Male Pattern Boldness: Zeffirelli's Feminist Adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*

William Brugger
Brigham Young University–Idaho

In the history of the world, feminism got off to a relatively late start. Notions of female inferiority were held from ancient Israel to ancient Greece, from the early Christian era right up to today, which some refer to as the post-Christian era. Most scholars agree that 20th-century feminism, although preceded by two hundred years of women's rights struggles, did not emerge until after World War II,[1] and date literary feminism's dawning at the late 1960s.[2]

The late 1960s also saw the release of Franco Zeffirelli's adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, a production which, despite some shortcomings, represented a landmark achievement in the filming of a Shakespeare play. Prominent film critic Leonard Maltin, for example, proclaimed, "Zeffirelli has succeeded in making a film instead of a photographed stage play."[3] Other reviewers complimented the film's elaborate costuming and authentic settings. Gareth and Barbara Evans, for example, took delight in the film's "opulent sense of Renaissance Italy."[4]

In addition to these achievements, which eventually became Zeffirellian trademarks, *Shrew* broke ground in another way: its uniquely feminist take on Shakespeare's tale. In 1967, the film's advertising tagline read: "In the war between the sexes, there always comes a time for unconditional surrender." But surrender for whom? Cleverly, by intentionally fostering such ambiguity, the film's promoters peaked audience curiosity before *Shrew's* release. More importantly, the tagline hinted at a new interpretation by encouraging viewers to suspend any preconceptions or predeterminations concerning the identities of victor and victim.

Audiences already familiar with Shakespeare's play, those adhering to—or expecting—a traditional interpretation, would have anticipated Kate's eventual, humble surrender to a proud Petruchio. But, as viewers quickly realized, Zeffirelli's version effectively

promotes the contrary: Kate's conquering a duped Petruchio. Many scenes Zeffirelli added in order to make the successful transition from play to film progressively endow Kate with sufficient marital power so that, by film's end, the roles of "tamer" and "tamed" are, if not completely and permanently reversed, at least interchangeable.

Audiences not quite ready to admit Petruchio's defeat, or those unsure about feminism's foray into the Shakespeare scene, could console themselves with a mutual taming. Such hesitancy to embrace Zeffirelli's new approach was a natural response: feminist reinterpretations, according to Renaissance researcher Philip Kolin, allow Shakespeare's women to be "rightfully seen as more complex, more central, and sometimes even subversive"[5]—thereby souring some tastes. In addition, while feminism was off to a strong socio-political start by 1967, it had not made much headway into literature, let alone Shakespeare studies. Kolin notes that feminism did not stake a claim in Shakespeare territory until nearly a decade later: "[I]t is only since the mid-1970s that feminism as both theory and praxis has focused on Shakespeare."[6] Even so, it would take nearly another decade for feminism to establish a permanent residence. In the fifteen or so years since, feminists have successfully "challenged and problematized many male-centered critical approaches to Shakespeare's plays . . . his women characters, and . . . male/female identities in the plays."[7]

From the film's first frames, Zeffirelli reveals a concern for the portrayal of women: *Shrew* opens by depicting one woman in a demeaning role, another in a stereotypical one. The former, a plump strumpet, hangs out her window. Her blond hair contrasts sharply with the Italian citizenry's darker coloring, and she sports what seem to be eight- or nine-inch heels. As a complete package, she stands apart—in all dimensions and aspects—and is the personification of artificiality. Literally, she possesses too much of what some carnal men apparently desire. Moreover, she is a hideously grotesque monster-figure (explaining Tranio's trauma and hasty retreat).

By placing her so early in the film, Zeffirelli's first female may be viewed as a kind of paradoxically repellant hostess, "welcoming" repulsed audiences (as she welcomes Tranio) into a perverse patriarchal society that apparently supports her livelihood—the same society in which Kate lives. Shakespearean scholar and film critic Russell Jackson observes that these initial scenes create a "convincingly detailed social picture of a world of sexual and social success."[8] She may even serve as a forerunner to Kate, as both

women live in isolation and are acknowledged only when they make some sort of concerted effort. Both are left to watch "real" life operate below their living quarters. In various ways and at various times, men label, purchase, use, and reject them —and force them to project an external persona inconsistent with their inner selves.

