate and Petruchio.[20] When Catherine Wise's Kate—who, according to one reviewer, begins the play as "a Tasmanian Devil of hissing ferocity, attacking everyone around her"—finally reigns her destructiveness in to kneel before John DiAntonio's Petruchio, he kneels back.[21] Immediately after seeing it in the play-within-the-play, this "act of mutual respect and partnership [is] echoed by [Toby Embry's] Christopher Sly," encouraging him to make amends to the Hostess for his belligerent drunkenness, which reinforces "the theme of mutual consideration in relationships."[22] However, despite the consensus among reviewers that in this production it is "clear Kate's transformation is necessary," they are hesitant to applaud Petruchio's actions.[23] B.F. Isaacson subtly betrays this anxiety when asserting that Kate was "a creature in obvious need of rehabilitation. . .whatever Petruchio's role in the matter."[24] Keolanani Kinghorn is more forthright in warning that the production's "content may be triggering for victims of domestic abuse. After all, we are dealing with problematic and dated gender roles that have been adapted for modern audiences."[25] Whether Petruchio's abuse is motivated by a patriarchal ego or a general concern for all humankind, the question, "can violence ever be overlooked in the name of love," endures.

As Reimers explains in her overview, some productions opt to expose the play's ethos of abusive patriarchal oppression in all its ugliness rather than trying to "redeem" or justify it.[26] In *Shakespeare and Gender in Practice,* Terri Power describes Connal Morrison's 2009 production at the RSC starring Michelle Gomez as Kate, which did exactly that. Power writes: "There was no withholding on the physical, emotional and psychological abuse of the character at the hands of her husband … [T]he audience watched in horror as she lifted up her skirt, bowing over a table, and offered herself to Grumio as part of her submission."[27] Charles Spencer of *The Telegraph* states that Morrison, "pays Shakespeare the compliment of presenting the play he actually wrote," realizing "[t]here is something deeply unattractive about watching a woman being abused for three hours."[28] These productions might best be described as "genre-bending," since rather than asking audiences to

laugh off or rationalize abuse, they instead emphasize the tragedy and horror of domestic violence.

The final tactic Reimers identifies is to side-step defining the circumstances behind Kate's submission altogether by opting to play the final speech ironically, so she is never truly "tamed."[29] This can be done with a sly glance to the audience—covertly letting them know she does not mean what she says—or by having Kate openly mock Petruchio's demand for submission. Reimers describes how Charlotte Dowding—who played Kate in Reimers's own production of *Shrew* at the London Fringe in 2017—"delivered the offer to place her hand beneath her husband's foot with searing sarcasm."[30] This might seem like a particularly contemporary reaction, but Paola Dionisotti explains her ironic take on the speech in Michael Bogdanov's 1978 production at the RSC: "To Petruchio she's saying, 'Is this what you want? The man I was having [fun fighting] with in the street, does that man want me to do this?'"[31] Ironically, disturbing the speech's meaning is feminist intervention because it creates space for women's resistance within patriarchy. Moreover, since Shakespeare's words are being turned on themselves, this is arguably the most pointed disturbance of the three that Reimers identifies. Unfortunately, however, it still does not fully escape the play's oppressive structures. Kate is compelled to give this speech, no matter how she says it, and the play's final emphasis on masculine physical superiority (5.2.164-7) implies that Petruchio could make her pay a terrible price for her moment of defiance after the curtain falls.

Taking a step back to examine these various approaches together illuminates how Reimers can at once celebrate the avenues of feminist disturbance that traditional casts have found and maintain that none of them result in an entirely "feel-good" *Shrew*. The common drawback in all of them is that, barring any major overhauls to the plot, they cannot completely transcend the problem of violent patriarchy in the play. However, as a few modern productions have found, combining these theatrical strategies with women's non-traditional casting can be a powerful tool for subjecting *The Taming of the Shrew* to the metatheatrical sphere of disturbance, disengaging the plot from patriarchal systems and ideologies.

Phyllida Lloyd's 2003 *Shrew* staged at the Globe, starring Kathryn Hunter as Kate and Janet McTeer as Petruchio, featured an all-women cast. Elizabeth Klett describes it as "a highly comic, swift -moving production that burlesqued the play's misogyny."[32] Theatrically, Lloyd's adaptation drew on the same strategies traditional casts use to disturb the meaning of the play. McTeer, for example, "did not hesitate to present Petruchio as brutish as well as charming," at times using her six-foot-one height to become alarmingly physical with Hunter's "tiny" Kate— even dangling her upside-down during their initial "wooing" scene. In protest, Hunter played the final speech very ironically, turning Petruchio's demanded submission into a farce.[33] This combination of exposing abuse with an ironic final speech is perhaps the closest it comes to a "feel-good" *Shrew* within the theatrical sphere. The defiance of patriarchal power in Kate's open refusal to be tamed is heightened all the more when she successfully holds her ground against an unflinchingly threatening Petruchio. That said, while the final scene of text was staged in a way to suggest that Kate has triumphantly "tamed" Petruchio's patriarchal ego—exiting behind his back to leave him hanging and embarrassed on "Come on and kiss me, Kate" (5.2.196)[34]—this "mockery … of male dominance" does not negate the possibility that Petruchio will retaliate.[35] Indeed, Kirwan describes how the couple exited "only to reappear having a screaming row in Italian."[36] Since, as noted, Kate's mockery does not necessarily neutralize the play's assertion of masculine physical superiority, the possibility of further conflict (which we can clearly see coming to fruition in Lloyd's conclusion) means she is left in a dangerous position. However, in this case, the lingering threat of male violence was dismantled metatheatrically by McTeer's performance as Petruchio, which Klett argues "worked with the rest of the all-female cast to destabilize the meanings of Shakespeare's problematic comedy."[37]

According to Klett, McTeer "embodied the standard of manliness that governed the world of the play," making her "presence in the role of Petruchio intensely magnetic and sexy, in ways that problematized normative gender ideologies. Her physical performance denaturalized gender by simultaneously citing masculinity and femininity."[38] What Klett describes is the "gap" between McTeer's gender and her character's, which subjects the

system of gender signifiers to a sphere of disturbance. The audience can see that she is a woman, yet McTeer is able to "perform" masculinity with ease. Kirwan describes McTeer's performance in the 2003 production as a "deliberate attempt to exaggerate and heighten behaviour.[39] This self-conscious performance of gender is obvious in clips of McTeer reprising her role in 2016 (again, with an all-women cast and in collaboration with Lloyd).[40] From the moment she emerges through a trap-door, her confident gait, smooth, powerful movements, and churlish body language are simultaneously farcical and unnervingly realistic. Reimers points out that masculine swagger in a female performer undermines the patriarchal logic of the play, as its assertion that women are "soft" and "weak" (5.2.181) does not stand up to the viewer's metatheatrical experience.[41]

Moreover, in addition to dismantling the play's essentialist justification for male dominance, seeing McTeer successfully exhibit the strength and self-determination reserved for the male characters raises the intriguing possibility that Kate could do so as well. Of course, it is possible to play Kate as a powerful woman, one who is not afraid to give as good as she gets from Petruchio. But in that case one risks portraying her as perpetuating the play's violent gender hierarchies, which likewise falls short of a "feel-good" outcome. McTeer, on the other hand, is able to take on domineering masculinity during performance purely to expose and ridicule it, thus metatheatrically reassuring feminist viewers that Kate would be able to defend herself and remain untamed without making her complicit in a violent society.

The feminist potential in the "gap" between actor and character is often explored in studies of women's non-traditional casting. Rhonda Blair aligns with Klett's views, declaring cross-gender casting a feminist device when the audience experiences it through Brecht's alienation effect, which requires the audience to remain aware of the performers and performance instead of losing itself in the illusion of the play.[42] This dual awareness is the mechanism by which McTeer can demonstrate women's capacity for violence without bringing it into the world of the play. But what happens when genderbending closes this gap? For the audience, without a gap to explain discrepancies between gender scripts, some things feel unfamiliar and strange. I felt this strangeness when I watched

Justin Audibert's genderbent *Shrew* staged at the RSC in 2019, starring Joseph Arkley as Kate and Claire Price as Petruchia. This production did a complete gender swap; all the male characters became women, and all the female characters became men, but the violence and power imbalance remained unchanged. The RSC's description explains that in this "reimagined 1590, society is a matriarchy"—which is definitely a huge disturbance.[43] I went in hoping this might be the "feel-good" feminist *Shrew* no other casting approach could provide, but I was wrong.

