

“Nothing but sit, and sit, and eat, and eat”:

the Cantankerous Teacher in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Eric L. De Barros

State University of New York at Oswego

*By definition, all comedies must end by praising and/or celebrating the elimination of a serious threat to the patriarchy order, and Shakespeare sets up the final scene of *The Taming of the Shrew*, one of his earliest comedies, to do just that. In short, by the time we reach Lucentio and Bianca’s wedding banquet, Petruccio has effectively tamed Katherine of her shrewishness. However, despite this scene of and cause for celebration, Petruccio remains oddly dissatisfied, as he responds to Lucentio’s encouragement of the sitting, chatting, and eating appropriate to such a festive occasion with these mood-killing words: “Nothing but sit, and sit, and eat, and eat” (5.2. 12). Although critics and editors have paid little attention to this oddly dissonant expression, in what follows, I argue that it constitutes an affective echo of both the period’s “confusion,” as Lisa Jardine terms it, about the education of women as well as Petruccio’s attempt to resolve that “confusion” in the direction of the body- and diet-oriented recommendations of Juan Luis Vives: one of the most conservative educational theorists of the period.*

In the final act of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, after the play has reached its denouement, Lucentio announces his and Bianca’s wedding banquet as the perfect way to mark the occasion and, for us, formally end the play:

At last, though long, our jarring notes agree,
And time it is when raging war is done
To smile at scapes and perils overblown
.....
My banquet is to close our stomachs up
After our great good cheer. Pray you sit down,
For now we sit to chat as well as eat. (5.2.1-3/9-11)¹

Generically, this short speech describes how every comedy needs to end. However, Petruccio is not in a cooperative mood, as he responds with a somewhat cryptic jarring note that threatens the

1 Quotations from *Shrew* throughout are from the *Norton Shakespeare*: Second Edition.

banquet as a useful device for the play's formal demands: "Nothing but sit, and sit, and eat, and eat" (5.2. 12). As if to say that sitting and eating are acceptable because this is how comedies must end, Baptista attempts to explain Paduan customs to his seemingly unwitting Veronese son-in-law: "Padua affords this kindness, son Petruccio" (5.2. 13). Unsatisfied with this brief lesson in cultural and generic literacy, Petruccio once again jars the scene: "Padua affords nothing but what is kind" (5.2. 14).

Critics and editors do not typically spend much time on the question of Petruccio's moodiness in these lines. If they acknowledge it at all, they usually do so to dismiss it as some sort of temperamental quirk. For instance, in the most recent Arden edition of the play, Barbara Hodgdon surmises that his sit-eat comment might be "a sign that Petruccio is bored by conventional manners (?)."² Ironically, despite the tenability of her suggestion, which I have specifically begun to think of in terms of genre, Hodgdon's non-committal parenthetical question-mark also suggests an awareness that something more significant might be going on. As I have suggested, that something poses a generic and interpretive threat that inconveniently folds back on the preceding four acts of the play. That is, by preventing the play from smoothly proceeding to an uncomplicated resolution, Petruccio's moodiness prompts us to reflect seriously on his problem with Paduan eating, sitting, and kindness.

We might also understand the events that follow his jarring notes as themselves representing precisely that kind of serious reflection. Indeed, without the moodiness of Petruccio's "Padua affords nothing but what is kind," there would be no occasion for Hortensio to question the kindness of his Widow and Katherine and no occasion for Petruccio to re-define the scene in terms of a kind of educational competition to determine who has the most obedient wife and therefore who is the most effective and legitimate teacher-

2 Barbara Hodgdon, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Arden Shakespeare, 292.

husband. In other words, Petruccio's moodiness triggers a series of events that reminds us that this has been a play about competing educational philosophies—competing theories of shrew taming—centered on the practical implications of sitting, eating, and the choice between kind and decidedly unkind methods of regulating both.

Although, in the specific context of the Elizabethan period, many of Shakespeare's plays arguably take advantage of the "confusion," as Lisa Jardine terms it, around women's learning, what I am arguing is that Petruccio's moodiness reflects that confusion and his taming method represents an attempt to eliminate it.³ To appreciate him in these terms, let us begin by taking a closer look at precisely how the period's most influential educational theorists—the theorists Petruccio is affectively echoing-- confronted the issue. First, in a 1523 letter of reply to his eldest daughter, Margaret Roper, after explaining how shocked and incredulous Reginald Pole, who he describes as a virtuous and learned young man, is by the display of Latin mastery in her "most charming" letter, More reflects on what it means for Margaret or any woman to be educated in his society:⁴

Meanwhile, something I once said to you in joke came back to my mind, and I realized how true it was. It was to the effect that you were to be pitied, because the incredulity of men would rob you of the praise you so richly deserved for your laborious vigils, as they would never believe, when they read what you have written, that you had not often availed yourself of another's help: whereas of all the writers you least deserve to be thus suspected. Even when a tiny child you could never endure to be decked out in another's finery. But, my sweetest Margaret, you are all the more deserving of praise on this account. Although you cannot hope for an adequate reward for your labor, yet nevertheless you continue to unite to your singular love of virtue the pursuit of literature and art. Content with the profit and pleasure of your conscience, in your modesty you do not seek for the praise of the public, nor value it overmuch even if you receive it, but because of the great love you bear us, you regard us— your husband and myself—as a sufficiently large circle of readers for all that you write.

3 Jardine, "Cultural Confusion and Shakespeare's Learned Heroines," 1-18.

4 More, *Selected Letters*, 154.

In your letter you speak of your imminent confinement. We pray most earnestly that all may go happily and successfully with you. May God and our blessed Lady grant you happily and safely to increase your family by a little one like his mother in everything except sex. Yet let it by all means be a girl, if only she will make up for the inferiority of her sex by her zeal to imitate her mother's virtue and learning. Such a girl I should prefer to three boys. Good-bye, my dearest child.⁵

In this complex expression of fatherly love, pride, and pity, More represents Margaret not as proof of women's intellectual equality but an exception to the rule of women's inferiority. As a reflection of the period's misogyny, it was difficult, arguably impossible, for him to categorically rethink her mastery of Latin, as it was difficult for Pole and most men of the period to believe his account of it. These difficulties are rooted in the belief that women were thought intellectually inferior because physically inferior. In that regard, it is significant that More concludes this letter by acknowledging Margaret's pregnancy and imminent labor and delivery, by identifying, in other words, the peculiar material-bodily basis of her intellectual inferiority, before sharing his hope that she has "a little one like *his* mother in everything except sex" (my italics) or at least a girl who "makes up for the inferiority of her sex." More's pity, however, is also and relatedly about the absence of any professional outlet or recognition for the "laborious vigils" that Margaret spent in the advancement of her learning.

Since the rediscovery of the classical tradition and the emergence, in particular, of Ciceronian political thought in Quattrocento Italy, the life of the stoic sage—the *vita contemplativa* or the *vita solitaria*—was no longer justifiable. In this new sociopolitically engaged milieu, the point of education, specifically the emphasis on rhetoric in the *studia humanitatis*, was to prepare boys for public or political service. As we might imagine, the inability to contribute to society in some meaningful way—the inability to do what your education prepared you to do and expect—often resulted in a profound identity crisis for the products of that

5 More, *Selected Letters*, 155.

system; we need only read More's own struggle to reconcile his hankering for the monastery with his sense of sociopolitical duty in the book-one dialogue of *Utopia* to get a sense of the extent to which public recognition and service defined educational and professional success. More pitied his daughter because her sex-gender difference effectively barred her from succeeding by these standards. In fact, because women's public speech was associated with sexual license, any learned woman bold enough to pursue public distinctions had to confront questions about her chastity. More's particular challenge, as an advocate of women's education, is to critique his society's skepticism about women's educability as well as its association of women's education with lasciviousness in precisely the misogynistic terms that his society could understand and would possibly accept. To that end, by praising Margaret's singular love of virtue and her contentment with the profit and pleasure of her conscience, More's letter engages in what Pierre Bourdieu might describe as a process of a turning that pitiful necessity of Margaret's limitations into the gender-specific virtue of the contented modesty of a socio-politically detached conscience.⁶

In another letter written to William Gonell, one of his children's tutors, just a few years earlier in 1518, More seems directly to contradict his society's view of women's inferiority, when he asserts that men and women "are equally suited for the knowledge of learning by which reason is cultivated."⁷ However, elaborating on the agricultural metaphor, he immediately makes a conditional concession that reveals women's bodies once again qualifying their intellectual equality:

6 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 54. Bourdieu explains, "if a very close correlation is regularly observed between the scientifically constructed objective probabilities (for example, the chances of access to a particular good) and agents' subjective aspirations ('motivations' and 'needs'), this is not because agents consciously adjust their aspirations to the exact evaluation of their chances of success. . . . In reality, the dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions in the objective conditions . . . generate dispositions objectively compatible these conditions. . . . The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable."