In contrast, Bianca ("white") is openly pursued by men in the daytime. She, too, stands apart, but does so by virtue of her beauty, virginity, marriageability, status, manners, wealth, and finery; in short, every quality the "slattern" lacks. What she reveals, Bianca conceals. Even so, it could be argued that Bianca does prostitute herself somewhat, as she giggles and spins through Padua's streets. It may not be coincidental that Zeffirelli places her at the center of town, at the marketplace, where goods are displayed and transactions made. Bianca has no business to conduct there, except to display herself as an eligible bachelorette. Strange men like what they see, and begin to serenade her—a form of solicitation—as another pursuer, behind Bianca, playfully lifts her veil without her consent—a clear affront to her modesty, as evidenced by her gasp. It is at this precise moment of "exposure" that Lucentio sees her and is love-struck.

Sadly, Kate is not so fortunate. In contrast to Bianca's romp, audiences first find Kate shut in an upper-level room, by her own will, observing her younger sister's return with suitors in tow. This scene is extremely telling: Kate is inside looking out, a damsel in a different kind of distress. Closed shutters allow no one to see in, allowing Kate to control perception. These shutters, arguably, have psychologically symbolic value, effectively representing Kate's emotional defenses. Within minutes of Bianca's return, Kate violently reminds Bianca—along with her entourage and Baptista's entire household—of everyone's constant discrimination and favoritism.

On the morning of Kate's "bad heir day," Petruchio arrives to claim her. Tellingly, Kate is the commanding presence as the two meet. As Petruchio witnesses the siblings' catfight, Zeffirelli portrays Petruchio as startled by Kate's viciousness. Wisely, Petruchio chooses to initially remain concealed, sizing up his opponent while assessing his own readiness and determination, before withdrawing for additional preparation. Tellingly, as Petruchio attempts to catch Kate off-guard, she does not even flinch; instead, she treats him in the same manner he treated Hortensio's servants earlier: with utter contempt for having intruded, sans snarl. Within seconds, she deceptively outwits him by pointing beyond him, pretending to address her father. When

Petruchio's back is turned, she makes a quick exit, giggling delightedly once safely out of reach—exhibiting the same kind of giddiness Bianca did as she was "escaping" men earlier. Kate finds as much pleasure in evading men as Bianca does attracting them.

In effect, Kate bests Petruchio first psychologically, then physically. By sheer luck, he happens to see her scurrying to another section of the estate. Once spotted, she attempts numerous evasive maneuvers as he approaches (placing heavy grain sacks over a trap door, pulling up a rope ladder, throwing barrels down a staircase, breaking a handrail, even physically throwing him off of her). Such duping and ducking will continue, right up to the film's end, with a puzzled Petruchio often lagging behind. Zeffirelli's Kate is a quick thinker—and a real action figure. The only way Petruchio has of controlling Kate, therefore, is to somehow physically overpower her: by wearing her out, twisting her arm, locking her up, or carrying her over his shoulder. In fairness, and true to Shakespeare's play, Kate is never in any serious physical danger while in Petruchio's company, a man whose bark is worse than his bite. As one reviewer observed, "Zeffirelli's *Shrew* avoided the direct violence usually included in 2.1 by turning the scene into a series of chases. There is in [Jack] Jorgens' words, 'harmless violence and festive destruction.' "[9] Petruchio's tendency to problem-solve physically becomes discernable to Kate quickly. Her learning to anticipate and evaluate his "hostility" is half her battle; the other half is learning how to subtly diffuse it and get on with the business of satisfying her own needs and wants.

Until she learns this, she still physically defends herself as best she can: running and climbing until exhausted, pounding on locked doors and tugging on their handles, struggling to release herself from his grip—and even striking him. During many of these battles, Zeffirelli's Petruchio is winded, sweaty, and sore, yet masks such effects when in Kate's presence. Were he not physically larger and stronger, Zeffirelli seems to suggest, Kate would have sent Petruchio packing shortly after his arrival. Certainly she has already rendered other men impotent, an observation Gremio makes early in the play ("she's too rough for me" [I.i.55]). Such men include her own father, whose authority Kate mocks every chance she gets.

