

About *The Taming of the Shrew*

The "First Folio" of 1623, published seven years after Shakespeare died, contains what is currently considered the "true" text of 36 of Shakespeare's works. In it, *The Taming of the Shrew* (published for the first time in the folio*, although performed as early as 1594) is cataloged as the eleventh of the Comedies, appearing in a somewhat unpredictable order between *As You Like It* and *All's Well that Ends Well*.

Critical responses to the play have varied widely:

"Altogether disgusting to modern sensibility." —George Bernard Shaw

"I find it gobsmacking that some people see the play as misogynistic... It's very obviously a satire... all about money and the level of power... so self-evidently repellent that I don't believe for a second that Shakespeare is espousing this. And I don't believe for a second that the man who would be interested in *Benedict and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet* and all these strong lovers would have some misogynist aberration... This is him investigating misogyny, exploring it and animating it and obviously damning it... — Conall Morrison

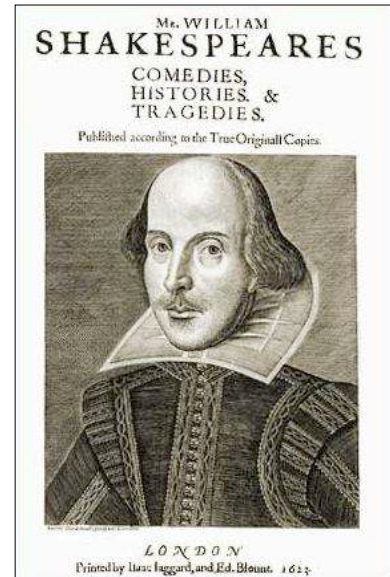
Harold Bloom felt strongly that Kate's speeches advised women how to rule absolutely, while feigning obedience: "'Strength' and 'weakness' interchange their meaning, as Kate teaches not ostensible subservience but the art of her own will... if you want to hear this line (Why there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate) as the culmination of a 'problem play', then perhaps you yourself are the problem."

Studies of Shakespeare's text suggest that *The Taming of the Shrew* and other plays, such as *The Comedy of Errors* and *Titus Andronicus*, most likely belong to his earliest period.

Shakespeare's early work was influenced by the works of other popular dramatists of his day (contemporaries such as Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlow), by the traditions of medieval drama, and plays written by Seneca. No specific source for *The Taming of the Shrew* has been noted by scholars; however it is quite similar to another play called *The Shrew* and may have its roots from a folk story.

The Taming of the Shrew emphasizes the economic implications of marriage—particularly how money and wealth are important factors to choosing a wife or husband. It is *not* a story of two star-crossed lovers striving to be together. *Shrew* deals with marriage as a business arrangement involving a transaction of money changing hands between the father of the bride and the groom.

*Foul and Fair: The term "foul papers" refers to Shakespeare's working drafts of a play; when completed, a transcript or "fair copy" of the foul papers would be prepared, by the author or by a scribe. Such a manuscript would be heavily annotated with accurate and detailed stage directions and all the other data needed for performance, and then could serve as a "prompt-book," to be used by the prompter to guide a performance of the play. Any of these manuscripts, in any combination, could be used as a source for a printed text. *The Taming of the Shrew* was probably prepared from foul papers.



The title page of the First Folio with the famous engraved portrait of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout