10.2478/genst-2021-0002

FEMINIST ORTHODOXY AND SHAKESPEARE'S *SHREW*

VLAD RĂZNICEANU

Babeş-Bolyai University

vlad.razniceanu@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Since The Taming of the Shrew is a particularly ambiguous play, its interpretation is predictably vulnerable to ideological excesses. The author argues that feminist criticism often exploits rather than explains the text, illustrates the techniques that are typically employed in slanting its meaning, and compares various interpretations in order to highlight a pervasive set of premises defined as 'orthodoxy'.*

Keywords: *Shakespeare, hermeneutics, feminism, ideology, meta-criticism.*

1. Introduction

Alongside such plays as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew* is as controversial on stage as it is in criticism. Unlike the other plays, whose notions of racial and ethnic difference are normative improvements on their contemporary alternatives (Thompson, 1984, p. 26), unease has always accompanied what *The Shrew* seems to prescribe about women's place in society, and their role in the family. Consider John Fletcher's admonitory sequel, *The Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tamed* (1647), as well as the numerous other negative reactions *The Shrew* has elicited with time (Thompson, 1984, p. 38).

Nonetheless, such responses and the ways they relate to the play are far from univocal. For example, it has been argued that Fletcher's work is much less concerned with the Shakespearean text than previously believed, being not so much a revision as an exploitation (Petzold, 2006, p. 160). Though it may still be considered a reproach to Shakespeare's denouement, it may also be seen as a counterpoint with fewer moral than narrative concerns, meant to furnish its source with the moiety expected of traditional shrew-taming narratives, where "a husband outwitting or triumphing over his wife is capped or balanced by one in which a wife outwits her husband" (Thompson, 1984, p. 18).

Yet Shakespeare borrows plenty from tradition, as can be observed by the motifs derived from or shared with other stories such as Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and the sixteenth-century ballad *A Merry Jest of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe* (Thompson, 1984, p. 12). The unfair treatment of women is both tapered, as Shakespeare removes physical abuse from the standard domestic dynamic, and in some way evinced, as Shakespeare brooks one-sidedness and sacrifices the primal gratifications of *lex talionis* for the sake of closure and harmony. Thus the critic is faced with the riddle of a play both insufficiently and exceedingly traditional, or, in other words, original. Put in that light, the available material surrounding *The Taming of the Shrew* may only serve to make the play's reception and its relationship to tradition even more contentious than in the case of Shakespearean texts on which documentation is scarcer.

For these reasons, among others, interpretations of this comedy are torn by a powerful acreage of antagonistic factors. The radical ambiguity of Katherina's speech in the final scene, the potential defectiveness of the First Folio text (Morris, 1981, pp. 39-45), the indefinite relationship between *The Shrew* and *A Shrew*, as well the 'metatheatrical' implications of the Induction and of Elizabethan stage conventions (Shapiro, 1993) — all these concur to make the message of the play volatile and hotly disputed in an age much more attentive to women's rights.

Increased social and political concerns do however carry the risk of overinterpretation and instrumentalization of the text. This study therefore proposes a critique of some excesses of feminist interpretations, in an attempt to set a hermeneutical standard for interpretation as opposed to instrumentalization. The play's unstable meaning thwarts conclusive moral and aesthetic judgments, and has led critics to call it a 'problem play' (Thompson, 1984, p. 41). According to Ernest Schanzer, in a problem play "we find a concern with a moral problem which is central to it, presented [...] so that uncertain and divided responses to it in the minds of the audience are possible or even probable" (as cited in Thompson, 1984, p. 6). Nevertheless, a play's flexibility does not preclude the existence of certain hermeneutical criteria which may be violated by ideological distortion. Brian Vickers (1993) believed that "politically motivated, perhaps ethically justifiable" feminist criticism "will not necessarily tell us anything about the way in which a novel or a play works, how it is structured in terms of plot and language, what qualities of creativity or imagination it may display, what ethical position it takes up on other issues" (p. 326).

Vickers analysed feminist interpretations of such plays as *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *As You Like It*, but has not broached the

vexed topic of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This article can thus be seen as complementary to Vickers' endeavour, and confirms that certain feminist presuppositions and practices in literary studies have transformed into orthodoxies since the 1980s, when feminist critique and gender studies were still considered inchoate and divergent academic practices (Vickers, 1993, p. 327).

