John Fletcher's Taming of Shakespeare: The Tamer Tam'd

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In *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London,* Andrew Gurr argues for four types of evidence that contribute to the portrait of contemporary playgoers: circumstances of performance, demographics, contemporary accounts of playgoing and "evidence for the mental composition . . . of the kind of playgoer the hopeful poet might expect to find in the crowd at the venue intended for his play" (5-6). He places significantly more emphasis and authority on the first three types of evidence—those he characterizes as physical—and takes only the most tentative steps towards the final kind of evidence. His overriding concern is that this last kind of evidence can be misinterpreted without firm, historical analysis as a foundation. Despite his caution and despite examples to substantiate his concern, Gurr essentially calls for an analysis of mental composition: "perhaps, though, the solidity established with the other three [types of evidence] may provide an anchorage for further exploration of this fourth kind" (6).

One way, perhaps, to avoid subjective analysis is to consider plays which underwent some kind of revision. In its most basic sense, *revise* means "to go over again, to re-examine, in order to improve or amend."[1] Almost exclusively, *revision* is used to describe the process and product of a writer returning to his or her work and the alterations, modifications, additions and deletions he or she makes to it.

In *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time,* Gerald Bentley suggests: "[One] type of revision of dramatists' manuscripts in the theaters occurred when the actors prepared the play for a revival. There are a great many records of one sort or another of this common practice; even the general public seems to have taken it for granted . . . And even the players took it for granted that their audiences were familiar with the custom of revision, whether it was admitted or not" (237-238). Ben Jonson, in his *Timber, or*

Discoveries, was among the many who argued that poets should "repeat often what we have formerly written; which beside that it helps the consequence, and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heat of imagination, that often cools in the time of setting down, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier by the going back" (*De stylo* 411).

It is apparent that early modern playwrights saw opportunities to capitalize on notoriety, and this may have been a driving force behind the composition *The First Part of Hieronimo*, the later-written prequel to Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. In a different vein, and one perhaps more closely linked to the fundamental definition of "revision," is John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize: or, the Tamer Tam'd*, a sequel to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* where the plot is continued, but characters are altered significantly.

I believe that John Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* is more than merely a second-class follow-up to Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, a fairly standard critical opinion. In looking at the gender/marriage debate that runs from approximately 1600-1620 (culminating with Swetnam and *hic mulier*), I believe that Fletcher anticipated an audience far more receptive to a "new London woman," such as those who appear in his play, and he emphasizes the difference between his audience and earlier ones by using Shakespeare's well-known play and characters. By revising some of those characters (but not all), Fletcher maximizes the effect and importance of the ongoing gender debate.

The relationship between Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize, or, The Tamer Tam'd* is both simple and complex—simple in that every editor of Fletcher's drama or critic of his work acknowledges the Shakespeare work as the source play. *The Woman's Prize* has been called a "sequel," a "continuation," a "counterblast," an "adaptation," a "spin-off," a "burlesque," and even a "calculated intertextual glance."[2] The simple fades into complex with respect to how and why Fletcher's revision takes place.

Fletcher anticipated an audience much more receptive to strong female characters versus those found in Shakespeare's play: while Katherine from *The Taming of the Shrew* may be strong-**willed**, she eventually accedes to the wishes of her father and her husband and at least speaks the language of a proper wife. Fletcher has strong women in his play, ones represented as independent and willing to speak their minds no matter the cost. Whereas Shakespeare's play is a "pleasant comedy" set in Italy to entertain a group of English (including the audience), Fletcher's play is a

"battaile without blood," according to the Prologue, and the stakes are higher because Fletcher is essentially setting up a rematch between the two main combatants from the first play.

It is too limiting to dismiss the notion of Fletcher as merely Shakespeare's reviser, as George Ferguson does in his 1966 critical edition of *The Woman's Prize*: "Fletcher goes no further than [keeping three Italian names—Petruchio, Tranio and Bianca]; he repeats none of the speeches, action, or subplotting; instead he turns the plot materials over and transports the action to London—leaving the Italian names and the changed character of Petruchio to hint rather broadly at the older play" (12). This sentence contains the whole of Ferguson's effort linking *The Woman's Prize* with *The Taming of the Shrew.*