At Petruchio's departure, Zeffirelli has him lock Kate in an upper room. Viewers may wonder why Zeffirelli has her sequestered; after all, Petruchio has already subdued her, he does not need her consent to marry, and he is actually leaving. On one level, Petruchio effectively puts Kate in storage, like a toy he has

finished playing with and will pull out when he returns. (Significantly, it is the very room from which Kate emerges on her wedding day less than a week later). On another level, Kate's "incarceration" symbolizes other forms of her imprisonment: societal, legal, patriarchal, even emotional. Even though Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar would not publish literary images of the "madwoman in the attic" until 1979, Zeffirelli's scene constitutes another contribution to the now-famous motif. At the very least, viewers are given a better view of Kate's terrible situation, sensing her helplessness, alienation, and frustration as they recall, perhaps, what it was like, as children, to be locked in a room as punishment.

A credit to trapped women everywhere, Zeffirelli's Kate refuses to do nothing. Sliding a table toward the door, she climbs on top of it and peers out a small window, watching Petruchio descend the staircase, hearing him confirm arrangements for the couple's wedding. Outraged yet still confined, Kate then does the only thing she can: she thinks. More accurately, she schemes. Zeffirelli's sensitive camera then captures Kate doing something she will do several times throughout the film: smiling, somewhat wickedly, somewhat hopefully, yet clearly indicating that she has discovered a way to get revenge on her aggressor. Though she actually says nothing, her smile hints at a method to her madness.

This scene, though brief, is a critical juncture in Zeffirelli's (modified) plot structure: Kate must determine how to confront a very serious challenge. Her decision seems an inversion, not surprisingly, of a Renaissance proverb: "Men act and women talk."[10] Intentionally or not, Shakespeare plays with this notion in *Shrew* as, generally speaking, Petruchio talks and Kate acts. Specifically, while he merrily explains his intentions in audience asides at regular intervals, she schemes silently. This dramatic detail Zeffirelli apparently discerned from the play and effectively employs in the film, so that Kate's every physical setback—from being locked in the room to being literally carted off on her "honeymoon"—is immediately followed by a psychological comeback, evidenced by only a devious smile prior to its realization. This pattern is one of Zeffirelli's ingenious contributions to the play, as he chronicles Kate's progression from overt physical assaults to covert psychological subterfuge. Zeffirelli's message: this woman cannot—will not—be beaten. While no man in the play is a match for Petruchio, a woman, paradoxically, is.

In Shakespeare's *Shrew,* Petruchio has the power; in Zeffirelli's *Shrew,* much of that power is transferred to Kate. The film, then, may be viewed as feminist not only because the female is

empowered, but also because the male has been stripped of much of his. To be sure, Zeffirelli's Petruchio, Richard Burton, is manly, perhaps even a man's man: strong features, broad shoulders, hairy chest, full beard, commanding presence, hearty laugh, coarse manner. While he may be, in the words of one viewer, "a self-confident, swaggering lout,"[11] there is absolutely nothing effeminate about him. Other males are subservient to him to varying degrees. Early in the film, for example, as Petruchio awakens with a hangover, two of Hortensio's servants enter his chamber. As one pours fresh water into a washbasin, another sprinkles in rose petals. Annoyed either by their intrusion or their eagerness to please, Petruchio snarls, sending the servants scrambling for the door. Of course, servants are ordinarily submissive, but Petruchio's displeasure is clearly exaggerated. Incidentally, animals respond similarly: moments later, as Petruchio makes his way toward Baptista's residence, a stray dog takes one look at him, yelps, and scurries away—a testament to Petruchio's supreme beastliness. Later in the play, Baptista does not verify Petruchio's dowry as he does with Gremio and Hortensio; instead he takes him at his word, whose claims are vague. The extent of Petruchio's estate is summed up only as "all my lands" (II.i.125)—repeated twice in the film.