This production does not manifest a "feel-good" reading partly because, on the theatrical level, it uncomfortably combines exposing abuse and redeemed by love models. When Kate is a man, his initial shrewishness does seem more dangerous for the other characters. In his first appearance, he threateningly crosses the stage towards Hortensia: "But if it were, doubt not [his] care should be / To comb your noddle like a three-headed stool / And paint your face and use you like a fool" (1.1.64-66), emphasising the end of the last line by jabbing at her with the chicken drumstick he is eating. Bianco, too, appears in danger of physical harm as Kate torments him while his hands are bound, threatening him with a pair of sheers.[44] Kirwan observes that Audibert's production "deliberately chose not to portray the dominant sex as physically stronger, to the extent that when Katherine made a gesture as if to be violent, many of the women stepped back in fright."[45] This is observable in the recorded production, but at the same time, the framing of the matriarchal society appears to contain this threat. While women are usually the marginalized minority in Shakespeare's plays, here they far outweigh the men both in number and societal power. Indeed, Senora Baptista demonstrates in 1.3 that she is quite capable of controlling her sons, with even Kate effectively (if "sulkily")[46] complying with her verbal corrections.[47] Kirwan goes so far as to assert that, despite his outbursts, Arkley's Kate is so reluctant "to step too far out of the gender role ascribed to him by this society … [that it] raised a serious problem for the play, in that Katherine came pre-tamed."[48] The result was one very similar to the Utah Shakespeare Festival's production where even if Kate's shrewishness was in clear need of reform, it was not threatening enough to justify the violent taming process.

Petruchia's behavior, by contrast, was presented as unflinchingly abusive. While the rest of the cast (particularly Laura Elsworthy's Trania) often over accentuated their lines, and paired them with stylistic, comedic poses (bringing in an element of clowning even stronger than Spiro and Day's in Frow's production), Petruchia's most violent moments were played with understated realism, particularly once the taming process had begun in earnest. Her skirmishes with Kate during the wooing and wedding scenes were primarily larger than life, but upon entering her house in 4.1 Petruchia's anger towards her household takes a chilling turn.[49] She quietly raged against them with no remnant of her previous joking tone, legitimately beating Grumio (Richard Clews) about the head with his own hat and abruptly raising the serving tray to strike the servant who spilled water, only being stopped by Kate's intervention.[50] While this production did not show Petruchia enacting physical violence directly against Kate, he appeared in terrible condition when seen again in 4.3 stripped to a dirty undershirt, desperate for food, and angry: "My tongue will speak the anger of my heart / Or else my heart, concealing it, will break" (4.3.83-4).[51] Arkley delivered the line with such heartbreaking authenticity that Price recalls bursting into tears the first time he spoke it to her in the rehearsal room.[52] Combined with the framing of Kate's limited threat, playing Petruchia as genuinely dangerous seemed to be setting up the perfect conditions for exposing abuse while expressing irony in the final speech (similar to Lloyd's approach in 2003). However, this is not the way that Audibert decided to go. Instead, the couple fell in love at first sight, and Petruchia turned on dimes throughout, showing Kate enough moments of gentleness that he submitted genuinely in the end.[53]

Arkley directed parts of Kate's final speech to the audience, clearly condemning patriarchy in the real world by breaking the fourth wall on lines like "I am ashamed that [men] are so simple / To offer war where they should kneel for peace" (5.2.177-8).[54] In an interview, Price describes women in the crowd cheering when he gave it, and here, we start to get into the ways in which non-traditional casting can influence feminist theatrical strategies at play.[55] When introducing her interview with Spiro, Karim-Cooper cites Holly A. Crocker's assertion that "representing submissive femininity" without "disturbing" a twenty-first-century audience

is a "near impossibility."[56] Indeed, as repulsed reactions like Reimers's demonstrate, for many viewers the "redeemed by love" model is hardly considered feminist at all, let alone a "feel-good" interpretation. In this instance, however, women in the audience cheer because genderbending has transformed what it means to be redeemed by love in the play. Rather than a woman giving up her "spirit to resist" (3.2.225) and submitting willingly to patriarchal oppression, Kate is a man renouncing male violence and resistance to women's authority.

