INTRODUCTION

Date and Theatrical Context

It is generally agreed that *The Taming of the Shrew* is among Shakespeare's earliest comedies, but to date it more precisely we need to examine the surviving references to its first publication and performance. Enquiry is complicated by the existence of two closely related plays: *The Taming of the Shrew*, printed in the Shakespeare Folio of 1623, and *The Taming of a Shrew*, a different version whose connection with the Folio play remains puzzling; it is convenient to refer to them as *The Shrew* and *A Shrew*. While the distinction between the two is important to us, however, it is not clear that it was consistently made in the early references. The preliminary evidence can be set out as follows:

1 On 2 May 1594 a play was entered to Peter Short in the Stationers' Register as 'A plesant Conceyted historie called the Tamyinge of a Shrowe'.[1]

2 A play was printed in a quarto edition in the same year with the following information on its title page: 'A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The taming of a Shrew. As it was sundry times acted by the Right honorable the Earle of Pembrook his servants. Printed at London by Peter Short and are to be sold by Cutbert Burbie, at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1594'. A single copy of this edition survives. It is the play known today as *A Shrew*.[2]

3 On 11 June 1594 a performance of a play called 'the tamyng of A shrowe' at the Newington Butts theatre is recorded in Henslowe's diary.[3] Henslowe does not mark the play 'ne' (meaning 'new'). Both the Admiral's Men and the newly formed Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company from this time onwards) seem to have been playing in this theatre in 1594.

4 In 1596 Peter Short and Cuthbert Burby reprinted the quarto of *A Shrew* with a few minor modifications.

5 On 22 January 1607 three plays, 'The taming of a Shrewe', 'Romeo and Juliett' and 'Loves Labour Loste', were entered in the Stationers' Register to 'Master Linge by direccon of A Court and with consent of Master Burby under his handwrytinge'. A third quarto of *A Shrew* appeared immediately with the imprint 'Printed at London by V.S. for Nicholas Ling and are to be sold at his shop in Saint Dunstons Church-yard in Fleet street. 1607.' This edition again had a few minor modifications.[4] In the same year Ling transferred his rights in *A Shrew* to John Smethwick.

[1] Edward Arber (ed.), *The Stationers' Registers, 1554–1640*, 2 vols., 1875, II, 648. See also the discussion of the descent of the copyright in this play from 1594 to 1623 in Greg, p. 62.
[2] Quotations from *A Shrew* throughout this edition are from the text given in Bullough, *Sources*, I, 69–108.
[3] R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (eds.), *Henslowe's Diary*, 1961, p. 22.
[4] For details of the variants between these early editions, see F. S. Boas (ed.), *The Taming of a Shrew*, 1908.

6 In 1623 *The Shrew* was printed in the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays.
7 In 1631 John Smethwick printed a quarto edition, not of *A Shrew* as one might expect, but of *The Shrew*, with a text clearly deriving from the First Folio.

It appears that Smethwick, owning the rights of *A Shrew* but printing *The Shrew*, did not discriminate between the plays. Neither, apparently, did Burby, when he consented to the association of *A Shrew* with *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. It seems clear, however, that both Pembroke's Men and the Chamberlain's Men had *Shrew* plays in their respective repertories by 1594.

A close estimate of the date of *The Shrew* depends upon our interpretation of (1) the relationships between the two versions, (2) theatre-company history in the 1590s and (3) connections with other relevant plays of the time. The relationship between *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* has been vigorously debated; it was once thought that *A Shrew* was the source for *The Shrew*, but it is now generally agreed that *A Shrew* is some kind of memorial reconstruction of *The Shrew* itself,[1] and it would therefore follow that *The Shrew* was performed before 1594. The troubled theatre history of the period leads us to suppose that it was at least two years before. A severe outbreak of the plague closed the theatres, apart from one short interlude, from June 1592 right on into 1594. The companies dispersed, some splitting into smaller groups and some reorganising under new patrons. Shakespeare's career at that time is not known with any certainty, but there are indications that he was with the Queen's Men before 1592, left with others to join Pembroke's Men in the same year, and finally joined the newly established Chamberlain's Men in 1594.[2]