7 More, *Selected Letters*, 105.

But if the soil of a woman be naturally bad, and apter to bear fern than grain, by which saying many keep women from study, I think, on the contrary, that a women's wit is the more diligently to be cultivated, so that nature's defect may be redressed by industry.⁸

Although More's "if" indicates that he doesn't share this view of women's nature and educability, these materializing and therefore masculinizing terms of cultivation—terms, in other words, of a masculinist and largely agricultural society—shift attention away from the basis of More's initial assessment of cognitive equality to the material realities of embodiment, specifically sex-gender difference. And by materializing women in this way—by identifying their reproductive peculiarity and accepting the metaphorically "bad soil" of their defective bodies—More concedes that women are not equal to men and therefore not fit for the intellectual or public spheres.

But the question remains, what's the point of educating women in good letters, even if we accept that it's possible to do so? More's 1518 letter to Gonell gives us an answer that by now we might expect. This letter is actually a response to one of Gonell's, which expresses his concern with the way in which More's educational program was threatening to debase or limit Margaret's "lofty and exalted character of mind."⁹ More's defense is that an educational program should aggressively discourage a desire for public approval—which he variously describes as pride, haughtiness, and vainglory—and encourage "most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and modesty and Christian humility in themselves."¹⁰ Of course, these educational goals were not gender specific. John, More's son, was trained in the same educational philosophy as his sisters, and More's own refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy—a refusal that led to his removal from public life, his imprisonment, and ultimately his execution—is indisputable evidence that religious integrity was more important than what he

8 More, *Selected Letters*, 105.

9 More, *Selected Letters*, 104.

10 More, *Selected Letters*, 105.

determined was immoral public service. The difference is that he and his son had a choice. For his daughters, learned piety was the only option, and, as I have said, More focuses on that option as a way of turning a misogynistic necessity into a gender-specific virtue.

The paradoxical nature of More's misogynistic argument illustrates the confusion about the nature and role of women that the early modern humanists inherited from both the classical and biblical traditions. That is, while Aristotelian-inspired misogyny and Christianity traditionally pathologized women as the irrational and immoral weaker vessel, classical mythology and history as well as early modern history are littered with representations of powerful learned women, such as the Muses, Pallas Athena, Minerva, Dido, Cleopatra, Zenobia, Christine de Pizan, Isotta Nogarola, Elisabetta Gonzaga, etc. More's co-educational home school was an attempt to resolve this mixed message, and it proved persuasive enough to change the mind of the most significant educational theorist of the sixteenth-century: his friend and fellow humanist Desiderius Erasmus. In a 1521 letter to the French humanist Guillaume Budé, Erasmus explains,

Again, scarcely any mortal man was not under the conviction that, for the female sex, education had nothing to offer in the way of either virtue or reputation. Nor was I myself in the old days so completely free of this opinion; but More has quite put that out of my head. For two things in particular are perilous to a girl's virtue, idleness and improper amusements, against both of these the love of literature is a protection. There is no better way to maintain a spotless reputation than faultless behaviour, and no women's chastity is more secure than her's who is chaste by deliberate choice. Not that I disapprove the ideas of those who plan to protect their daughter's honour by teaching them the domestic arts; but nothing so occupies a girl's whole heart as the love of reading. And besides this advantage, that the mind is kept from pernicious idleness, this is the way to absorb the highest principles, which can both instruct and inspire the mind in the pursuit of virtue.¹¹

11 More, *Selected Letters*, 297.

More's education of virtuous daughters helps Erasmus realize that the love of literature is an effective means of socio-sexual control, because that love—the occupation of a girl's whole heart in the love of reading—makes the “deliberate choice” of the faultless behavior of chastity more secure than traditional domestic training. As several early modern historians and literary critics have argued, the point of a humanistic education was not simply to produce free individuals as much as free, willing, or consensual male subjects. For Erasmus, what More's co-educational home school proves is that a humanistic education could do the same thing to and for women. That is, with the right curriculum—one which, as More recommends, excludes or limits rhetoric and history and strongly emphasizes religious figures like St. Jerome and St. Augustine and other ancient authors who promote women's moral probity and humility—classical learning promised to socialize women to accept their confined roles as domestic partners.

By way of contrast, Sir Thomas Elyot is the only major educational theorist of the sixteenth century to reject this intellectual and political confinement in *The Defence of Good Women* (1540). At the decisive point in the dialogue, Candidus, the dialogue's defender of women, overwhelms Caninus, the dialogue's Aristotelian misogynist, with an impressive list of female classical figures intended to demonstrate women's educational and political ability:

And perdy, many arts and necessary occupations have been invented by Women, as I will bring now some unto your remembrance. Latin letters were first founded by Lisostrata, called also Carmentis. The VII liberal arts and poetry by their maidens called the Muses. Why was Minerva honored for a goddess? But because she founded first in Greece, planting or setting trees: also the use of armor: and as some do testify, she invented making of fortresses, and many necessary and notable sciences. Also that the wits of women be not unapt to laudable studies, it appears by Diotima and Aspasia two honest maidens. . . . Hundreds of such women are in stories remembered, but for speed of time I will pass them over, since I trust that these be sufficient to prove, that the whole kind of women be not unapt unto wisdom. . . . As concerning strength and valiant courage, which you surmise to lack in them, I could make to

you no less replication, and by old stories and late experience prove, that in armies women have been found of no little reputation, but I will omit that for this time, for as much as to the more part of wise men it shall not be found much to their commendation: Saving that we now have one example among us, as well as of fortitude as of all other virtues, which in my opinion shall not be inconvenient, to have at this time declared, and so of this matter to make a conclusion.¹²

Zenobia, the third-century Syrian queen who conquered Egypt and successfully resisted Roman invasion, is the “real-life” embodiment of Candidus’s argument, and his inclusion of her—his inclusion of a virtuous and powerful woman speaking for women—at the end of the dialogue is presented as the coup de grace against Caninus and the other opponents of women’s educational and political equality. However, there is a striking inconsistency between Candidus’s laudatory introductory description and Zenobia’s “actual” embodied presence in the dialogue. Despite proving herself an exceptional ruler and military leader, what brings her to Rome and into the dialogue is her eventual defeat at the hands of the Roman emperor Aurelian. As a prisoner of war pardoned for her “nobility, virtue, and courage,” she paradoxically represents an equality qualified by the military superiority of men.

This qualification is also borne out in the dialogue itself. Zenobia immediately expresses deep anxieties about accepting Candidus’s invitation to dinner because venturing out of her home at night will likely raise questions about her chastity. “For I dread infamy,” she tells Candidus, “more than even I did the loss of my liberty.”¹³ After assuring her that “no such thing shall happen”¹⁴ because she is in the company of “no men but of honest condition,”¹⁵ Candidus proceeds to ask the questions intended to illustrate the type of educational program appropriate to women as well as why

12 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, D5r-D6v.

13 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, D8r.

14 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, D8r.

