

5-2015

A Discourse of Hoodwinking: Falcons and Performativity in The Taming of the Shrew

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A DISCOURSE OF HOODWINKING: FALCONS AND PERFORMATIVITY IN
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
English

by
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May 2015

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis examines falconry's usage as a framing metaphor in William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. This work provides a close reading of a familiar play in order to address old concerns in a new light by bridging both feminist critique with the newer field of animal studies. Where recent scholarly work frequently ignores falconry's presence, this work recognizes that Petruchio's taming speech and the play's later acts are structured to mirror falconry practices that would have been well known to most early moderns, but are unfamiliar to contemporary audiences. This thesis provides a detailed comparison between the language of early modern advice manuals on taming, including the following topics: falconry, wifely duties, and horsemanship. Further, it seeks to illustrate how Shakespeare's text, which is often read as starkly misogynist, can be read as subversive of early modern patriarchy, while leaving its ideologies intact. *The Taming of the Shrew*'s lead couple, Petruchio and Katherina, demonstrate a taming performance which figures Petruchio and Katherina as falconer and falcon, respectively. This adoption of falconry as taming metaphor is unique to *Taming*, and provides Shakespeare a new avenue for subverting patriarchal notions while appearing to adhere to them through skillful performance.

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Introduction

*Petruchio: My **falcon** now is sharp and passing empty.*

*And till she **stoop** she must not be full-gorged,*

*For then she never looks upon her **lure**.*

*Another way I have to man my **haggard**,*

*To make her come, and know her **keeper's call**,*

*That is, to watch her, as we watch these **kites***

*That **bate** and **beat**, and will not be obedient. (Taming, III, iii, Ll 167-176)*

The preceding passage, the first half of Petruchio's taming monologue from William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, is well known for establishing Petruchio's taming methodology, setting forth a plan by which he will compel the shrewish Katherina into wifely submission. It is worth noting that the first half of the full monologue never mentions Katherina specifically, nor does it refer to a woman in general, but rather situates itself within falconry terminology and methodology. Shakespeare scholars have approached the monologue with varying responses, some viewing this as an example of stark misogyny and evidence for domestic violence in the name of securing patriarchal designs, others arguing more moderately that Petruchio is fulfilling his husbandly duty according to the social strictures prevalent in Elizabethan England, and some even arguing that this speech, and the play as a whole, represent a theatrical farce that shouldn't be taken too seriously. Despite these approaches' vast differences, a common thread exists. The passage makes its case through falconry metaphor, and yet, most approaches pass over the language's technicalities with little

more than a cursory glance, essentially ignoring the presence of rich falconry lore. I argue that such a cursory close reading fails to understand falconry's methodology and practices, as well as its role and importance as a genteel spectator sport within early modern English society.

In order to address the lack of study into Shakespeare's falconry I will perform a close reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* which illustrates falconry's use as a metaphor for wife taming. Merely explaining the falconry terminology and linking Katherina's metaphorically subordinate role as a falcon to her likewise subordinate role as wife does not suffice. Shakespeare's use of falconry does not remain a linguistic metaphor by which to frame the narrative; rather, his characters literally act out common early modern falconry practice in the scenes that follow Petruchio's monologue. Thus, we must not only address falconry as metaphor, but also falconry as performance. It is through this complementary relationship of falconry as both metaphor and performativity that I will argue that *Taming* ultimately fails to produce a tame wife, but rather affirms the necessity of both her metaphorical wildness and agency in marriage.

Now we must ask ourselves, why study falconry so closely? Falcons are far from the only animal species mentioned in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The title obviously refers to shrews and the play's induction alone references horses, dogs, larks, nightingales and falcons. Considering the profusion of creatures, why does Petruchio so heavily base his taming upon falconry's methodologies and also why do I privilege falcon taming methods over horse taming or dog training? Following the taming monologue, Petruchio and Katherina both literally and metaphorically act out falconry in scenes indebted heavily to falconry practice. The famous sun and moon scene mirrors the psychological

training of hooding practices. Even more explicitly, the entire wager scene's structure is identical to an early modern hawking contest, a practice in which gentlemen would take bets as to whose bird would fetch prey and return to their master's call. The winner of such contests won the pot as well as increased status as a gentleman. Thus, falconry in the early modern era was used more an upper-class display of husbandry ability than as a hunting method. Linking this with Katherina's necessitated wildness I will demonstrate that Katherina and Petruchio's employment of falcon husbandry is not evidence of effective patriarchal rule in the domestic sphere, but rather a duplicitous display which allows both husband and wife to ascend the social strata *together*. A contemporary reader is almost sure to miss these connections as falconry's popularity has waned in recent centuries; however, given falconry's widespread practice in the early modern period, such metaphors would not go unnoticed. According to Richard Grassby, "falconry terms and metaphors were common in all branches of literature- and were employed by authors without any apparent need to explain technicalities- until the middle of the seventeenth century" (40). In fact, Shakespeare makes over fifty mentions of falconry and hawking throughout his works, all of which are employed in a technically correct manner (Pope 131). Therefore, the profusion of falconry metaphors and their technical complexity, coupled with their use as structural framing for *Taming's* narrative, begs for further examination.

From Falconry to Shakespeare

Having already identified the decline of falconry as a major hindrance in bridging an early modern reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* with a contemporary one, I feel that it is necessary to provide a discussion of falconry's history, methodologies, and practices.

In essence, falconry is a sport where birds of prey, also known as raptors, are caught, trained, and then flown to take game. The raptors used are varied, from the tiny Kestrel which catches insects and small birds, hawks which are flown at ground game such as rabbits and squirrels, falcons which are used to take birds, and occasionally Eagles which have been flown at game as large as deer and tigers. Despite the differences of game, all raptors are trained in a nearly identical manner, the basis of which is teaching the bird to associate the falconer with its food source so that it would return to his signal or relinquish its kills to him.

I should emphasize here that falcons are trained; to suggest that any raptor used for falconry is “tamed” would be an egregious fallacy. Indeed, while the word “taming” was in common usage during the early modern period, it was never associated with falcons. A trained female peregrine falcon was often considered “manned” or “gentled.” We see Petruchio employing the former in his taming monologue; it is poignantly accurate that he never uses the word “tame” in what is often referred to as his “taming monologue.” The introduction to my edition of *Taming* argues,

As a verb (or verbal noun), *gentle* (*gentling*) might seem to refer to the same activity as *taming* in the sense of breaking the instinctive behavior of an animal to make it serve human needs. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not acknowledge that usage until a century after the composition of Shakespeare’s play. (Maurer and Gaines xiii)

Instead, they argue, *gentle* implied an upper class distinction. However, falconry terminology, especially in regards to species, complicates the word’s meanings. Female

falcons, especially Peregrines and Gyrfalcons, were considered the prize raptors of the era because of their large size and beauty. The term “falcon” itself implied a bird’s sex as it was typically used in reference to females only, while “tercel” or “tiercel” was used to denote a male. Interestingly, while “falcon” indicated both a species and sex, it also indicated that a bird had already been manned. The term for an unmanned, or wild, female Peregrine was “haggard,” a term we see Petruchio employing to describe the shrewish Katherina.

Published in 1575, George Turberville’s *The Booke of Faulconrie or Hauking* includes several pages which discuss the difference between the “Haggart” falcon and the “Falcon Gentle.” Turberville separates the two by both temperament and physical description, almost as if the two types of Peregrine were actually separate species (Turberville 36-37). Symon Latham, in his *Falconry, in Two Bookes* (1615), corrects and clarifies this distinction, claiming that haggard falcons were Peregrines which reached hunting age in the wild, whereas Falcons Gentle, also Peregrines, were taken from the nest as eyesses and manned at an early age. He also repeats Turberville’s assertion that haggards are the more skillful hunters because they learned to catch prey in the wild (Latham 3-4). However, that prized wildness also made them harder to man and train. Many falconers specifically sought to capture haggards because they had already successfully hunted in the wild, making them harder to keep and man, but more likely to catch prey when taken hawking.

