

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE FINAL SCENE

#### *Kate's Satisfaction*

It is singularly apt that Kate's climactic declaration of wifely devotion should take place within the walls of Lucentio's house, completely upstaging her sister in Bianca's own matronly domain, while simultaneously and publicly doffing her notorious reputation as a shrew in front of all who once condemned her as such. In doing so, she not only regains her social standing in Padua as a gentlewoman but also confers honour upon her husband and redeems herself from her turbulent past.

This is not to say, however, that her previous shrewish behaviour was unwarranted or her righteous anger suddenly groundless: On the contrary, Kate has conclusively resolved these issues within herself by the simple expedient of rejecting the pseudo-male precedent she has always been faced with and unreservedly accepting her husband as the recognized male ideal. By methodically proving his worth to her, somewhat ruthlessly but very effectively, Petruchio affords her the opportunity to embrace the full extent of her womanhood in counterpoint to the brazen reality of his manhood. He is man to her woman, male to her female, and one hundred percent masculine in perfect complement to her feminine nature. He is highly intelligent, honourable both in word and deed, physically attractive, well able to provide for her financially, and - the most crucial point in his favour - he loves her. It is this complete package of

manhood that Kate ultimately responds to. Thus, in effect, Petruchio's genuine strength of character validates his headship of Kate, consequently allowing her to freely reciprocate with her wholehearted response to him as a worthy husband. This defuses her anger against the other men in her life, all now relegated to a suitably negligible position in comparison with her alpha male husband, liberating her to experience the joy of her womanhood as the beloved wife of a nonpareil.

Because Petruchio is the man that he is, he similarly needs and desires a complete woman, a real woman, and not a counterfeit female. Kate is well aware that there are no half measures with this man. She is not only desired sexually, but she is important enough to induce him to conceive and implement the entire taming sequence both for her long-term happiness as well as his. Indeed, it must be stressed again that it is highly unlikely that Petruchio would marry a woman without the promise of abiding passion, let alone embark upon such a mission as the taming of the shrew for either a lukewarm regard or mere appeasement of ego. Kate is every bit a woman worth fighting for, and he rises to the challenge with courage, integrity and the hope of finding a lasting, worthwhile love. In this, as we see, he is far from disappointed.

From the instant Petruchio and Kate enter Lucentio's house from the street, just after the kiss they have shared, Shakespeare hints broadly at the change in circumstances, using the host as his mouthpiece. Lucentio welcomes his guests, stating that '[at] last, though long, our jarring notes agree,/And time it is, when raging war is done,/To smile at scapes and perils overblown' (5.2.1-3). While Lucentio overtly refers to the complications his elopement with Bianca has caused, and perhaps the confusion of identity which has baffled his father,

there can be no doubt in the playgoer's mind that these opening lines of the last scene are a thinly-veiled allusion to the new relationship between the shrew and her tamer, who are finally at peace with each other after having continually locked horns since their first meeting.

When Lucentio invites his guests to partake of the banquet, Petruchio laughingly declares 'Nothing but sit and sit, and eat and eat!' (5.2.12), again inadvertently showcasing the difference between himself and the other men by his comment, hinting at his inclination towards a healthier and more active lifestyle with food taken in moderation rather than indulging in the physical excesses of his counterparts. Baptista tells him to enjoy this token of Padua's kindness, and Petruchio promptly responds that Padua has afforded him nothing but what is kind. Despite being disguised as a gracious rejoinder to his father-in-law's statement, this is a direct and delicately-offered compliment to his wife, for it was she whom he lately took from Padua. With this, he signals his contentment in his marriage both to her and the company at large.

Hortensio, unaware that a subtle change has come over his friend's relationship with the erstwhile shrew, remarks that he wishes this were really true for both Petruchio's sake as well as his own. Petruchio deliberately pretends to misunderstand him, lightheartedly saying that Hortensio probably fears the widow he has just taken to wife, purposefully giving the impression that it is certainly not he, Petruchio, who has anything to regret by his marriage. The widow's barbed attack on him, however, abruptly changes the casual tone of things.

Widow :

*He that is giddy thinks the world turns round.*  
(5.2.20)

This is a bold and direct insult to Petruchio, implying that his marriage to a shrew and his subsequent fear of her has made him assume that all men are afraid of their wives. She thus twits him in public for his foolishness in marrying the undesirable Kate.