15 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E1v.

educated women ultimately make the best rulers. Zenobia's answers reveal an educational program, much like More's and Erasmus's, where women are educated in moral philosophy with an emphasis on prudence, constancy, and obedience to their husbands. As Elyot through Zenobia explains, the specific goal of such a program is to instill within women the ultimate virtue of Temperance:

But in a woman [, Zenobia declares,] no virtue is equal to Temperance, whereby in her words and deeds she always uses a just moderation, knowing when time is to speak, when to keep silence, when to be occupied, and when to be merry. And if she measures *it* to the will of her husband, she does the more wisely: except *it* may turn them both to loss or dishonesty. Yet then should she seem rather to give him wise counsel, than to appear dishonest and sturdy.¹⁶

Constance Jordan argues that, in the second sentence, Zenobia “insists that a wife is exempt from these constraints on her freedom if her husband’s wishes ‘may turn them both to loss and dishonesty’.”¹⁷ However, the loose punctuation so typical of early modern prose and the repetition of the vague pronoun “it” makes this a particularly slippery or difficult-to-interpret passage that seems, at least, to raise questions about the simplicity of Jordan’s reading. In other words, while the first “it” seems to refer to a clearly defined understanding of “Temperance,” by the time we reach the second “it,” the effects of the conditional statement and the modifying clause transforms “it” and “Temperance” in an important—although confusing—way. In that regard, it is reasonable to read the second “it” as representing a wife’s temperance wisely measured to her husband’s will and the “except” clause as saying that if she doesn’t do so—if she does not measure it wisely—her unwillingness or inability will hurt them both. Therefore, rather than freeing a wife from her husband’s will, as Jordan would have it, this passage arguably suggests the exact opposite, that is, the responsibility for what he does falls solely on her ability to counsel him wisely.

16 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Women*, sig. E2r (my italics).

17 Jordan, “Feminism and Humanism,” 195.

This enormous responsibility, which, of course, makes Zenobia and all women convenient Eve-like scapegoats, is a consequence of Candidus's bold inversion of the somatic basis of sex-gender inequality articulated at the beginning of the dialogue. That is, after establishing that rational greatness, not physical strength, is that which distinguishes humanity from other animals, Candidus proceeds to dismantle the Aristotelian correlation between women's physical weakness and their moral and intellectual inferiority. By this logic, men are less rational than women because they are stronger and therefore more inclined to potentially tyrannical physical force, and women, by virtue of their relative weakness and subsequent reliance on reason factored as "Discretion, Election, and Prudence," are "more perfect [human beings] than men" with the potential to rule more justly.¹⁸

This reversal represents an interesting feminization of nonviolent humanistic theories of educational and political rule. Indeed, the same gender-specific educational training in moral philosophy that prepared Zenobia to serve her husband— King Odaenathus— as a wise, temperate and, above all, obedient wife prepared her for the rational and nonviolent— that is, the just and effective rule—of her people after his death. During her reign, she explains to Candidus, she "made Justice chief ruler of [her] affections," which enabled her to enact the kinds of policies that "added much more to [her] empire, not so much by force, as by renown of trust and politic governance."¹⁹ In fact, these policies prove so effective "that diverse of [Palmyra's] enemies . . . chase rather to leave [the hostility of their own country], and to remain in [Palmyrene] subjection."²⁰ Humanists like Erasmus and More extended this political transformation to absolute monarchs or princes by charging that war and violent rule are tyrannical, and they implored princes to acknowledge the free will of their subjects and rule them, as God rules all humanity, consensually.

18 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, D4v.

19 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E5v-E5r.

20 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E5r.

The Defence is Elyot's contribution to this ethos. However, it is significant, as I have already noted, that the patriarchal military ethos of Aurelian Roman imperialism wins out in the end. Even more paradoxically, not only does Zenobia's education prepare her for marriage and nonviolent just rule, it also prepares her for Roman captivity. That is, through her study of "noble philosophy" she "acquired such magnanimity" that once in Rome she is able to "keep in as straight subjection all [her] affections, and passions."²¹ And if we consider more closely the irenic policies of her rule, it becomes clear that nonviolent self-control ultimately means the acknowledgement of male authority. First, in order to protect "the name of a woman" from the contempt of the people, Zenobia tells us that she "always stayed abroad among [her] nobles and counselors, and said [her] opinion, so that it seemed to them all, that it stood with good reason";²² also, she tells us that she often reminded the people of the liberty and honor they received "by the excellent prowess of [her] noble husband showing to them [her] children . . . exhorting them with sundry orations to retain their fidelity."²³

In both instances, the legitimation of men— nobles, counselors, and the memory of her late husband— sanctioned her rule by protecting her from charges that she ruled "womanly," which in these instances is implicitly factored as emotional and irrational.²⁴ Therefore, despite Elyot's efforts to invert the somatic basis of sex-gender inequality, Zenobia's own political strategies reveal a woman trapped within traditional notions of sex-gender difference, ruling her empire as any woman would have ruled her household. In the final analysis, Elyot's feminization of nonviolent rule seems, at best, ambivalent and, at worst, ironic.

21 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E5r.

22 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E4r-E5v

23 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E5v.

24 Elyot, *The Defence of Good Vvomen*, E4r.

While Plato practically disqualifies or, at least, significantly minimizes the importance of the sexed-gendered body in the *Republic*, no major educational theorist of the sixteenth century was able or willing to go that far. However, their promotion of a Greek and Latin curriculum for women logically points in the direction of a transcendent Platonic equality. Although these educational theorists attempted to have it both ways, that is, to unlock the door to women's equality only to leave it shut, their complex constructions of educated women are still logically and imaginatively threatening to the early modern patriarchal system. And complexity is always more threatening to a social order than simplicity, no matter how confusing, paradoxical, ambivalent, and/or ironic.

With that in mind, it is my contention that Juan Luis Vives, the Spanish humanist and tutor to the English princess Mary Tudor, attempts to eliminate that complexity and therefore end that confusion with a bodily centered simplicity: what, as I will soon return to, Petruccio identifies as sitting and eating. Like More, Erasmus, and Elyot, Vives cites classical, Biblical, and contemporary examples of learned women throughout his treatise and recommends curricular content intended to ensure chastity and wifely obedience. However, he goes beyond the others in vividly and repeatedly explaining or materializing women's socio-sexual inferiority in terms of health and physical discipline. Specifically, in *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1524), Vives represents the weak psychosomatic constitution of women as prone to indiscretion and therefore in need of an ascetic dietary regimen.²⁵ For him, this misogynous myth of inferiority is rooted in the Biblical story of the Fall. And although at one point he stresses the important role that mothers play in the early formative development of children, he goes on to explain women's unfitness to teach in terms of Eve's originary indiscretion.

25 Vives, *Christen Woman*.

But I gyve no licence to a woman to be a teacher, nor to have authorite of the man but to be in silence. For Adam was the first mayde, and after Eve, and Adam was nat betrayed, the woman was betrayed in to the breche of the commandement. Therefore because a woman is a fraile thygne, and of weake discretion, and that maye lightlye be disceyved: whiche thing our first mother Eve sheweth, whom the devyll caught with a light argument. Therefore a woman shulde nat teache, leste whan she hath taken a false opinion and beleve of any thing, she spred hit into the herars, by the autorite of maistershyp, and lightly bringe other into the same errour, for the lerners commenly do after the teacher with good wyll.²⁶

A proper or improper diet is what ultimately distinguishes the pre- from the post-lapsarian mind/body nexus, and Satan “betrays,” as Vives terms it, Eve instead of Adam—women instead of men—because he identified in her the kind of weakness that “a light argument” might persuade to abandon the nourishing or fortifying innocence of the Edenic diet for the sinful and therefore lust provoking fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Furthermore, women’s cognitive inferiority factored as a lack of discretion is ultimately rooted in a gender-specific defect of the stomach:

For the man is nat so yrefull as the woman. And that is nat in mankynde onlye, but also in all kyndes of beastis, as Aristotle saythe. For males, bycause they have more bolde stomackes, and are more lusty of corage, therfore be they simple and lesse noysome, for they have the more noble myndes. And females contrary be more malicious, and more set to do harme. Wherefore the woman wylbe takyn with light suspicions, and ofte complayne and vex their husbandes, and anger them with pervyshe puelyng: but the man is easier to reconcile than the woman. Lykewise, as of men he, who is most stomacked unto a woman, nor lusty coraged, wyl remembre injury longest, and seke for vengeance the most violently, nor can be content with a mean revengeance.²⁷

Referencing Aristotle’s somatic theory of women’s inferiority, this passage importantly illustrates the extent to which the stomach and implicitly digestion are as sexed and gendered as any other

26 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 23-24.

