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The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare

VOLUME 32

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY JOHN DOVER WILSON



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge New York Melbourne Madrid Cape Town Singapore São Paulo Delhi

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108006040

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2009

This edition first published 1928, 1953

This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00604-0

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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EDITED FOR THE SYNDICS OF THE
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

BY

SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH
AND JOHN DOVER WILSON

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by
Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521094993

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First published 1928
*Reprinted 1953, 1962
First paperback edition 1968
Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2009

* Places where editorial changes or additions
introduce variants from the first
edition are, where possible, marked by
a date [1952] in square brackets.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-07556-5 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-09499-3 paperback

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THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

I

Coming to this comedy in our observance of the 1623 Folio's order, and in face of one of the most difficult cruxes in the Shakespearian Canon, we think it well to preface our approach to it with a brief but bold statement of the critical principles we have applied hitherto, and propose to apply, to questions of the authenticity, date, and so on of this or that play.

Our method has been accused as 'disintegrating' Shakespeare. We retort that no method at this time of day can, on condition of its being scholarly, do anything else, if we use the word intelligently. No one can pretend that Heminge and Condell's First Folio was a considered collection, revised by Shakespeare (after death) and bequeathed by him as his solemn claim on the worship of posterity. The First Folio has been proved—as might have been guessed from the twin names of its editors—to have been compiled from playhouse copies—piously, be it agreed, but not therefore with any exactness of research. It follows, then, that when we have an earlier Quarto of any given play, printed in the dramatist's lifetime—and not so far as we know disavowed by him—it has *prima facie* a good claim to be considered.

The consideration of these Quartos, and the claim of a number of them to give, quite often, a text more authentic than that of the First Folio, has been by all scholars admitted. The men, in fact, who have helped to substantiate this have done the greatest service to Shakespeare in their generation: and providing that they do not make—as they cannot and do not—any

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assertion of finality, we would urge that they at any rate work upon human probabilities. The old fashion was to assign any doubtful or inferior work of Shakespeare's to composition by several hands; and we are all familiar with 'Experts' who disagree in assigning this or that dozen lines of a given play to Marlowe, Dekker, Fletcher, Chapman. After some years of reading Shakespeare, testing our own inability and observing the talents of our fellows, we doubt if that confidence can be trusted, even in scholars of admitted learning.

But the difference resolves itself into two ways of 'disintegration.' The old way was to assume that Shakespeare, a man of supereminent genius, never fell below it, and that therefore, when the text exhibited rubbish or dirt, this rubbish was the contribution of a collaborator. (It would be interesting, could we discover it, to know all about the fellow who wrote all the worst lines in Shakespeare; almost as interesting as to discover something more about Shakespeare himself.) The new way is to suggest that the text of our author, as we have it, comes through playhouse copies and could (save by piracy) come through no other way. Which—men being what they are, and the stage and copyright being what they were—seems to our ignorance the more probable? Is it likelier that, for this or that play, Shakespeare should have sought through a library and worked with helpers, or that the Lord Chamberlain's Company should have trusted him to work *solus* upon any old play and then have altered it, here and there, to meet public taste? We know from Greene's famous attack upon him as a theatrical *factotum*, that Shakespeare did actually serve apprenticeship at this job and that his skill or success in it was not unnaturally resented by accredited playwrights with whose original compositions he made free: but even apart from this knowledge we ask bluntly 'Is it conceivable that any manager of a theatrical company, not being a fool and having

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discovered a young man who could do this sort of thing to admiration, would be at the cost of hiring a collaborator?' The supposition is as false to ordinary commercial prudence as it is to any experience of men who have had some acquaintance with the various ways in which masterpieces are written.

Moreover, and upon some acquaintance with Elizabethan writings, we may boldly challenge the pretence by any man—and the men who attempt have usually written no original work in their lives—to take a discussable play and parcel it up, assigning so many lines of it to Marlowe, so many to Massinger or to Fletcher, so many to authentic Shakespeare, so many of the rest to some wretched collaborator (happy in nothing but being innominate, unless happier belike in never having existed) who conveniently inserted whatsoever was flat, stale, unprofitable, bawdry, obscene, or by any twist of the idolatrous mind 'un-Shakespearean'; the truth being that Shakespeare could, in his large way, write bawdry, write flat passages (or at least let them pass in his process of refurbishing such and admit here and there spectacular effects artistically repugnant to him) such, for example, as the silly masque in *Cymbeline*.