The actual connection between Fletcher and Shakespeare appears obvious: as Shakespeare neared retirement as the head playwright for the King's Men, Fletcher was brought in to fill in the gaps and, eventually, to take over as lead playwright. Fletcher's collaborations with Beaumont, Massinger, Field and even Shakespeare as well as his individual contributions kept him employed until his death in 1625. The overlap with Shakespeare goes deeper than time of service, however; Gurr states that the popularity of the King's Men between 1609 and the early 1620s[3] was unrivaled, and his argument rests largely on the familiarity later audiences had with earlier works, particularly those by Shakespeare. *The Woman's Prize* as a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew* easily fits this pattern. Fletcher himself, less than a decade later, treats the notion of revising an old play in the prologue to his *The False One*:

> New titles warrant not a play for new,
> The subject being old; and 'tis as true,
> Fresh and neat matter may with ease be fram'd
> Out of their stories that have oft been nam'd
> With glory on the stage. (1-5)

Minor Revisions

Fletcher, like most revisers, makes changes that are slight and do not have the same significance as other revisions. Among these is Hortensio who becomes Moroso in Fletcher's play and Baptista who becomes Petronius. In what can only be described as a literal lessening of character, Shakespeare's Lucentio is revised into Rowland, the young suitor to the younger daughter. Finally, Bianca is revised as Livia, the younger daughter fighting her father's wishes for whom she is to marry.[4] Unlike Shakespeare's Bianca, who is

mostly acted upon but performs some part in the final decision regarding her marriage, Livia plays a major role in the plotting and duping of her father. In a small way, this revision of Bianca into Livia establishes the basis for what I believe truly marks Fletcher's play as a significant revision of *The Taming of the Shrew*: his attention to and strengthening of female characters as well as in his limited revision of Petruchio.

Kate/Maria

Despite Kate not actually being an on-stage character—her name goes noticeably unmentioned the play—she appears in Fletcher's revision in two substantial ways: first, with regard to the final scene in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and second, in the guise of Petruchio's second wife, Maria.

Kate's final speech and its closing action (placing her hand under Petruchio's foot) are at once a vindication of Petruchio's taming process and an affront to feminists no matter how nascent. Much of what has been said critically about Shakespeare's play emphasizes the central relationship between the tamer and the shrew. This relationship has been used to tout Shakespeare as feminist, anti-feminist, radical, or reactionary.[5]

Fletcher, writing for an audience familiar with Shakespeare's play, must have seen this same prominence and thus chose to use irony as the basis for his presentation of Kate in his play. She does not make an appearance in Fletcher's play, but her presence is impossible to ignore; she is referred to as early as the sixteenth line in the first scene:

> What though his other wife,
> Out of her most abundant stubbornesse,
> Out of her daily hue and cries upon him,
> (For sure she was a Rebell) turn'd his temper,
> And forc'd him blow as high as she? (I.i.16-20)
>
> * * * *
>
> For yet the bare remembrance of his first wife
> (I tell ye on my knowledge, and a truth too)
> Will make him start in's sleep, and very often
> Cry out for Cudgels, Colstaves, any thing;
> Hiding his Breeches, out of feare her Ghost
> Should walk, and weare 'em yet. Since his first marriage,
> He is no more the still *Petruchio*, (I.i.31-37)

These opening descriptions, as well as ongoing references to Kate throughout the play, revise the ending of *The Taming of the Shrew* in a fundamental way: Kate has not been tamed, much as Petruchio

would like everyone around him to believe. Fletcher provides no alternate motivation for Kate's actions at the closing of Shakespeare's play; instead, he returns to the earliest descriptions of her by Gremio and Hortensio and restores them in describing Katherine after marriage—"a devil" (I.i.121), "a shrewd ill-favor'd wife" (I.ii.60) and "Her only fault, and that is fault enough, / Is that she is intolerable curst / And shrewd and froward, so beyond all measure" (I.ii.88-90). Petruchio did not tame "Katherine the curst"; rather, as he states in the middle of *The Woman's Prize*, "did Heaven forgive me, / And take this Serpent from me" (III.iii.165-166). Here, Fletcher makes his first substantive revision—and this to a character never seen on stage! Fletcher could have merely said that Petruchio's first wife had died, but any references to their married life would have reflected the literal ending of *The Taming of the Shrew*: Kate tamed, Petruchio the victorious husband. Many of Maria's complaints, real or imagined, about her future life with Petruchio are dependent on his first wife being shrewish and Petruchio continuing his attempts at taming her.