Shakespeare's association with Pembroke's Men, which may have been co-extensive with the life of that company, may help to explain the existence of *A Shrew* and of two other abbreviated and reconstructed plays of this period: *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (a version of *2 Henry VI*), printed in 1594, and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (a version of *3 Henry VI*), printed in 1595, naming Pembroke's Men on its title page. Behind these garbled plays, it has been claimed, we can detect 'good acting versions', deliberately (and perhaps even authorially) cut and rearranged for performance by a cast slightly smaller than originally intended.[3] It has been shown that all three 'bad' texts, including *A Shrew*, can be performed by a company of eleven adult actors, four boys and about five supernumeraries playing soldiers, attendants and so on. Certain actors' names ('Tom', 'Sander', 'Will') appear in speech headings and stage directions in all three texts, making it appropriate to treat them as a group. The relationship of *A Shrew* to *The Shrew*, however, is not quite like that of the *Henry VI* derivatives to the Folio texts. Although *A Shrew* contains evidence of memorial reconstruction

[1] For a full discussion of the relationship between *The Shrew* and *A Shrew*, see Textual Analysis, pp. 173–92 below.
[2] See Scott McMillin, 'Casting for Pembroke's Men: the *Henry 6* quartos and *The Taming of a Shrew*', *SQ* 23 (1972), 141–59; G. M. Pinciss, 'Shakespeare, Her Majesty's Players, and Pembroke's Men'. *S.Sur.* 27 (1974), 129–36; and Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The origin and personnel of the Pembroke company', *Theatre Research International* 5 (1980), 45–68.
[3] McMillin, 'Pembroke's Men', p. 148. Gary Taylor has reached similar conclusions about the 1600 'bad' quarto of *Henry V*: see Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *Modernizing Shakespeare's Spelling, with Three Studies in the Text of 'Henry 5'*, 1979.

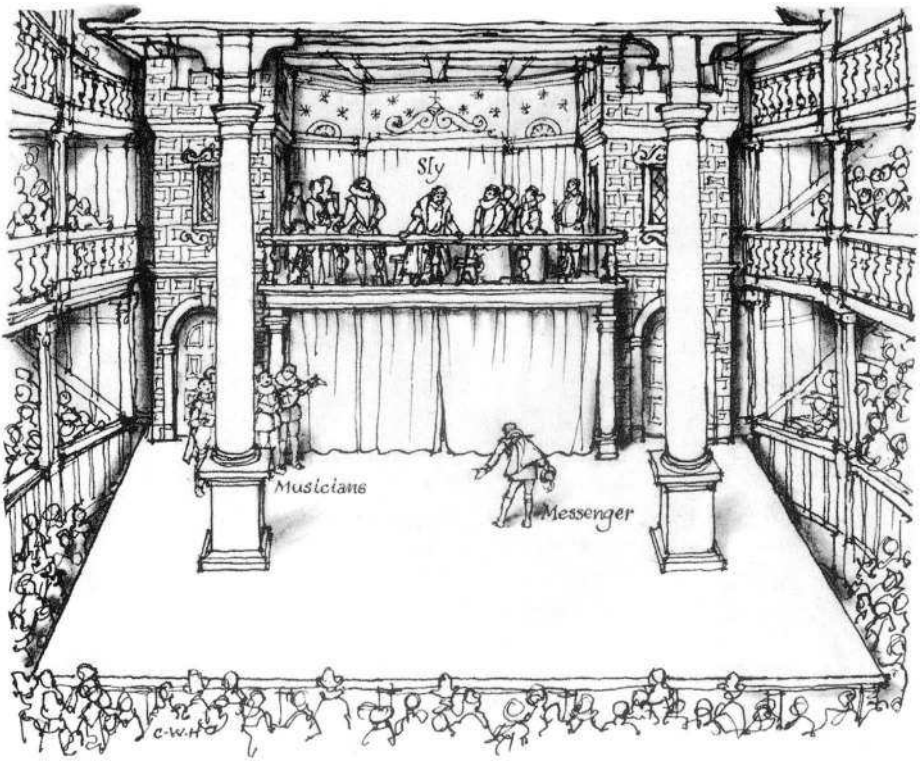
and of cutting, it is much more freely rewritten. The Folio text of *The Shrew* itself, moreover, appears to have been cut, since Sly and his companions disappear at the end of 1.1 instead of staying, as they do in *A Shrew*, to watch the play and conclude the action. Neither surviving text, therefore, seems wholly to preserve the play as it was performed before the closing of the theatres.[1]