If Zeffirelli had an agenda in his characterization of Petruchio, it may have been to exaggerate his stereotypical manliness to the point of ridicule, as he did with the tart from the start. Without question, Zeffirelli's Petruchio is a well-drawn likeness of Shakespeare's comic figure: audiences laugh *with* him as he merrily goes about taming Kate. But a generous portion of the film's collective humor is also aimed at Petruchio's expense; audiences laugh *at* him—at his grossness, his impropriety, his insobriety, even his naiveté—either in mockery or out of vicarious embarrassment. One reviewer observed that Burton's character "appears so alcohol-soaked his timing is all off."[12]

But perhaps it is Burton's unique characterization which allowed Zeffirelli to go where Shakespeare himself feared to tread: Kate and Petruchio's wedding. Filming the couple's ceremony was risky: every reader of the play envisions the event differently and such a substantial insertion would, therefore, be ripe for scrutiny and subsequent criticism. Viewed optimistically, however, what better opportunity to portray this particular Petruchio in all his "glory," while simultaneously pushing certain buttons Kate never knew she had?

Prior to the wedding scene, audiences saw Kate forced upstairs, locked up, and abandoned. A few days later—her wedding day—

she remains inside the same room, but is unresponsive as another man—her father—now begs her to come out. In her own time, and by her own will, she soon emerges, takes her father's arm and begins a grand descent down a staircase. This same staircase, which she voluntarily descends by her father's supporting arm, Kate involuntarily ascended by Petruchio's forceful arm. Weary, haggard, and humiliated then, she appears radiant and dignified now, eager to claim the day as her own. Interestingly, no other women attend her, suggesting that an independent, self-sufficient Kate readied herself alone. Harking back to the film's beginning, Kate is still apparently wary about letting anyone get too close, especially at this time of great vulnerability.

Approaching onlookers—a crowd she has always associated with hostility—Kate is unable to anticipate how they will receive her. She is momentarily apprehensive, glancing repeatedly at her father for emotional support (he never looks at her, but focuses on those waiting below). To Kate's surprise, she is applauded; more importantly, she is accepted—and seemingly forgiven for being such a shrew. Zeffirelli captures beautifully this pivotal moment when Kate's heart softens, as evidenced by the genuine smile she cannot wipe from her face. For the first time, she likes people, and even gives Bianca a tender, sisterly kiss (representing both an apology and a request for forgiveness), before turning her attention to a bounteous banquet prepared in her honor. Her wedding, so far, is picture-perfect; the day promises to be a bright start to a new life. For the moment, Kate is Everywoman.

This moment lasts nearly three hours, near the end of which men in attendance, noticing a stray dog approaching the church, cruelly equate it with Petruchio's arrival, adding insult to Kate's injury. Instantly, Kate's mood changes from relative patience to resentment then rage. Question: if the crowd insinuates that the groom is a dog, by analogy, what does that make the bride?

A single stray comment reminds everyone of Kate's former persona—the persona she wants to shed which has now been reapplied. Zeffirelli is again commenting on the damage done by labels, underscoring the truism that people become what others perceive them to be. The circularity of Kate's situation is dizzying: 1) originally branded a "shrew," 2) she makes a genuine attempt to lose the label, 3) and makes significant and rapid progress, 4) only to be publicly reminded of the label without warrant, 5) provoking her to respond accordingly, 6) and behaving in a manner consistent with the label, 7) causing the label to be reapplied. Also significant is the fact that the joke and the subsequent laughter means the

crowd has officially given up hope, and therefore the support which Kate so desperately wants and needs.

Shortly thereafter, Petruchio arrives. Not only is he extremely late, he is extremely dressed, the antithesis of the knight in shining armor. Mocking knightly attributes of chivalry and fidelity, he flirts with rooftop women by blowing them kisses as he approaches the church—further fueling his fiancée's fire. The bride's elegance and glamour is matched only by the groom's impropriety and indecorum, evidenced most notably by his parading skewered pheasant. Assuming the best of intentions, the dead birds are Petruchio's contribution to the wedding feast. Hopefully, they are freshly killed, "justifying" his lateness. Zeffirelli has Petruchio participating in the quintessentially manly sport of hunting while Kate waits patiently, if not worriedly, under a hot Italian sun in a multi-layered wedding gown. Moreover, once Petruchio reaches the church steps, he first addresses not Kate, but her dowry-providing father. In a matter of minutes, Kate has gone from bride to butt to barter.