To his credit, Petruchio responds to this piece of rudeness with considerable aplomb. He robs the widow's comment of its sting by nonchalantly commending her upon her bold wit. As he did before with Hortensio's insensitive remark, he quietly attempts to avert the possibility of insult to his wife. Kate, however, begins to suspect that the widow is subtly insulting Petruchio. Ever straightforward, she demands to know the widow's meaning up front.

Katharina :	<i>Mistress, how mean you that?</i>
Widow :	<i>Thus I conceive by him.</i>
Petruchio :	<i>Conceives by me! How likes Hortensio that?</i>
Hortensio :	<i>My widow says, thus she conceives her tale.</i>
Petruchio :	<i>Very well mended. Kiss him for that, good widow.</i>

(5.2.21-25)

This time, Petruchio's obvious attempts at witticism do not succeed in distracting Kate's attention. She is not so easily fobbed off by humorous repartee or his efforts to pour oil upon the troubled waters. Grimly she returns to her original question.

Katharina :	<i>"He that is giddy thinks the world turns round":</i>
	<i>I pray you, tell me what you meant by that.</i>
Widow :	<i>Your husband, being troubled with a shrew,</i>
	<i>Measures my husband's sorrow by his woe-</i>
	<i>And now you know my meaning.</i>
Katharina :	<i>A very mean meaning.</i>
Widow :	<i>Right, I mean you.</i>
Katharina :	<i>And I am mean indeed, respecting you!</i>

(5.2.26-32)



This sharp altercation betrays Kate's humiliation and indignation at being thus targeted for ridicule by a woman she has only just met. Kate rightly condemns the widow's comment as a contemptible one, but Hortensio's new wife calmly reminds her of her reputation as a shrew, to which Kate responds that she is not at all shrewish compared to the widow herself. Nevertheless, Kate is probably well aware that it is her own past behaviour that has warranted this public opinion of her relationship with Petruchio. More important than her own chagrin, however, is her very real anger on her husband's behalf, for he is in fact the real target of the widow's sly insult. She is clearly frustrated at her inability to display her love and loyalty to him when thus publicly confronted by her sorry repute as a fractious shrew. Despite her anger, she is morally helpless to defend her husband since the truth of her own previous shrewishness forms the weapon being used against him. Indeed, even the tiff with the widow, occurring as it does in public company, might be construed as exemplifying her shrewishness!

Well aware of her bitter hurt and helpless anger at this unwarranted and unfair attack, Petruchio abandons any plans to change the subject and coolly displays his support of his wife by encouraging her in her quarrel with the widow, carefully preserving a lighthearted veneer throughout in order to save Kate any more embarrassment, unwittingly seconded of course by the foolish Hortensio.

Petruchio :	<i>To her, Kate!</i>
Hortensio :	<i>To her, widow!</i>
Petruchio :	<i>A hundred marks, my Kate does put her down.</i>
	(5.2.33-35)

This clearly indicates that he is completely on her side. Interestingly enough, he actually mentions his willingness to wager upon Kate's prowess

against any other woman in a showdown, albeit disguising this as a jest, providing a valuable foreshadowing of future events. This not only publicly displays his confidence in her intrinsic worth but also reassures her of her value to him. He is also displaying pride in a wife who will stand up for him against others, as Kate is doing. Kate is noticeably quiet after this subtle reassurance. Despite her impotent anger and hurt pride, her hard-won self-control now shows itself, assisted by the knowledge that she has a sure ally in her husband.

She says nothing even when Bianca slyly hints that all the other men in the room were cuckolded because of her preference for Lucentio, counting Petruchio into the group of her disappointed suitors. Petruchio, however, has no qualms about demonstrating his dislike for Bianca. He strongly objects to her vain supposition and announces his intention to launch a verbal counter-attack, but before he can do so, Bianca withdraws from the men's company with another unseemly sexual innuendo aimed at her sister's husband. Nevertheless, when she and the other wives have gone, Petruchio shows his low opinion of her by congratulating all those who unsuccessfully aspired to Bianca's hand. Ruthless as ever, he does not spare Lucentio's feelings in his contempt of Bianca, announcing a toast to 'all that shot and missed' (5.2.51). In this way, he deliberately throws down the gauntlet, accurately anticipating the other men's criticism of his own wife in turn. It is not long in coming, for every man there has an opinion on the infamous shrew.