Two further pieces of peripheral evidence tend to support a date before 1592. At one point in *A Shrew* we find the stage direction *Enter Simon, Alphonsus, and his three daughters*. Since the play's character 'Simon' is already on stage, it has been suggested that this was also the name of the actor who played 'Alfonsus', and therefore to be identified as Simon Jewell, of either the Queen's or Pembroke's Men, who died (probably from the plague) in August 1592.[2] Another intimation of an early performance of *The Shrew* is found in an allusion in Antony Chute's poem *Beawtie Dishonoured written under the title of Shores Wife*: 'He calls his *Kate* and she must come and kisse him'; *A Shrew* does not have the kissing sequences of *The Shrew* 5.1 and 5.2.[3]

Verbal parallels with non-Shakespearean plays may be adduced to confirm a date before 1592, perhaps as early as 1590. A number have been noted between the anonymous play *A Knack to Know a Knave* and both *Shrew* plays.[4] *A Knack* was first performed by Strange's Men at the Rose on 10 June 1592 and marked 'ne' (meaning 'new') in Henslowe's diary. It was printed in 1594. While we cannot be sure that the published text of *A Knack* was the same as that acted in 1592, any detectable borrowings from the *Shrew* plays must date back to pre-plague performances. If we assume from the borrowings from *A Shrew* that a performance of the derivative text intervened between the original performance of *The Shrew* and the first of *A Knack*, the date of *The Shrew* is pushed back even earlier. Parallels with Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* are of interest but do not give much help with the precise dating of *The Shrew*, as the date of Kyd's play itself cannot be established with certainty within the range 1582–92. Many scholars, however, favour a date towards the end of the period. A trace of the old play *King Leir* may be left at 4.1.58–9; it belonged to the Queen's Men and it has been argued that Shakespeare acted in it.[5]

The evidence so far suggests, therefore, that Shakespeare originally wrote his play, complete with all the Sly material, for a large company (possibly the Queen's Men) either in the season ended by the closing of the theatres in June 1592 or in the preceding season. During the turbulent years 1592–4 two companies came to possess cut versions of the play – *The Shrew*, which remains close to the original, and *A Shrew*, a memorial reconstruction of the original. It remains possible that *The Shrew* was among the first of Shakespeare's plays and dates back to 1590, but since there is no controlling external evidence, such a speculation depends upon a judgement of the play's maturity in relation to Shakespeare's other early work.

[1] For a fuller discussion of the origins of the Folio text, see Textual Analysis, pp. 173–92 below.
[2] See Mary Edmond, 'Pembroke's Men', *RES* 25 (1974), 129–36; Scott McMillin, 'Simon Jewell and the Queen's Men, *RES* 27 (1976), 174–7; and Wentersdorf, 'Pembroke company', pp. 48 and 63.
[3] See William H. Moore, 'An allusion in 1593 to *The Taming of the Shrew*?' *SQ* 15 (1964), 55–60.
[4] See G. R. Proudfoot (ed.), *A Knack to Know a Knave*, Malone Society Reprints, 1963, and Ann Thompson, 'Dating evidence for *The Taming of the Shrew*', *N&Q* 29 (1982), 108–9.
[5] See Kenneth Muir (ed.), *Lear*, 1952, pp. xxiv–xxix, and Pinciss, 'Her Majesty's Players', p. 133.