Thus, genderbending has the potential to take submission and metathetarically transform it into the ultimate ironic reading—if overshadowed by the fact that even when the genders are swapped, the play inherently confines the redeemed by love model within an oppressive power hierarchy. Therefore, the success with which Audibert's production turns Kate's submission into an anti-oppression statement depends on how one reads its exposure of abuse.

There is obviously feminist value in condemning patriarchy, but I have to agree with Billington's assertion that while it is subversive for a man to say, "Thy wife is thy lord," the swap "never shows why physical abuse [is] any more endearing when practised by women than by men."[57] This, crucially, is the point: the RSC makes their intention clear in their description of the production on their website, explaining "we turn Shakespeare's fierce, energetic comedy of gender and materialism on its head to offer a fresh perspective on its portrayal of hierarchy and power."[58] If cross-gender casting enabled McTeer to keep women's violence out of the play, Price's Petruchia brought it right to the heart and center, making a statement on patriarchal oppression that on the surface seems decidedly counterproductive. However, it was not just the idea of women becoming the oppressors that did not sit right; it was how Price did it. Strangely, Petruchia disturbed me more than Petruchio ever has.[59] She was a truly horrifying gaslighter, demanding supremacy with an eerily calm, entitled aura. But about halfway through the recorded performance, I realized that is probably how a lot of early modern men would have done it, and this is how genderbending can function as feminist intervention in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Reflecting on genderbending, Harriet Walter muses: "If it looked or felt wrong, wouldn't we have to ask

ourselves useful questions as to why?"[60] Why did it feel eerie to see Petruchia so self-assured in her right to dominate? And why does it not seem strange when Petruchio asserts his authority, even when he is played by a woman like the "incredibly magnetic and sexy" McTeer?[61]

In Kirwan's comparison of Lloyd and Audibert's productions, he initially groups them together under the heading of "Conceptual Casting," which "may involve a change in the character's gender and pronouns…or not. . .[in either case] such casting is usually designed to be noticed, and to generate interpretive significance through cognitive dissonance."[62] Crucially, however, once he gets into his analysis of Audibert's production, Kirwan acknowledges that there is a difference between the kinds of cognitive dissonance each approach creates. By aligning the characters' gender identities with that of the performers, Audibert "eschewed the models of formal disruption that characterize Brechtian theatre. . .[therefore] unlike the Globe production. . . any effect of alienation was dependent on the audience's assumed prior knowledge of an Elizabethan history and dominant patriarchal structures against which the inverted world of the production could be assessed."[63] When Blair breaks down cross-gender casting, she asserts that actors go through an "oscillation of identity in performing the other gender."[64] The ability to oscillate between identity categories is possible with cross-gender casting because distance is maintained between the character and the performer playing the role, allowing the audience to unconsciously view them through their expected gender scripts without contradiction. When genderbending removes the safety of that barrier, we instead experience oscillation between the woman Petruchia and the "maleness" of *her* gender script. Genderbending did not provide a "feel-good" version of the play, but it did open a new gap between our culturally engrained expectations of women and the way they are presented to us when pronouns change, making the internalized ubiquity of the script itself glaringly visible. In Lloyd's production, women's non-traditional casting extends the disturbing power of theatrical strategies by tying them into the metatheatrical sphere; in Audibert's, it defamiliarizes them to let us confront the assumptions that underly the roles of the play and our response to them.

So, if women's non-traditional casting can make metatheatrical feminist interventions in *The Taming of the Shrew* through theatrical strategies pioneered by traditional casts, does that mean we have finally achieved a "feel-good" version of the play? Fellow Shakespearean Bernice Mittertrenier Neal's response to that question was to return a question of her own: "What does it even mean to 'feel better' after having seen a production of *Taming*?"[65] We may leave Lloyd's production having cheered Kate on as she mocked Petruchio *and* be reassured that she will be alright by McTeer's representation of strength, but we are still left with a violent, misogynistic world at the end of the play, one that, as Neal points out, the viewer may notice mirrors our own.[66] We do not find relief from such a world in Audibert's production. We may see a (very problematic) matriarchy onstage, but the strangeness of that experience only highlights the degree to which we remain unshocked by its patriarchal opposite. These are not lighthearted or particularly empowering realizations for feminist audience members, and that—alongside the abusive elements in the plot—suggests that no matter how it is staged, a completely "feel-good" version of *The Taming of the Shrew* may simply be impossible. That said, it is important to remember that there is a difference between a "feel-good" experience and a good one. We must understand the systems of patriarchal oppression in Shakespeare's world as well as in our own if we are to challenge either effectively. It may not be pleasant to watch, but we should feel good about the ways in which *The Taming of the Shrew* can move us toward that goal.