During Fletcher's playwrighting years, the tradition handed down was that "women were told over and over and over that they were inferior, that they had lesser minds, that they were unable to handle their own affairs" (Hull 140). Barbara Baines, in her introduction to three anonymous pamphlets from 1620 (*Hic Mulier*, *Haec-Vir* and *Muld Sacke*), comments:

> Discourses on the precise nature of woman's frailty and the most effective cure for it were popular throughout the Renaissance. By the close of the sixteenth century, many writers had come to the defense of women, but after the death of Queen Elizabeth, the detractors seem to have found the larger audience. The antifeminist arguments and responses to them intensify during the reign of James I . . . (v)

In updating Shakespeare's play but still removed from the flashpoint of *Hic Mulier*, Fletcher anticipates an audience similar to that for both *Epicoene* and *The Roaring Girl*: one not enslaved to popular taste but likewise not unfamiliar with gender issues of importance – in marriage, in social circles, in political debates. This intertextual connection emphasizes not only how Kate is revised by Fletcher as a non-reformed shrew, but also how she is truly revised as Petruchio's second wife, Maria.

Maria exhibits the same willfulness and strong personality as her predecessor with one substantial difference: Maria's goals are not Kate's. Kate's motivations are based on her personality,

described and demonstrated: "that wench is stark mad" (I.i.69) and "If I be waspish, best beware my sting" (II.i.206). Maria reserves her marital favors to create "a miracle" (I.ii.69), to make Petruchio "easie as a child, / And tame as feare" (I.ii.113-114). Maria's ultimate goal is to be married to Petruchio, just not married to the Petruchio who has the reputation for aggressively taming his first wife and for being an overbearing, dominating husband. Maria herself says of Kate, "She was a foole, / And took a scurvy course; let her be nam'd / 'Mongst those that wish for things, but dare not do 'em" (I.ii.141-143).

The contrast between these two is perhaps starkest when looking at each's final speech. Kate's is, at the least, a verbal recitation of a traditional role for a wife with heavy emphasis on the dominant position of husband—"thy lord, thy king, thy governor . . . / thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign" (V.ii.138, 146-7). Her speech, 44 lines total, is all-but impossible for many modern audiences to accept at face value;[6] while no direct evidence exists as to how Shakespeare's audience might have reacted, some insight does exist in the change between Shakespeare's and Fletcher's anticipated audiences: the latter could accept overt characterizations of strong women, even domineering women; in Shakespeare's play, that characterization is squelched.

Maria's final speech, a mere 18 lines, could hardly be more different from Kate's. It is a eulogy for Petruchio (who has faked his death in a last-ditch effort to shake the resolve of his wife), but she has nothing good to say about him nor about her loss: "There are wants I weep for, not his person" (V.iv.28). Fletcher does not merely revise Kate's speech here—he obliterates it. Maria's words are so far to the opposite end of the spectrum compared to Kate's that the two speeches are more contrast than comparison. Maria's action, not only <u>not</u> to mourn her husband's death but to insult him over his coffin, completely negates the message contained in Kate's speech: honoring and obediently serving one's husband. Fletcher tempers Maria's words by the end by having Maria's language in the closing lines echo Kate's own—"make me what you please" (V.iv.42), "your servant" (43), and "all my life / . . . I dedicate in service to your pleasure" (65,67)—but the resolution of the conflict is decidedly changed from the earlier play.

Bianca

I believe that Bianca is the most important character in Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize*. In one sense, this Bianca is <u>not</u> the one from *The Taming of the Shrew*—that is Livia; in another sense,

however, a truer sense, this Bianca is the one from Shakespeare's play, just older. As such, Fletcher makes his most impressive revision by taking Bianca from *The Shrew* and showing her as grown up—she is at once a supporter of shrewish behavior and an advocate for the more traditional role of wife. Just as Shakespeare's Bianca progresses from wooed young lady to an "understudy" shrew (Burns 43), Fletcher's Bianca contains these two disparate philosophies and, as such, manages to tie the two plots of the play together. Moreover, she demonstrates what Maria eventually achieves: a union of strong-willed behavior and womanly decorum. She even utilizes some of Kate's own language because Kate herself functions as the original example of these two disparate approaches to her gender role.