27 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 110.

part and function of the body.²⁸ In this instance, Vives represents the stomach as the determinative site of socio-sexual control, and men are ultimately “simple and less noysome”—that is, more controlled—not because they function within a society designed for the perpetuation of their own authority, but because they have “more bolde stomackes,” which also means they are “more lusty of corage” and “have the more noble myndes.”

In chapter eight of book one, which is entitled “Of the ordrying of the body in a virgin,” Vives again references Eve’s dietary indiscretion in the process of imploring parents to regulate their daughters’ diet: “And they ought to remembre that our first mother for meate [that is, food] was caste out of paradise. And many yonge women that had been used to delicate meates . . . have gone forth from home and jeopardded theyr honestie” (34-35). Indeed, the wrong diet, as Vives goes on to explain, results in the kind of irrational and materialistic behavior that renders women unable to maintain their chastity. In Vives’s estimation, these undisciplined women conduct themselves like animals—female wolves to be exact—who end up choosing men who are no better than animals themselves.²⁹ “Oh folysshe mayde” he castigates these women, “whiche haddest leaver have contynuall sorrowe in golde and sylke, than have pleasure in wollen cloth: whiche had leaver be hated and beaten in rayment of purple and ryche color, than be loved and set by in a course garnet

28 This gendering of the stomach and digestion complicates the downplaying of gender in Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves*. Even in Schoenfeldt’s otherwise instructive reading of eating as a physiological and ethical phenomenon in *Paradise Lost*, the sociopolitical significance of sex-gender difference—the difference between Eve’s eating and Adam’s eating—is, for the most part, only cursorily registered.

29 In terms of the female-wolf analogy, Vives states, “Wherfore it was well and aptly spoken, that a country man of myne sayd, that the nature of women was in chosynge men, lyke unto the female wolves: Whiche amonge a great sorte of males, take the fouleste and worste favoured” (78). In terms of the male-animal analogy, he states, “And in tyme passed I thought it had bene a fable, that men tell, howe Pasyphae the queen of Candy, dyd lye with a bulle . . . but nowe me thynketh them all lykely enough to be true, when I se women can fynde in theyr hartes, to tomble and lye with vicious and fylthy men, and dronkerdes, and braulers, and dawysh, and brayneles, cruell and murderars. For what difference is between them and asses, swyne, bores, bulles, or beares?” (77-78).

of meane colour.”³⁰ In this powerful expression of Christian anti-materialism, the abdominal and dietary weaknesses of undisciplined women distort their intellectual and sensory perceptions to the point that the feeling and sight of expensive materials— gold, silk, purple, and other rich colors— anesthetizes them to their unhappy lives with abusive husbands. Because women are essentially incapable of controlling themselves, Vives implores parents to regulate their daughters’ diets, as I have already illustrated, and, as importantly, to limit their public exposure:

Wher to shulde I tell how much occasion of vyce and noughtynes is abrode? Wherefore the poet seemeth to have sayd nat without cause: It is nat laufull for maydes to be sene abrode. Howe moche were hit better to abyde at home, than go forth and here so many judgementes, and so dyvers upon the, and so many jeopardies?³¹

But when it is absolutely necessary for a maiden to leave home— for example, to attend Mass—Vives charges that “afore she go forth at dore, let her prepare her mynde and stomake none other wyse, than if she went to fyght”³² and that she should be “well covered, leste [she] either gyve or take occasion of suavyng. A Christen mayde ought to have nothing a do with weddyng feastis, bankettes, and resortynges of men.”³³ In this restrictive view of women’s place in early modern society, there is, of course, little need for anything in the way of formal humanistic learning, especially rhetoric. Indeed, the only books Vives recommends are those that “may teche good maners.”³⁴ Unlike a man, who should “have knowlege of many and diverse things that may both profet hym selfe and the common welthe,”³⁵ a woman, in Vives’s estimation, “is a fraile thyng, and of weak discretion” that must avoid the public sphere and spend her

30 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 78. We find a comparable anti-materialistic strain of thought in Vives’s major educational treatise for boys entitled *De Tradendis Disciplinis* (1531). See *Vives: On Education; a Translation of the De Tradendis*.

31 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 58.

32 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 58.

33 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 68.

34 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 23.

35 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 23.

virtually confined existence engaged in “the study of wysedome . . . whiche dothe enstruct [her] maners, and enfurme [her] lyvyng, and teacheth [her] the waye of a good and holy lyfe.”³⁶

Written and performed at about the same time that the last edition of Vives’s *Christen Woman* was published, *The Shrew* opens by immediately establishing the bodily centered simplicity of a Vivesian critique. After Lucentio, a typical well-to-do young man, announces his intentions to pursue “[a] course of learning and ingenious studies” (1.1. 9), he commands Tranio, his servant, to evaluate his plans:

And therefore, Tranio, for the time I study,
Virtue and that part of philosophy
Will I apply that treats of happiness
By virtue specially to be achieved.
Tell me thy mind, for I have Pisa left
And am to Padua come as he that leaves
A shallow plash to plunge him into the deep,
And with satiety seeks to quench his thirst. (1.1. 17-24)

Of course, Lucentio’s scholarly enthusiasm represents the passion for learning that humanists themselves exemplified and attempted to spread. But his decision to analogize it to potentially excessive or gluttonous drinking also suggests a youthful disregard or ignorance of the fact that, with the proliferation of available ancient texts, there is a point at which learning, like eating and drinking, becomes dangerous or unhealthy to both the mind and the body.³⁷ In other words, by recklessly diving into the deep pool of Paduan learning without the direction of a wise and mature tutor as well as a manageable course of study structured by an academic timetable, there is a good chance that he will be overwhelmed—that he will drown. That he looks to Tranio for educational advice only highlights the extent of his lack of guidance, for Tranio’s recommendation makes learning a vehicle of pleasure rather than an instrument of self-control:

36 Vives, *Christen Woman*, 22-23.

37 For informative discussions of the humanist response to that proliferation, see Dohrn-Van Rossum, *History of the Hour*, 252-260, and Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching*, 17-143.

Mi perdonate, gentle master mine.
I am in all affected as yourself,
Glad that you thus continue your resolve
To suck the sweets of sweet philosophy.
Only, good master, while we do admire
This virtue and this moral discipline,
Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray,
Or so devote to Aristotle's checks
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured.
Balk logic with acquaintance that you have,
And practise rhetoric in your common talk.
Music and poesy use to quicken you;
The mathematics and the metaphysics,
Fall to them as you find your stomach serves you
No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en.
In brief, sir, study what you most affect. (1.1. 25-40)

In his critique of Aristotelian moderation and his advocacy of Ovidian eroticism, Tranio ensures the play's festive tone and comic trajectory: that the play will not be concerned with the boring matter of bodily self-discipline but the erotic or Ovidian challenges to it. To that end, he picks up on Lucentio's dietary metaphor, agreeing that his master should be resolved "to suck the sweets of sweet philosophy," in the process of encouraging him to allow his "stomach," that is, his appetite or his youthful desires, to guide his Paduan course of study. In this way, as Lynn Enterline argues in her recent study of early modern education, Shakespeare employs Ovidian eroticism "[to mock] school habits"³⁸ and "bring into question the humanist claim that the Latin curriculum and methods of discipline would produce recognizable 'gentlemen' for the good of the commonwealth."³⁹ Tranio certainly serves this mocking questioning function. However, he is just one part of the story. That is, the tension between discipline and eroticism remains throughout the play, and Shakespeare, as I argue, employs Vivesian misogyny (which we might understand as a gender-specific version of Aristotelian self-discipline) to reconstitute 'gentlemen' or, as I have termed them, traditional knight-warriors for nonviolent service in domestic and political affairs.