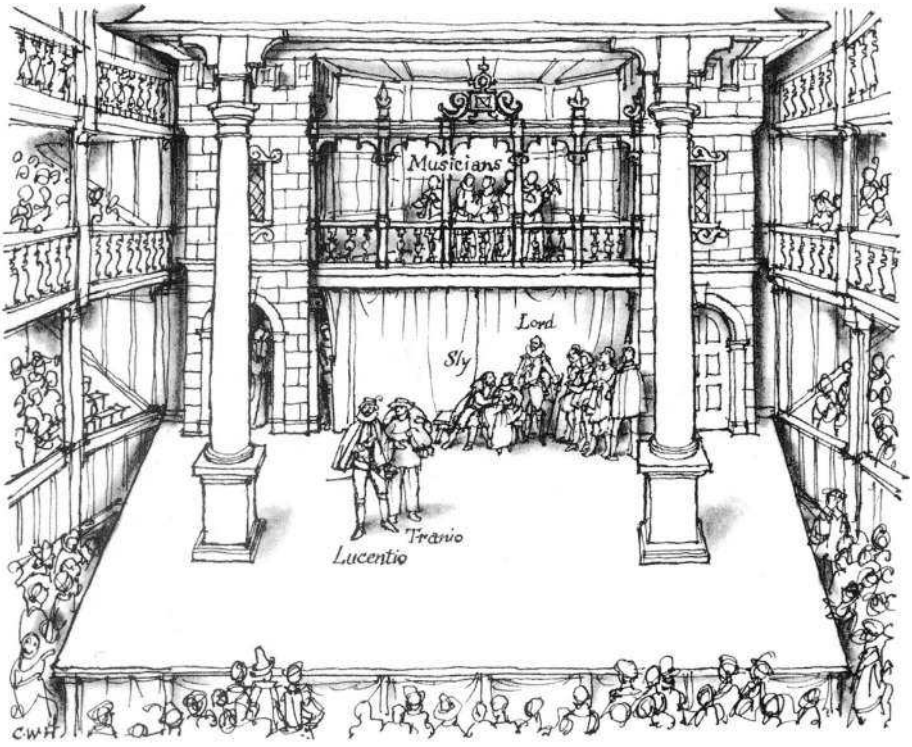


1 A possible staging of Induction 2 with the use of a gallery, by C. Walter Hodges. The scene is played 'aloft', as in a playhouse of the 1590s provided with a spacious upper stage. It is here suggested that the musicians, if seen at all, need not be placed above. The Messenger is shown announcing the performance from the acting-area below

The Shrew in the Context of Shakespeare's Own Work

Among Shakespeare's comedies, *The Shrew* has particularly close affinities with *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. It is generally agreed that these three plays are Shakespeare's earliest comedies but the order in which they were written has not been definitely established. In the absence of other arguments it has seemed logical to suppose that Shakespeare progressed away from writing plays directly based on classical or Italian models towards the less plot-bound mode of romantic comedy which he subsequently developed from *Love's Labour's Lost* to *Twelfth Night*. If we accept this view, *The Comedy of Errors*, which is most heavily dependent on classical sources, would come first, *The Taming of the Shrew*, with its mixture of classical and romantic materials, would follow, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare's first attempt at fully romantic comedy, would be the latest of the three.

There are obvious objections to this theory: one might claim, for example, that the ending of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is comparatively weak and that Shakespeare



2 A possible staging of Induction 2 on the main stage, by C. Walter Hodges. The scene is all placed below, as in a playhouse with a restricted upper stage. The Messenger has just withdrawn and the first players have entered

could hardly have written it after dealing competently with much more complicated dénouements in *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Shrew*,[1] or one might object that Shakespeare did not in fact jettison classical motifs after *The Shrew* but continued to use them throughout his career.[2] Marco Mincoff has argued that *The Shrew* must precede *The Comedy of Errors* on the grounds that it is stylistically more primitive,[3] and Brian Morris has gone so far as to suggest that *The Shrew* 'might be not simply Shakespeare's first comedy: it might be his first play'. He draws our attention to the evocation of Warwickshire in the Induction, suggesting that Shakespeare is here 'recalling a countryside he had quite recently left', and he proposes a date of 1589.[4] Another editor, H. J. Oliver, agrees that *The Shrew* must have been written at least as early as 1592 but supposes on internal evidence that *The Two Gentlemen* came first.[5] The whole question of the dating of Shakespeare's earliest plays was reopened