The standard process of falconry from capture to successful hunting takes approximately three months. There are four basic stages in this training: manning, training, exercising, and hunting. The birds are typically taken in the fall during their first

year of life and immediately undergo the “manning” phase. During this phase, the bird is acclimated to humans and taught to associate their falconer with food; this is the basis of the foundational trust between falcon and falconer, and what keeps most from deciding to fly off and never return when released. This stage was accomplished by several methods of particular importance to our discussion. Firstly, food, in the form of meat, is only made available from the falconer’s gauntleted fist. Further, during the medieval and through portions of the early modern eras, the bird was kept blind during this stage through one of two processes.

The first of these processes is known as “seeling,” and involves the eyelids being stitched shut while the bird was also kept awake at all times through clamorous noise (“*seeling*”). Though this practice was becoming outdated in Shakespeare’s time—it was being replaced through hooding of hawks—he was undeniably aware of its practice. Petruchio’s monologue makes no direct mention of seeling; however, Shakespeare does use the term in a famous line spoken by the titular character in *Macbeth*,

Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale. (*Macbeth*, III.iii.47-51)

As Macbeth’s lines reveal, the falcon was kept in complete darkness through the day in order to instill fear in the bird. Following this period of instilled fear, the falcon’s eyes were allowed to open. Supposedly this strengthened the bond between falconer and

falcon as she associated him with having the power to control daylight. The second process was known as “hooding” or “hoodwinking” and followed the same principle except instead of stitching the eyelids shut, the bird’s head was covered by a removable hood typically made of leather; hooding remains today the standard method for calming falcons.

Following a falcon’s manning, the training phase begins and involves tethering a hoodless bird to a stake and teaching it to come to the falconer’s upraised gauntlet. Once this is successful, the bird is then enticed to the “lure,” typically a pair of dove’s wings attached to a furry or feathery object made to look like the type of prey the particular bird will be flown at. Once the bird takes the lure, it is then taught to give up its catch in exchange for clean meat from the falconer’s hand. In this way, the bird is always made to associate the falcon with its food source, not its kill. The subsequent exercising phase is simply an extension of the lure training, but performed off the tether for the purpose of giving the bird ample space to fly and stay at peak hunting health and weight. Once this weight is achieved, the falcon is flown for hunting until the annual molting season when it sheds its feathers to grow new ones.

In the early modern era, it was common for nobles and royalty to gather in large groups in the field during the hunting season to fly their birds together. This practice was known as “hawking,” and as I mentioned earlier, there were often bets placed on the success of particular falconers and birds. These contests were also socially charged with each falconer trying to prove the success and primacy of their manning art. Thus, the whole affair was steeped in patriarchal class structure and the esteemed prize for winning the bet had as much to do with the social display of prowess as it did with falconry. We

can see then that the practice of falconry was an intricate art ingrained in early modern society as both cultural sport and class and gender consciousness.

Though falconry was present in Europe during first millennium A.D., it is widely agreed upon that falconry became popular among crusading kings and knights who often returned to Europe with several falconers in tow.¹ Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstoffer, considered the most influential of these medieval falconry practitioners, wrote the massive *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* (circa 1247), one of the first European treatises on falconry. The next major English work on the subject, *The Book of St. Albans* (or *The Boke of St. Albans*), was published in 1486. Of particular note to our discussion this work includes a raptor species hierarchy which links to monarchical class structure. The list begins with equating emperors with eagles, Gyrfalcons with kings, Falcons Gentle with princes, and continues to equate various birds with every level of the social stratum, even “Servants” and “Knaves” (Berners).

While *The Book of St. Albans* is attributed to abbess Dame Juliana Berners, its historians generally agree that this list is actually part of a compilation of other works that Berners includes in her book. I note this to illustrate that the link between human social class and animals, especially falconry, is far from localized and singular notion in the medieval and early modern eras. The list further corroborates the widespread aspect of these cultural notions in a particularly interesting way. Anyone familiar with falconry or birds of prey will quickly point out that this list was likely not written by a falconer. Its equation of emperors with eagles is ironic because eagles were considered useless for falconry by English falconers, and further, their carrion eating habits were not considered

¹ It bears mentioning that the folk tales deemed the literary ancestors to *Taming* arrived in Europe during the Middle Ages by the exact same roads which brought falconry into prominent practice. See Jan Brunvand’s “The Folktale Origin of *The Taming of the Shrew*.”

especially regal. The list also separates “Falcons Gentle,” “Tercel Falcon,” and “Peregrine” into three distinct social classes despite the fact that these all referred to the same species known today as the Peregrine falcon. What the list illustrates then is a writer unfamiliar with the technicalities of falconry, but acutely aware of falconry’s intricate links to social class. It is no stretch then to assume this list’s relation to the Elizabethan chain of being, with falcons having their own established hierarchy within its divinely dictated cosmology. Once we recognize the depth of falconry’s absorption into the Elizabethan cosmology, we can more adequately understand how such a diverse amount of falconry terminology and metaphors made its way into Shakespeare’s work, as well as other early modern texts, without need of an explanation.

Critical Approaches

Though *The Taming of the Shrew* owes its central taming metaphor to falconry, critics have suggested that its narrative structure is derived heavily from folk-tales and ballads of the period which presented an overlap between domesticity and animal husbandry. One such ballad, “A Merry Jeste of a Shrewd and Curste Wife, Lapped in Morel’s Skin for her Good Behavior,” uses a horse taming metaphor to structure its narrative of wife taming. Shakespeare’s central plot line is practically identical to the ballad’s. In both works a young man is paired with a young woman who is described as shrewish. The young man then sets out to tame her, making her obedient to his wishes. I argue that the two narratives’ actual taming methods, and their outcomes, drastically diverge at this point because of the respective husbandry metaphors used by the men. The husband in “A Merry Jeste,” employing the often brutal methods used in training work horses, violently beats his wife, strips her of all her clothes, and wraps her in the hide of

his old horse, Morel, until she submits to his demands. However, Shakespeare's invocation of taming through falconry methods necessitates that Petruchio take a much less physically violent approach, instead taming Katherina through a more subtle, psychological method which is explicitly demonstrated in his famous monologue.

The divergences between horse training and falconry serve to illustrate competing notions of women's power and agency in Elizabethan England. The brute physicality of Elizabethan equine taming, its methods and goals, contrasts starkly with the more subtle psychological taming employed with raptors. In both works' final scenes, the wives' altered behaviors are displayed to their families and the public, though the displays differ according to the metaphor used. The violent methods employed by the young man in "A Merry Jest" are not solely attributed to horses, but rather to horses owned and employed by those of lesser social status. For the common man, a horse was an instrument of work and thus needed to behave at whatever cost to its health. Falcons, however, were not used for work, but rather for sport. According to Grassby, "The popularity of falconry always depended more on the status it conferred and the pleasure it gave than on its utility" (50). This effectively explains Petruchio's purpose in his marriage as necessary for elevating his social standing and displaying his economic power.

If we apply the falconry cosmology in *The Book of St. Albans* to Petruchio and Katherina's relationship, Katherina's falcon status "gentles" Petruchio as she solidifies his status as a gentleman. Indeed, Margaret Maurer and Barry Gaines have made this argument sans-falconry, claiming,

Shakespeare's preoccupation in *Shrew* is not only with the taming process whereby men make gentle women but also with the wittily construed

converse of such taming: a process whereby women can exert, in a different and even retributive way, their power to make, out of base stock, gentle men. (Maurer and Gaines 117)

This desirability explains then why Petruchio actively seeks to court the “haggard” Katherina; he sees in her both the pleasure of sport and its opportunities for ascending the social strata. Here too, falconry has its say; the inherent publicity in falconry, paired with the dichotomous relationship between a haggard’s skill in hunting and difficulty to train, made the haggard a desirable choice for a gentleman who sought increased status. I argue that we can further draw ties between animal and wifely purpose, the implication being that a common man needed a utilitarian, working wife, while the gentleman desired a wife for pleasure and social mobility.

