

Within the metadrama, Petruchio uses self-disguise to present a misunderstood appearance – himself as someone who truly loves and wishes to marry Kate – he vows to “woo [her] for [his] wife” regardless of how unwilling she is or how harsh she is to him because he will break her “discontent” and mean spirit by “kill[ing] her in her own humour”. Kate is nothing but a dowry to him, it seems, and he brashly uses his disguise, a ‘key artifice’ in comedy, according to Jacques Snider Denton, *The System of Shakespeare’s Dramas*, to approach Baptista and propose to “Katherina, fair and virtuous” as he calls her; Baptista plays into what he assumes to be this misunderstanding without correcting him, repeating “I have a daughter, sir, called Katherina” – this is humorous as he removes the inapplicable adjectives.

The comedy of misunderstanding is also played into with the men involved with Bianca’s subplot – Hortensio, Lucentio, Tranio, Vincentio and the Pedant – the two real suitors, Hortensio and Lucentio disguise themselves to get closer to Bianca after Baptista declares not to “bestow [his] youngest daughter before [he has] a husband for the elder”, Hortensio enlists the help of Petruchio, his “good friend” and also Kate’s suitor, intertwining the action and counter-action, creating more misunderstanding within the play, to offer him “disguised in sober robes to old Baptista as a schoolmaster”. He intentionally disguises himself, presenting a misunderstood appearance to other characters and creating the comedy of misunderstanding; he is able to carry it out with the help of somebody else, more specifically someone new to Padua because the new person has no relations to the society around them. Lucentio also uses similar tactics, a mistaken identity to create misunderstanding in order to become closer to Bianca. However, as a newcomer to Padua, it is easier to him to plot; he simply allows Gremio (another suitor of Bianca’s) to find him ‘disguised as Cambio, a schoolmaster’, so he can be taken to Baptista for Bianca’s education. Lucentio also has his servant Tranio to help him. The two ‘exchange outfits’ so Tranio can act on Lucentio’s behalf and go to Baptista with an official proposal to stop Gremio from marrying Bianca. Before the denouement can occur with the real Lucentio dropping his disguise and marrying Bianca. Tranio and Gremio engage in a game-like ‘sensuous deception’ of Baptista, bargaining for Bianca’s hand in marriage with bid and claims of “hangings all of Tyrian tapestry” and “three great argosies”, confusing Baptista and affirming the comedy of misunderstanding on stage and within the play.

Secondly, it is a comedy of misunderstanding for Shakespeare’s contemporary audience. By setting the play in Padua, Italy, it creates a kind of ‘fairyland’; ‘the natural order of things is turned upside down; the ordinary mediations of life are perverted’, an idea addressed and explained in *The System of Shakespeare’s Dramas* – the audience accepts this because it is a metadrama. The Italian setting is heavily emphasised in the first scene, with Lucentio referencing “fruitful Lombardy” and “great Italy” – it is also evident in the characters’ names and the ‘io’ suffix, Tranio, Gremio, Biondello, and so forth. This exotic setting creates a kind of misunderstanding for the Elizabethan English audience, because it removes them from the everyday streets of London and takes them to a fantasy world many of them would never see, much like the character of Christopher Sly, being plucked from his “heath” and taken “aloft”, allowing the action to be hurried along and caricatured.

Shakespeare’s audience was almost 80-85% illiterate, and during the Elizabethan era, equality in marriage and women’s rights were almost unheard of in the heavily patriarchal society. Women