[1] In Clifford Leech (ed.), *TGV*, 1969, pp. xxi–xxxv, it is argued that the first draft of that play preceded *The Shrew* but that the present (revised) text is later.
[2] This is well demonstrated by Richard Hosley in 'The formal influence of Plautus and Terence', in J. R. Brown and B. Harris (eds.), *Elizabethan Theatre*, 1966, pp. 131–45.
[3] M. Mincoff, 'The dating of *The Taming of the Shrew*', *ES* 54 (1973), 554–65.
[4] Morris, pp. 50–65.
[5] Oliver, pp. 29–33.

by E. A. J. Honigmann, who draws our attention to the number of independent arguments that have been advanced for pushing back the dates of various early plays, thus giving greater weight to the theory that Shakespeare began his career as a dramatist in the 1580s and not around 1590 as traditionally accepted.[1]

The links between *The Shrew* and *The Comedy of Errors* are most obvious in *The Shrew*'s sub-plot, though they are not confined to it. In both plays we find the plot-device of the threat to the life of an innocent merchant: *The Comedy of Errors* opens dramatically with the Duke of Ephesus telling the Syracusan merchant Egeon that his life and goods are forfeit because of newly begun hostilities between the two dukedoms (1.1.1–22), and Tranio invents a similar situation in *The Shrew* when the hapless merchant he has chosen for the role of 'supposed Vincentio' says he comes from Mantua (4.2.72–87). Both plays also have a comic scene in which a man is refused entry to a house (either his own or his son's) because another man masquerading as him is already inside and is accepted as the genuine character by the other occupants: this happens to Antipholus of Ephesus in *Errors* (3.1) and to Vincentio in *The Shrew* (5.1). These two plot-devices derive ultimately from Roman comedy but Shakespeare's immediate source for both of them was probably George Gascoigne's *Supposes*, which served him for most of *The Shrew*'s sub-plot.[2]

There are several other similarities between *Errors* and *The Shrew*. Both plays have a 'framing action' outside the main narrative: the Egeon story in *Errors* and the Sly material in *The Shrew*. The Egeon story has a simple narrative link with the main plot of *Errors*, since Egeon is the father of the twins whose mistakes and adventures constitute the main action, while the Sly story is related to the main plot of *The Shrew* in a more indirect thematic way, particularly in its concern with deception and transformation. Sly's confusion as to which part of his experience is dream and which part is reality comes to a head when he is presented with a 'wife':

> Am I a lord, and have I such a lady?
> Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now? (Induction 2.64–5)

Antipholus of Syracuse undergoes a similar confusion when his twin brother's wife addresses him as her husband:

> To me she speaks, she moves me for her theme:
> What, was I married to her in my dream?
> Or sleep I now and think I hear all this? (2.2.181–3)[3]

Both men decide to accept the 'dream' since it appears so agreeable, but for Antipholus of Syracuse the experience becomes frightening and nightmarish and a potentially cruel 'awakening' awaits Sly. *Errors* develops the darker side of the mistaken-identity theme which is only hinted at in *The Shrew*, but in both cases the potentially disturbing 'man denied entry' scene discussed above may have suggested these developments.

[1] E. A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare's Impact on his Contemporaries*, 1982, pp. 53–90.
[2] For a fuller discussion of Shakespeare's use of *Supposes* in *The Shrew*, see pp. 9–17 below.
[3] Quotations and line references to plays other than *The Shrew* are from Riverside.