Notes

1. Sara Reimers, "From Theory to Action: Staging a Feminist Production of *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare* 20. 2 (2024): 260, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2023.2208104.

2. Dan Kopf, "What is Shakespeare's most popular play?" *Priceonomics*, September 22, 2016, https://priceonomics.com/what-is-shakespeares-most-popular-play/.

3. Elaine Aston, *Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 17-8. It is also worth noting that Aston emphasizes the idea that feminist theatre practice should not "be designed to 'fit' a 'theory'. … [Rather,] practice constitutes a process of endless beginnings, discoveries, unforeseens, contradictions and, inevitably, confusions. What guides us through … is our commitment to exploring different ways of representing or 'seeing' gender" (18).

4. Of course, in Shakespeare's theatre it was "traditional" to have all-male casts, but I use this label to describe modern productions where men play men and women play women because this has been the default expectation in Western theatre since actresses became a common fixture on the English stage after the Restoration (and we now tend to think of the all-male early modern model as "original practices").

5. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 262.

6. Peter Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*: Cross-Gender Casting in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Taming of the Shrew: The State of the Play*, eds. Heather C. Easterling and Jennifer Flaherty (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021), 125.

7. Where female actors play male roles, I use the original he/him pronouns.

8. Where a character's pronouns, titles, etc., are changed in the script to align their gender identity with the female actor. This practice is also known as "regendering," but I prefer "genderbending" because it better reflects both the temporary, non-exclusive effect of the production in question and the fluidity of typically-gendered traits.

9. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 262.

10. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 262.

11. Farah Karim-Cooper, "Re-creating Katherina: *The Taming of the Shrew* at Shakespeare's Globe," in *Women Making Shakespeare: Text, Reception, Performance*, eds. Gordon McMullan, Lena Cowen Orlin and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 307-8.

12. Toby Frow, director, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, featuring Samantha Spiro and Simon Paisley Day (Globe Festival, London, 2012), 2 hrs., 47 mins., 11 sec., *Drama Online* video, DOI: 10.5040/9781350997530, 02:15:30-02:19:15.

13. Quotes are taken from William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Barbara Mowat et. al. (Simon & Schuster's Folger Shakespeare edition, 2014), https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/the-taming-of-the-shrew/.

14. Frow, 02:38:20-02:42:05.

15. Karim-Cooper, "Recreating Katherina," 309-10.

16. Michael Billington, "*The Taming of the Shrew* Review – RSC's Battle of Reversed Sexes," *The Guardian* (March 19, 2019), https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/mar/19/the-taming-of-the-shrew-review-rsc-royal-shakespeare-theatre-stratford-upon-avon.

17. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 262.

18. Frow's production is "clownish" in the sense that Spiro and Day over exaggerate their anger and the violent moments in the play to the point where they can be taken less seriously in service of the "redeemed by love" model, without moving their depiction of abuse beyond the scope of realism. By contrast, other traditionally-cast productions have used clowning in a Brechtian sense to alienate the audience from the taming process. For example, in the Globe's 2024 production directed by Jude Christian, Petruchio (Andrew Leung) speaks through a marionette of himself while wooing Kate (Thalissa Teixeira), who plays the scene straight until she abruptly kicks him in the groin to cheers from the crowd. Jude Christian, director, "'If I be waspish …': Taming of the Shrew: Summer 2024:

Shakespeare's Globe," posted July 23, 2024 by Shakespeare's Globe, *YouTube*, 1 min., 36 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azryIuqKaZU&t=3s.

19. Michael Billington, "*The Taming of the Shrew* – review," *The Guardian*, July 05, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jul/05/taming-of-the-shrew-review.

20. I am aware that Rachelle's production did utilize women's non-traditional casting for a few of the minor roles, featuring Cassandra Bissel as Tranio and Chloe McLeod as Biondello. I choose to discuss it alongside the traditionally cast productions because the major roles, most importantly Kate and Petruchio, were traditionally cast.