This introduction must include a certain political proviso: the following research by no means intends to cast aspersion on or to lessen sympathy for the cause of women's rights movements. Nor is the study at hand meant to discredit extreme interpretations, such as George Bernard Shaw's (2008) opinion of the play as "altogether disgusting to modern sensibility" and marred by "Shakespeare's immaturity" (pp. 74-75), or the view of exacting feminists like Germaine Greer (2012), who, conversely, affirmed that "[t]he submission of a woman like Kate is genuine and exciting" and described the tamer Petruchio as "both gentle and strong" (p. 234). The aim here is simply to distinguish between the instances where analysis of *The Taming of the Shrew* is being used for purposes other than achieving a deeper understanding of the play *qua* play, and where it is applied for a properly philological enterprise. Since the play is deeply concerned with the relationship between the sexes and the conditions of a happy marriage, the main 'uses' of the text happen to be those affiliated with feminism and psychoanalysis.

2. Orthodoxy and ambiguity

Recoiling from his favourable thoughts about radical reader-oriented criticism professed in *Opera Aperta* (1962), Umberto Eco (1990) made a more conservative distinction between 'using' a text and 'interpreting' it in *The Limits of Interpretation*: "To critically interpret a text means to read it in order to discover, along with our reactions to it, something about its nature. To use a text means to start from it in order to get something else, even accepting the risk of misinterpreting it from the semantic point of view" (p. 57). Starting from this distinction, orthodoxy can be considered as a system of axioms that guides partisan critical practices involving the 'use' of a text and which is necessary for the fulfilment of the *telos* that lies beyond understanding the text's nature. Whereas a partisan critic may freely disregard 'the risk of misinterpreting' his object of study, the orthodoxy informing his critique is never distorted, subverted or critically scrutinized.

In that sense, orthodoxy represents a hermeneutic form of ideology, and has two main effects in literary criticism: selective ambiguity, and similarity of conclusions. In this and the

subsequent section of my analysis I will be concerned with the former. There are two essential types of ambiguity to a Shakespearean text. The first stems from an epistemological problem: there is a limit to what the modern reader can know regarding the Elizabethan *Zeitgeist*, the play's contemporary reception, its genesis, sources, textual integrity and sometimes even its authorship. Because of that, what the play communicates is sometimes fragmented or unintelligible. The second type is of literary nature: the ambiguity is deliberate, rather than accidental and contextual.

One important difficulty in the hermeneutic practice of Shakespeare studies lies in distinguishing between the two. Understanding which type of ambiguity prevails at each junction is thus essential to any critical endeavour. The critical process may be considered unfinished until more data is available; complete after duly identifying and analysing the text's thematic complexity and intrinsic ambivalence; or complete because ambiguity is shown to be minimal or absent. However, critical orthodoxy never allows for incompleteness, nor for suspension of judgment, and, instead of building around the aforementioned distinctions, it enshrines those instances of ambiguity favourable to its thesis, while ambiguities that do not corroborate with the ideological aim are effectively ignored or deemphasised. Put in this context, the 'extrinsic/intrinsic' distinction becomes a 'useful/trivial' distinction.

3. Selective ambiguity – a case study

The ideological approach to Shakespearean texts, and its corresponding dismissal of ambiguity can be effected by omission, anachronism, misconstrual, and double standards. An example of such an array of contortions is found in Carolyn E. Brown's "Bianca and Petruchio: 'The Veriest Shrew[s] of All'". In this study of the play, Brown chooses "the most delightful way of taking *The Taming of the Shrew* [...] – the topsy-turvy one" (Goddard, 2008, p. 108). Brown (2008) construes Petruchio and Bianca as the antipathetic, manipulative shrews, and Kate as the victim of a male-dominated society which eventually forces her to be disingenuous in order to cope psychologically, and to seize power. Thus, the conventional development of the character is reversed: Petruchio's actions and society's pressures result in Katherina turning "from a straight-speaking rebel into a subversive shrew" (p. 178).