Critical responses to *Taming*’s metaphorical equation of wives with animals have varied greatly. Lynda E. Boose, makes the claim that criticism of *Taming* often seeks to redeem the play and Petruchio from its obvious misogyny (Boose 176). In response to like critics who have argued that Petruchio’s taming is inherently misogynistic and patriarchal, Kathryn Schwarz offers a cautionary response. She argues that, “ the danger [of such readings] lies in reproducing cultural theory under the illusion that we are studying social history...Patriarchy’s word is no one’s mother tongue” (Schwarz 82). She also reminds us that searches through early modern historical sources will reveal a plethora of dissenting and competing voices in thriving opposition to patriarchy. I argue that close reading Shakespeare’s falconry allows us to bridge the gap between *Taming*’s

misogyny and the resistances to it through the lens of theatricality. This theatricality hinges, of course, upon detailed knowledge of falconry and its practice.

For the contemporary reader and critic, it is particularly easy to dismiss Petruchio's treatment of Katherina as irrevocably misogynistic simply because he treats her "as an animal" and thus as inhuman. And yet, the field of animal studies presents a significant complication to such a dismissal. Animal studies as a field remains widely interdisciplinary; however, the deconstruction of the Cartesian human/animal divide serves as its centralizing litany. In *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* Laurie Shannon identifies a post-Descartes and contemporary human/animal binary, claiming,

Granting the free agency of thought to all humans and classifying the entire balance of creatures, from the oyster to the ape, as uniformly hardwired, René Descartes extracted people and animals alike from a larger cosmic inventory... One was autonomous, a pure mind for which embodiment was beside the point and even unnecessary; the other was a mindless automaton. (Shannon 1)

Shannon argues that such an aggressive human/animal binary did not pervade early modern England, and that undoing the binary in our approach to these texts and "tracing early modern frameworks for cosmopolity across species...opens historical horizons for imagining a quadruped's perspective—even as it, in turn, eyes the concept of humanity from its unvaunted dorsal side" (28). Thus, animal studies scholars argue that undoing the Cartesian divide

aids in “[making] the same kind of shift in the ethics of reading and interpretation that attended taking sexual difference seriously in the 1990s (in the form of queer theory) or race and gender seriously in the 1970s and 1980s” (Wolfe 567-68).

Cary Wolfe cautions that animal studies often fails in its attempt to reintegrate nonhuman animals by focusing solely on animals to the exclusion of humans, and thus reinstates “the human/animal divide in a less visible but more fundamental way, while ostensibly gesturing beyond it” (Wolfe 568). To risk stating the obvious, that animal studies needs to address humanity, offers its own problem of positing a definition of “humanity” that must inevitably reinforce a differentiation from “animal.” Rather, we must address the liminal boundary between what we have identified as human and animal, where the human and the animal become indistinguishable. Early modern texts in general, and *The Taming of the Shrew* specifically, provide an exhaustive supply of human/animal intersections. Bruce Boehrer argues that “in terms of early modern English literary history, this linkage becomes especially visible in ‘birds of prey’” which work their way into Jonson, Shakespeare, and others (544). However, if we turn back to the sixteenth century’s approach to falcons and falconry in Shakespeare we see this human/animal divide played out fiercely in today’s criticism, treating the falcons as mere puppets and machines played with by men. These approaches treat falcons as usable commodities by which men gain pleasure and status. If we consider the falcon as a being with agency and will, even as it is used for the sport of falconry we can understand the interaction between falconer and falcon as a relationship between two agential beings. Indeed, the falcon’s willfulness is *necessary* for the gentlemanly sport of falconry. As I argued in discussion over the use of the term “haggard,” Petruchio’s gain in social status

depends upon Katherina's willfulness and agency *through* her falcon status, not in spite of it. However, before I can address the implications of her falcon agency, I must first demonstrate why Shakespeare ties Katherina's taming to falconry.

Origins of Wife Taming

To this point, I have focused keenly on the metaphorical equation of wives to animals in two distinct literary marriages. Before proceeding on to discuss taming discourse, I must first provide some explanation of Elizabethan proscriptions for wifely behavior. Advice manuals were common in this era and were written to cover nearly all aspects of Elizabethan life, including husbandry. Indeed the difficulty of parsing out *animal* husbandry and "real" husbandry becomes quite difficult because the dominion of man over beast and woman is quite literally equated in the era. Nowhere is this more evident than in the writings of Gervase Markham who wrote on multiple topics of husbandry, including: horsemanship, falconry, and housewifery, providing detailed advice on the proper administration and conduct of each. A wife's willing subjection to patriarchal rule figures prominently in such advice manuals and is justified through Christian Scripture. William Gouge's treatise, *Of Domesticall Duties*, cites *Ephesians* 5:22 in its opening section, "Wives submit your selves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Gouge 13). John Dod and Robert Cleaver's treatise also makes sure to carefully secure patriarchal control through biblical precept which is evident in its title, *A godly form of household government for the ordering of private families, according to the direction of God's Word*.

Gouge, continuing his discussion of *Ephesians* 5, presents the Pauline analogy of the husband to his wife as Christ is to his church. He argues,

The place of an husband intimated in the last clause of the former verse, is more plainly expressed, and fully explained in this verse. His place is expressed under the metaphor of an *head*: and amplified by his resemblance therein unto *Christ*... A wife must submit herself to an husband, because he is her *head*: and she must do it *as unto her Lord*, because her husband is to her, as Christ is to the Church... As an head is more eminent and excellent than the body, and placed above it, so is an husband to his wife. (Gouge 14)

Here we can firmly see the influence of the Elizabethan cosmology which figured anything placed above something else as *superior*² to that which is below it. Thus Gouge takes the Pauline analogy and analyzes it through an existing framework which understood husbands as superior to their wives.

If the husband is the head of the wife, and she is to submit herself to him, what does that literally entail? Does she simply take orders and do as she's told? The resounding answer from Gouge, Markham, John Dod and Robert Cleaver is *yes, but*. Dod and Cleaver claim "it is God's will that she should be subject to her husband, so that she shall have no other discretion or will but what may depend upon her head" (Dod and Cleaver). They qualify this statement however, arguing,

This dominion over their wives will doth manifestly appeare in this, that God in old time ordained, that if the woman had vowed any thing unto God, it should notwithstanding rest in her husband to disavow it: so much

² Indeed, Gouge uses the language differentiation of a husband as *superior* to his wife, who is necessarily *inferior* to him in the same way that the husband is inferior to his King and God.

is the wives will subject to her husband. Yet it is not mean that the wife should not employ her knowledge and discretion which God hath given her, in the helpe, and for the good of her husband: but always it must be with condition to submit herself unto him, acknowledging him to be her head, that finally they may so agree in one, as the conjunction of marriage doth require. (Dod and Cleaver)

Thus, wives are entreated to act as their own agents while simultaneously submitting themselves to their husbands' rule. It should come as no surprise that this prescription caused problems in Elizabethan marriages, as personalities, judgments, and opinions conflict in even the most peaceful of marriages. While these manuals secure wifely agency, albeit in a very small sense, they also recognize and address the struggles when the two remained two in mind.