It is interesting to note that, during the subsequent barrage of unfavourable comment regarding his wife, Petruchio firmly establishes that he is completely content in his marriage. He doggedly persists in deflecting every shrew-centred insult the men aim at him by claiming that they do not pertain to

him in any way since his wife is not a shrew. In other words, Petruchio still maintains his initial stand that Kate is not a shrew and that the other men are mistaken in their assessment of her. This proves conclusively that he is not only intimately acquainted with her deepest self, but that he is also completely loyal to her whether or not she is present in his company. If Petruchio had indeed first embarked on the shrew-taming with nothing more than a challenge in mind, it is clear that that motive has been superseded by something far more meaningful, because, if it had not, what could be more natural than to boast of the success of his venture in front of his companions? It is highly significant, therefore, that he staunchly refuses to agree with the other men that he has a shrewish wife, despite the evidence proffered by their own acquaintance with Kate. Indeed, he defends her in a well-bred manner that only lightly covers his determination to highlight her excellence as a woman. Not surprisingly, the other men are surprised and puzzled at Petruchio's apparent reluctance to admit the truth as they see it, and they unsuccessfully apply themselves to discomfit him.

Tranio :	<i>'Tis thought your deer holds you at a bay.</i>
Baptista :	<i>O ho, Petruchio! Tranio hits you now.</i>
Lucentio :	<i>I thank thee for that gird, good Tranio.</i>
Hortensio :	<i>Confess, confess, hath he not hit you here?</i>
Petruchio :	<i>'A has a little galled me, I confess; And as the jest did glance away from me, 'Tis ten to one it maimed you two outright.</i>

(5.2.56-62)

There is no better illustration of how cleverly Kate's husband defends his marriage. By remarking that popular opinion has his shrewish wife holding him at arm's length, Tranio affords Petruchio a supreme opportunity to turn the tables upon the complacent men before him. Petruchio calmly comments that while the insult might have slightly galled him, the blow actually glanced away from him

because there is no substance or truth to it in his case, and having done so therefore, it would have badly maimed Lucentio and Hortensio who are married to real shrews and thus form much better targets than he for that sharp jest. Baptista, by virtue of being Kate's father, now intervenes by offering his own conclusive opinion upon the matter – 'Now, in good sadness, son Petruchio, I think thou hast the veriest shrew of all' (5.2.63-64).

Petruchio's response is quietly confident.

Petruchio : *Well, I say no. And therefore for assurance  
Let's each one send unto his wife;  
And he whose wife is most obedient  
To come at first when he doth send for her  
Shall win the wager which we will propose.*  
(5.2.65-69)

By proposing the wager, and making sure that it is for a substantially greater amount than he would bet on either hawk or hound, Petruchio demonstrates the extent of his faith in his wife's loyalty towards him. The three men agree upon the sum of a hundred crowns to be paid to the man whose wife responds most promptly to his summons. Bianca's husband is completely confident of Bianca's obedience and so is Baptista, whose offer to take half this son-in-law's bet is immediately rejected. However, Bianca sends a message to say she is too busy to come to Lucentio, and now it is Petruchio's turn to indulge in a little taunting of his own. When Gremio says that at least she has sent him a kind answer, which is more than anyone can expect from Petruchio's wife, he counters this by expressing the hope that Kate will send him a better reply than her sister has afforded her husband (5.2.89). Hortensio now sends the servant to 'entreat' his own wife, to which the widow sends reply that she will not come in answer to a silly jest and that he had better come to her instead. After displaying

undisguised amusement at Hortensio's predicament, Petruchio sends Grumio with a command for Kate to come to him.

It is at this point that one must bear in mind the context of this wager and the circumstances that precede it. Hardly any time has elapsed between the women's exit from the men's company and this sudden summons to come to them. Bianca and the widow can scarcely be blamed for not acceding to their husbands' requests, for both women have not got a very high opinion of their husbands' mental capabilities despite having chosen to marry them. It is quite likely that Bianca simply cannot be bothered to humour Lucentio's demand for her presence when she is in the middle of a nice chat with a friend, and likewise, the widow – who has already demonstrated her sharp mind and ready, if unkind, wit – cannot see any sensible reason why the young man who has wed her for her wealth and undemanding companionship should suddenly be throwing his weight around asking her to join a company she has only lately forsaken. She rightly guesses that Hortensio has some ulterior motive – she thinks it is a jest – and is unwilling to leave a comfortable seat by the fire to dance attendance upon him.