Despite being deeply offended, Kate shows uncharacteristic restraint. Her defensive weapon of choice is a warm, inviting smile—identical to one she gave while locked in the room. Convinced of her sincerity, Petruchio eagerly climbs the church's steps, arms outstretched to embrace her, only to be shoved back down into the crowd. Fortunately for a stunned Petruchio, the crowd—as Zeffirelli films it—is in his corner, breaking his fall and cheering him on to battle. This 1-2-3 sequence—alluring smile, eager approach, and instant rebuff—occurs again on the couple's wedding night, as well as at virtually every potentially intimate moment they (almost) share. Some interesting symbolism may be found in each character's elevation: here, at the church, on top of the stairs, Kate is physically higher than Petruchio. She makes him come to her; in order to rise to her level, he needs her invitation or permission. This same scenario is true at Baptista's house (where Kate looks from a third-story bedroom window down on an advancing Petruchio), at Baptista's mill (where she climbs multiple stairs to hide in an attic or loft, and prevents him from entering), and even in Petruchio's house (where Kate occupies his second-level master bedroom while he sleeps downstairs).

Anxious to embarrass him as much as he did her, Kate runs to the altar. Kate's intention is to refuse Petruchio once he vows to marry her, effectively doing what many men have done to women: leave them at the altar—every woman's nightmare. (If successful, Kate may fulfill many a female fantasy.) The camera catches Kate

impatiently tapping her fingers on the altar, an indication of her disregard for marriage and the supposedly holy spot at which its ceremony is performed. After enduring more pre-marital mischief, Kate's supposed moment of triumph arrives: instead of declaring the usual "I do," she spitefully protests, "I WI LL N—," physically prevented from finishing the desired adverb by a kiss from her new husband. Again, the crowd gleefully intervenes, their "congratulations" effectively drowning out a dazed Kate's objections.

Zeffirelli's film then cuts to the reception. Kate has recovered nicely, mingling with well-wishers and exhibiting a resiliency she will increasingly rely on. But this grit hits the fan when she witnesses Petruchio's avaricious reception of an immense money chest: Kate's dowry—20,000 crowns—and another turning point for the newly bought newlywed. Zeffirelli intentionally places Kate exactly where she does not belong: in the exclusively male sphere of commerce. Her stunned expression says it all: the previous public humiliation she suffered is nothing compared to this private degradation. Symbolically, she watches herself being handed over—even manhandled—in a literal transfer of ownership, helpless to forestall the transaction. Zeffirelli shows men anxiously surrounding the chest, and then rapaciously reviewing its contents, before escorting it out of the house and onto Petruchio's cart. These painful images may explain why, at Petruchio's heartless announcement to leave the reception early, Kate wholeheartedly asserts herself like never before, publicly denouncing her husband's decision. Unfortunately, for at least a third time in a single day, no one takes her side—not even her father. For a third time, she is silenced. And, for a third time, a male's physical force is used to restrain her, as Petruchio carries her outside like some commodity and dumps her on a donkey. She *has been* swept of her feet—just not the way she had imagined. As a bride on her wedding day, she *is* a spectacle, just not the way she had hoped. Kate's own wedding guests, warm and dry inside the reception hall, smile happily not because they blissfully imagine *her* future, but because they blissfully imagine *their* future—without her. The donkey carries Kate, while Petruchio carries her dowry.

Zeffirelli films Shakespeare's references to the couple's miserable and muddy journey from the reception hall to Petruchio's home, retaining Kate's tumble into a puddle as well as Petruchio's callous refusal to pull her out. (Instead, he laughs uproariously, then rides away without looking back.) Shakespeare's company, of course, would have faced serious challenges in presenting this

