

that theatre has the power to change one's reality, and the dramatic effectiveness of characters playacting within a play contributes to the overall enjoyment for the spectator.

Similar to Sly, the taming plot devised by Petruccio's playacting also interferes with and alters Kate's identity. Although these transformations are indeed similar, they are not identical due to the ambiguity to whether Katherine's transformation is permanent or not and whether it is genuine. The first scene of the Induction offers a framing device to rest of the play, as it gives elaborate instructions about how to impersonate a dutiful wife 'soft low tongue and lowly courtesy', we are then entitled to be suspicious of Katherine's conversion from shrew to the submissive.³⁴

Interestingly, Shakespeare does not complete Sly's character development and he disappears from the play entirely. Another edition of the play, variously described as an earlier version that Shakespeare possibly revised as a source; or as an unauthorised copy reconstructed from an actor's memory entitled *The Taming of A Shrew*, deviates from the *The Shrew's* ending and instead extends and concludes the Sly plot.³⁵ The final act portrays Sly awaking from a dream, remembering his metamorphosis to be unreal from which he has learned 'how to tame a shrew.'³⁶ Maguire states that Shakespeare's plot is shrew-taming to an extent, but his overarching theme is theatre: 'the ways in which life and personal identity can be transformed by drama; the play's five acts have usurped reality's two scenes. Therefore, Theatre has the power to overturn reality.'³⁷ However, one can argue that the playwright's intention was not solely to dramatise how drama can overturn reality, but to simply provide a social comment on marriage conventions at the time that incurred comic relief.

On reflection, Shakespeare's skill for transforming identity on stage allowed him to mirror the human behaviour within the governed household and through his cleverly designed characters the societal tensions of Elizabethan identity and gender dynamics could be reflected onstage for entertainment. One could say that the appeal behind such plays as *The Shrew* is witnessing the fluidity of characters and the self on stage, in which the heroine Katherine conveys. Despite her apparent submission to Petruccio, the true entertainment lies in how she is manipulated and to whether the audience believes she has indeed been converted. The ambiguity of the final resolution to whether she is genuine or merely playacting, where other characters are undoubtedly guilty of committing, leaves the reader to decide for themselves which is the actual truth. *The Shrew* offers a

³⁴ *The Shrew*, Ind.1.113

³⁵ Francis E. Dolan 'Alternative Endings' in *The Taming of the Shrew Texts and Contexts* ed. by Francis E. Dolan (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996) p.144

³⁶ William Shakespeare, 'The Taming of A Shrew' in *The Taming of the Shrew Texts and Contexts* ed. by Francis E. Dolan (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996) 5.1.180, p.153 - Further references will be given in the text using the short form *A Shrew* and the act, scene and line numbers.

³⁷ Laurie E. Maguire, 'Private Life: Shakespeare and Selfhood' in *Studying Shakespeare: A Guide to the Plays* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) p.49