Kate, however, has grown to respect and admire her husband's character and intellect. She does not need to pretend to have a high opinion of him because she already has a high opinion of him, fed by observation and experience. Having only recently been made aware of how expertly he has manipulated events and incidents to break down her stubborn barriers, and having learnt to trust the merit of his motives even if she cannot at first identify them, as well as acting on the strength of her newfound faith in him as her loyal companion, she has no hesitation in immediately responding to his summons. She purposely overlooks the apparent egoism and foolishness of the 'command', knowing that

Petruchio probably has a very good reason for asking her to come to him. Being an intelligent woman, she probably has a shrewd idea of what he is doing, for as I have pointed out, a wager was jokingly mentioned previously by Petruchio himself, and if that were not enough, she was also with the two other women when they were successively informed of their husbands' requests for their company. It would be a singularly dim woman who could not guess that something is afoot.

Petruchio, despite his confidence in Kate's loyalty to him, is neither foolhardy nor cocky. Being an honest man, he knows he cannot be one hundred percent positive that she has truly fathomed his purposes as regards the taming he has subjected her to, nor can he be completely certain of where he stands in her eyes. Too few words have passed between them for him to be sure of either her regard or her love. After he has commanded Grumio to go to his mistress with his summons, Hortensio is quick to anticipate Kate's answer, and Petruchio's response to his friend's comment gives us a rare glimpse of his heart.

Petruchio :	<i>Sirrah Grumio, go to your mistress. Say I command her to come to me.</i>
Hortensio :	<i>I know her answer.</i>
Petruchio :	<i>What?</i>
Hortensio :	<i>She will not.</i>
Petruchio :	<i>The fouler fortune mine, and there an end.</i> (5.2.99-102)

This unstudied statement reveals Petruchio's genuine hopes for his relationship with his wife. If Kate does not trust him enough to come to him, it is to his own ill-fortune because it signals an end to his own hopes. Although he seems to refer to the outward financial loss that he will have to cover if he loses the wager, there is a far deeper meaning to his pensive remark. If Kate has not

truly thrown off her shrewishness in response to his love for her, or if she does not honestly acknowledge and accept his rightful authority over her whilst trusting in his loving concern for her, then he is the one who has failed to win her to his side. He implies that the 'fouler fortune' would be his because he would not have gained such an exceptional woman as Kate to fulfill the role of faithful and loyal wife to him as he had earnestly hoped to do. And this would in turn put paid to his hopes for an outstandingly satisfying marital relationship. Kate's obedience to his call, therefore, would set the precedent for the rest of their married life, for it would serve as an outward sign of inward solidarity between husband and wife, first in public and subsequently in private.

She does not disappoint him. Kate comes swiftly at his call, and asks her husband what she can do for him. He tells her to bring Bianca and the widow to their husbands, and that if they will not come willingly, to thrash them soundly towards them under his authority. It is difficult to imagine a task which Kate would be more willing to do, for she has probably been wanting to thrash those two spiteful woman for quite some time, and here is her husband asking her to do it for him! As Morris notes, not only does he give her 'the chance to use physical violence on the widow who has insulted her and the sly and shrewish sister she has been itching to beat since Act 2', but by his authority over her as husband and her concurrent obedience to his specific command, 'it would all be legitimate, praiseworthy and "obedient"' (1981:148). This opportunity for vengeance is another veiled gift from Petruchio to his wife, and one she accepts gleefully, for it puts her in a position of superiority to those who have so lately offended her. Would it be a wild flight of fancy to imagine that there is laughter in her heart and a mischievous smile on her lips as she leaves the room?

Hortensio and Lucentio, blind to the subtle nuances of sublingual communication, or 'coded messages', as Morris calls it (1981:148), do not bother to hide their amazement at this demure obedience to Petruchio's order. Petruchio, delighted at Kate's trust in him, tells his two friends that this 'wonder' is the heraldic sign of peace, love, quiet life and the rightful roles of man and woman in the covenant of marriage.

Lucentio : *Here is a wonder, if you talk of a wonder.*  
Hortensio : *And so it is. I wonder what it bodes.*  
Petruchio : *Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life,  
An awful rule, and right supremacy,  
And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy.*  
(5.2.110-114)

Miserly Baptista is so overcome that he offers Petruchio another dowry for Kate, but Petruchio forestalls him by saying that he will win the wager even more thoroughly by demonstrating Kate's virtue even further. As she comes into the room with Bianca and the widow, she hears him comparing them unfavourably to her in front of their husbands, underlining her womanliness to the crowd of men who had once condemned her as unwomanly. It is clear that Kate's trust in Petruchio as her defender is well deserved! Then he tells her to throw down her cap, saying that it does not become her. She obeys.