scene on stage, which is probably why the playwright had Grumio relate the account. But there may have been another reason Shakespeare did not attempt the scene's enactment: to audiences hearing the story in third person, Kate's mishaps are comic. Zeffirelli's filming of them, however, may border on the tragic as audiences witness her suffering "firsthand." While the film's scene can be initially funny, if one suspends its common classification as farce, its humor quickly fades upon imagining the implications such an ordeal could have in actuality. Kate, unprotected from the elements and already wet from rain, is wearing a multi-layer dress, now soaked completely through and undoubtedly heavy. She still has quite a few hours to travel before arriving at her new home, by which time it is *snowing*. Petruchio, notes one critic, "looks disappointed and disgruntled when the bedraggled Kate walks through the door, as though he had hoped she was dead and the dowry his with no further trouble."[13] For a moment at least, it seems as though Zeffirelli intentionally spoils the fun, concerned with the possibility that Kate's wedding date could easily have been her death date as a result of exposure. As when a practical joke backfires, ending in unintentional injury, Petruchio's taming almost went too far. Even though few would conclude that Petruchio is homicidal, he may be sadistic; at the very least, he is cruel, fit to be classed with the passersby in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This scene, like so many before and after it, poignantly illustrates the humorlessness of Kate's state, eliciting considerable sympathy while validating the view of Kate as victim.

Such sympathy also extends to Kate's wedding night: historically, the socially acceptable and expected moment of a woman's submission to a man's demands. Zeffirelli could have shown Petruchio as deferring the possibility of intimacy, but chose not to. Instead, audiences glimpse a character capable of deserting his new bride in the afternoon and desiring her in the evening. Once Kate is sure Petruchio not going to force himself upon her, she assumes control via her sexuality by partially undressing in front of him and letting him kiss her shoulder before coyly turning away and getting into bed. As she did at the church, she smiles invitingly. As he did at the church, he approaches eagerly, at which point Kate hits him over the head with a bed warmer. Experiencing agony instead of ecstasy, Petruchio responds by destroying what would have been their wedding bed, saving face by blaming the bed's inadequacy on his servants. Zeffirelli's film allows for the interpretation that Petruchio's tantrum, unlike his other tirades, is not premeditated, and that he may have been willing to end the

taming (at least temporarily) in exchange for intimacy.

Not to be outdone, Kate resorts to crying—loud enough to be heard within earshot, leading Petruchio to believe he has won this battle ("this is a way to kill a wife with kindness" [IV.i.208]). Zeffirelli, however, makes it clear that Kate is the victor: once she is certain that Petruchio has heard her sobbing, she smiles to herself—just as she did shortly after he locked her in the room—for a number of reasons: she has avoided intimacy with a man she neither loves nor respects, she is left alone, and she has a comfortable bed all to herself. She solely occupies the master bedroom; in effect, and in his absence, she is more than the mere mistress of the house—she is its master.

If there is any doubt as to her new role, it is alleviated early the next morning, as Zeffirelli's Kate not just cleans house, but directs Petruchio's servants to clean it. By extension, Kate is also declaring her intolerance for her husband's habits, lifestyle, and behavior. Within a few hours, Petruchio's domain is dominated and domesticated by Kate, who, for example, has the chandelier lowered and deep-cleaned before her husband arises from his hardwood table (a delightful contrast, clearly proving who slept better). Kate's fervor means that the estate's impending transformation will be radical. By the next scene, it is immaculate: the armory is polished; the table is symmetrically set with fine tableware; fresh flowers abound (in spite of the recent snowfall); all the servants are bathed, well dressed, and freshly pressed; the dog is, well, *groomed*. And, last but not least, even Petruchio is scrubbed. Of course, directly or indirectly, he is footing the bill. If Petruchio is actually spending money on home improvement, then he has been domesticated; if Kate is, then she has gained her husband's trust. Either way, she wins.

This same scene also depicts Kate fussing over the servants, not in any dissatisfied way, but with fondness and pride—and in direct contrast to Petruchio's harsh treatment. More importantly, she has befriended them and they reciprocate by treating her with respect. For all intents and purposes, they are *her* servants. In fact, she treats them better than she does her husband, and their allegiance forces Petruchio to feign acceptance while he sits apart from the action, just as Kate did earlier in the film. She has had to adapt, and does an admirable job of it.

Even though domestic life has improved for the couple, their endeavors at mutual taming continue. When Kate's new cap and dress arrive (specially ordered by Petruchio), she is overjoyed. Her expression, aimed at her husband, is complete adoration for both

the gift and its thoughtful giver. Zeffirelli's filming of this scene again suggests that Petruchio, with a little restraint, could have ended the battle right then and there, with both parties emerging victorious. True to the play, Petruchio immediately announces his dissatisfaction, prompting Kate to verbally abuse him in front of their servants and guests. Added to the film is Petruchio's cleaving the cap and shredding the dress unnecessarily, delivering the message that it is one thing to deny a person something, quite another to destroy it. His subsequent justification speech (in which he argues against fine clothing), though eloquent, becomes hypocrisy in this film, as he is stunningly arrayed in gold thread. He is, however, at least consistent, leaving the room once a devastated Kate begins to cry.