The problem with Carolyn Brown's thesis stems from her very understanding of the term "shrew", which is founded upon a mixture of misconstrual and anachronism. In her view, shrewishness is typically associated with being a person that is "manipulative",

“subversive” and who also “engage[s] in deception”. Indeed, without this spin on shrewishness, Bianca could not be so richly worked into the role of the shrew in which Brown casts her, for her headstrong nature is only hinted at by her desire for educational autonomy in the part where she tells Hortensio and Lucentio that “I’ll not be tied to hours nor ’pointed times/ But learn my lessons as I please myself” (3.1.19-20 – all citations from the Arden 3 edition, ed. by Brian Morris).

Only in Act V can she be construed properly as a shrew, because then she displays her wilfulness, as well as a penchant for vituperation. In this final act she marries without her father’s informed consent, grows quarrelsome at the feast in the final scene, and snaps back at her husband for betting one hundred crowns on “her duty”, calling him a fool. Even at that point she is not fully a shrew, because the physical abuse and emasculation of the husband with which this stereotype was commonly associated are absent or only faintly suggested.

Moreover, “shrewishness” is only obliquely associated with our current understanding of “shrewdness”, and it is evident in the play that Shakespeare did not need Katherina to be scheming and manipulative in order to persuade his audience that she was a shrew. Morris (1981) notes that, despite the devilish connotations of the word’s etymology, “[i]n this context ‘shrew’ clearly means ‘a woman given to railing or scolding’” (p. 120), as it was first used in Chaucer’s *The Merchant’s Tale*. Katherina is variously described as “shrewd”, most often alongside the word “curst”, but most likely this is an allusion and an appeal to the audience’s knowledge of folktales and ballads such as *A Merry Jests of a Shrewde and Curste Wife*, where there is little scheming or equivocation, and where the phrase “shrewde and curste” has the meaning “cantankerous and sharp of tongue” (Morris, 1981, p. 180).

Brown justifies her construal of Petruchio as a shrew by bending semantics, and stating that “Shakespeare’s depiction of a man as a shrew was nourished largely by the more enlightened attitudes toward women and marriage of this time, and it was possible because of the etymological ambiguity associated with the word ‘shrew’” (Brown, 2008, p. 165). It may be debatable that Shakespeare based his character on a subtle *sous-entendu* depending on a meaning of ‘shrew’ used two centuries before his time. However, it is less likely that Petruchio is constitutionally a shrew than that his behaviour is a hyperbolic imitation of Kate’s earlier behaviour, which ceases once the taming is achieved, seeing that the final act hints at domestic tenderness and tranquillity. The moment the two kiss in the street is perhaps the most heartfelt in the play, and receives no mention from Brown. Similarly, Brown ignores the possibility of love in marriage, although Kate had willingly acquiesced to marriage with Petruchio. Despite Katherina’s early protests, the possibility of refusing marriage in

Elizabethan times was always open to women, even though they could not generally choose any suitor to their liking. The “veto of the child” is well-documented, as even the avowed anti-patriarchal historian Lawrence Stone (2000, p. 187) recognizes. Petruchio is not one of Brown’s shrews who “appear as doves before marriage and [are] turned into beasts after the ceremony” (Brown, 2008, p. 169), since the veto could even be brought to bear at the church, and we know that it is precisely there where he is at his most uncouth. As we shall see, much feminist criticism unduly fashions Katherina as a victim, truncates her fierce independence self-contradictorily (after all, she excoriates with impunity three men in the first act alone), and ignores the possibility that Katherina may desire to marry Petruchio just as much as he does.

What Petruchio and Kate do not share is the motivation behind their violent outbursts: Kate simply cannot control her emotions, while Petruchio’s distemper is a part of the cunning plan to administer his wife a harsh sentimental education. The only exception to this rule is Petruchio’s altercation with Grumio in the second scene of the first act. Nonetheless, Brown (2008) considers Petruchio’s cunning the tell-tale sign of his shrewishness: “Shakespeare has Petruchio do what we are suspicious the other shrew, Bianca, is doing: both conceal their unkind natures and assume a ‘gentler, milder’ demeanour” (p. 168). One may object that the characters who consider Kate a shrew do not emphasise her clever, manipulative or sly nature, but rather her rowdiness and harshness. The same should apply to Petruchio.