Both plays have two contrasted heroines, one of whom in each case is a shrew. Antipholus of Ephesus complains of the shrewish behaviour of his wife Adriana and she is reproved by her sister Luciana, who argues the case for male supremacy and female obedience in terms similar to those used by Katherina (*The Shrew* 5.2.136–79, *Errors* 2.1.10–31). Like Hortensio's Widow in *The Shrew*, Adriana rejects this 'fool-begged patience' but finally confesses her fault when she is severely scolded by the Abbess in the last scene. Mincoff and Morris consider that the reproof of shrewishness in *Errors* represents a moral and artistic advance on that in *The Shrew*, but this seems debatable, since Adriana is publicly humiliated despite the fact that in her husband's behaviour she has far more provocation for her attitude than Katherina. Even if one did accept that *Errors* was more sophisticated in this respect, it seems dubious to use the comparison for dating evidence as Mincoff and Morris do: one might as well argue that the treatment of jealousy in *Othello* is more sophisticated than that in *The Winter's Tale*, so *Othello* must be the later play.

The setting of *The Shrew* in Padua may be a deliberate contrast with the setting of *Errors* in Ephesus since Padua was renowned in the Renaissance as 'a citadel of common sense against the new mythology [of witchcraft]' typically associated with Ephesus.[1] Shakespeare exploits the reputation of Ephesus for superstition and sorcery in *Errors*, while in *The Shrew* there are several suggestions that Katherina is possessed by a 'devil' (the archetypal shrew being 'the devil's dam') and hence that the taming process is a kind of exorcism. Padua was also famous as an ancient university town, so it is appropriate that Lucentio should go there to pursue 'A course of learning and ingenuous studies' (1.1.9). He sees the move as an important part of his education and of his initiation into adult life:

> for I have Pisa left
> And am to Padua come as he that leaves
> A shallow plash to plunge him in the deep. (1.1.21–3)

Petruchio also seems to have 'left home' in a significant sense, as he tells his friend Hortensio that he has been blown from Verona to Padua by

> Such wind as scatters young men through the world
> To seek their fortunes farther than at home
> Where small experience grows. (1.2.47–9)

This theme provides a strong link with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* where the plot is similarly activated by young men travelling from one part of Italy to another for education and general profit. Valentine departs on his travels with the remark that 'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits' (1.1.2) and there is some concern that his friend and cousin Proteus is not going to have the same opportunities (1.3.4–16). Of course the chief result of all this educational travel, as in the Roman comedies which again lie behind this motif, is romantic involvement with the women in the new location. As Tranio points out in 1.1 of *The Shrew*, the advanced study of Ovid (meaning the pursuit of amorous adventures) is a major reason for leaving home. The

[1] See H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1969, pp. 58–61.

romantic rhetoric of both plays is similarly influenced by Lylyan rhetorical patterning, and Shakespeare makes good comedy out of the swearing and forswearing of the young lovers.[1]

All three of these early comedies contain comic scenes between masters and servants: Dromio of Ephesus genuinely mistakes the commands of Antipholus of Syracuse in *Errors* 1.2, but he gets beaten for it just as Grumio does for pretending to misunderstand Petruchio in *The Shrew* 1.2. Speed in *The Two Gentlemen* also pretends to misunderstand commands (2.1), and he can be compared with Tranio and Biondello (*The Shrew* 4.2 and 4.4) when he finds himself in the position of explaining the situation to his rather slow employer (2.1). Launce in *The Two Gentlemen* is a more original comic character who is allowed to reveal his wit in lengthy speeches (as in his two scenes with his dog, 2.3 and 4.4) as well as in repartee. In this he is more like the Grumio who describes the journey home from Padua in 4.1 of *The Shrew*.