In sum, while admitting that any true scholar reasonably conversant with his author can have the courage to say of almost any great passage that it is *aut* Shakespeare *aut nullus*, the pretension of anyone to assign such a remark as 'Muttons,' or 'I knew your father well,' or 'My lord, the carriage waits' from Shakespeare to somebody else on internal evidence postulates a priestly access to sources of information denied to simple men.

To assume as Shakespeare's a play advertised as Shakespeare's in the First Folio by Heminge and Condell (who knew him) is surely the sensible thing to do in absence of strong evidence of his having been helped by guessed-at collaborators of varying degrees of fame. To suggest that his text stands, as we have it, upon

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playhouse and prompt-book copies is as surely a simpler and more economical solution of a hundred difficulties. Nay, this and the whole business of 'piracy-publishing' and its methods—with the sort of authenticity that any cheap Quarto might claim—has been so carefully examined and elucidated for us by Dr A. W. Pollard and others as to leave the old pretensions of 'Experts' confidently assigning this line or that to this or that collaborator with Shakespeare—say Marlowe or Chapman—looking very foolish indeed. As it happens, we have in *The Taming of the Shrew*—in the play itself and in the story of its provenance—two cautionary illustrations of the dangers that lie in wait for the 'collaboration' theorist, to entrap him.

In the first place, our comedy in title and plot has an indisputable and close affinity with another (anonymous) one entitled *The Taming of A Shrew*: their histories in the publishing trade are entwined. This anonymous play contains not only sheaves of Marlowesque verse but a sheaf or two of Marlowe's actual writing, conveyed from *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*: and yet (as we shall see) it is extremely doubtful that Marlowe had any conscious hand in it, or was responsible for it in any way.

Secondly, in dealing with our text of Shakespeare's play and working on the suggestion that a great deal of it is non-Shakespearian, we soon discover that either he wrote the whole of it or that we have to create for ourselves an innominate collaborator of such unusual talent that he is capable of being a poet, a skilled playwright or a complete fool indifferently and unexpectedly at any moment; in other words, that the good things occur in the midst of the bad, the bad in the midst of the good, and that to sift them out and assign them with confidence lays an intolerable strain upon self-sufficiency.

In 1857 Grant White, improving upon suggestions by Warburton and Steevens, evolved his theory of a

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collaborator who obligingly did the bad work and left Shakespeare to put in the good; and this theory has found wide acceptance ever since, though not by any means without disputants¹. One of the most recent of these challengers, Dr Ernest P. Kuhl, has touched very neatly its fatal flaw.

The critics who follow the general conclusions of Grant White give to the unknown collaborator the underplot together with what they choose to call the 'poor touches' of the major part. To Shakespeare they assign the taming scenes, as well as some of the 'undoubtedly good touches' in the minor plot. This division at once confronts us with a curious problem by saddling this co-worker with an impossible task. He becomes a composite, hardly an individual. Strangely enough this difficulty seems to have escaped the observation of all save that shrewd critic Dr Furnivall. Though this venerable scholar believed that Shakespeare had an assistant, he declared that there was great danger of treating the play as if it were a plum-pudding, giving all the plums to Shakespeare (cf. *New Shakespeare Soc.* 1874, 104). The truth of this statement becomes obvious when one recalls that the main source *The Taming of A Shrew* has plenty of plums. And conversely to mention but one Shakespearian play, *The Comedy of Errors*—accepted as genuine by all critics—abounds with glaring instances of 'poor touches.'

Collaboration in culinary art is not to be likened to collaboration in literary art. We are dealing not with a simple structure but with a piece of art; a play whose plot has been the admiration of generations; one of the best in Shakespeare².

To some small details in the above we might demur, but in general it well expresses the old fallacy of inventing an unknown collaborator to serve as whipping-boy for all Shakespeare's sins, real or supposed.