Gremio, the first person in the play to characterize Kate, states that “[s]he’s too rough for me” (1.2.55), Tranio observes that the lady is “stark mad and wonderful forward” (1.1.69), Hortensio describes her as “[r]enown’d in Padua for her scolding tongue” (1.2.98-9), Petruchio knows that she is an “irksome brawling scold” (1.2.186), and Tranio remarks Petruchio’s ability “to tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue” (4.2.59). It would seem that, if shrewishness were a recipe, it would be more parts unrestrained fury, self-assertion and verbal violence than psychological finesse and manipulation. Brown’s shrew is closer to the narcissistic or psychopathic dark triad types of today’s psychology than to the fierce hot-tempered woman of the Elizabethan play.

Double standards are used in conjunction with anachronism to forward the presupposed inversion of shrewishness in the play. In describing Bianca as “no lady or chaste maiden but a wanton flirt” (2008, p. 172), Carolyn E. Brown seems to be juggling with the moralities of two ages, alternating past and contemporary ethical precepts. Petruchio’s violent treatment of his servants is considered proof that he is “a much more egregious shrew”, whom Shakespeare paints as brutal “because he is a man” (p. 172). This operates moral charges

pertaining to class equality, gentleness and masculinity that are patently modern. Meanwhile, Brown is using Elizabethan or even Puritan sexual ethics to demean Bianca, and to portray her as a “shrew”. If moral systems become mere interpretive tools, there is no reason why one would not flip the image to one’s discretion, and view Petruchio as a gallant pioneer of domestic life without physical or sexual abuse (which is a true revolution as far as tales about shrews go, cf. Thompson, 1984, p. 28), and Bianca as an avant-garde, sexually emancipated flirt (should she truly be as sensual as the author claims). This confirms Brian Vickers’ (1993) diagnosis that “[f]ar too many feminist analyses of Shakespeare consist of character studies, often one at a time, with moralizing judgements from a superior modern viewpoint” (p. 349). The innovation here is merely that the alleged superiority of our modern viewpoint is also subject to the expediency of critical whim.

Since Brown requires Petruchio to be a brute by nature, and not one to display threatening behaviour solely as a means of reforming a virago, he must actively seek pretexts to be violent in order to gratify his vicious needs. This interpretation is grounded on two oversights. The first is the misconstrual of Grumio, an intelligent, but also rather mischievous servant. Grumio understands perfectly his master’s intentions, impishly suggests offering the famished Kate mustard without beef, but also ridicules his master: “*Petruchio*: Well, sir, in brief, the gown is not for me. / *Grumio*: You are i’t’h’right sir, ’tis for my mistress” (4.3.152-3). He is even cultivated enough to use legal Latin terms in a parodic yet lexically correct manner: “*Imprimis* we came down a foul hill, my master riding behind my mistress” (4.1.59-60). Furnivall considers the complex and witty Grumio “the finest character of the play” (as cited in Bloom, 2008, p. 70), but Brown merely frames him with a touch of classist prejudice as the “unsophisticated Grumio”, who is unaware of the existence of the ethic dative, and could not possibly have intentionally twisted Petruchio’s words, “knock me here soundly” (1.2.8), for his own delight in the young man’s exasperation.

Furthermore, Brown completely disregards the farcical exigencies of a comedy rooted in Gascoigne’s rendition of Ariosto’s *I suppositi* (1509). Indeed, as Edmund K. Chambers (2008) argues, the play “does not approach [its theme] from an ethical standpoint at all, but merely from that of humorous and dispassionate observation” (p. 105). Violence, for instance, does not have the same role here as, say, in *Titus Andronicus*. It provides comic relief rather than character development, and its generic function is aptly put into perspective by Ruth Nevo’s (2008) remark: “Apart from the cuffing and beatings of saucy or clumsy *zanni* which is canonical in Italianate comedy, no one whips anyone in *The Taming of the Shrew*, violence being confined to Katherina who beats her sister Bianca, and slaps Petruchio’s face” (p. 129).