21. B.F. Isaacson, "Comedy Untamed: Utah Shakespeare Fest's *Taming of the Shrew*," *Utah Theatre Bloggers*, June 26, 2024, https://utahtheatrebloggers.com/916185/comedy-untamed-utah-shakespeare-fests-taming-of-the-shrew.

22. Keolanani Kinghorn, "Shrewdly Hilarious: Campy Shakespeare at Its Best," *Rhetorical Review*, July 29, 2024. https://rhetoricalreview.com/2024/07/29/taming-of-the-shrew/.

23. Kinghorn, "Shrewdly Hilarious."

24. Isaacson, "Comedy Untamed."

25. Kinghorn, "Shrewdly Hilarious."

26. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 261-3.

27. Terri Power, *Shakespeare and Gender in Practice* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 12.

28. Quoted in Power, *Shakespeare and Gender in Practice*, 12.

29. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 271.

30. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 271.

31. Quoted in Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today* (London: Routledge Women's Press, 1989), 23.

32. Elizabeth Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece: Cross-Gender Shakespeare and English National identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 156.

33. Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece*, 158-60.

34. Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece*, 160.

35. Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece*, 160

36. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 134.

37. Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece*, 160.

38. Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece*, 158.

39. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 131.

40. Phyllida Lloyd, director, "The Taming of the Shrew Montage – Shakespeare in the Park 2016," posted June 09, 2016 by PublicTheatreNY, *YouTube*, 1 min., 24 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcEbVmEwSmY.

41. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 266. It is worth noting that Reimers makes this observation in relation to her own production. As part of her effort to stage a feminist *Shrew*, she purposefully cross-gender cast a woman, Rachel Smart, to play Grumio (one of the most physical characters in the play), in order to achieve a similar undermining of its ethos of male physical superiority. Reimers, "From Theory to Action," 265-6. Again, although Reimers did utilize women's non-traditional casting, I chose to discuss the ironic final speech alongside the traditionally cast productions because Kate and Petruchio were traditionally cast.

42. Rhonda Blair, "'Not … but'/'Not-Not-Me': Musings on Cross-Gender Performance," in *Upstaging Big Daddy: Directing Theatre as if Gender and Race Matter*, eds. Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 292.

43. "The Taming of the Shrew." *Royal Shakespeare Company*, 2019, https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-taming-of-the-shrew/.

44. Justin Audibert, director, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, featuring Joseph Arkley and Claire Price (Stratford-Upon-Avon: Royal Shakespeare Company, 2019), 2 hrs., 38 mins., 10 sec., *Drama Online* video, DOI: 10.5040/9781350993761, 00:05:30-00:08:30; 00:32:00-00:33:40.

45. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 137.

46. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 137.

47. Audibert, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 00:33:30-00:34:40.

48. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 137.

49. Audibert, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 00:44:10-00:49:45; 01:20:25-01:21:15.

50. Audibert, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 01:32:15-01:35:00.

51. Audibert, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 01:46:25-01:58:15

52. Claire Price, "Playing Petruchia at the RSC – an Interview with Claire Price," interview by Andrew Smith, *To Be or Not to Be: Lockdown Shakespeare*, 2020, audio transcribed and edited by Maria McNair for *Shakespeareforall.com*, https://www.shakespeareforall.com/blog/claire-price.

53. Audibert, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 00:44:00-02:33:45.

54. Audibert, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 02:30:10-02:33:45.

55. Price, "Playing Petruchia at the RSC."

56. Karim-Cooper, "Re-creating Katherina," 304.

57. Billington, "RSC's Reversed Battle of Sexes."

58. "The Taming of the Shrew," *rsc.org*.

59. This is an example of how the production, as Kirwan puts it, "deliberately court[s] the recognition of difference." Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 135.

60. Harriet Walter, *Brutus and Other Heroines: Playing Shakespeare's Roles for Women* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016), 157.

61. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 128.

62. Kirwan, "The Turn of the *Shrew*," 136.

63. Klett, *Wearing the Codpiece*, 158.

64. Blair, "'Not … but,'" 291.

65. Bernice Mittertrenier Neal, email exchange with the author, October 18, 2024.

66. Neal, email exchange, October 18, 2024.