¹ Notably Miss Charlotte Porter, Mr J. M. Robertson, and Drs Gollancz and Boas.

² *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. xi, no. 3 (reprinted 1925).

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We know that Shakespeare could write sinfully as well as superbly—a defect, maybe, of his ‘many-sidedness.’ We can claim, perhaps on long familiarity with his writings and some acquaintance with the characteristic styles of other men, to give our opinion (yet always and only for what it is worth) on any disputed play or scene, saying pretty positively that it is or is not Shakespeare’s. But the critic becomes exorbitant who professes himself able to take any play, dissect it almost line for line and distribute the portions to A or B or C, actual men or merely supposed: for that is more than our experience of human sagacity and human fallibility allows us to concede.

There lurks a further fallacy in the assumption that a writer of genius, touching up his work, always and consistently improves it as he revises. Who, for example, would claim this of Wordsworth, or of Burns? (Let anyone, for instance, compare the three versions of *The Banks o’ Doon* and say if they show a consistency of improvement.) And if a poem may deteriorate under its author’s own care, even more easily may a play, and yet again more easily might an Elizabethan play exposed from birth to the mercies of actors, promptmen and pirates—the moth and dust corrupting and the thieves breaking through to steal.

II

With the provenance of *The Shrew* our Note on the Copy deals in some detail. But we must prick out here some points of the outline.

(1) The text which every editor must use is that of the 1623 Folio. There was a later Quarto (1631), a careless reprint of this text, negligible by us for the moment. The later Folios have been collated with the First by Dr R. Warwick Bond (see his Introduction to

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this play in *The Arden Shakespeare*) and we may take the word of so conscientious a scholar that the differences do not amount to much.

(2) Henslowe's *Diary* notes that a play *The Taming of a Shrew* was performed in June 1594 by the Lord Chamberlain's Servants (Shakespeare's Company) at Newington Butts. In their run of five or six nights they presented also *Titus Andronicus* and a *Hamlet*.

(3) In the previous May one Peter Short had entered at Stationers' Hall a play with the following title:

A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of a Shrew, As it was sundry times acted by the Right honourable the Earle of Pembroke his servants. Printed at London by Peter Short and are to be sold by Cuthbert Burbie at his shop at the Royal Exchange, 1594. 7d.

This quarto, reprinted by Burby in 1596, conveyed by him to N. Ling in 1607, who published a third edition (used by Pope) in that year, and again transferred in the same year to John Smethwick who in 1631 substituted for our play the Quarto to which we have alluded, has hitherto been accepted most excusably as the play which Henslowe saw and the *verus fons* of our Comedy, which it resembles not only in title, general conception and main plot, but even in coincidences of quite good diction. Indeed, while every examination of the provenance must start from it, and always with difficulties enough, nothing at any rate seemed easier than to start by accepting it for an early version of *The Shrew* and working on that assumption—until Mr P. Alexander, the other day (*Times Literary Supplement*, Sept. 16, 1926), made the explosive suggestion that Short's quarto was not the play Henslowe saw, but a corrupt and degraded version, fudged by actors of Lord Pembroke's Company who, broken and out at heel, had sold that play to the Lord Chamberlain's Company but traded what they remembered of it to

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Burby, and that Smethwick, to whom it had descended, in 1631 jettisoned it in favour of the right text of the 1623 Folio. For some other curious and intriguing questions conjured up by this version—henceforth distinguished here as *A Shrew* from Shakespeare's *The Shrew*—see VII. But we dismiss it for the moment to pass back to a yet earlier 'source' upon which Shakespeare's play largely, and the 1594 play pretty certainly though in far smaller measure, drew for the subsidiary plot of Bianca and her lovers.

(4) This is a comedy *I Suppositi*, written by Ariosto and produced by him with acclaim at Ferrara (his city) under patronage of the Duke's brother, the magnificently wicked Cardinal; transferred with more applause to Rome; re-cast later by its author into poor verse; and translated into English (prose) by George Gascoigne, who seems to have known the versified play while basing his work on the earlier one.

Gascoigne's title runs:

Supposes a Comedie written in the Italian tongue by Ariosto Englished by George Gascoygne of Grayes Inne Esquire, and there presented 1566.

Here, on a sharp discovery that two such minds as Ariosto's and Shakespeare's once came within measurable distance of collaboration, if not of contact, we promise ourselves mighty sport. But the result is null, and mainly because Ariosto's Comedies, popular in their day, are null, by no means giving any measure of the man. They are ingenious after an accepted fashion; and Shakespeare borrowed the inventive tricks of *I Suppositi*. But, these used, Ariosto's play was emptied. It had none of the humorous and human stuff provided by the story of the Shrew and her tamer.

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So we turn back from the intrigue of Ariosto to the real stuff of our play; the Induction and all the Petruchio-Katharina business. The 'sources' or 'derivation' of both of these can be dismissed by sensible men at once; the Induction theme—of the drunken sleeper awakened—being at least as old as the poem to the tale of Abu Hassan in *The Arabian Nights*, the shrew-taming scenes as old as the hills. Who ever possessed a grandfather that could not be roused from the chimney corner as by the sound of a trumpet to cap either of them with an analogous local tradition? The affair of the wives' wager at the end, too, is pure folk-lore. Shrews in especial, and stories of them, stick in the memories of old men who can 'mind' when there were such things as ducking-stools. And this kind of robust story imposed upon jejune Italian intrigue undoubtedly gives *The Shrew* a something racy, English and highly Elizabethan. *I Suppositi* has its polite revenge in civilising much of *A Shrew* which is in places coarse, and unforgivably coarse when it puts some of its grossest words into the mouth of Katharina. Indeed we may own not only of *A Shrew* but of *The Shrew* that they have not outworn the centuries comparably with the mass of Shakespeare's better plays. They are of primitive, somewhat brutal, stuff. We may not in this age have harked back to the chivalry of the Courts of Love or idealising of womanhood which the worship of Mary carried as a noble fashion into Court and tourney: we may understand as we read Chaucer the concomitance in his day of *Troilus* or *The Knight's Tale* with the lewder stories of his pilgrims, and even fit their meanings together intelligently in the *Prologue* and *Tale* of the *Wyfe of Bath*. But we do not and cannot, whether for

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better or worse, easily think of woman and her wedlock
vow to obey quite in terms of—

A spaniel, a wife and a walnut tree,—
The more you whip 'em, the better they be.

Let us put it that to any modern civilised man, reading *A Shrew* or *The Shrew* in his library, the whole Petruchio business (in *A Shrew* he is called Ferrando) may seem, with its noise of whip-cracking, scoldings, its throwing about of cooked food, and its general playing of 'the Devil amongst the Tailors,' tiresome—and to any modern woman, not an antiquary, offensive as well. It is of its nature rough, *criard*: part of the fun of those fairs at which honest rustics won prizes by grinning through horse-collars.

IV

Nor can we at all agree with Johnson's pronouncement that 'of this play the two plots are so well united that they can hardly be called two without injury to the art with which they are interwoven.' In fact *The Shrew* abounds in 'loose ends' and sentences which assume in someone or other acquaintance with information not previously imparted (indicative of 'cuts' and patching); the hero, Petruchio, just drops in upon the intrigue from Verona without a why or wherefore and takes charge: anybody who meets anybody else in the street, no matter from what distance arrived, has always somehow known his father and his repute; while as for the back-chat of the serving-men, if not un-Shakespearian, it is frequently as silly-otiose as any we are tempted to redeem from Shakespeare in any play.

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A Shrew and *The Shrew* are both prefaced by an 'Induction,' in which a drunkard on an ale-house bench in stupefied sleep, is discovered by a nobleman on his way from hunting, who plays a trick on him—just as the Caliph Haroun al-Raschid had played it on Abu Hassan—bidding his train carry the fellow home, dress him in fine raiment, and on his awaking conspire in solemn make-belief that he is a great lord come to his senses out of long insanity. In this framework, and for the victim's delectation, the main Comedy of intrigue is enacted. The shape of the Elizabethan stage and the seating of an Elizabethan theatre lent themselves to this kind of framework, and variations upon the device are not uncommon: the actor-spectators being either set apart or distributed among the real audience with licence to interrupt, 'gag' and comment.

It has become a tradition with critics to admire the Induction to *The Shrew*, to admire the whole business of Christopher Sly and the Master's improvement upon the framework of the 1594 play. To this, while agreeing in part, we in part demur. The Induction to *The Shrew* is quite good genuine Shakespeare and capitally managed up to a point; then the frame breaks up, dissolves, is lost. Sly fades straight out at the end of Act 1, Scene 1, and the rest of him is silence. Many excellent opportunities for clownish criticism (we may with proper modesty assert) are let go by. He ends on the admirable comment "'Tis a very excellent piece of work, madam lady: would 'twere done!' At this point, it may be urged, he might effectively and even spectacularly have gone off to sleep again and have snored at intervals during the long remainder of the Comedy. Well and convenient: but we do want to know what becomes of him at the end; and this little piece of satisfaction the Inductor of

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1594 has provided for us. But who can he be, but Shakespeare? It was the 'manifestly better end' he provides, that made Pope, reluctantly, ascribe *A Shrew* to Shakespeare. He makes the lord's servants take the poor fellow and dispose him softly back on his ale-house bench again. Perhaps Shakespeare concluded upon an audible snore; or our demand has been a dull-witted one and the right ending was to close the curtain on silence. But, after all, it is not the way of authors to invite public attention so subtly to the dullness or insipidity of their own compositions. To vary a remark of the late and regretted A. B. Walkley, the scholars of Westminster annually turn their dormitory into a theatre, but the expert playwright does not intentionally return the compliment by turning his theatre into a dormitory.

Those of us who are old enough to remember *The Follies* and Pellissier's most successful device of distributing a part of his actors in upper boxes and stalls to 'guy' with profane interjections upon what happened on the stage itself, may think another suggestion worth considering: that Shakespeare, anticipating some such device, distributed his guyers in some similar way, and left the interjections to their own wit in improvising; such 'gag' never having been put on paper in the play-house copy, would of course never reach the printer.

But this we allow to be merest conjecture.

In face of the many strange problems set by the concurrence and contrast of *A Shrew* and *The Shrew*, let us, almost in parenthesis, clear the decks of Ariosto and Gascoigne before discussing the two Inductions which open our way into the serious maze.

I Suppositi has no Induction. It undoubtedly supplied the sub-plot (not the 'taming' plot) of *The Shrew*, and possibly, but very far more faintly, parts of *A Shrew*. But with the real stuff of either it has little to do. The author of *Orlando Furioso*, though at pains

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to translate his prose version of *I Suppositi* into bald verse, cannot conceivably have taken pride in either (as no reader can derive satisfaction from the second, which is 'right butter-women's rank to market' on a nag of lengthened stride). He is even careless of his own city's geography. Reading Gascoigne, one is smitten in the eye by the old man Philogano's account of how he arrived from Sicily, *via* Ancona and Ravenna, at Ferrara, 'continually against the tide.' Says he—

Honest man, it is even so: be you sure there is no love to be compared like the love of their parents towards their children. It is not long since I thought that a very weightie matter shoulde not have made me come out of *Sicilia*, and yet now I have taken this tedious toyle and travaile upon me, only to see my sonne, and to have him home with me.

Ferrarese. By my faith, sir, it hath been a great travaile, indede too much for one of your age.

Philogano. Yea be you sure. I came in companie with certaine gentlemen of my countrie, who had affaires to dispatche as far as to *Anticon*, from thence by water to *Ravenna*, and from *Ravenna* hither, *continually against the tide*.

But there in Ariosto it is (Act 4, Scene 3): save that Ariosto, knowing his country, says nothing about a 'tide.' With him it is simply *in contrario d'acqua*, or 'against the stream.' A careful treatise on the canal and river system of Italy in the sixteenth century (*a*) as it actually was, and (*b*) as it might be believed in by theatre-goers, has yet to be written.