This brings us to the case of double standards and omissions. Brown derives her arguments from both dramatic and naturalistic readings. The use of different hermeneutic approaches is legitimate if they are applied compatibly, and not when they suit one aspect or another alone. For example, Brown (2008) cites the composition of the scenes in order to defend her thesis: “These two appearances of Bianca (3.1 and 4.2) reflect on two other adjoining scenes (3.2 and 4.1), both dominated by Petruchio” (p. 173). However, other dramatic and textual considerations that undo a polarising ethical view of the play are completely overlooked – e.g. the fact that *The Shrew* is a metatheatrical play-within-a-play because of the induction (see Shapiro, 1993), or that sixteenth-century England prohibited the use of female actors. As already shown, the play’s adoption of the conventions of a long-standing tradition of Italian comedy is also ignored.

On the other hand, Brown (2008) takes at face value the actions of the characters as if they were living beings, or part of a high-fidelity Balzacian fresco of society: “While Petruchio is more physically violent than Bianca, they both provoke their victims, mentally tormenting and taunting them by playing with words until their victims want to ‘knock’ them” (p. 168). This too is problematic, however, because the critic cannot possibly impose or justify a completely naturalistic reading of the play. Such a paradigm would undermine Brown’s analysis, considering that the tying of Bianca could only be viewed as a disproportionate, dysfunctional act of aggression in actual life, which would contradict the “candid victim” narrative constructed around Kate. If theatrical conventions are ignored, Lucentio’s opening monologue on facts Tranio already knows, which has merely the purpose to inform the audience, would be read as some demented outburst of loquacity in the real world. Since *The Shrew* is not a purely referential, non-fictional text, the issue of representation cannot be disregarded in favour of pedantic moral opprobrium unless one can defend a naturalistic view of the play.

One can only conclude that Brown resembles Jan Kott in her radical resourcefulness: she uses the play and exploits its ambiguities, but disregards internal textual evidence contrary to her thesis. Even if feminist orthodoxy seems to be flouted by the negative light thrown on Bianca, the discerning reader will observe that, while Bianca’s condition comes across as a character flaw, Petruchio’s masculinity is explicitly postulated as the root of his worst behaviour: “Because Petruchio is a much more egregious shrew and because he is male, Shakespeare makes him more violent and physically dangerous than Bianca in private, as he bullies and beats Grumio” (Brown, 2008, p. 166). In keeping with this, “Bianca and Petruchio: ‘The Veriest Shrew[s] of All’” can only reinforce a polarity between the sexes.

This is encapsulated by the overarching meaning attributed to the play: “*The Taming of the Shrew* records the toll of a misogynistic society on young women – throughout time. The play can be viewed in allegorical dimensions, with Katherine representing everywoman, and Petruchio embodying the male power base” (Brown, 2008, p. 178). If one is to adopt an allegorical vision, one must remember that two of the three wives found at the end of the play are shrewish still, are married according to their own preferences, and defy the men without suffering repercussions at the hands of the patriarchal powers. Due to what can only be a tendentious elision of facts, the study in point proves more ingenuous than convincing, and ultimately falls into the routine of reinstating female characters and indicting males at the text’s expense.

4. Similarity of conclusions

Carolyn E. Brown’s extreme reading creatively interprets and expands the play, but fails to deepen our understanding of its nature and meaning. It is a good example of the techniques with which orthodoxies warp ambiguity, but one must also highlight precisely what those orthodoxies are. In order to do so, one may examine their second effect: similarity of conclusions.

The conclusions of studies guided by feminist orthodoxy are rarely surprising; they are, in fact, disguised premises: the assumed pervasiveness of patriarchy, the ascription of morality to gender, and the indissoluble power-based antagonism between the sexes. Issues such as class struggle, individuality, dramatic convention, creativity or authenticity are all effaced in favour of those axiomatic critical shibboleths. In the case of *The Shrew*, this tacitly associates the sex of the play’s characters to *a priori* value judgments. While superficially the conclusions may differ, since Katherine may be portrayed as a victim, as Brown saw her, or as a woman of “virgin pride and individuality”, as Germaine Greer did (2012, p. 234), the underlying rule is that the analysis cannot escape a gendered moral paradigm, which if not damning masculinity winds up praising the emancipation of femininity.