38 Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 99.

39 Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 118.

In that sense, Lucentio's openness to Tranio's pedagogical philosophy creates the conditions for the parental nightmare of sexually promiscuous children that humanistic educational theorists variously described. Therefore, it is not surprising that before Lucentio has a chance to enter a classroom at the University of Padua or at least hire a tutor, the sight of Bianca on the streets of Padua triggers a potentially dangerous case of lovesickness:

O Tranio, till I found it to be true
I never thought it possible or likely
But see, while idly I stood looking on
I found the effects of love in idleness,
And now in plainness do confess to thee,
That art to me as secret and as dear
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was,
Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,
If I achieve not this young modest girl.
Counsel me, Tranio, for I know thou wilt. (1.1. 142-152)

As Robert Burton, a seventeenth-century scholar, tells us, “[Lovesickness] rageth with all sorts and conditions of men, yet it is most evident among such as are young and lusty, in the flower of their years, nobly descended, high fed, such as live idly and at ease.”⁴⁰ This clearly applies to Lucentio, as he enters into a confused identification with Dido instead Aeneas only to be followed by an even more disturbing identification with a raping Jove. Indeed, it appears that Tranio's role in his educational planning, which suggests the problematic centrality of Ovid in the grammar school curriculum, has taken its toll, for he ends up identifying with both “the love in idleness” of Dido's suicidal effeminacy and the out-of-control sexual desire of Jove.⁴¹ Setting the stage, as it were, with these illegitimate socio-sexual alternatives, it is as if Shakespeare is

40 Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, The Third Partition, Section 2, 56. Also for a suggestive reading of lovesickness in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, see Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 99-135.

41 See Phillippy, “Loytering in Love,” 27-43. Phillippy usefully argues that what explains Lucentio's gender reversal is that Shakespeare, following George Turberville's English translation of Ovid's *Heroides*, rejects traditional gender roles and the privileging of the military concerns over domestic or amorous one.

subtly critiquing the Ovidian-based education of the early modern curriculum and questioning whether men can remain in and in control of the potentially effeminating, comically-oriented sphere of the home without jeopardizing their manhood.

Typical of comedy, this problem centers on the failure of two fathers to manage their children's sexuality. In fact, as I have already referenced, it is Baptista's public display of his daughters as commodities on the Paduan marriage market that triggers Lucentio's lovesickness and subsequent play of identities to begin with. In terms of the educational theorists we have considered, what is fundamentally wrong with Baptista is that he defines his love for his daughters in terms of the satisfaction of their intellectual pleasure instead of a responsibility to instill within them socio-sexual discipline.

After Bianca apparently begins to cry in response to Baptista's decision to "mew her up" (1.1. 88), as Gremio describes it, Baptista continues with a promise of compensatory love: "And let it not displease thee, good Bianca,/For I will love thee ne'er the less my girl" (1.1. 76-77). Significantly, this guilty promise reveals that for Baptista love has been defined by allowing his daughters the relative freedom of public exposure that his betrothal scheme now forces him to restrict. And although Bianca's crying reflects just how spoiled that freedom has made her ("a pretty peat!" [1.1. 78], as Katherine mocks), she allays Baptista's guilt by assuring him that her books and instruments will keep her company and thereby take the place of her freedom: "My books and instruments shall be my company,/On them to look and practice *by myself*" (1.1. 82-83; my italics). While I will return to the interpretive as well as sociopolitical implications of her revelation of independent study, for now it is sufficient to note that learning emerges as an alternative way for Baptista to express his love, which allows him to more confidently reiterate his decision to confine her:

Gentlemen, content ye. I am resolved.
Go in, Bianca.
And for I know she taketh most delight
In music, instruments, and poetry,
Schoolmasters will I keep within my house
Fit to instruct her youth. If you, Hortensio,
Or, Signor Gremio, you know any such,
Prefer them hither; for to cunning men
I will be very kind, and liberal
To mine own children in good bringing up.
And so farewell, Katherina, you may stay,
For I have more to commune with Bianca. (1.1. 90-101)

Like the domesticated piety recommended by Elyot, More, and Erasmus, confined learning or studying potentially represents a practical solution to Baptista's and, more generally, Paduan corruption in that it is a solitary activity that removes women from public view and therefore out of what Katherine initially characterizes as a state of virtual prostitution. However, as we have already seen with Tranio, Baptista's corrupt ethos of freedom, pleasure, and profit reduces confined learning to nothing more than a stunt ultimately intended to increase his daughters' marriage-market value.

This nescience about the power of learning and specifically its shrew-making potential pervades the Paduan play world. While all the suitors—Hortensio, Gremio, and Lucentio—devise impersonation schemes that employ the cover of learning, learning, as superficially and materially represented by academic commodities like clothing, musical instruments, fairly bound books, and perfumed paper, functions for them as little more than materialistic cover, as little more than deceptive and simplistic props or tools of amorous and economic motives. What Baptista and the others seem wholly unaware of is that books, no matter how superficially handled, contain potentially corrupting and destructive ideological content available to anyone rebelliously autodidactic enough to open them. Books, in other words, are potentially volatile erotic objects, and educational theorists attempted to defuse, as it were, their explosiveness by either morally framing them or banning the most offensive ones

altogether. Vives, for instance, criticizes schoolmasters for teaching their scholars “Ovidis bokes of love”; and, in the specific case of women, concludes,

Therefore a woman shuld beware of all these bokes, likewise as of serpents or snakes. And if there be any woman, that hath suche delyte in these bokes, that she wyl nat leave them out of her handes: she shuld nat only be kept from them, but also, if she rede good bokes with an yll wyl and lothe therto, her father and frendes shuld provyde that she maye be kepte from all redynge. And so by disuse, forgette lernynge, if it can be done.⁴²

This caveat is a far cry from what we have seen so far in *The Shrew*, for, if Katherine and Bianca are any indication, women are free to read whatever they desire in a corrupt university town with all kinds of potentially explosive books available in great supply.

Despite that, it doesn't appear that Katherine and Bianca have been reading or desire to read the offending classical books of love that Vives primarily has in mind. Or if they have been, they haven't been doing so in the corrupting way that Vives fears. If anything, what makes the women threatening to the patriarchal establishment is that their likely reading choices and practices, reflected in Katherine's violent shrewishness and Bianca's delight in solitary and independent study, almost turns them so completely against romantic love and eroticism that it almost turns them completely against marriage.

While the association of shrewishness with lasciviousness was a commonplace one in the Renaissance, by denying it in this way, Shakespeare suggests that the dangers of improper learning extend far beyond the problem of controlling women's erotic desire. Focusing on the act-three scene of Bianca's instruction, several literary critics have variously commented on precisely what Shakespeare is saying about those dangers. For instance, Kim Walker suggests that “the play reproduces the anxieties attendant on the education of women that are visible in pedagogical treatises

42 Vives, 27.

and conduct books of the sixteenth century⁴³ and specifically argues that “[Bianca’s] Latin lesson becomes a sight/site of female duplicity⁴⁴”; Thomas Moisan, paying particular attention to what he assumes is Lucentio’s selection of Penelope’s letter to Ulysses from Ovid’s *Heroides*, suggests that “the use of a Latin lesson as camouflage for Lucentio’s pursuit of Bianca” represents, as I have already similarly suggested, a commodifying domestication of learning that “epitomizes the uses, or misuses, to which education and formal ‘learning’ are put throughout the play⁴⁵”; and Patricia Phillippy also similarly argues that by dramatizing Lucentio’s use of the *Heroides* as a tool to court Bianca, “Shakespeare presents the *Heroides* not as a source of moral exempla, but of pleasure, and goes on to cast humanist education itself—or more specifically, its all-too-easy manipulation—as a dangerous and seductive interloper in the household.”⁴⁶

While I generally agree with these assessments, specifically the suggestion that Bianca’s act-three assertiveness anticipates her act-five shrewishness, my concern is that they underestimate the extent of her control during the scene of instruction by either implicitly or explicitly assuming the passage from the *Heroides* is Lucentio’s selection. That is, if the goal of all the suitors is to open Bianca up to their amorous designs, then it does not make sense that Gremio would have included the *Heroides*—a book Erasmus and Vives thought “more chaste⁴⁷ than Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *Art of Love*—in his packet of lavishly bound “books of love” or, even if he did, that Lucentio would have selected an excerpt from Penelope’s epistle—which Erasmus further classifies as “wholly chaste⁴⁸—for Bianca’s language lesson. It does not make sense,

43 Walker, “Wrangling Pedantry,” 192.

44 Walker, “Wrangling Pedantry,” 199.

45 Moisan, “Interlinear Trysting and ‘Household Stuff,’” 104.

46 Phillippy, “‘Loytering in Love,’” 42.

47 Quoted in Moisan 111.

48 Quoted in Moisan 111.

in other words, for Lucentio to select a passage taken from a letter that emphasizes both a woman's faithful chastity as well as what the Elizabethans would have recognized as a petulant or shrewish rhetorical sophistication.

What does make sense is the possibility, if not likelihood, that the *Heroides* is one of the books she presumably owned before her formal instruction, that is, one of the books she references in act one, where she expresses the desire (to continue) to study independently. What I'm suggesting here is that independent study and shrewishness are linked, and that Baptista's irresponsibly lazy philosophy of liberal education is dangerous mainly because it allows his daughters to independently explore and discover classical models of rhetorical agency contained in books like Ovid's *Heroides*. In that regard, nothing is surprising about Bianca's declaration of scholarly independence during the act-three scene of instruction. The scene begins with the two counterfeit tutors quarreling over whether lessons in music or Latin should come first, when Bianca intervenes to explain that she is actually in charge:

Why, gentlemen, you do me double wrong
To strive for that which is my choice.
I am no breeching scholar in the schools.
I'll not be tied to hours nor 'pointed times,
But learn my lessons as I please myself. (3.1. 16-20; my italics)

Several literary critics have also pointed out that a potentially demystifying or deconstructive bit of dramatic irony characterizes her declaration, for, after all, she, as all female characters on the early modern stage, was played by a boy.⁴⁹ In this way, although *The Shrew* explicitly explores the implications of women's learning,

49 That is, as Moisan explains, in this and other instances, *Shrew* "calls attention to its own theatricality . . . [ultimately making] it more difficult for its audience to differentiate the female character Bianca from the boy actor and theatrical apprentice playing her, and, thus, a more complex matter to accept unblinkingly Bianca's assertion that she is 'no breeching scholar'" (108). Also, building on the oft-cited feminist argument of Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity*, 33-50, Walker rhetorically asks "who is speaking here [when Bianca declares her independence]?" (198) and then concludes it "may be read as a voice that exposes the shrewish woman as cultural construct" (198) as well as a "voice that reaffirms the incipient shrew by doubling it with the boy actor's resistance to 'proper' adult male authority" (198).

and specifically the unauthorized and therefore dangerous speech it enables, its representation of male domestication (in the home, the school, and the theater) and specifically the “de-breeching” effeminization of grammar school boys also obliquely addresses the period’s anxieties about the education of boys and their later, adult socio-sexual performative as men.

With the bureaucratic complexities that came along with the consolidation of power in monarchical courts and the advances in military technology that rendered the martial skills of the individual knight-warrior obsolete, sixteenth-century monarchs faced the difficult task of persuading aristocratic men that their survival as a ruling class depended on bureaucratically serving the state with weapons of learning instead of violently serving themselves with weapons of war.⁵⁰ As Norbert Elias famously illustrates in *The Civilizing Process*, early modern educational theorists played a central role in advancing this class and gender re-definition.⁵¹ In fact, educational theorists variously attempted to persuade aristocrats of the manliness of learning in treatises that subtly but recurrently draw on the classical association of rhetoric with physical exercise and combat. In that regard, for as much as *The Shrew* is about addressing the education of women, it is also significantly about re-educating men in a nonviolent direction.

As I suggested at the outset, Shakespeare presents Petruccio and his taming of Katherine as the solution to these challenges. From the initial act-one miscommunication with Grumio that ends with him wringing Grumio’s ear to his act-four verbal and physical abuse of his servants in the seclusion of his country house, Petruccio displays a propensity for violence that highlights just how unmanly the other male characters are and how effeminizing Padua’s urban-

50 For historical analyses of this educational revolution see Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 672-683; and Ruth Kelso, “The Education of the Gentleman,” 672-683. Also for important analyses of the affective and professional adjustment of aristocratic men to this sociopolitical and technological shift, see Jon Connolly, “The Sword and The Pen,” 1-36; and Jennifer C. Vaught, *Masculinity and Emotion*, 1-26.

51 Elias, “Toward a Theory of Social Processes,” 443-524.

educational milieu is. As the play-logic would have it, what he brings to that world is the corrective energy of an aristocratic, military ethos necessary to keep women in their silent and subordinate place. For instance, when Gremio questions whether Petruccio has “a stomach” (1.2. 189) to woo a shrewish “wildcat” (1.2. 191) like Katherine, Petruccio assures him that he does in a series of rhetorical questions:

Why came I hither but to that intent?
Think you but a little din can daunt mine ears?
Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puffed with winds,
Rage like an angry boar chafèd with sweat?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field,
And heaven’s artillery thunder in the skies?
Have I not in a pitchèd battle heard
Loud ‘larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets’ clang?
And do you tell me of a woman’s tongue,
That gives not half so great a blow to hear
As will a chestnut in a farmer’s fire?
Tush, tush—fear boys with bugs. (1.2. 193-205)

These are certainly not the sounds of the Paduan street, home, or schoolroom, but Petruccio’s suggestion is that his exposure to them—his exposure to the sounds of the hunt, the sea, and the battlefield and the violent masculinizing training that they metonymically represent—has actually prepared him to tame the shrewish Katherine. On the other hand, the Paduan men’s fear of Katherine’s shrewishness suggests a lack of comparable training that effectively renders them no better than cowardly superstitious boys afraid of the relatively soft sound of a shrewish woman’s voice, which Petruccio comparatively describes as not even half as loud as a chestnut popping in a farmer’s fire.

Petruccio’s function, however, is not simply to bring the violence of the hunt, the sea, or the battlefield to Paduan society; it is to demonstrate that his military prowess and male bravado can be channeled or translated to meet the emerging nonviolent needs of early modern society, specifically as represented by the decidedly

more delicate domestic matters of women's taming and marital negotiations. However, as the acts of violence that we have already considered as well as the one instance where Petruccio threatens to "cuff" (2.1. 216) Katherine illustrate, *The Taming* does not represent this civilizing process as an uncomplicated, easy, or automatic one. That is, despite Petruccio distinctive braggadocio, such as warning Baptista that he is "rough . . . and woo not like a babe" (2.1. 135), the Paduan milieu significantly imposes the kind of disciplinary handicap that presumably produces shrewish women and makes controlling or correcting one as shrewish as Katherine nearly impossible or, as Gremio characterizes it, Herculean: "Yea, leave that labour to great Hercules," Gremio sarcastically responds to Petruccio's insistent and ostensibly foolish desire to woo Katherine, "And let it be more than Alcides' twelve" (1.2. 253-254). While an expression of doubt predictably and even understandably uttered by an old and impotent man, its association of an impossible domestic task with Hercules's mythic feats of ultra-masculinity also ironically represents precisely the kind of figurative-imaginative thinking that enables Petruccio to redefine traditional male aggression.

What in large part makes Petruccio's domestication of manhood a persuasive alternative to the physical violence of the hunt and the battlefield is that it allows him the performative expression and satisfaction of symbolic violence through his rhetorical domination of Katherine. As Grumio bluntly assures Hortensio,

I pray you, sir, let him go while the humour lasts. O'
My word, an she knew him as well as I do she would think
scolding would do little good upon him. She may perhaps call
him half a score knaves or so. Why, that's nothing; an he begin
once he'll *rail in his rope-tricks*. I'll tell you what, sir, an she
stand him but a little he will throw a *figure* in her face and
so *disfigure* her with it that she shall have no more eyes to see
withal than a cat. You know him not, sir. (1.2. 108-110; my italics)

Despite the failed communication between master and servant that initially reveals Petruccio's problematic propensity for physical violence, what Grumio reveals about his master—what he knows

more intimately and violently than Hortensio—is that he is a warrior-scholar with a figuratively dangerous and disfiguring tongue to match his literally dangerous and disfiguring hands. That is, by analogizing Petruccio’s rhetorical skill to aggressive and violent physical action, he, like humanistic educational theorists, materializes and masculinizes learning in a way that presents it as a legitimate alternative to traditional aristocratic violence. In his first example, as we have also seen in educational treatises, he likens Petruccio’s likely future verbal assault on Katherine to a physical exercise, specifically a mastery of rope climbing. And in the second instance, he plays on the word “figure,” which means “external form” or “to bring into shape” (*OED*), to describe the way in which Petruccio will so violently throw, bring into shape, or materialize a blinding figure of speech in Katherine’s face.

These figurative and performative materializations represent tenuous sublimations of traditional male aggression that retain the potential to spill over into real violence. Significantly, Grumio’s excessive descriptive violence draws attention to the substitute nature of that sublimation and thereby threatens to trigger the realization of that potential. In a sense, Grumio is not just a victim of Petruccio’s propensity for violence; he, as his analogy illustrates, also represents it. For instance, before Petruccio catalogues his man-making experiences, Grumio’s interjection takes his master’s examples to their literal conclusion: “Will he woo her? Ay, or I’ll hang her” (1.2. 193). This homicidal expression highlights the extent to which Grumio is like the id that Petruccio must repress.

That repression centrally involves Petruccio selecting a metaphor for Katherine’s taming more consistent than Grumio’s unstable disfiguring one with Paduan nonviolence and humanistic educational theory. And the one that he selects— the one that allows him to retain the masculinizing energy of the hunt and the battlefield without the attendant violence— is that of falcon taming. As Edward Berry argues, [t]o respond adequately to this play, we must come to terms with [falcon taming] as its central metaphor”

and only then, he continues, might we be able “to discover . . . a way of ‘*saving the play*’ from its own [disturbing misogynistic] ending’ without either evading or romanticizing its main action, that of ‘taming’ a woman.”⁵² Indeed, over the years, this evasive and romanticizing commitment has characterized many readings of the play. And although Berry acknowledges as much, by retaining the role of interpretive savior, he also ends up suggesting a reading that similarly simplifies or evades the play’s complexities. That is, developing Coppélia Kahn’s argument that Petruccio represents “a caricature of male violence and male dominance, and the taming action a farce,” Berry concludes that Petruccio amounts to no more than “a source of satiric laughter.”⁵³

Perhaps because I do not think *The Taming* is in need of salvation, that is, as long as our understanding of Shakespeare is honest, mature, and encompassing enough to include potentially disturbing non-celebratory readings, I see Petruccio’s falcon taming metaphor as much more than a source of satiric laughter or even, as Berry also more cynically suggests, one that “is insidious precisely because”⁵⁴ it is nonviolent and therefore ostensibly more humane than typical shrew-taming stories. But, as I have already suggested, if we think of Petruchio as a warrior-scholar converted by the nonviolent ethos of humanistic educational theory, it becomes clear that the falcon taming metaphor represents a response to the civilizing process and the resultant crisis of masculinity that threatened to render violently oriented aristocratic men sociopolitically insignificant and therefore the subjects of the potential farcical satiric laughter that Berry identifies. In other words, accepting the general plausibility of the Kahn-Berry satiric laughter suggestion, the falcon taming metaphor represents *a response* to that laughter, not one of its triggers.

52 Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 97 (my italics). Berry takes the “saving the play” quotation from the seminal essay of Lynda Boose, “Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds,” 239-279. My commitment to a serious reading of the play is much indebted to this essay.

53 Kahn, *Man’s Estate*, 18; Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 119.

54 Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 99.

With that in mind, we are in a position to consider Petruccio's most extensive articulation of the metaphor. At the end of act 4 scene 1, after Petruccio's has subjected Katherine to a series of ostensibly foolish and mad tactics (the verbal jousting that I have already briefly referenced [2.1.], his embarrassing conduct before, during, and after the wedding [3.2], and denying her sleep and food while sequestering her away in his tyrannically managed country home [4.1.]), he explains his conduct in a soliloquy:

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 eat.
Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not.
As with the meat, some undeserved 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 reverent 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. (4.1. 169-192)

For Petruccio, language or speech for its own sake—what some might term mere academic speech—is part of what's wrong with a university town like Padua. When Tranio (impersonating Lucentio) introduces himself to the others as a competing suitor for Bianca with a reference to Paris and Helen of Troy, Petruccio impatiently asks, “Hortensio, to what end are all these words”

(1.2. 246). Also, although his taming of Katherine begins with an extensive demonstration of his rhetorical mastery, he reaches a point where he again appears to lose patience and insists on “setting all this chat aside” (2.1. 260). In that light, he presents the falcon taming metaphor as a practical, solutions-oriented form of speech and, in the spirit of male aristocratic competitiveness, challenges other men to out-speak and out-perform him. Indeed, this relationship between language and action is essential for the satisfaction of a warrior-scholar like Petruccio.

Also, what is conveniently lost in his attention to the taming metaphor is that literal falcon taming centers on a loving and gentle process that culminates in the coordinated hunting and killing of other animals. That is, the details of a loving process obscure the performative reality of a deadly purpose. In that way, Katherine’s aggressive final-scene castigation of Bianca and the Widow represents the ultimate expression of loving submission. In both figurative and literal instances, satisfaction comes in a safe and acceptable form of violence: either redirected away from Katherine’s body to domestic objects (against food and dishes earlier in the scene; the pillow, the coverlet, and the sheets in this passage; and, as we will explore later, a hat and a gown in act 4 scene 3) or with Katherine as the physical and rhetorical proxy of male domination. In short, the prescriptive metaphor of an aristocratic sport like falcon taming forces the redirection and in-direction of a more acceptable method than mere words or brute force by which to achieve “real” physical power over women and perhaps even, as his claim of a “politically begun . . . reign” suggests, all political subjects.

Redirection, however, does not result in a proto-Cartesian dematerializing transcendence or subordination of the body.⁵⁵ Rather, in the gendered economy of classical and early modern medical thought, Katherine’s problem is that her body, as reflected

55 While those treatises are at best ambivalent on the specific health benefits of falcon taming, they share with Petruccio the belief in the importance of the body and exercise to an educational program.

in her violent shrewishness, is too hot. Indeed, as Gail Kern Paster describes, Katherine is a “humoral subject distempered by too much heat . . . [and] must be cooled in order to be socialized as a wife.”⁵⁶ Petruccio’s falcon taming method makes possible just such a cooling off of her body by allowing, as Paster also describes, “the transformation of her environment through the manipulation of the six Galenic nonnaturals of air, diet, rest and exercise, sleeping and walking, fullness and emptiness, and passions.”⁵⁷ However, if we recall Petruccio’s own propensity for violence, his body is also too hot for the nonviolent milieu of Paduan society and must be subjected to the same manipulation. Of course, this expression of mutual bodily deprivation would fit neatly into a romanticized reading of the play centered on loving companionate marriage. However, as I have been arguing, what we see here instead reflects a fundamental redefinition of manhood that brings men anxiously close to women by prescribing for them comparable nonviolent dispositions and regimens of bodily care.