Elizabethan advice manuals generally put forth two prescriptions for maintaining a happy marriage. The first prescription was preventative: simply to marry two individuals who showed "a mutual liking" for one another, for "Mutual love and good liking of each other is as glue" (Gouge 96). Dod and Cleaver add that "Every man ought also to remember this, that either his wife is wise and religious, or else she is foolish and irreligious... if he be married to one that is wise and religious, and knoweth her dutie out of God's word, then one sharpe and discret word is sufficient" (Dod and Cleaver). Thus if both husband and wife like the other, and if both behave according to the era's patriarchal hierarchy, the marriage should prove to be happy from the beginning.

However, transgressions of wifely duty were bound to happen and the advice manuals encouraged husbands to remain well-liked in their marriages. Dod and Cleaver advise,

When the wife shall be inflamed with ire, wrath, malice, or envie, the husband ought to suffer her; and after the heate is somewhat cooled, and the flame quenched, then mildly to admonish her...the wise and discret husband ought to use all good meanes to win the good liking of his wife toward him...For although the husband shall have power to force his wife to feare and obey him, yet he shall never have strength to force her to love him. (Dod and Cleaver)

This mild wifely discipline, while it certainly figures the wife as more a childlike inferior to her husband than an equal partner in marriage, is markedly not representative of the kind of abuse inflicted upon the wife of “A Merry Jeste,” nor is it representative of the type of domestic aggression in *Taming*. Further, the discussion of wifely duty is analogized as connecting both head and body as a unified whole while benefiting each. The discourse never figures a human/beast power hierarchy in which one must be brought to heel under patriarchal control by a physical and psychological manipulation better known as taming.

Pamela Brown has argued of a curious maxim advising women to act shrewish: “In early modern parlance a shrew was a garrulous, domineering, and intractable wife. Shrew bad, patient wife good: everyone knew that. So it is curious to come across a proverb that gives the shrew precedence over the submissive wife: *better a shrew than a sheep*” (Brown 1). Here the anonymous author points out the power of shrewish

behavior: a shrew has the ability to threaten her husband's authority and therefore bring shame upon him unless he caters to her demands in some way. In this light we can more readily understand Gouge, and Dod and Cleaver's encouragement to husbands to make themselves well-liked. We can also more fully understand the blowback from husbands desperate to secure their patriarchal control and headship over their marriage. If the wife's obedience secures his primacy and manhood, then the wife's disobedience threatens it, giving her more power in resistance than in submission. How then were men to control their headstrong and socially astute wives, when their willing cooperation was not given? "A Merry Jest" and *The Taming of the Shrew* are produced as poetic and dramatic discourses in an attempt to discuss this question, if not answer it.

However, neither "A Merry Jest" nor *The Taming of the Shrew* ever truly address the necessity of a tame wife. Rather, both texts make an assumption of the audience's familiarity with wife taming and its rationale. In *Taming*, this assumption is framed by the play's narrative structure which closely follows the plot of prior taming narratives. According to Jan Brunvand, these narratives have Asian origins, and found their way into southern Europe during the middle ages (Brunvand 268). Folklorists have identified several in which

a man cures his bad wife by administering cruel and irrational punishment to a recalcitrant animal; also, the texts of both types frequently share further traits, such as the wager on the wives' obedience. Other similar devices to tame a bad wife are sometimes found in folktales, and all of these stories involving some kind of violent trick by a husband make up an interrelated group of oral narratives which may be called "The Taming of

the Shrew Complex"... the secret of the successful taming is the husband's trick of administering excessively severe punishment to an animal in order to frighten his bad wife. (Brunvand 345, 347)

While falcons are mostly absent from these tales, we should note the remarkable symmetry between the tales' introduction to Europe and falconry's. It would be no stretch to imagine that the same returning crusaders who brought falconers from the Middle East back to Europe also brought the taming folk-tales which would eventually inform *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Brunvand unknowingly makes the connection between "A Merry Jeste" and *Taming* when he claims, "Shakespeare must have been exposed to some "horse-killed" version of the tale" (347). The horse metaphor's appearance in "A Merry Jest" coincides specifically with the young man's marriage to the ballad's shrewish woman. The marriage begins to disintegrate at its outset, driving the young husband to consider a curious punishment, "I fear me I shall never make her good/ Except I do wrap her in black Morel's skin" (784). Morel is the young man's horse who "is [so] old, he can labor no more,/nor do no good but always eat,/ I trow I have kept him thus long in store,/to work a charm that shall be feat." Here we see a curious internal dialogue in which the young man considers sacrificing his old horse to use its skin as a disciplinary tool in taming his wife. However, the young husband laments, "Yet I am loathe for him to kill/ For he hath done me good service by now" (795-96). Within the context of his wife's disciplining, the young man's lament for Morel effectively demonstrates his opinion of a

disobedient wife, lowering her to the same plane as a lame beast of burden whose only value remains in sentimentality. Further, that he considers sparing Morel due to his usefulness places his wife as less useful and worthless compared to Morel. Thus an Elizabethan wife's submission to the will of her husband takes paramount importance; she is the very embodiment of patriarchal submission. Therefore, in disobeying her husband and refusing to submit to his will, she has effectively made herself as worthless to him as a lame horse.

Her equation to Morel then is made complete when the young husband "command[s] anon,/ To slay old Morel his great horse:/ And flay him then, the skin from the bone/ to wrap it about his wife's white corpse" (869-72). This image most concretely establishes the direct relation between wife and horse in "A Merry Jest." Morel is slain and used to wrap the wife. In this context, the word *corpse* means the wife's living body, but the reader's association of *corpse* with death effectively equates the horse's body with the wife's, reinforcing the metaphor. That Morel's hide is intended to wrap the wife becomes the metaphor's physical embodiment, making the wife's denigration complete. She has been deemed as worthless as a lame horse and to show it, the young man intends to cloak her body with Morel's hide. For all intents and purposes, the wife replaces the horse by taking on both his worth and appearance. This affirms the utility of her existence, denying her purpose beyond her usefulness to her husband. Viewed through this lens, the husband's taming methods can be more easily understood.

Throughout the Elizabethan period, and long after, the standard practice of horse taming and training involved-particularly for work horses- copious physical punishment, even abuse, a tactic reflected in the contemporary term, "horse breaking." Following another

round of disobedience, in the form of a physical assault, the husband “clean from the back her smock he rent./ In every hand a rod he got, and laid upon her a right good pace” (954-56). Here we see again the use of the term “rod,” which Markham has shown is undeniably tied to disciplining a horse. In tearing the clothes from her body, and then using the implements with which one would discipline a horse, the husband again reinforces her animal worth, and in accordance, tames her by beating her into submission.

The links between patriarchal dominion, animal husbandry and domesticity also link to early modern financial structure. Laura Gowing has argued,

The making of marriage in early modern society laid out the different meanings of conjugality for women and men; but it was as marriages came apart that the precise implications of those meanings emerged most starkly. When marriages broke down, a whole edifice of economic transactions, sexual relations, and social roles came unstuck. (Gowing 180)

This is further explicated through the legal aspects of animal husbandry. In Elizabethan England, “It was a felony to steal a manned hawk, but under common law no wild creature could be private property, so a lost hawk belonged to whoever reclaimed it, even when it was wearing varvels,” small metal rings attached to the legs of a raptor bearing the owner’s name, and often crest (Grassby 48). This link between taming and ownership explains one aspect of the era’s masculine fear of cuckoldry. If a hawk was indeed stolen, how was its rightful owner to prove that ownership when the thief could simply argue that he reclaimed the bird himself? Given the presumption of masculine dominance in

Elizabethan households, the need for an obedient wife or servant can be understood through this same lens. If a wife or servant acts wild and outside the control of the patriarch, then he does not actually control them, creating a state in which his control or “ownership” is denied, tying domestic disobedience to financial loss as well as public humiliation. Despite the owner’s branding, a lost hawk was still lost, making the owner’s loss take on a public dimension.