Clearly these three comedies are closely related to each other in various ways, though the similarities may not help to establish the order of composition. *The Shrew* has more surprising links with the early history plays: the outrageous courtship scene between Petruchio and Katherina in 2.1 would surely have been compared by contemporary audiences with the similar confrontations between Suffolk and Margaret in *1 Henry VI* 5.3 and between Richard and Anne in *Richard III* 1.2, if we accept the conventional dating of those plays as 1589–90 and 1592 respectively. Possibly the three female roles were written with the same forceful boy actor in mind. The characterisation of Petruchio as a bluff, rather engaging man who encourages the audience to appreciate his 'performance' by telling us in advance how he is going to manipulate people (2.1.165–76, 4.1.159–82) is unusual among Shakespeare's comedies but reminds us of Richard III himself and of the Bastard in *King John*, which may have been written as early as 1590. A further link between *The Shrew* and *Richard III* is suggested by Sly's odd error when he claims 'we came in with Richard Conqueror' (Induction 1.4), which recalls the story recorded by John Manningham in his diary in 1601 as told to him by his fellow law student Edward Curle:

> Upon a time when Burbidge played Richard 3 there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him that, before she went from the play, she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained and at his game ere Burbidge came. Then, message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third.

Manningham helpfully adds 'Shakespeare's name William'.[2] It might not be too far-fetched to see the line in *The Shrew* as a joke for those who knew this contemporary anecdote.

Finally, one can see in *The Shrew* examples of the strong Ovidian influence which affected much of Shakespeare's work in the early 1590s. Tranio encourages his master to read Ovid in 1.1 and we duly find him reading the *Heroides* with Bianca in 3.1 and

[1] Compare, for example, the repetitions in *The Shrew* 1.1.148–9 and 207–8 with Proteus's soliloquy in *TGV* 2.6.1–22; and see 4.2.26 n. below.
[2] This anecdote is related and discussed by Samuel Schoenbaum in *Shakespeare's Lives*, 1970, pp. 37–8.

joking with her about the *Ars Amatoria* in 4.2. The Ovidian influence on the Induction is even stronger, since the 'wanton pictures' described to Sly represent various erotic encounters from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Induction 2.45–56); this passage has been criticised for over-decorativeness and for being 'direct imitation of Marlowe',[1] but it is clearly relevant to the theme of transformation through trickery (in the case of Sly) and love (in the case of Katherina). The Elizabethan fashion for writing Ovidian erotic narrative poems began when Thomas Lodge published *Scylla's Metamorphosis* in 1589, and Shakespeare was one of the first of many poets to essay this genre when he published *Venus and Adonis* in 1593. His earliest classical play, *Titus Andronicus* (usually dated 1593–4), is even more heavily Ovidian than *The Shrew*, drawing on the story of Tereus and Philomel for its plot and requiring a copy of the *Metamorphoses* to appear on stage in 4.1. It has also been remarked that the language of *Titus* is Ovidian, particularly in its tendency to elaborate pictorial effects.[2]

Comparison with Shakespeare's other works, therefore, while it cannot establish any clear sequence, suggests that the play belongs to the earliest phase of his development and leaves us free to suppose that it was written in or about 1590.

Sources

Discussion of Shakespeare's sources for *The Shrew* has been confused, firstly by the existence of *A Shrew* and secondly by the reluctance of literary scholars to deal with folktale and oral tradition.

As I have said above (p. 2), it was formerly held that *A Shrew* was quite simply Shakespeare's direct source-play for *The Shrew* but this position has become untenable for the following reasons: (1) There is considerable evidence for believing that *A Shrew* is not an independent text at all but a rather unusual kind of 'bad' quarto deriving from Shakespeare's *The Shrew*.[3] (2) Work on the folktale origins of both plays supports the likelihood that *A Shrew* derives from *The Shrew* rather than *vice versa*.[4] (3) The structural and thematic sophistication of *A Shrew* (which contains all three of the plot-strands of *The Shrew*) is so outstanding that even those few scholars who reject the 'bad' quarto theory resort to suggestions like '*A Shrew* may not be so much the source-play as Shakespeare's first shot at the theme.'[5] The alternative, as Richard Hosley says, is 'to assume around 1593 [or 1590] the existence of a dramatist other than Shakespeare who was capable of devising a three-part structure more impressive than the structure of any extant play by Lyly, Peele, Greene, Marlowe or Kyd'.[6] Even without the textual evidence, this assumption is so dubious that it seems wisest to assume that it was Shakespeare who was responsible for the complex structure and interweaving of materials that we find in both *Shrew* plays.