Bianca and the widow, not being privy to the details of the taming of the shrew, are appalled by her immediate compliance with what seems to them to be a humiliating gesture of slavish obedience. The widow exclaims loudly at Kate's apparent foolishness and Bianca is indignant at what seems to be a 'foolish duty' (5.2.129). When Lucentio tells her that he wishes her duty were as foolish as her sister's since it has cost him a substantial amount of money, she tells him off sharply for betting on her obedience – 'The more fool you for laying on my



duty.' (5.2.133). Evidently, she does not see the need to maintain the pose of sweet-natured goddess when it clashes with her own interests. Greer accurately observes that Bianca is a cold and disloyal wife who does not hesitate to humiliate him in public (1971:209). It is not difficult to anticipate Lucentio's dumbfounded silence after this unexpectedly shrewish reply.

Kate, of course, immediately remembers the incident with the haberdasher and the pretty cap Petruchio had ordered to be made for her. Earlier, he had withdrawn the gift, saying that her ungentle behaviour did not merit it. The old cap she wears is thus a symbol of her bad behaviour, and the new one waiting for her at home in turn represents ideal womanhood. By ordering her to throw down her old cap, he is telling her that she now has every right to the new one and the position of gentlewoman that it represents, for she is no longer a shrew in anyone's sight, especially not his own. She has voluntarily cast down her shrewishness and now deserves to be clothed in garments befitting a lady. It is richly ironic that Petruchio's secret compliment to Kate is considered to be an unnecessary insult by everyone else except herself and her husband. Indeed, the use of this personal code seems to heighten further the sense of understanding and comradeship between husband and wife. In addition to this, she can see clearly that Petruchio is also affording her another opportunity to demonstrate her willing obedience to him in front of her greatest critics. Is it any wonder then that Kate, in pleased recognition of her husband's approval and with perhaps more than a tinge of self-satisfaction, gladly hurls this symbol of her old unhappy life to the floor?

Petruchio's crafty masterminding of events to publicly restore his wife's honour in front of the type of men who unknowingly personify the root cause of

her shrewish behaviour is a potent example of his worthiness to be wholly loved and wholeheartedly obeyed. He puts the resolution of matters in Kate's hands, giving her the chance to redeem herself in the eyes of the pseudo-men who accuse her and the disguised women who patronize her. He affords her his authority as her keeper to give legitimate vent to her strong feelings of resentment towards Bianca and the widow, again underlining the fact that they are a team now and what insults her insults him also. Kate's cheerful demonstration of wifely obedience not only benefits him by winning the respect and admiration of his friends (as well as the money wagered!) but also benefits her by establishing the foundation of a new reputation for her – replacing the earmark of 'shrew' with one saying 'ideal wife'. Moreover, Petruchio, as we have seen, is not above the simple desire for revenge on Kate's behalf. His deliberate targeting of the widow is ample proof of his intention to give Kate her pound of flesh, and he does it so masterfully that no man there can gainsay him, especially in the face of the widow's recent disobedience to her own husband despite the rather trivial circumstances.

Petruchio :	<i>Katharine, I charge thee tell these headstrong women What duty they do owe their lords and husbands.</i>
Widow :	<i>Come, come, you're mocking; we will have no telling.</i>
Petruchio :	<i>Come on, I say, and first begin with her.</i>
Widow :	<i>She shall not.</i>
Petruchio :	<i>I say she shall – and first begin with her.</i>
	(5.2.134-139)

Now the ball is entirely in Kate's court. By relinquishing all control of the situation, Petruchio has given her a golden opportunity to utterly humiliate him, if she so wishes, in order to get her own back for the indignity of the taming he has imposed upon her. Likewise, it is also a chance for her to completely overthrow once and for all the stigma of her repute as a shrew, if she desires to

do so. Knowing that she has trusted him, he now hands over his own complete trust of her, and knowing her innate honesty, he does not expect her to lie or speak favourably of womanly duty if she does not sincerely feel that way. At the most, perhaps, if she does not repudiate him, he expects her to give her audience a short summary of wifely virtues to consolidate her new reputation as a perfect wife and gain back the respect which she had forfeited by her past ill-nature.