While traveling to Padua for Bianca's reception, Kate now rides a horse, having apparently graduated from her donkey days. Having passed Petruchio's short course in astronomy, Kate, upon arriving in Padua, is stunningly outfitted in a crimson velvet dress with gold accents and trim (she got the dress after all). Moreover, she is perfectly coordinated with Petruchio's attire. Sporting matching formalwear, the Bianca/Lucentio reception will, in many ways, also be *their* reception. Their apparel also signifies cooperation, conformity, harmony, equality and perhaps even mutual love, if color means anything to Zeffirelli. In contrast, no other couples' clothing matches in the film's final banquet scene.

With Kate's "surrender," the war is over—for Petruchio at least. Now, looking good and apparently feeling even better, Petruchio bids Kate to kiss him—in public. She feigns embarrassment, but Petruchio persists. Audiences expecting a cinematic smack equal to the lip-numbing numbers of previous decades are quickly disappointed, as is Petruchio, who gets only an anticlimactic peck on the nose, followed by an innocent grin. Kate's kiss may be viewed as a kind of compromise, simultaneously satisfying his need for either affection or affirmation, as well as her concern for discretion. But it also represents the absolute minimum she can do and still comply. And, for the first time, surrounding crowds work to Kate's advantage rather than to her husband's: with witnesses, Petruchio is hard-pressed to protest.

Dazed and confused, Petruchio is quiet and pensive during dinner, paying more attention to his wine than his wife. Periodically, both he and Kate watch Lucentio and Bianca caressing and kissing across the table. Still silent, the troubled twosome then observes small children playing near their table. When one child begins to cry, Biondello quickly comes to his aid, comforts him, then gently

places him on a dog's back. The camera then fixes on the couple's studied expressions, both of which suggest that their maternal and paternal instincts have been aroused. In a thirty-second shot, Zeffirelli asks an insightful question: are Kate and Petruchio ready for children? Up to this point, each has been so completely, so chronically self-absorbed. In response, Petruchio glances at Kate, giving her a shy half-smile, evidence that he is not opposed to the prospect of having children. But his expression also suggests a realization that he will need Kate's compliance to make that happen—something she also seems to sense. If Kate has a change of heart, it may explain the earnestness with which she gives her final speech. During the filming of this scene, Elizabeth Taylor surprised the production's cast and crew, including its director, who later wrote in his autobiography:

> I had assumed, as I imagine had Richard, that when we did the notoriously controversial final scene in which Katherine makes her act of submission not merely to Petruchio but on behalf of all women to all men, she would do it in the now accepted ironical way. The usual trick is for the actress to wink at the audience as much as to say, "We all know who really has the upper hand, don't we?" Amazingly, Liz did nothing of the kind; she played it straight.[14]

Kate's sincere speech moves not only Petruchio (Richard Burton, according to Zeffirelli, became misty-eyed at Taylor's performance), but everyone in attendance. Kate—the butt of jokes and the source of embarrassment—is now the center of attention and the object of adulation. Just as she was a spectacle when she left these people a short time earlier, she is a spectacle now, a true sight to behold—this time, for all the right reasons.

For his part, Petruchio couldn't be more proud—or aroused. Smiling broadly, he approaches her, embraces her, compliments her, and kisses her. Delighted by their first mutual kiss, Petruchio turns and faces a cheering crowd, but in the moment it took him to turn back to Kate, she disappears. His laughter quickly dies, while the crowd's revives. Distressed, he begins to part and move through the crowd in an attempt to catch up to his wife, who apparently got away unhindered with the help of some friendly conspirators. With great effort, Petruchio reaches the door through with Kate escaped, and, once through, Grumio closes it shut, barricading it with his body to prevent others from following.