Writing in the late eighteenth century, Elizabeth Griffith strays far from the exigencies of feminism as we understand them, and so provides a useful contrast with recent approaches. Though Griffith (2008) condones domestic violence by quoting Petruchio’s lines about blowing great fires with great winds, she takes exception to Dr Warburton’s indictment of women’s sartorial affinities in his view of the play, regarding him as “severe on our sex at a very cheap rate” (p. 45). She also manages to provide the contextualization of the characters’

extreme temperaments of which Brown is unable, observing that the play resembles romances and remarking on the setting of Shakespeare's play: "the clear and warm air of Italy communicates a brisker motion to the heart and spirits than our natural phlegm can possibly be sensible of" (Griffith, 2008, p. 43). Griffith calls Katherina's final soliloquy "admirable", but she bristles at its last four lines, remarks the speech's potential irony, and describes it as: "betraying more of the *time-servant* than the *convert*" (p. 44, emphasis in original). Griffith's analysis, then, was one of her age, but not devoid of nuance.

The same can be said of Coppélia Kahn's (1975) analysis: it is complex and discerning, and, unlike Brown, pays attention to the implications of the induction, and even contends that Katherina "quite possibly has fallen in love with her tamer" (p. 97). However, the assumption of patriarchal dominance still colours Kahn's conclusions:

[...] we realize that the myth of feminine weakness, which prescribes that women ought to or must inevitably submit to man's superior authority, masks a contrary myth: that only a woman has the power to authenticate a man, by acknowledging him her master. (p. 100)

Karen Newman (1986), who uses a language-focused Althusserian paradigm, claims that the induction "foregrounds its artifice and therefore subverts the play's patriarchal master narrative by exposing it as neither natural nor divinely ordained, but culturally constructed" (p. 16). The main currency between the sexes seems to remain power, translating the Hegelian master-slave dialectic into that of male-female. This is puzzling considering historical materialism's dogmatic concerns with class, as there is little emphasis in Newman's study on the fact that the family dynamics the play exhibits are highly peculiar to the upper-classes and the nobility. Very similar in his approach to the induction and frame-structure of *The Shrew* is Michael Shapiro (1993), who, albeit with greater focus and detail, reaches strikingly similar conclusions on the construction of gender and on Shakespeare's subversion of the audience's "fantasy" of subjugation (though one wonders if the female onlookers could truly be said to have the same fantasies):

[...] the Folio playfully contrasts opposing stereo-types of the gentlewoman and the scold and juxtaposes the ideal fantasy with the dreaded nightmare, exploiting the audience's realization that these familiar cultural constructs or roles were theatrical illusions created by male performers. (p. 166)

There have also been efforts of refashioning the polarities of gender into "cultured/uncultured" (Slights, 1989), "educated/uneducated" (Hutcheon, 2011; Morris (Ed.),

1981), alongside Barbara Hodgdon's (1992) softer version of "oscillating gender identities". The first and last readings do not step outside the boundaries of feminist orthodoxy, and fixate on construing the play's characters from the point of view of power relations depending on gender.

In the terms of Claude Levi-Strauss' structural anthropology, Slight's (1989) pays no attention to the fact that her own view of patriarchy may be socially constructed and anachronistic when she writes that "Shakespeare does not ironically subvert the patriarchal power structure portrayed in the *Shrew*, nor does he disguise it with the fictional traditions of romantic love" (p. 189). In spite of her focus on fluidity, Hodgdon (1992) still overemphasises the privilege accorded to masculinity, and creates a false dichotomy suggesting that the presence of women in Shakespeare's play is a "problem" which only occurs in one of two ways: "A play in which the 'problem' of woman is not her exclusion but her radical inclusion" (p. 538). Hutcheon (2011) does manage to tone down the prominence gender has received in criticism: "We should not think of Katherina's subjugation as that of an exemplary female but instead as that of an exemplary student" (p. 333), but Morris (1981) adds the same caveat about social constructivism I found in Slight's: "On the one hand, education is designed to liberate and bring to full fruition the innate capabilities of the pupil. On the other, it is a means of reducing the individual to social conformity [...]" (p. 133).

Though these interpretations contain less interpretive prestidigitation than we saw in Brown, the presupposition of gender-based struggles under patriarchal structures persists. The taming of the text's ambiguities, and the confusion of premise and conclusion in feminist orthodoxy present themselves as philologically unsound and logically suspect.