Kate, of course, exceeds his expectations in every conceivable way. If ever there was any doubt in Petruchio's mind regarding her understanding of the intentions behind his taming techniques or the reality of his heart for her, it is completely obliterated by the overwhelming generosity of her response and the sharp accuracy of the insight it demonstrates. Kate proves beyond a shadow of a doubt what an exceptional woman she is – she dazzles her audience with the transparent sincerity of her speech and displays keen intelligence by skillfully blending ironic humour within truth. Her speech is the grand finale of the play. It serves to illustrate how precious the true submission of a woman really is and how exceptional a man must be to rightfully merit it.

Katharina : *Fie, fie! Unknit that threatening unkind brow,  
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,  
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.  
It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,  
Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,  
And in no sense is meet or amiable.  
A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,  
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;  
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty  
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.*  
(5.2.140-149)

Kate's opening lines rebuke the two women's obvious and perfectly natural anger at their husbands for thus allowing them to be the targets of a

speech on womanly duty from a shrew.<sup>1</sup> She tells them that anger blots a woman's beauty, ruins her reputation and is neither suitable nor becoming. She likens an angry woman to a fountain of turbulent water that churns up so much mud that it is impossible to drink from it, and remarks that no man in his right mind would ever want to do so no matter how great his thirst. Obviously, this is a very candid and very accurate description of herself as she once was. The subtle implication is that, while no ordinary man would have braved the waters of such a fountain, her husband is no ordinary man. Knowing full well her reputation as a shrew, and conceding her right to justifiable anger, Petruchio nevertheless took his chances with her for both his sake and hers. Kate is subtly lauding her husband's intrepid courage by eliminating the possibilities of any other man doing what he has done. Her allegory illustrates how exceptional he is, and she knows that the significance of this is not lost upon her audience. She then explains why a wife should obey her husband.

Katharina : *Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,  
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,  
And for thy maintenance commits his body  
To painful labour both by sea and land,  
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,  
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;  
And craves no other tribute at thy hands  
But love, fair looks, and true obedience –  
Too little payment for so great a debt.  
Such duty as the subject owes the prince,  
Even such a woman oweth to her husband;  
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,  
And not obedient to his honest will,  
What is she but a foul contending rebel  
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?  
I am ashamed that women are so simple  
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,  
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway  
When they are bound to serve, love, and obey.*

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<sup>1</sup> It is not at all surprising that neither of the pseudo-men whose wives are being lectured by the ex-virago make so much as a peep of protest at this treatment of their brides. In comparison, it is totally inconceivable for Petruchio to allow another man or even another woman to rebuke his wife in public for bad behaviour, though she might later have to answer to him in private! Hortensio and Lucentio do not even attempt to protect their wives from ridicule or censure, thus further illustrating how deficient they are as husbands compared to Petruchio.

*Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,  
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,  
But that our soft conditions and our hearts  
Should well agree with our external parts?*  
(5.2.150-172)

It is interesting to note that Kate's speech outlines the ideal relationship between husband and wife as explained in detail in Chapter Three of this study. She describes a husband as the figurative head and protector of his wife, her keeper, one who cares deeply for her and looks after her well-being, and through his beneficent stewardship of her makes himself worthy of her trustful submission. Nevertheless, by specifying the ways in which he ultimately deserves such trust - most notably by using the term 'honest will' which refers to righteousness of character, conduct and desire - Kate has effectively excluded every man of her acquaintance from such a position except her husband. She is only completely free to be a woman because he is a real man. The very fact that she is standing in front of two women and lecturing them on why their husbands deserve their love and respect bears unshakeable witness to her own experience on offering such love and respect to the husband who has shown himself to deserve such a valuable gift.

Bianca and the widow, however, have no such recommendation when it comes to their husbands. Hortensio conveniently married his wife on the rebound for her wealth and perhaps a semblance of regard. Lucentio is an immature good-looking lad with more money than sense who eloped with Bianca after falling for her beauty and apparent docility. Neither man has wooed and won his bride in a manner to give them confidence in their worthiness to lead them in legal or spiritual headship. In effect, Kate is describing an ideal husband in her speech. And by pointing out that their rebellion against husbandly perfection is

completely unwarranted, she is cleverly exposing them to an unpleasant truth – their husbands are rather less than perfect, therefore they are as justified in their revolt as she once was in hers.