As Grumio closes the door behind Petruchio and the film ends, two scenarios are imaginable. One is that Kate waits for Petruchio to follow her, he does, the couple unites, and finally

consummates their marriage, in which case Grumio guards a nuptial "bedroom door," ensuring their privacy. But if Zeffirelli wanted to promote this ending, the scene's sequence—her speech, their kiss, her departure, his confusion, his exit, their reunion—seems odd, nor does it feel romantic. It is hard to imagine that Kate, having just given the speech of her life, suddenly desires intimacy. Maybe it was the kiss but, for believability, Kate would have to have been aroused enough by a two-second kiss to leave the reception *without her partner.* There needs to be more evidence to make this connection: for example, Kate clinging to her husband after the kiss, whispering in his ear, or taking him by the hand and leading him out of the reception room.

A second, more consistent scenario is that another chase ensues and intimacy will be further forestalled into the indefinite future. Given the film's earlier chase scenes, and Kate's talent for evasion, it seems more plausible that the chasing which began their relationship continues, with Kate still in the lead. Having kissed Petruchio and aroused him, ditching him is a perfect way to publicly humiliate him. Petruchio's facial expression as he is trying to exit is one of embarrassed concession: Kate trumped him and, given the formality of the occasion, he graciously acknowledges it. In this way, Kate gives Petruchio a taste of his own medicine, depriving him of something he desperately wants just as he denied Kate a longer wedding reception, food, and a new dress. It is comic, ironic, and fitting that Kate wins this final round.

After the film's release, and after the dust of controversy settled, Zeffirelli's interpretation went on to significantly alter the way modern readers and viewers approached Shakespeare's text. By 1977, Jack Jorgens would label the play a "piece of male chauvinist wishful thinking" promoting the dangerous idea that a "woman's will can be broken and in the end both she and the man will be the happier for it."[15] The play was also produced differently: "following the emergence of 'women's liberation,' " observes critic Diana Henderson, "between 1976 and 1986, five Shrews . . . appeared on North American television—setting a frequency record for productions during the era for sound recording."[16] Attesting to Zeffirelli's impact, at least some these productions, such as the American Conservatory Theater's, gave the overall impression that Kate reigned. By the time Zeffirelli's *Taming of the Shrew* became available on videocassette in the mid-1980s, the reverse side of the video jacket cover touted it, in feminist jargon, as "a look at male chauvinism and women's liberation in the 16th-century." Following a brief plot summary, the blurb concluded with this open-ended

lure: "Kate has found a more effective way to dominate her mate." Feminist critics such as Marianne Novy can confidently present *Shrew* in 1999 as *the* "paradigmatic comedy for feminist rewriting."[17]

Thus, the view that Kate "won" this battle of the sexes seems to have prevailed, putting Zeffirelli ahead of his time by at least ten years, and as much as twenty, guiding Shakespeare's future as much as preserving his past—a conclusion consistent with Zeffirelli's own self-perception as "an enlightened conservative continuing the discourse . . . [and] renovating texts."[18]

Notes

1. C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 201.

2. M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 233.

3. "Taming of the Shrew." Internet Movie Database.

4. Gareth Evans and Barbara Lloyd Evans, *The Shakespeare Companion*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 208.

5. Philip C. Kolin, *Shakespeare and Feminist Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography and Commentary*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 5.

6. Kolin, 3.

7. Kolin, 5.

8. Russell Jackson, "Shakespeare's Comedies on Film, " *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television*, eds. Anthony Davies and Stanley Wells, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 110.

9. Ace G. Pilkington, "Zeffirelli's Shakespeare," *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television*, eds. Anthony Davies and Stanley Wells, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170.

10. Kolin, 6.

11. "Taming of the Shrew." Internet Movie Database, .

12. "Taming of the Shrew." Internet Movie Database, .

13. Pilkington, 171.

14. Franco Zeffirelli, *Zeffirelli: The Autobiography of Franco Zeffirelli*, (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), 215-216.

15. Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 67.

16. Diana E. Henderson, "A Shrew for the Times," *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and Video*, eds. Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt (London: Routledge, 1997), 150.

17. Marianne Novy, *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women' s Re-Visions in Literature and Performance*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 4.

18. Nicholas Thomas, *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers: Directors*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., (Chicago: St. James Press, 1991), 944.