Though this aspect of the falconry metaphor is not directly addressed in *Taming*, Shakespeare employs it through the titular character of *Othello* when he states of Desdemona, “If I do prove her haggard/ Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings/ I’d whistle her off and let her down the wind/ to prey at fortune” (*Othello* III, iii, LI 264-67). In this line Othello directly ties wifely disobedience to a husband’s public and personal shame through a falconry metaphor. The modern reader unfamiliar with falconry is likely to miss both the husbandry ties and the finality present in these lines. In *The Ornithology of Shakespeare*, James Edmund Harting states, “Falconers always flew their hawk *against* the wind. If flown *down* the wind, she seldom returned. When, therefore, a useless bird was to be dismissed, her owner flew her ‘down the wind;’ and thenceforth she shifted for herself, and was said ‘to prey at fortune’” (Harting 59). Thus we see Shakespeare’s discussion of domestic obedience and its impact on a patriarch’s measure through an animal-human metaphor.

If we consider the ballad form’s inherent ties to the lower classes of the Isles, it might be argued that the horse metaphor employed by the “A Merry Jest” broached only the realm of the financial loss inherent to a disobedient wife, while rejecting the social dimension. It could also be argued that the social and sport dimensions are absent

considering the utility of the horse as opposed to the relative lack of utility in falconry. Though falcons were flown by members of every social strata, the spectator sport aspects were typically practiced only by the wealthy, whereas horses were commonly owned by a wider range of classes. Unfortunately there is little scholarship on “A Merry Jeste” or horsemanship among commoners in which to situate an argument. However, even the advice manuals written for the wealthy shed some light on Elizabethan attitudes toward horse behavior. In his eight volume work *Cavalariçe, or the English Horseman*, Gervase Markham, makes the claim that without the rod (known commonly as the crop today) a horseman looks “like a mule-ryder” (Markham, v.2 , 47). Thus he argues that without the symbol of discipline, the crop, a horseman can’t even look like a horseman, undeniably lending a certain social element to the horse metaphor used within “A Merry Jeste.”

While no horse is actually killed in *Taming*, the servant, Grumio, tells a story about how Petruchio savagely beats him after Kate’s horse falls, muddying her bridal clothes (*Taming*, III, iii, L1 43-68). Thus in Shakespeare’s tale, the servant stands in for the horse, being beaten in front of Kate to demonstrate his husbandly mastery. Despite the servant’s humanity, there is no doubt that Shakespeare’s taming narrative is framed in the same manner of the tales of animal mastery. Brunvand argues that Shakespeare obviously could not have a horse killed or even present on stage, and thus the dramatic medium presents the irrational-animal-abuse-in-front-of-spouse motif as dialogue (Brunvand 348). However, the formal argument doesn’t explain why the servant becomes a stand-in for the horse. Grumio could just as easily have presented a literal horse-killing through dialogue. Though it may seem an easy answer, the link between human and animal was simply a given of the period, with animals and humans both being employed

metaphorically to describe the other. Grumio falls prey to the same assertion of animal equality in *Taming* as does the wife of “A Merry Jeste.” Both embody the servant role as one of utility and comfort making, much like the horse Petruchio and Kate ride before it falls, or Morel before he ages beyond utility. When Petruchio beats the servant instead of the horse, we see Shakespeare transgressing the folk tale trope of irrational animal abuse as domestic curative. Where the folk tales’ husbands beat the horses, Petruchio beats the servant equated to them. In doing so, Shakespeare further cements his characters within an animal hierarchy that mirrors early modern class structure. Sly becomes dog; Grumio becomes horse; Kate becomes falcon.

The Falconry Divergence

The husband’s response to the wife’s physically violent disobedience marks the location where *The Taming of the Shrew* departs from “A Merry Jest.” Crocker argues, “Like Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*... [“A Merry Jeste”] treats violence as a carefully cultivated domestic curative, a regime of discipline that the noble son-in-law administers to restore masculine mastery over the household” (Crocker 57). However, grouping the taming of the young husband and Petruchio together under the same moniker of “domestic violence” illustrates a failure to understand the differences in taming method as well as its subsequent implications. Having been slapped by Katherina, Petruchio responds, “I swear I’ll cuff you, if you strike again,” yet Katherina’s response, “If you strike me, you are no gentleman” effectively robs Petruchio of any recourse through violence by using Petruchio’s reputation in the public sphere against him (*Taming*, II, i, Ll 225-26). She takes a measure of power in her feminine submission, undermining Petruchio’s masculine power within the very system that establishes his

dominance. If Katherina cannot be beaten, then she cannot be equated with a beast of labor as is the wife in “A Merry Jest.” Denied the ability to beat Katherina into submission, Petruchio renews his taming efforts, adopting instead a campaign of environmental manipulation and psychological punishment. In his famous monologue at the end of act three, scene four, Petruchio states, “ My Falcon now is sharp, and passing empty./ and ‘til she stoop she must not be full-gorged” (III, iv, Ll. 169-70). These lines establish *The Taming of the Shrew*’s animal husbandry metaphor. Instead of the horse in “A Merry Jest,” Katherina is being named a raptor. Her skillful avoidance of physical punishment at Petruchio’s hand necessitates the different metaphor as a falcon cannot be tamed through direct physical punishment, but through associating the falconer with a food source.

Petruchio’s taming monologue in act three is overwhelmingly saturated with references to falconry in its first half. I have bolded the falconry specific vocabulary in the following passage:

And thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And ‘tis my hope to end successfully.
My **falcon** now is sharp and passing empty.
And till she **stoop** she must not be **full-gorged**,
For then she never looks upon her **lure**.
Another way I have to man my **haggard**,
To make her come, and know her **keeper’s call**,
That is, to watch her, as we watch these **kites**
That **bate** and **beat**, and will not be obedient.

She ate no meat today, nor none shall she eat (*Taming*, III, iii, LI 167-176)

Here we see Petruchio establishing a regime of denying Katherina that which she desires in order to keep her focused on the goal that he sets out for her. Even when hunting, the falcon was never fed from her kill, but with cleaned meat from the Falconer's hand.

Latham instructs,

[when training to the lure] to walk about her, using your voice, and giving her many bits with your hand. And leave not off this course, but every day use her unto it, until you have wonne her even to leane and bend her body to your hand, and to bring what she hath in her foote towards you... or otherwise to shew her love and desire unto the same. (Latham, 12)

In essence, the falconer is training the falcon to give up her independence, instead learning to depend upon him for her sustenance, despite her obvious capability to catch prey herself. This is accomplished through denying her independence by keeping her from feeding herself, an act Petruchio employs by consistently denying Katherina meat by claiming it is not good enough for her. Even this portion of the taming, though often overlooked, is drawn from falconry. Every treatise and book on falconry from the period insists on feeding falcons "clean meat," which was supposed to make them healthier and thus stronger, faster, and more effective in preying. Thus even the undesirability of the meat is steeped in falconry lore. The effect of the training then becomes for Katherina to associate Petruchio's presence to her needs being met, establishing her dependency on him.

Petruchio's equation to falconer as food source is carried further in the next lines of his monologue,

As with the meat, some undeservéd fault
I'll find about the making of the bed;
And here I'll fling the pillow, there the bolster,
This way the coverlet, another way the sheets;
Ay, and amid this hurly I intend
That all is done in reverend care of her-
And, in conclusion, she shall watch all night;
And if she chance to nod I'll rail and brawl
And with the clamour keep her still awake.
This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,
And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour.
He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak; 'tis charity to show. (*Taming*, III, iii, Ll 178-190)

To the contemporary reader the falconry metaphor might seem to dissipate, giving way to a more directly domestic taming. However, the tie to falconry remains present in the taming methodology. The earlier lines which mention watching kites can be put in conversation with the domesticity of these lines through yet another technique in falcon training.

This link between a master and his control of daylight is further explored more explicitly in act four, scene five when Petruchio forces Katherina to accept his control

over whether it is the sun or moon which is shining. After vehemently denying Petruchio's claims upon the sun and moon, she finally responds, claiming:

Then, God be blessed, it is the blessed sun,
But sun it is not, when you say it is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be so for Katherina. (*Taming*, IV, v, ll. 19-23)

Here Kate is demonstrating not only submission to Petruchio's will, but also to his mastery over the sun, moon, and all creation by implication.

Petruchio's taming methods of food and sleep deprivation have been read by many as deliberate psychological and physical spouse abuse. Though I will not attempt to deny that his taming methodology is representative of contemporary conceptions of abuse, I disagree that his speech is evidence of a desire to harm Katherina. The line, "I intend/ that all is done in reverend care of her" should be taken more literally than it usually is. Once again, an explanation can be found in Petruchio's falconry metaphor.

Latham states of the young haggard,

Thus doth she rest no daie, but toile continually, unles the extremity of
foule, and tempestuous weather doe let and hinder her, when no other
foules are able to stirre abroad to seeke their food. This proves what hurt
we doe unto our young hawkes (being full of metal, found, and
courageous) when as for two or three daies flying, wee doe commonly
determine of two or three daies resting: this we learne not from the wilde

hawke, whose course and order (with reason, and as neere as we may) wee ought to imitate and follow. Shee, when shee hath labored three or foure daies together in boisterous and bitter weather is not the next day one iot the worse, but rather the better, for by the dayly use of her bodie, and exercise of her wings, she is preserved & kept in perfect health. (Latham 6-7)

In the margins he also states, “to the young hawke till she bee staid and blooded, give no rest, or very little if it be possible” (6). This illustrates that sleep deprivation was actually looked on favorably as a means by which to prepare for a young falcon for the hunt. Given this, Petruchio’s method cannot be deemed a purposeful abuse of Katherina, but instead the standard method by which a young falcon would have been kept in peak hunting health. Considering the public stakes of falconry performance, it would have done harm to his reputation to have an unhealthy falcon as its performance would have been diminished. In this context, reading Petruchio’s taming as intentionally malicious and brutal becomes willfully ignorant of the language he employs which expresses reverent care and markedly not the malicious brutality a contemporary reading might assume. An obvious objection to this claim might argue that treating a wife as an animal is evidence itself of stark spousal abuse. I will not attempt to refute this claim, but I instead want to interrogate a separate concern: whether or not we can read Petruchio’s taming as reality, and whether or not that matters.

Hoodwinking, or the Issue of Performativity

Do we then write *Taming* and Petruchio off as well-meaning exemplars of early modern misogyny? Is the play simply a dramatic variant of the many husbandry manuals of the era, inherently patriarchal in its view? Undeniably, Petruchio's falconry metaphor establishes a power hierarchy in which he is supposedly dominant over Katherina.

However, accepting this hierarchy as a dramatic reflection of reality would be a mistake.

Marea Mitchell reminds us

that it is easy to forget as the play unfolds that the main plots of the play, the taming and the wooing, according to the Sly-frame, are all part of the performance mounted by the hirelings of the Lord...the theme of performance, thus begins early in this particular play, and is very closely tied to issues of interpretation and meaning. (Mitchell 238)

The choice of whether to include the Sly frame in productions has an important impact on the drama's interpretation. Diana E. Henderson claims of film that, "in choosing to erase the Sly frame... [some] filmmakers increase the inset story's claims to social reality" (Henderson 150). Thus, to ignore the Sly frame is to put undue pressure upon Petruchio and Katherina as representative of early modern reality. Rather, their existence as characters within a play within a play situates performativity, not taming, as the play's centralizing idea. The play within a play remains acutely aware of performativity through its close.

Why then does Shakespeare spend so much time weaving falconry lore into Petruchio's taming, when performativity remains the central issue? I argue that the taming itself represents yet another layer of performance in an already multi-layered

drama. Where critics often take the play's taming dialogue at its word, we should not forget that it remains dialogue, not action. Petruchio's taming monologue is just that, a monologue. Grumio's story of Petruchio beating him remains a story. Even when we see Petruchio employing his methodology in the sun/moon scene, a servant is present. Essentially, we never see a moment within the play where Petruchio and Katherina's marriage has no audience. Thus we are doubly distanced from the reality of Petruchio and Katherina's marriage. This distance alone should make us wary of the play's farcical nature. Remaining critical of the play's "reality," we also can see the falconry metaphor complicated by the discourse on performativity.

It is important to note that while Petruchio sets out to tame Katherina through falconry methods, Katherina herself is the one who forces the animal husbandry metaphor to ascend to the plane of falconry when she denies Petruchio the ability to beat her into submission. She is allowed this through her noble status when she invokes Petruchio's standing as a gentleman in her argument against his ability to employ physical violence. By threatening his status, she reaffirms her own as a lady of higher birth, thus demanding that Petruchio treat her as such. Notably, Petruchio's adoption of falcon taming occurs only after this power play, proving his acceptance of her status. However, the falconry metaphor still situates the couple's relationship in terms of Katherina's usefulness to Petruchio. Where the wife in "A Merry Jest" is considered useful only in terms of her utility through comfort and ease for her husband, Katherina's usefulness is defined through the increased social reputation and pleasure Petruchio can achieve through taming a highborn shrew. In both "A Merry Jest" and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the wives' purpose is illustrated and explored through the works' final scenes

which depict performances of wifely obedience. The wife's performance in "A Merry Jeste" unequivocally illustrates the success of a brutal taming and the husband's gain from it. However, I argue that *Taming*'s final scene fails to unequivocally illustrate a tame Katherina. If we recognize that a falconer does not produce a *tame* creature, then we can infer from Katherina's equation with a falcon implies a permanent wildness necessary to the practice of falconry. Thus, Petruchio's demonstration of Katherina's successful "manning" simply cannot be viewed as a taming at all.

To address the role of performativity in wife taming, we must now turn to the works' final scenes. The young man of "A Merry Jest" invites his in-laws and neighbors over for dinner and "The good man commanded what he would have,/ The wife was quick at hand" (1051-52). Here, we see that the wife is obedient, carrying out all the duties commanded of her, just as the reader might imagine that Morel used to. Though the wife's obedience allows her to shirk the horse hide, the threat of its repeated use is evident in its continued existence in the cellar. Metaphorically, she has assumed Morel's laborious, beast of burden role. The hide's continued existence is also proof of the need for the husband's continued physical dominance to ensure his wife's obedience. *Taming*'s conclusion is not so clear-cut. According to Jean E. Howard, "The multiple instances of disguise and transformation...[reflect] possibilities for change both in people's behavior and in their social circumstances" (Howard 134). In his display of Katherina's taming, Petruchio makes a wager with Lucentio and Hortensio in which the men call for their wives and the winner is decided by whose wife comes first. Katherina is the only wife who comes to her husband's call, winning the bet for Petruchio. However, this display is not truly a show of Katherina's total submission. The wager itself is rooted in the

falconry metaphor used throughout the play. When hawking, the falconer must set his raptor circling high above to search for prey, effectively releasing his control over the bird. The men call for their wives in much the same way they would recall their raptor from the hunt. Though the wager is intended to display their wives' submission, it also grants them a level of agency. Every falconer must accept that the falcon might never come when called. Coupling this risk inherent in falconry with its public, spectator sport elements, we see that the falconer has much more to lose than his falcon should his taming prove inadequate; he is shamed as well. Therefore falconry's practice is established in its performance.

The paradoxical dichotomy between falconry's inherent risk and its promise of social reward becomes the space within which Petruchio and Katherina's relationship is defined. In some sense, Petruchio needs Katherina to be wild, and difficult to tame. The greater the risk involved in taming her, the greater the possible reward. Before striking Petruchio, Katherina rarely acts the shrew that her contemporaries repeatedly suggest she is. Helga Ramsey-Kurz argues that this creates a situation in which Katherina "has no other option than to act the shrew she is branded" (Ramsey-Kurz 268). Petruchio seizes upon this, further antagonizing her to the point where she strikes him. Ironically, this first true act of shrewishness we witness from her is what empowers her to leverage Petruchio's status as a gentleman against him. In playing her role as a shrew, she is granted a level of power and social status that she was previously denied. This establishes her first moment of true performance. Taking her cue, Petruchio then seeks to tame her as a falcon and not a shrew. The title, *The Taming of the Shrew*, then becomes problematic.

If Katherina is not a shrew, then who is and why is she, or they, being tamed? An answer can be found within the wager scene at the play's end. Grounded in the falconry metaphor, the scene is a social derivation of a hawking. We see the men grouped together while their wives are out of sight, much as falconers must send their birds circling high above. The men goad Petruchio, with Baptista claiming, "Now, in good sadness, son Petruchio, / I think thou hast the veriest shrew of all" (*Taming*, V, i, Ll 66). Petruchio responds,

Well, I say no; and therefore, for assurance,
Let 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 propose. (V, i, Ll 67-71)

The men make wagers, but consistent with his characters, Petruchio seeks to outdo them all and ups the wager by stating, "Twenty crowns. / I'll venture so much of my hawk or hound, / but twenty times so much upon my wife" (V, i, Ll 74-76). The reader should note here that Katherina is being differentiated from a hawk in this instance, our first clue that the play's falconry metaphor might be an act. Lucentio and Hortensio both send for their wives but are denied. Petruchio then sends for Katherina, the only wife to come to her husband's call, and wins the wager. This then suggests that Katherina has either been cured of her shrewishness or never was one at all, considering her metaphorical falcon nature. It also suggests that Bianca and the former widow might be the play's actual shrews. Their shrewish nature is further established when, following Bianca and the

former widow's disobedience, Petruchio again commands Katherina, telling her to fetch the disobedient wives: "Go, fetch them hither. If they deny to come,/ Swinge me them soundly forth unto their husbands./ Away, I say, and bring them hither straight" (V, i, Ll 115-17). She complies immediately, bringing them before Petruchio. If we consider the shrew's small, mammalian stature, this command illustrates the disobedient wives' shrewish nature as Katherina brings them back to Petruchio exactly as would a properly trained falcon. And yet, Petruchio does not stop there with his demonstration of Katherina's taming. He commands Katherina to "tell these headstrong women/ what duty they do owe their lords and husbands" (V, i, Ll 142-43). When the widow scoffs at this, Petruchio seemingly points at her and tells Katherina, "And begin with her" (V, i, Ll 147). Katherina's third, and final compliance seals the falconry metaphor as, having captured her prey, she willingly hands their metaphorical corpses over to Petruchio.

What conclusions then can be drawn from this reversal of shrewish identity? Through this final scene the play's title itself becomes intentionally misleading and farcical. At its outset *The Taming of the Shrew* appears to produce a shrew in Katherina, but she herself undercuts that designation, an act which is reinforced through Petruchio's falconry taming methods. I have argued that Bianca and the former widow could stand in as the play's shrew. If we consider that the term "shrew" originally targeted socially outcast men, Christopher Sly could also be considered *Taming's* shrew, especially in light of his "gentling" into lordship in the induction.

Considering my argument concerning agency and *Taming's* meta-theatricality, it is interesting that the play begins as a play being performed for Christopher Sly, a common man acting the part of a gentleman. If a class distinction exists between

methodologies of animal husbandry and wife taming, what can we infer about Shakespeare's employment of falconry? Sly also provides an interesting window into how animal metaphors overlap. In the induction he is paired along with and compared to the hunting dogs, which is interesting given the play's heavy focus on falconry. If he holds with dog status, which ranks under the falcon, can Christopher Sly truly relate to the metaphor and its more subtle psychological elements, or does he view it only for its surface methodologies and thus miss the subtle power implications? Another question to ask of Sly is, considering Katherina's role as falcon, who is the play's shrew? Considering "shrew's" early use to indicate socially inept males and considering the theatrical nature of Petruchio's and Katherina's courtship, taming, and marriage, might Christopher Sly be the play's actual shrew? Like Katherina he is forced by a male of upper class standing to play a role, and by doing so assumes the mantle of a lord. By acting, he both escapes his proscribed status as a commoner and is tamed, or "husbanded," into an elevated role within the Elizabethan social framework.

Whoever we might argue stands in as the actual shrew, by the play's final scene we have not borne witness to Katherina being tamed as a shrew, but trained as a falcon. Considering the copious and maddening amounts of role swapping and deception throughout the play, this should come as no surprise and lends credence to those who have read the taming as entirely farcical. Ramsey-Kurz offers another answer when she claims, "*Taming* actually provides a more general appraisal of play-acting in that it asserts the ubiquity of theatrical performance in real life and establishes its indispensability as a cultural practice employed by males and females alike to negotiate their place within society" (Kurz 265). She continues by asserting that Petruchio's

“taming of Katherine can be read...as an endeavor to induce Katherine to do like him and act naturally rather than being natural” (270). Read in this light, Petruchio’s taming becomes a performance piece that takes on a socio-political goal. By the play’s end, Petruchio’s taming performance, steeped in falconry as a spectator sport, firmly situates him as above the other men in the social hierarchy and wins him a substantial sum of money as well. However, Petruchio could not have succeeded in this alone; he needed Katherine’s complicity in her role as falcon. Given that she herself leveraged against Petruchio’s gentlemanly status in order to take on that role, I assert that Katherine’s complicity suggests a level of agency and power that some Shakespeare scholarship seeks to deny her in its goal to expose Petruchio as irredeemably brutal and misogynistic. The play’s final line even goes as far as to suggest that Petruchio’s wager was staged when Lucentio states, “’Tis a wonder, by your leave, that she will be tamed so” (V, i, L1 201).

How might we reconcile Lucentio’s theory that Petruchio’s true taming is false? The wager scene’s connection to falconry offers yet another insight. When Katherine returns with Bianca and the former widow in tow, Petruchio says, “Katherine, that cap of yours becomes you not:/ Off with that bauble, throw it underfoot” (V, i, L1 133-34). She complies, throwing the hat to the ground immediately. This illustrates her obedience, and yet there is a spousal subtext being employed. Considering the usage of hoods in falconry, and Petruchio’s metaphorical references to them in his taming speech and in the scene where he compels Katherine to agree with him on whether it is the moon shining or the sun, the cap here can be read as Katherine’s hood. Katherine’s lines also wittily invoke the cap as a falconry hood when we are first introduced to it. When presented with the cap he ordered, Petruchio claims “this was molded on a porringer/...’tis lewd and

filthy... a knack, a toy, a trick, a baby's cap. / Away with it. Come, let me have a bigger" (IV, i, Ll 68-71). Katherina quips, "I'll have no bigger, this doth fit the time/ and gentlewomen wear such caps as these" (IV, I, Ll 72-73). Here Shakespeare puns on the word "gentle" and its associations with animal husbandry, creating a subtext of falconry practice within dialogue concerned with fashion, itself a practice steeped in performance and appearances.