[1] Mincoff, 'Dating', p. 560.
[2] See J. C. Maxwell (ed.), *Tit.*, 1953, pp. xxxi–xl.
[3] See Textual Analysis, pp. 173–92 below.
[4] J. H. Brunvand, '*The Taming of the Shrew:* A Comparative Study of Oral and Literary Versions', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University, 1961. See also Brunvand's article, 'The folktale origin of *The Taming of the Shrew*', *SQ* 17 (1966), 345–59.
[5] Bullough, *Sources*, 1, 58.
[6] Richard Hosley, 'Sources and analogues of *The Taming of the Shrew*', *HLQ* 27 (1963–4), 289–308.

The three-part structure comprises the Christopher Sly framing action (referred to hereafter as the frame), the courtship and taming of Katherina by Petruchio (the main plot) and the courtship of her sister Bianca (the sub-plot). It is unanimously accepted that the sub-plot derives from George Gascoigne's play *Supposes* (1566), a prose version of Ariosto's *I Suppositi* (1509). The situation is straightforward and free from argument because we have a clear literary tradition with specific texts to compare. In the case of the main plot and the frame the situation is more complicated because both derive from folktale and oral tradition. We can cite *The Arabian Nights* and sundry English translations and derivatives as precedents for the trick played on Sly, and we can scour jest-books, ballads and collections of fabliaux for shrew-taming stories, but the best we can find will be general analogues rather than precise sources in the literary sense. It has even been argued that such literary analogues as have been discovered for the shrew-taming story have been misleading rather than helpful, since they have been overemphasised by scholars unwilling to explore the less familiar terrain of folklore and oral tradition.[1]

In deciding to have a framing action or Induction Shakespeare seems to have been following a contemporary theatrical fashion since several plays dating from around 1590 exhibit this kind of structure, notably Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (if we accept the later dating), Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*, Greene's *James IV*, Greene and Lodge's *Looking Glass for London and England* and the anonymous *Histrio-mastix* (which was later touched up by Marston).[2] The personnel and subject-matter of these inductions vary considerably, from supernatural figures watching a revenge plot in *The Spanish Tragedy* to rustics telling fairy tales to while away a night when they are stranded in a wood in *The Old Wives' Tale.* The basic type of narrative Shakespeare uses – the story of a beggar transported into luxurious surroundings and tricked into believing he is a lord – can be found in *The Arabian Nights* where Haroun Al Raschid plays the trick on someone he finds sleeping. A European version occurs in the exploits of Philip the Good of Burgundy, who repeated the trick, according to Heuterus who tells the story in his *De Rebus Burgundicis* (1584). Goulart translated this version into French in the *Thrésor d'histoires admirables et memorables* around 1600 and Edward Grimeston translated Goulart into English in 1607.[3] Although this version is an attractive analogue of Shakespeare's play since the abducted artisan is entertained with 'a pleasant Comedie', the French and English translations are too late for Shakespeare to have used them and there is no evidence that he read Heuterus in Latin. There is, however, some reason to believe that the story was also printed in a lost jest-book compiled by Richard Edwards and published in 1570 and this could have been Shakespeare's source.[4]

[1] See Brunvand, 'Folktale origin', pp. 348–53, and 'Comparative Study', pp. 263–84.
[2] See Thelma N. Greenfield, *The Induction in Elizabethan Drama*, 1969, for a complete list of such plays. Critical discussion can also be found in Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, 1962, and Leo Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*, 1974, pp. 267–72. See also Appendix 2, pp. 199–203 below, on the staging of the Induction.
[3] Bullough reprints Grimeston's version in *Sources*, 1, 109–10.
[4] Thomas Warton records having seen the story in a copy of this book in his *History of English Poetry*, 1775, Section 52.