In counterpoint, Petruchio is highlighted as everything Hortensio and Lucentio are not, simply because Kate the one-time shrew has found him worthy of her honest submission. The other two women cannot in truth admit to being in the same boat. Being intelligent women, they have in all probability realized their husbands' limitations even before marriage but resigned themselves to compensating for their shortcomings by contenting themselves with covert domination. It is undoubtedly galling to be expected to pander constantly in the guise of wifely submission to the expectations of a good-natured but immature man of comparatively weak character! Their justifiable contempt of such a course of action is warranted, and their lack of husbands who are worth looking up to marks them as the discontented unhappy women that they are. In other words, they are in secret what Kate was in public and has overcome. They are shrews in disguise, flourishing behind their respectable facades.

In describing the ways in which a husband merits the regard of his wife, especially by references to his 'painful labour' on her behalf, watching throughout stormy nights and cold days, and by stressing comparison of her physical comfort to his corresponding physical exertion, Kate draws humourously ironic parallels between the normal life of a gentlewoman and the rigours of the taming sequence that Petruchio has subjected her to. Only her husband would be able to correctly interpret her surface words to divine the wry allusions to sleep deprivation, impending starvation and the other discomforts she suffered during the taming by the obvious contrast. Despite this use of subtle

wit, Kate is completely sincere in the content of her speech, for she also obliquely refers to her deep entrenchment in the comfort zone of her shrewishness, out of which she would probably have never escaped if not for Petruchio's harsh but timely interference. She generously acknowledges that debt by saying that all her love and loyalty is too little payment for such a great debt (line 158), secretly offering her husband not only thanks but appreciation for his rescue of her from the trap of anger and disillusionment. As Greer comments, 'the submission of a woman like Kate is genuine and exciting because she has something to lay down: her virgin pride and individuality' (1971:209). The thing is, she lays herself down knowing that Petruchio will lift her up and not trample her, and in the basis of that faith is the beauty of her relationship with her husband.

Kate ends her famous finale by telling the two women that she has been in their shoes, and for better reason, but that anger and rebellion as a course of action is unprofitable. She has learnt that the greater the anger, the greater is the need for its resolution in love, for the strongest anger only reveals the greatest need. She has indeed found resolution to her righteous anger as well as great contentment in her new role as exceptional wife to an exceptional husband. In no way does this undermine her individuality. On the contrary, her unique personality is strengthened and accentuated, instead of demeaned, by partnership with an equal. Kate has changed, and so have the circumstances of her life. She is no longer a shrew because she has now no need to be. Petruchio is not a beggar pretending to be a Lord, or in other words, a pseudo-man professing masculinity. He is the real thing – a Lord, disguised as a beggar to storm her defences and win her heart. Being a real man in every sense of the word, he does not desire a

woman who pretends to be less than she is in order to pander to his ego. Instead, he wants a woman like Kate, courageous enough to flaunt her intelligence and independence as vital parts of her femininity.

The last few lines of her speech, and Petruchio's response to it, are beautifully summarized by Morris (1981:149) below:

'Finally, and quite gratuitously, she offers a public gesture of subservience freely and unasked:

*...place your hands below your husband's foot  
In token of which duty, if he please,  
My hand is ready, may it do him ease.*

Petruchio responds to this unsolicited act of love and generosity with one of the most moving and perfect lines of the play, almost as if he is lost for words, taking refuge in action: "Why, there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate." I believe that any actor striving to represent Petruchio's feelings at this moment in the play should show him as perilously close to tears, tears of pride, and gratitude, and love.'

I certainly agree.

The shrew-tamer's next words confirm that the long-postponed physical consummation of their marriage is at hand, for now that the taming of the shrew is over, a long and happy marital relationship may begin.

Petruchio : *Come, Kate, we'll to bed.  
We three are married, but you two are sped.*  
[To Lucentio] *'Twas I won the wager, though you hit the white,  
And, being a winner, God give you good night!*  
(5.2.188-191)

His parting shot to his astounded friends reveals the depth of his satisfaction. Lucentio may have wed the much-vaunted ideal in Bianca, but it is Petruchio who is the real winner, for he has gained a mutually rewarding marital alliance



with a woman who is fully his equal in intelligence and strength of character, and who truly reciprocates his respect for her, his trust in her and his love of her.

It must not be supposed that Shakespeare intends to imply that Petruchio and Kate have a perfect marriage from that moment on, or that they themselves have suddenly attained perfection. On the contrary, the end of the play signifies the beginning of a new journey together as husband and wife. As Greer remarks, 'there is no romanticism in Shakespeare's view of marriage. He recognized it as a difficult state of life, requiring discipline, sexual energy, mutual respect and great forbearance' (1971:209). By these standards, however, Petruchio and Kate certainly stand a much better chance of having a successful marriage compared to the other two couples!