Within these affective and behavioral limitations, male domination becomes an essentializing and simplifying matter of bodily difference. In other words, all Petruccio has to do to create and securely mystify a belief in the rightness of male dominion—even as his taming of Katherine and his self-taming expose it as a process—is demonstrate his superior ability to endure the challenges of bodily deprivation. We never hear from him the equivalent of Katherine’s “But I, who never knew how to entreat,/Nor never needed that I should entreat,/Am starved for meat, giddy for lack of sleep” (4.3. 7-9). As the embodied hybridized compromise of a warrior-scholar, he complains about a lot of things, but, unlike Katherine, he never complains about the cold, the lack of food, or the lack of sleep: conditions which would not have been uncommon to the battle-tested warrior or the ascetically oriented scholar.

⁵⁶ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 88.

⁵⁷ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 88.

This difference is, of course, the basis of Katherine's final-scene disquisition on wifely obedience. In this much-debated closing speech, she first orders Bianca and the Widow—and by extension all women⁵⁸—to stop casting threatening angry looks at their husbands, because the ruling patriarchal demands of female beauty pathologizes anger in women as a disfiguring emotion fundamentally antithetical to normative happy wifely obedience. As Katherine concludes, the only thing that a husband wants and needs from a wife is “love, fair looks, and true obedience” (5.2. 157). Furthermore, to emphasize the incompatibility of anger with that constrained role, Katherine continues by materializing anger with a number of pathologizing, gendered analogies. Anger in a woman is like the frosts that bite the meadows; it is like the whirlwinds that shake the delicate buds; and, most significantly, it is like an exogenous disturbance to a clean fountain, a disturbance which makes the fountain's water muddy and therefore undesirable to even the thirstiest of men. Even if women could feel and express anger in a way not fundamentally construed as self-polluting, self-disfiguring, and ultimately self-destructive, their physical weakness relative to men would render such an expression, at best, a treasonous waste of time. That is, because men, for the “maintenance” (5.2. 152) of women, can and do commit their bodies to the “painful labours” (5.2. 153) of the harsh and threatening natural elements, they are, by natural, self-evident, physically demonstrated right, dominant, sovereign, princely, caring, and benevolent. Therefore, any opposition to such “honest will” (5.2. 162) would be doomed to fail as the act of a “foul contending rebel” (5.2.163) or a “graceless traitor” (5.2. 164). Indeed, as weaker vessels-- as “unable worms” (5.2. 173), Katherine advises the women to accept their subordinate position: to accept, in other words, “that [their] soft conditions and [their] hearts/Should well agree with [their] external parts” (5.2. 171-172). In short, as dramatically represented by Katherine's concluding hand-under-foot

58 Boose insightfully argues that “Having ‘fetched hither’ the emblematic pair of offstage wives who have declined to participate in this game of patriarchal legitimation, Kate shift into an address targeted at some presumptive Everywoman” (240).

gesture of submission, the might of male physical superiority makes right in every aspect and in every sphere of early modern life.

This difference also returns us to the bodily centered simplicity exemplified by Vives's *Instruction*. That is, in the course of redefining male authority in terms of a superior capacity to endure physical deprivation, Shakespeare through Petruccio also redefines male authority in terms of sententious moral probity. While we have already explored his critique of Paduan speech, its Vivesian strain most clearly begins to emerge before the wedding, when he arrives late and "fantastically dressed." After the other characters question whether he intends to marry Katherine in "these unreverent robes" (3.3. 105), as Tranio describes them, and insists that he change into something appropriate to the occasion, Petruccio refuses: "Good sooth, even thus. Therefore ha' done with words./ To me she's married, not unto my clothes" (3.2. 109-110). Despite playfully continuing that she will wear him out sexually before he can wear out his wedding clothing, the seriousness of an implicit anti-materialism—that dietary excess and the resultant corrupt materialism threaten the marital union of dangerously and differently embodied souls—penetrates that bawdy festive surface nonetheless. In short, his fashion statement as well as its irreverent performative enactment during the wedding ceremony is as much a material critique of Paduan materialism as it is a source of festive laughter. The act-four fitting scene builds on this anti-materialistic critique. After the taming method has rendered Katherine "as cold as can be" (4.3. 37), she complains to Hortensio, Petruccio tests whether that coldness has extinguished her materialistic desires by teasing her with food, promises of fashionable luxury items, and a return to the corrupt and corrupting materialistic milieu of Paduan society:

Kate, eat apace, and now, my honey love,
Will we return unto thy father's house,
And revel it as bravely as the best,
With silken coats, and caps, and golden rings,
With ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales, and things,
With scarves, and fans, and double change of bravery,
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knavery. (4.3. 52-58)

Before Katherine can finish eating, assuming that she has a chance to start, he invites the haberdasher and the tailor to present her with a cap and a gown as examples of their fashionable “knavery.” While “knavery” in this context most plausibly means “[t]ricks of dress or adornment” (*OED*), Petruccio’s anti-materialism as well as his other serious critiques of Paduan corruption also powerfully evokes its primary definition: “dishonest and crafty dealing; trickery, roguery” (*OED*). In other words, the point that Petruccio goes on to make in somewhat of a drawn out manner—a manner perhaps attempting to simultaneously evoke the quite different meanings of the word knavery—is that the technical trade skills feeding, as it were, Padua’s corrupt consumer culture is itself a reflection of that corruption. Indeed, his criticism of the fashionable workmanship of the Haberdasher’s cap and the Tailor’s gown represents an indirect way of criticizing that culture. Specifically, he criticizes the cap as appearing to have been “moulded on a porringer—/A velvet dish. Fie, fie, ‘tis lewd and filthy/Why ‘tis a cockle or a walnut-shell,/A knack, a toy, a trick, a baby’s cap” (4.3. 64-67).

The analogies proliferate, as he goes on to describe it as “[a] custard coffin, a bauble, a silken pie” (4.3. 82). He likewise criticizes the sleeve-design of the gown: “What’s this—a sleeve?” he sarcastically asks, “‘Tis like a demi-cannon./ What, up and down carved like an apple-tart?/Here’s snip, and nip, and cut, and slish and slash,/Like to a scissor in a barber’s shop” (4.3. 88-91).⁵⁹ Although it may strike us as insensitive and even sadistic for Petruccio to discredit these examples of contemporary fashion in terms of various banqueting foods, his taming method, when compared to violent historical accounts of shrew taming or even the play’s sister play *The Taming of a Shrew*, is a relatively compassionate one based on linking, as Vives does, a corrupt taste for luxurious clothing to a corrupting diet of dangerously unhealthy food.

59 See Natasha Korda, *Domestic Economies*. In a related but different materialist argument, Korda argues that “in likening the commodities that are brought in after supper to banqueting conceits, commonly known as ‘voids’ or ‘empty dishes,’ Petruccio . . . emphasizes the commodity’s lack of substance or stuff” (69).

Indeed, Petruccio's task is to starve Katherine and himself of these interconnected excesses for their own good. In that light, it is possible to understand Petruccio's otherwise cryptic response to the final-scene banquet ("Nothing but sit, and sit, and eat, and eat" [5.2. 12]) as much more than an expression of boredom. It is, as I have been arguing, an educational critique that justifies the taming of both a shrew and her teacher-husband.

Eric L. De Barros is a Visiting Assistant Professor of English at the State University of New York at Oswego. A committed teacher-scholar, he has taught courses as varied as English composition, critical theory, epic poetry, Shakespeare, Renaissance literature and culture, and autobiographies of black masculinity at five institutions of higher learning over a fifteen-year period.

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Petruccio and the Habdasher
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