An audience aware of falconry practices might have missed this first pun, but surely would have recognized the parallels in the wager scene. The cap's metaphorical existence and removal as a falcon hood primes such an audience for Katherina's flight, as falcons were kept hooded until just before being sent after their quarry. Thus, when Petruchio calls the hood a "bauble," he illustrates it, and thus her taming, as ultimately unnecessary except in its employment for social gain through play-acting. This is further suggested by Katherina's personal removal of the hood. Speaking literally, a falcon could not remove its own hood, but Petruchio commands Katherina to do just that, an act which demonstrates both her complicity in the performance as well as her personal agency within it. Thus, the cap's usage is intentionally deceptive and layered with meaning. In no way does it physically or metaphorically blind Katherina, but rather the other characters and audience. This connects with the historical development of falconry hoods which literally "hoodwinked" the bird. Of further note, the figurative definition of "hoodwink," which meant "to blindfold mentally; to prevent (any one) from seeing the truth or fact" does not appear in published texts until 1610, a full two decades after Shakespeare wrote *Taming* ("hoodwink"). It is no stretch to consider Shakespeare's metaphorical use to have aided in the propagation of this figurative definition.

Katherina's obedience monologue opens with an address to the widow, "Fie, fie, unknit that threatening, / unkind brow" (V, i, Ll 147-48). Her usage of "unkind" alludes back to Petruchio's taming monologue when he states his taming method as a "way to kill a wife with kindness." Petruchio's statement is troublesome in its context as taming method. The goal of any taming is not death, but obedience. Even if the death mentioned is metaphorical in nature, the goal of shrew taming was to produce a proper wife—therefore killing a wife with kindness still remains counter to Petruchio's proposed goal. Even situated within the falconry metaphor, the line retains its problematic nature. No Elizabethan falconry treatise or book ever encouraged using kindness as a weapon of fear and manipulation in training a falcon. In fact, all of them are replete with counsel to be exceedingly gentle and kind to the falcons. Edmund Bert admonished rough treatment saying that a "Hawke [will] understand that it is no kindnesse, but violence and churlish usage, which must never be offered a hawke, and then you shall perhaps find her dislike your hand and hood coming to her, and so be a little coy and angry" (Bert 17). Why then does Petruchio make the troubling statement? The answer hinges upon the multiple meanings of the word *kind*, which can be understood as affection, likeness, and natural identity. Petruchio's taming embodies the likeness definition as he seeks to tame Katherina by acting the shrew himself. In essence, by acting in the likeness of a shrew he teaches her how to act one herself, which was the necessary first step in teaching her the value of performance. Undeniably, Shakespeare's genteel audience would have been as familiar with falconry practice and thus would have detected the anachronistic and backward use of violence in Petruchio's taming monologue. Thus, the troubling line

serves as a hint to the audience that they should not take Petruchio's taming speech at face value.

Katherina's allusion to Petruchio's speech, which she was not present for, makes an argument for her complicity in Petruchio's social manipulation. That she invokes the speech after metaphorically killing Bianca and the widow, calling the latter "unkind," ties her performance to Petruchio's taming theory. Thus, "to kill a wife with kindness" becomes not a reference to taming his own wife, Katherina, but to using Katherina to publicly shame Lucentio and Hortensio's wives, and by proxy shaming the men and moving above them in the social hierarchy. The reference is undeniably grounded in the spectator sport element of the falconry metaphor. Thus the play's title, *The Taming of the Shrew*, is revealed not as solely a discourse on Elizabethan wife taming, but as also a treatise on social empowerment through the skilled use of role-playing and theatricality. Ramsey-Kurz argues that "The insistent postponement of intimacy beyond the very ending of *The Taming of the Shrew* prevents a disclosure of the character's real self, a complete shedding of the disguises they have donned... [this] simulates an ever increasing, never-ending masquerade" (Kurz 268). Though Petruchio implores, "Come, Kate, we'll to bed," the play ends before a sexual marriage consummation can be confirmed (*Taming* V, i, Ll 198). In the earlier section on the origins of wife taming, I argued that the necessity of demonstrating a tame wife was established in the practice of common law nullification of ownership if an animal proved wild. This necessity then provides an explanation for Petruchio's refusal to publicly acknowledge an intention to consummate his and Katherina's marriage until after the demonstration of her taming.

However, we should not approach *Taming* as merely a theatrical farce, but as a site of social resistance to patriarchal dominion through play acting its own practices. Katherina's final monologue delivers an apparent reaffirmation of the Elizabethan woman's meek character through berating her fellow women's disobedience and commanding them, "place your hands below your husbands' foot; / in token of which duty if he please, / my hand is ready, may it do him ease" (V, i, 189-191). Lynda Boose has argued that "while Kate offers to place her hand below her husband's foot rather than kiss it, the stage action seems clearly enough to allude to a ritual that probably had a number of national and local variants" (177). She further reads this as her ultimate act of submission. I argue there are several distinct problems with the claim here, as Boose conveniently ignores the stage image while tying it to a historical allusion which she backs up only with a "probably." Instead, we must ask why Kate alters the conventional display and what Shakespeare accomplishes through it.

Though an overt act of submission Katherina's act remains a reaffirmation of her power within her role as an Elizabethan woman. The act of placing her hand beneath her husband's boot does illustrate her willingness to publicly submit to his demands; however, his will must be deferred as he may not purposefully bring physical harm to her by stepping on her hand. By publicly embodying the patriarchal gender role, Katherina gains a level of power over both Petruchio and her fellow women; this occurs in stark contrast to the wife in "A Merry Jest" whose submission is total, leaving her with the same level of agency given a broken horse. Petruchio, having been "gentled" by Katherina, also gains from her submission in the form of his social dominance and monetary winnings from the wager. It is poignant then to recognize that without

Katherina's early subversion of Petruchio's physical dominance, her taming would not have been possible. Katherina's acceptance affirms the system as well as her power within it. Thus, Petruchio's taming and Katherina's obedience become subversive of Elizabethan notions of husbandry and wifely obedience even while leaving the ideology intact. Through a cunning performance of their proscribed roles, they effectively kill through kindness the Elizabethan notion of marriage and the wife.

Approaching Petruchio's employment of falconry as merely a metaphor, some feminist readings miss the rich, playful, and even subversive commentary on class, performativity, husbandry as mediated through falconry. However it is just as important to remember that *Taming* is simply not a play about falconry. There are no falcons here, simply characters who adopt the mask of falconry to navigate the early modern social construction of patriarchal marriage. Where feminist readings have often sought to approach the play's performativity as constructive of patriarchal design, I have approached it rather as a pragmatic navigation of established early modern social mores. *Taming* neither defends patriarchy nor attacks it. Rather, Petruchio and Katherina's adoption of falconry as performance illustrates, much like the husbandry manuals of the era, a way to conduct a successful marriage in the early modern era. This success is defined not through masculine dominance or feminine submission, but their performance.

Lastly, I would like to return to the idea of "hoodwinking." I have argued that *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play about the power of performativity. The entire drama is constructed as a play within a play with characters who swap identities as often as clothes. I have proposed a reading which looks at the power relation between Petruchio and Katherina and deems it inscrutable. The face of the relationship is one which firmly

secures a wife's status as *inferior* to her *superior* husband, but my reading seeks to pull the mask off to determine the reality of their relationship, despite my claims against the possibility of such a reality. I have claimed that Petruchio and Katherina have successfully "hoodwinked" both the play's characters, as well as the audience, with their skillful taming performance. However, I also must recognize that this mask of performativity clouds any critic's reading, and by extension, my own. Does *Taming* present a successful taming followed by years of marital bliss? Does Petruchio really employ falcon training techniques to subdue the shrewish Katherina? Is she complicit in this act? The only solid answer my reading truly provides is that we cannot know and are left with more questions than answers. Perhaps then, given the Elizabethan era's strong anxiety about social structures collapsing at the whim of a woman, this silence of unknowability presents as the most profound hoodwinking of all.

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