Bianca's overriding purpose in *The Taming of the Shrew* is to gain the freedom to marry but not necessarily to anyone she has been presented with before the play begins. As she tells her sister, "of all the men alive / I never yet held that special face / Which I could fancy more than any other" (II.i.10-12). Still, she wishes Kate to marry someone, anyone, so that she may marry whomever she wishes. Her final choice, however, appears to be almost instantaneous. Her quick response to Lucentio may be either a young girl's fancy or, as she says, a case where she "learns her lessons [to] please herself" (III.i.20).

From Act 3 until the last scenes of Act 5, Bianca becomes essentially a non-entity, only speaking briefly with Lucentio to confirm her affection. When her father confronts both lovers V.i., all she says is "Cambio is chang'd into Lucentio" (123). It is Lucentio who reveals their marriage to Baptista. While Vincentio rails against the way he has been treated by Tranio and the Pedant, the duping of Baptista is largely ignored. Bianca has had to do little to usurp the authority of her father, and Lucentio's idyllic description of their marital bliss mirrors their brief on-stage courtship.

In the play's final scene, however, everything changes. Lucentio discovers, much to his surprise and at no small cost to his bank account, that Bianca has no intention of being at his beck and call:

> *Bianca*: Fie, what a foolish duty call you this?
> *Lucentio*: I would your duty were as foolish too.
> The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca,
> Hath cost me [a] hundred crowns since supper-time.
> *Bianca*: The more fool you for laying on my duty. (V.ii.125-129)

With this, Bianca says no more—at least in Shakespeare's play. The pattern for Fletcher, however, has been set: a relatively quiet,

demure Bianca who has learned from her older sister how to be "headstrong" (V.ii.130).

Ferguson's critical edition devotes no space to discussing the Bianca in Fletcher's play. His longest treatment of her character? "Bianca, the trouble maker" (15). Similar to critics of *The Taming of the Shrew*, critics of *The Woman's Prize* focus most of their energy on the main-plot couple, Petruchio and Maria. Unlike her counterpart in Shakespeare's play, Fletcher's Bianca is not involved in an engagement plot, so her character is pushed by critics even further to the background than even Bianca of *Shrew*. But Bianca is crucial—she is the only character to play a pivotal role in both plots (Maria/Petruchio and Livia/Rowland). This importance is a direct result of Fletcher anticipating an audience more receptive to 'strong woman' plays, and by including her in his revision, Fletcher creates a bridge between the two works beyond that of borrowing of a few names.

Bianca is the first to raise the notion of Maria's rebelling against Petruchio and their marriage bed. Interestingly, Bianca uses the phrase "Believe me" to reinforce her advice to the newlywed, Maria. As Kate's sister, Bianca would have first-hand knowledge of Petruchio's continued efforts to be the domineering husband described throughout Fletcher's play. Perhaps more telling on this point is Bianca's "All the severall wrongs / Done by Emperious husbands to their wives / These thousand yeeres and upwards, strengthen thee: / Thou hast a brave cause" (I.ii.122-125). Her line may serve, however subtly, as motivation to spur on and "command" Maria and her rebellion (I.iii.111ff). If Bianca has witnessed the violent treatment of Petruchio to Kate, she may be driven by some revenge motive against her sister's abusive husband—Fletcher uses the phrase "abusing his first good wife" later in his play (III.iii.118). This Bianca, in no small fashion, picks up where Shakespeare's Bianca left off: a willful woman unwilling to subscribe to the social 'norms' for a new wife. In this case, the new wife is Maria, but Bianca's actions and advice ring familiar, particularly as the play progresses. Bianca and Lucentio begin their marriage with a debate over duty (as quoted before); after Maria is counseled by Bianca in *The Woman's Prize*, Petruchio and Maria debate the same topic.

Through most of the first two acts, Fletcher's Bianca serves as a coach for Maria, educating her in the ways of a strong-willed woman. She also serves as the catechizer for Livia, who comes to join their rebellion. With Maria properly educated, Bianca proceeds

to educate the now-ensconced Livia and eventually the City and Country women who join their crusade.

Bianca's work is done so well, having trained all the women in the play, that she disappears from the main plot. When Petronius and the other men come to Maria's house to call them down from their isolation, all the other women **but** Bianca participate in name-calling, declarations of independence and negotiation of terms. Her job is done, at least with regard to training Maria. Bianca learned from Shakespeare's shrew, Kate; she in turn has passed along this education to Fletcher's female characters. Mission accomplished, Bianca turns to the plot nearest to her own original one: the duping of Petronius to arrange the marriage of Livia and Rowland. In this case, her plotting with Livia and conning of Petronius are what allow the match between Rowland and Livia to take place at all.