## CONCLUSION

'Kate's speech at the close of the play is the greatest defence of Christian monogamy ever written. It rests upon the role of a husband as protector and friend, and it is valid because Kate has a man who is capable of being both, for Petruchio is both gentle and strong....The message is probably twofold: only Kates make good wives, and then only to Petruchios; for the rest, their cake is dough.'

(Greer 1971:209)

Perhaps no other statement has been written that expresses so succinctly and so accurately the prime focus of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Throughout this dissertation, I have endeavoured to establish several important points regarding the play based upon one pivotal factor - the nature of Kate's turnabout, or *volte-face*, in the final act of the play from shrew to ideal wife.

It is characteristic of Shakespeare's sly wit that *The Taming of the Shrew* is a deliberately misleading and extremely ironic play. The audience is masterfully tricked into conceiving initial impressions which are then ruthlessly shown to be worthless when held up to scrutiny. The play that is ostensibly about a socially unacceptable woman is suddenly revealed to be a satire on inadequate men. This is because the shrew *per se* is only found unacceptable by men who are themselves inadequate, since the combination of her strength of character and the intensity of her just anger poses a threat both to them and to the rigidly enforced traditional doctrine of male headship and female submission that these men are actually unworthy of.

The rebellious shrew who is forced to conform with the ideals of society after being 'tamed' by her husband - and who thus seems to be the personification of Woman Silenced by Man - is shown instead to be a woman finally satisfied with

her circumstances after unexpectedly finding what she has been looking for, and thus finding a resolution to the discontent that found its expression in shrewishness. The shrew was created by discontent, and is consequently able to be dissolved by satisfaction.

The significant theme of duality in the play is extensive. Kate is presented as the shrew but shown to be the veritably more desirable woman, while Bianca - despite touting herself as the perfect female - is only pretending to fit the male ideal of womanhood, an ideal which is in itself undeniably flawed. The play pretends to be farcical, but reality is more and more evident as it progresses. Kate herself, supremely individual as she is, represents Everywoman in her most basic desires.

By dint of a comparative study of popular critical opinion and detailed analysis of the play itself, I have undertaken to demonstrate that Kate's shrewishness is adopted in self-defence against psychological oppression and false ideals of womanhood propagated by a patriarchal system that misuses the principles on which it was originally founded. Although the reasons behind Kate's shrewishness are understandable and in fact deserving of sympathy, shrewishness itself nevertheless becomes a bad habit, causing her much grief, alienating her from her community and jeopardizing any chance of true happiness for herself. Yet the nature of her rebellion demands that her high standards of what constitutes manliness not be compromised in any essential aspect.

This dilemma is satisfactorily resolved by the advent of Petruchio into her life. Petruchio marries Kate out of hand and demonstrates to her the ugliness of a shrewish nature by adopting it himself and forcing her to deal with the reality of her

behaviour. At the same time, by virtue of his own honesty and strength of character, he shows her that he is completely worthy of her true trust and respect, unlike the inadequate men she has been accustomed to who demand subservience from their women but do not deserve it. He woos her in a manner that seems exceedingly rough, but in actual fact is strategic and sensitive, and proves himself at the last to be an ally beyond her greatest expectations.

I have proposed in this dissertation that Kate's final speech is made in a completely sincere manner with occasional ironic undertones that do not give the lie to her words. Her speech is sincere because her just anger has found its resolution in a rewarding marital alliance, her loyalties have changed and her mind-set altered. Her sincerity marks a change in herself, which, while provoked and catalysed by Petruchio, has been carried out solely and independently by Kate herself in honest response to a realization of the depths and possible ramifications of her unpleasant attitude.

Characteristically, once she has decided to change, she does so unstintingly, spurred on her own honest nature and perhaps also by the sure knowledge that her husband is well worthy of her. Kate's intellectual and moral strength, as well as her spirited independence, make her a fitting wife for Petruchio. At the close of the play, the two other marital relationships appear shallow and unsubstantial compared to that of Kate and Petruchio, and rightly so indeed.

It is perhaps one of the most interesting and significant aspects of the play that Kate and Petruchio are the only ones who leave the stage at the end of the play. Because the Induction has no resolution – in other words, we do not know what

happens to Sly – it is perhaps not that far-fetched to deduce that his illusory experience is still going on, with the cast of the play still staring open-mouthed as the two triumphant protagonists leave an artificial world and its artificial values and step out into the reality of life.