VI

But we return to the Induction and, with that, to the beginning of serious business.

In our text of *The Shrew* we open upon a somnolent tinker on a bench outside an ale-house; upon whom happens a merry lord on the way home from hunting

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with pack and meinie. So it opens in *A Shrew*. But whereas in our play the merry lord talks as any merry lord naturally would—

Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds...

in *A Shrew* he opens with—

Now that the gloomie shaddow of the night
 Longing to view Orions drisling lookes
 Leapes from th'antarctic world unto the skies
 And dims the Welkin with his pitchie breath
 And darksome night oreshades the cristal heauens,
 Here break we off our hunting...

—an outburst that might well have set any retinue of huntsmen staring at one another. And so *A Shrew* plunges into passages not only Marlowesque, but sometimes lifted straight out of *Tamburlaine* or out of *Faustus*, word for word.

What shall be said of this, for example, when in *A Shrew* Ferrando (Petruccio) is courting Katarina?—

Sweete Kate the¹ louelier then Dianas purple robe
 Whiter then are the snowie Apenis,
 Or icie haire that goes on Boreas chin.
 Father, I swear by Ibis' golden beake,
 More faire and Radiente is my bonie Kate,
 Then siluer Zanthus when he doth imbrace,
 The ruddie Simies at Idas feete,
 And care not thou swete Kate how I be clad,
 Thou shalt haue garments wrought of Median silke,
 Enchast with pretious Iewells fetcht from far,
 By Italian Marchants that with Russian stemes,
 Plous vp huge forrowes in the Terren Maine,
 And better farre my louely Kate shall weare...²

What is this but the First Part of *Tamburlaine*,
 Act 1, Scene 2?

¹ *Thou* Edd. 1596 and 1607.

² *A Shrew* in 'Shakespeare's Library' (Hazlitt's ed. Pt II, vol. ii, p. 513). Our references are to pages in this edition

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Zenocrate, lovelier than the love of Jove,
 Brighter than is the silver Rhodope,
 Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills...
 Thy garments shall be made of Median silk,
 Enchased with precious jewels....

And Christian merchants that with Russian stems
 Plough up huge furrows in the Caspian sea,
 Shall sail to us, as lords of all the lake.

Dr Bond (with acknowledgments to Bullen and Courthope) has listed¹ some thirteen of these 'liftings' from *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, and to his list we may add *Tamburlaine*, Second Part, Act 4, Scene 3 init. (the famous 'jades of Asia' speech which, as it goes on, is clearly echoed in Ferrando's boasting that he will tame his bride's recalcitrance, come what may). Here are the passages:

Tamburlaine, Second Part, Act 4, Scene 3—

The headstrong Iades of *Thrace*, *Alcides* tam'd
 That King *Egeus* fed with humane flesh
 And made so wanton that they knew their strengths
 Were not subdew'd with valour more divine,
 Than you by this unconquered arme of mine.

A Shrew (p. 520)—

Fer. Were she as stubborne or as full of strength
 As were the Thracian horse *Alcides* tamde,
 That King *Egeus* fed with flesh of men,
 Yet would I pull her down, and make her come
 As hungry hawkes do flie unto their lure.

VII

All these 'liftings' and echoings raise a number of questions and cross-questions which admit a wide speculation, but in the present stage of our ignorance (admitted ignorance being the parent of learning) may be briefly set out and left with a few comments.

¹ Introduction, p. xxxviii.

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Question 1. Was the play *A Shrew* printed by Peter Short for Cuthbert Burby in 1594, 'as it was sundry times acted' by Pembroke's Servants, written by Marlowe, or by Marlowe in collaboration with others; and, if so, was Shakespeare one?

We know when and where and almost precisely how¹, Marlowe came to his end. He was slain with a dagger on the evening of May 30, 1593, in a room of entertainment at Deptford by one Ingram Frizer (or Frysar), an agent of Walsingham's, and in the presence of two notorious secret-service scoundrels, by name Nicholas Skeres and Robert Poley. There was no other witness. The three had spent the most of the day, walking up and down with Marlowe (himself an amateur in political intrigue), presumably trying to persuade him into saying or gainsaying something of which he held the secret. He was buried two days later, and Frizer after delay received a Pardon. Now it seems unlikely that anyone would have presented a year after this grim affair a play burlesquing Marlowe; most unlikely that our gentle Shakespeare—who on all evidence admired his 'dead Shepherd'—would have done so. It seems reasonable to give human decency the benefit of the doubt and suppose that *A Shrew*, though published in 1594, was presented, or at least written, before Marlowe's death in May 1593.

Question 2. But then, did Marlowe himself write it, with or without collaborators? To the more seriously minded this suggestion may appear incredible. But to those acquainted with stage-folk and their ways there is nothing incredible about it. Marlowe's was a mocking spirit; and one can, without any grave stretch of belief, imagine that after a thundering success with *Tamburlaine* he (and maybe some kindred spirits) would have exploited

¹ Thanks to the research of Mr J. Leslie Hotson: *The Death of Christopher Marlowe*. London: The Nonesuch Press, 1925.

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its success by 'guying' his own bombast. As a theatrical, and commercial, hit the intrusion, upon a heathside pot-house, of a master of hounds who, to the amazement of his hunt, suddenly breaks into grandiose lines upon the 'Shadow of the Night longing to view Orion's drizzling looks,' might well have tickled ears that remembered them in high tragic setting.

Question 3. But if Marlowe had collaborators in this was Shakespeare one of them? To this we should have no hesitation in answering 'No,' were it not for just one touch which winds up Sly's interposition in the finale of *A Shrew*, which interposition, by the way, gets the comedy out of a bad *impasse*, and is in the right Warwickshire-Dogberry vein.

Question 4. Is it possible that the play which Henslowe saw acted at Newington Butts by the Lord Chamberlain's Servants in June 1594 was not *A Shrew* but actually Shakespeare's *The Shrew*, more or less as we have it?

The suggestion has much inherent probability, apart from the conjectural evidence brought by Mr Alexander to back it up (see II). And the suggestion amounts to this: that in or about 1592 the Earl of Pembroke's Company, having toured the provinces with *A Shrew*, etc. unsuccessfully, and returning to London hard-driven, disposed of their rights in this play to the Lord Chamberlain's Company (in which Shakespeare was then perhaps acting as general furbisher and *Johannes factotum*), and that out of *A Shrew* our young adapter of genius constructed *The Shrew* for his Company, piously cutting out the Marlowe, or most of it, and weaving in the plot of Ariosto-Gascoigne's *Supposes*¹. If Shakespeare did this, and just so, we need not be worried that Meres does not include this play in his list in *Palladis Tamia*

¹ For a different interpretation of the facts, v. Note on the Copy, pp. 104-113.

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(1598); for Shakespeare's job-work for his Company would, on any likelihood, have been done anonymously and even with some stealth.

This brings us to *Question 5*. If Shakespeare did this thing, as early as 1592, upon a play written by eminent hands and adapted it for a rival company, was *The Taming of the Shrew* by any chance the occasion of Greene's famous dying outburst, in the autumn of that year, denouncing the 'upstart crow beautified with our feathers', and not, as Sir Sidney Lee suggests, Shakespeare's patching upon *King Henry VI*¹?

It will be seen that among these questions and along the alleys they open conjecture may wander at will and research in hope. We have merely indicated them, without pretence anywhere of a confident solution.

VIII

To call *The Shrew* a masterpiece is not only to bend criticism into sycophancy and a fawning upon Shakespeare's name. It does worse. Accepted, it sinks our standard of judgment, levels it, and by levelling forbids our understanding of how a great genius operates; how consummate it can be at its best, how flagrantly bad at its worst.

We hold that no-one walking on any such safe respectable level between heaven and hell can ever grasp the range of a Shakespeare to whom, in the writing of Comedy, *The Shrew* came in the day's work with (let us say) *Twelfth Night* or *The Tempest*. To pretend that *The Shrew*, with its 'prentice grasp on poetry, can compare for a moment with *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* or with *Twelfth Night* is an affectation, as foolish as most other human folly; as to assert *The Shrew's* underplot (the whole Ariosto intrigue) as

¹ *The Life of Shakespeare*, by Sir Sidney Lee, pp. 115-16.