My goal here is not merely to raise awareness of Bianca's character but to tie together the Biancas from each play by showing Shakespeare's Bianca in her context—a shrew in training, but contained by the traditionalist context of the play—alongside the revised Bianca in Fletcher's play, a Bianca who has grown into her shrewishness, learned where to apply it (and when not to) and turned it into a positive, strong-woman characteristic instead of a negative. The marriage matches between Maria/Petruchio and Livia/Rowland are both made to the satisfaction of the men. Petruchio must be won over, but the Bianca-trained Maria is up to the task; Rowland must be duped into his match, and Bianca plays an integral role in making that happen. The older generation, represented by Moroso and Petronius, are the unhappiest characters in the play at the end, perhaps a commentary on how the social climate had changed in the time since Shakespeare's play was first performed.

Petruchio

Petruchio is arguably the one character not rewritten by Fletcher, at least not to the degree he rewrites Kate and Bianca. Petruchio spends nearly the entire play doing what his character does in Shakespeare's play—"taming" his willful wife. As before, he hopes to starve her into submission—"She must do nothing of her selfe; not eate, / Drink " (I.i.45-46)—but while his actions remain consistent from the original play to the revision, the outcome of this rematch battle of the sexes is not. Kate is supposedly subdued by Petruchio's machinations, becoming the perfect, dutiful wife. The end of *The Taming of the Shrew* is not one of domination/submission, but it is one of "virtue and obedience"

(V.ii.118); in *The Woman's Prize*, Maria may claim to be her husband's "servant" (I.iv.46), but her husband considers her his "unhappiness, [his] misery" (V.iv.41). Indeed, Maria claims to have tamed Petruchio and, by doing so, earned equal footing, according to the play's Epilogue:

> The Tamer's tam'd, but so, as nor the men
> Can finde one just cause to complaine of, when
> They fitly do consider in their lives,
> They should not raign as Tyrants o'r their wives.
> Nor can the women from this president
> Insult, or triumph: it being aptly meant,
> To teach both Sexes due equality;
> And as they stand bound, to love mutually. (Epilogue 1-8)

Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* is the ruling husband, brooking no disobedience from his new wife. He comes into the play swaggering and proceeds apace to tame his bride-to-be. The initial wooing scene (II.i), described by one critic as "breathing fire" (Asimov 455), pits Petruchio against Kate in a pitched battle of words. While she insults him mercilessly and even slaps him during the scene, he remains resilient and calm, referring to their confrontation as a "chat" (268). At the conclusion of their duel, he announces to Baptista that he will agree to marry Kate; in doing so, he dismisses Kate's railing against him and her insults. This declaration comes on the heels of Katharine calling Petruchio a "half lunatic," "madcap ruffian" and "swearing Jack" (II.i.287, 288). Not surprisingly, Maria executes a similar strategy to confute Petruchio in his efforts to control his 'willful' wife. I should perhaps acknowledge that Fletcher does revise the tamer, Petruchio, in a sense: as the tamer, Maria. Fletcher's Petruchio is not the same man as that in Shakespeare's play in that he is wholly unsuccessful in subduing his bride; instead, it is **his** fierceness and volatility that are tamed. Anticipating an audience familiar with Shakespeare's Petruchio and his methods for shrew-taming, Fletcher creates similar situations for his characters but that are inverted versions of those moments in the older play.

In no small fashion, Petruchio and Kate's encounter just after their marriage is not unlike Petruchio and Maria's just after **their** marriage. Her challenge of "I will be angry; what hast thou to do?" (III.ii.216-7) is answered with his infamous "I will be master of what is mine own. / She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house, / My household stuff, my field, my barn, / My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything" (230-2). Fletcher replays this scene when Petruchio first confronts Maria over her boycott of their marriage bed, even using similar phrasing to enhance the echo:

Petruchio: If you talk more,
I am angry, very angry.
Maria: I am glad on't, and I wil talke. (I.iii.168-170)

* * * *

Ile make you know, and feare a wife *Petruchio*,
There my cause lies.
You have been famous for a woman tamer,
And beare the fear'd-name of a brave wife-breaker:
A woman now shall take those honours off,
And tame you; (I.iii.261-266)

Maria, in direct response to a use of Kate's own language, sets the same agenda Petruchio did in the earlier play, to tame a strong-willed, 'angry' spouse; obviously, however, the genders have been reversed—a reflection, I argue, of Fletcher's anticipated audience that accepted these types of roles and actions from women.