5. Conclusion

Two weaknesses straddle the thesis of this article. The first is that it would require a greater corpus of criticism in order to better warrant, and to further refine its perspective. The second stems from its focus on feminism as a unitary phenomenon, instead of taking stock of the distinctions between the first, second and third waves, and of other subdivisions within the current.

Nonetheless, all these approaches remain unilaterally concerned with "the woman problem", and thus justify a unitary treatment. For the time being, and considering the scope afforded by such a study, the techniques shaping feminist orthodoxy and its conclusions in hermeneutic practice remain a territory to explore. The current results may be summarized by

quoting Brian Vickers (1993), who considered such misappropriations “endemic to the whole feminist enterprise of locating ‘the woman’s part’ and judging from there” (p. 350).

References

- Brown, C. E. (2008). Bianca and Petruchio: “The Veriest Shrew[s] of All”. In H. Bloom & P. Loos (Eds.), *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: The Taming of the Shrew* (pp. 163-181). New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism.
- Chambers, E. K. (2008). The Taming of the Shrew. In H. Bloom & P. Loos (Eds.), *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: The Taming of the Shrew* (pp. 103-108). New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism.
- Eco, U. (1990). *Advances in Semiotics: The Limits of Interpretation*. T. A. Sebeok (Ed.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goddard, H. C. (2008). The Taming of the Shrew. In H. Bloom & P. Loos (Eds.), *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: The Taming of the Shrew* (pp. 108-113). New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism.
- Greer, G. (2012). *The Female Eunuch*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Griffith, E. (2008). The Taming of the Shrew. In H. Bloom & P. Loos (Eds.), *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: The Taming of the Shrew* (pp. 40-49). New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism.
- Hodgdon, B. (1992). Katherine Bound; Or, Play(K)ating the Strictures of Everyday Life. *PMLA*, 107(3), 538-553.
- Hutcheon, E. (2011). From Shrew to Subject: Petruchio’s Humanist Education of Katherine in “The Taming of the Shrew”. *Comparative Drama*, 45(4), 315-337.
- Kahn, C. (1975). “The Taming of the Shrew”: Shakespeare’s Mirror of Marriage. *Modern Language Studies*, 5(1), 88-102.
- Nevo, R. (2008). Kate of Kate Hall. In H. Bloom & P. Loos (Eds.), *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: The Taming of the Shrew* (pp. 128-140). New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism.
- Newman, K. (1986). Renaissance Family Politics and Shakespeare’s “The Taming of the Shrew”. *English Literary Renaissance*, 16(1), 86-100.
- Petzold, Jochen. (2006). Subverting the Master Discourse? The Power of Women’s Words in Shakespeare’s “The Taming of the Shrew” and Fletcher’s “The Woman’s Prize, or The Tamer Tamed”. *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik Und Amerikanistik*, 31(2), 157-170.
- Shakespeare, W. (2003). *The New Cambridge Shakespeare: The Taming of the Shrew* (updated ed.). A. Thompson (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shakespeare, W. (2003). *The Taming of the Shrew* (3rd ed.). B. Morris (Ed). London: The Arden Shakespeare.
- Shapiro, M. (1993). Framing the Taming: Metatheatrical Awareness of Female Impersonation in “The Taming of the Shrew”. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 23, 143-166.
- Shaw, G. B. (2008). Chin, Chon, Chino. In H. Bloom & P. Loos (Eds.), *Bloom’s Shakespeare Through the Ages: The Taming of the Shrew* (pp. 74-75). New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism.
- Slights, C. W. (1989). The Raw and the Cooked in “The Taming of the Shrew”. *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 88(2), 168-189.
- Stone, L. (2000). *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Vickers, B. (1996). *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Vlad RĂZNICEANU is a graduate of Babeş-Bolyai University, where he studied English and Norwegian. His research interests encompass literary theory, thanatology, biography, contemporary British literature, and Shakespearean drama. He has published articles, reviews and studies in *Steaua*, *Echinox* and *Studia UBB: Philologia*. The present article is part of the research project *Shakespeare on the Bed of Procrustes: Contemporary Hermeneutic Paradigms*, and has been funded by a special research scholarship from the Virtual Excellence College (STAR Institute, Babeş-Bolyai University). Special thanks are given to Dr. Adrian Papahagi for his scrupulous guidance.