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master-work. Any careful, candid examination will expose it as patchwork, and patched none too cleverly.

But the trouble about *The Shrew* is that, although it reads rather ill in the library, it goes very well on the stage, in spite of the choice of managers and adapters to present it without the Induction—the one block of it which indelibly stamps it as Shakespeare's. Samuel Pepys on April 7, 1667, went to the King's house and

there saw *The Taming of a Shrew* which hath some very good pieces in it, but generally is but a mean play; and the best part, 'Sawny' done by Tracy; and hath not half its life, by reason of the words, I suppose, not being understood at least by me.

Being a play which invites rant and in places even demands it, *The Shrew* as naturally tempts the impersonator of Petruchio to unintelligible shouting and mouthing. Yet there is a delicacy in the man underlying his boisterousness throughout, which should be made to appear, and, allowed to appear, is certain to please. He has to tame this termagant bride of his, and he does it in action with a very harsh severity. But while he storms and raves among servants and tailors, showing off for her benefit, to her his speech remains courteous and restrained—well restrained and, with its ironical excess, elaborately courteous. It is observable that, through all the trials he imposes on her, he never says the sort of misprising word that hurts a high-mettled woman more than any rough deed and is seldom if ever by any true woman forgotten or quite forgiven. This underlying delicacy observed by the actor presenting Petruchio, the play can never fail to 'act well,' or—as Pope and Johnson put it—to divert.

As for Katharina, only a very dull reader can miss recognising her, under her froward mask, as one of Shakespeare's women, marriageable and willing to mate; a Beatrice opposing a more repellent barrier,

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yet behind it willing, even seeking, to surrender. Her true quarrel with her sister Bianca (who has something in her of the pampered cat, with claws) slips out in the words which *A Shrew* gives to her—

But yet I will consent and marry him;
For I, methinks, have been too long a maid,
And match him to [too], or else his manhood's good¹;

and in her outburst upon her father in *The Shrew*—

She is your treasure, *she* must have a husband².

And there are truly few prettier conclusions in Shakespeare than her final submission—

Nay, I will give thee a kiss, now pray thee, love, stay³.

IX

There have been shrews since Xantippe's time and since Solomon found that a scolding woman was a scourge shaken to and fro: and it is not discreet perhaps for an editor to discuss, save historically, the effective ways of dealing with them. Petruchio's was undoubtedly drastic and has gone out of fashion. But avoiding the present times and recalling Dickens, most fertile of inventors since Shakespeare, with Dickens's long gallery of middle-aged wives who make household life intolerable by various and odious methods, one cannot help thinking a little wistfully that the Petruchian discipline had something to say for itself. It may be that these curses on the hearth are an inheritance of our middle-class, exacerbating wives by deserting them, most of the day, for desks and professional routine; that the high feudal lord would have none of it, and as little would the rough serf or labourer with an unrestrained hand. Let it suffice to say that *The Taming of the Shrew* belongs

¹ Sc. 5. 70-72. ² Act 2, Sc. 1. ³ Act 5, Sc. 1.

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to a period, and is not un gallant, even so. The works of our author do not enforce set lessons in morals. If we require moral instruction of them we must take them in the large and let the instruction almost imperceptibly sink in and permeate. He teaches no express doctrine anywhere, unless it be the value of charity as interpreting law. He is nowhere an expositor of creed or dogma, but simply always an exhorter, by quiet, catholic influence, to valiancy and noble conduct of life. Indeed it were no paradox to use even of this rough play the saying of St Jerome concerning the Son of Sirach, that we read Shakespeare not for establishment of doctrine but for improvement of manners.

[1928]

Q.

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TO THE READER

An obelisk (†) implies corruption or emendation and suggests a reference to the Notes.

A single bracket at the beginning of a speech signifies an 'aside.'

The reference number for the first line is given at the head of each page. Numerals in square brackets are placed at the beginning of the traditional acts and scenes.

Stage-directions quoted verbatim from the Folio are printed with inverted commas.