The 'taming' of Petruchio is perhaps Fletcher's largest revision to this character and is manifest in Petruchio's final words:

I am born again:
Well little *England*, when I see a husband
Of any other Nation stern or jealous,
Ile wish him but a woman of thy breeding, (V.ii.60-63)

Shakespeare's Petruchio revels in the dynamic between him and his wife, that of master and obedient wife. In fact, he uses the word *obedience* or variants no fewer than three times; however, the word does not appear in the entire final scene of *The Woman's Prize*—in any character's dialogue. Indeed, the word does not appear in the entire fifth act. Certainly, it would be inadequate to position an entire argument on the presence or lack of a single word, but considering its use in light of Fletcher's other changes to *The Shrew* reinforces his revisions.

Until the end of the Fletcher's play, Petruchio is the same swaggering man he was in Shakespeare's play; Maria is as willful as her counterpart, but she is neither defiant nor obstinate without reason—she admits to loving Petruchio early in the play. Her reasons for "taming" him are so that she is not lorded over and beaten down like Kate. This relationship, and Maria's accomplishment, would have held no comic force if the previous play had not existed; likewise, to have a taming battle between two unrecognizable characters would not have contained the same levels of knowing as a battle between a well-known Petruchio and the new iteration of his wife. Just as the characters in Fletcher's play are aware of Kate and her history (revised as it may be here), Fletcher's anticipated audience would be familiar with Shakespeare's

characters and the changes introduced. It has been said that ideas reach saturation in their life-cycle when parodies and spoofs appear; these latters' existence is wholly dependent on the audience 'getting the joke' by being familiar with the original, and I think Fletcher's audience was expected to understand the history of the characters portrayed to best see the revision and inversion of taming.

As I have indicated previously, an ongoing desire on the part of Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences to see familiar characters in slightly new surroundings (dare I even mention Elizabeth, Falstaff and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*?) may have been as much an economic force as an artistic one. While there is no shortage of playwrights denigrating audiences for their tastes,[7] there is also no shortage of playwrights ultimately catering to that same audience.

Revision and Anticipated Audience

H.J. Oliver contends that "the Elizabethan audience came to see [the] play 'pre-conditioned' . . . to enjoy the spectacle of the taming of one on whom they would not expect to waste a moment's sympathy" (50). He says this of Shakespeare's play, but these words ring true of Fletcher's play as well. The 'pre-conditioning' Oliver speaks of must have played no small role in Fletcher's choice of subject matter and characterization. Fletcher chose to use Shakespeare's characters for a reason: he anticipated that his audience would be familiar with the confrontation between Petruchio and Kate and, most importantly, with its outcome. A significant social shift had occurred, however, and Fletcher anticipated an audience different from that of the original play. As Linda Woodbridge indicates,

> the majority of plays acted between 1610 and 1620 . . . were the property of companies that played either exclusively to the public theater or to both theaters; to be acceptable, a play had to pass muster at the public theater, bastion of the citizenry.
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> * * * *
>
> [After 1610], no shrew tamings were staged; to the contrary, *The Woman's Prize* . . . showed the shrew tamer tamed by this wife; Maria tames her tamer without ever becoming shrewish herself. (250)

By leaving Petruchio essentially unrevised, Fletcher anticipated an audience that would expect the confrontation between Petruchio and Maria to end similarly to the first play. Thus, by having the story end on a decidedly different note and portraying a character whose similar machinations are ultimately thwarted, Fletcher is

able to tap into the familiarity of character while creating a new play, one whose comic turns are dependent on the previous play.

More importantly, his revisions reflect a major issue of the time period (critics consider the *hic mulier* period to be from 1610-1620), that of the proper role of women and men in Jacobean society. Critics have noted this relationship, but none have drawn connections between what Shakespeare wrote and what Fletcher revised. As seen in Maria, Bianca and even Petruchio, Fletcher anticipated an audience vastly different from Shakespeare's. His play, according to Linda Woodbridge, was well-versed and keenly aware of the new London woman controversy: "conditions in contemporary life influenced the choice of these conventions rather than others and that the strong-mindedness of contemporary women was one of those conditions" (267-8).[8]

In his book, *The John Fletcher Plays*, Clifford Leech contends that Fletcher "was no serious defender of women's rights, but rather a man who took some interest and pleasure in watching a fight between well-matched opponents. In *The Woman's Prize* it would seem good to him that Petruchio should be subdued, as Shakespeare had given him an apparently final victory in an encounter where no advantage, in Fletcher's view of the nature of things, could be more than temporary" (53). Inherent in Leech's description here is anticipated audience: Fletcher's "view of things" as playwright was contingent on public taste and disposition; certainly playwrights were less successful in correctly anticipating an audience (for example, Ben Jonson's *The New Inn* and Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*), but the economic realities of theatrical life in London necessitated a reasonable anticipation of what an audience would care to see. That Fletcher chose to take an already-existing play and change the relationships within it to such a degree is an ideal example of anticipated audience having an impact on revision strategies. Fletcher could have written an entirely new play on this subject, but his taking a play already in his company's repertoire and reworking it speaks to the notion of audience playing a role in that decision and its execution.

Notes

1. This definition, from the OED2 CD-ROM (v. 1.13), is contemporary with the earliest plays discussed here: "1596 Bacon *Max & Use Com. Law* (1630) 'Ep. Ded. 2' To revise the Romane lawes from infinite volumes..into one competent and uniforme corps of law."

2. Terms are taken, respectively, from Munro, 283; Gayley, 83; Baldwin, 377; McKeithan, 58; Squier, 120; Cone, 65; and Smith, 39.

3. "The only evidence for change turns up under Charles, when the company seems to have begun to acknowledge a difference in tastes between the Blackfriars gentry and the Globe's citizenry . . ." (Gurr *Playgoing* 169).

4. Of course, Fletcher's use of Bianca's name for what is an altogether different character opens many exciting possibilities for anticipated audience shown through revision; this issue is discussed later in the chapter.

5. For a sample of diverse readings, see critical editions by Oliver (1998); Holderness (1989); Bloom (1988), Bevington (1988); Thompson (1984). Also, Dusinberre's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, Patterson's *Reading Between the Lines*, Chamber's *The Elizabethan Stage*, McKeithan's *The Debt to Shakespeare in the Beaumont-and-Fletcher Plays*, Haring-Smith's *From Farce to Metadrama: A Stage History of 'The Taming of the Shrew'*, and Dolan's *'The Taming of the Shrew': Texts and Context.*

6 . "The Shakespeare in the Park (New York, NY) production that featured Morgan Freeman and Tracey Ullman reflected the discomfort many people felt about the ending of the play, and offered a version of the 'solution' that now seems commonplace. When Kate was making her deferential speech at the end, she was down on her knees helping Petruchio off with his boots. He was seated on a stool, looking very pleased with her comments. As she finished, she upended him and he landed on his back, first shocked, then amused. Then the two of them walked off together arm in arm, having 'played a joke' on the rest of the people on stage" (van den Berg).

7. For a representative sampling, see Marlowe's *Tamberlaine* (1587), Lyly's *Midas* (1589), Heywood's *The Brazen Age* (1595), Jonson's *What You Will* (1601), Beaumont's *The Fox* (1607), Ford's *Broken Heart* (1629), even as late as Shirley's *The Doubtful Heir* (1640).

8. Woodbridge goes one step further: "King James' attempt . . . to enlist the support of literature in his campaign against aggressive women was, as far as can be judged from extant plays, a signal failure. We can account for the drama's new image of women, forged during the *hic mulier* years, by positing increased pressure by female playgoers. . . . For generations, literature had sought to modify women's behavior by praising Grissils and damning shrews; during the *hic mulier* years, women forced the drama, at least, to provide models more to their taste—Katherine of Aragon, the spurned wife who stands up for herself; Maria, the rebellious wife whose insubordination is celebrated; the Duchess of Malfi, the widow allowed a sex life with no authorial condemnation. Whether any insubordinate wife was ever celebrated by any living creature in the real world is finally a secondary question: a real world whose literature admits to her celebration as an imaginative possibility is capable of celebrating her in the flesh eventually" (267).