

When Hodgdon calls a country house “reminiscent of remote Sadean territories,” she strives for an unwarranted association (539). That country retreat would have evoked in Elizabethan times the setting of the hugely popular *Decameron*. Bits of Freud, Sade, or Foucault only help in obscuring Shakespeare.

Finally, it is not fruitful to compare the Elizabethan habit of using boy actors to play female roles with present-day transvestism. The two phenomena have clearly very different causes and hence do not illuminate each other. It is misleading to suggest that because the actor playing Kate is a boy, her words and actions in the final scene of the play can be moving “between masculine and feminine positions” (540). Uneven doses of behavior traits labeled masculine or feminine can be encountered every day of our lives among the people we meet. This was true also four hundred years ago. The oscillation of Kate’s speech is in the nature of things. There seems no need to credit it to the existence of a boy actor.

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To the Editor:

The main problem with performance-oriented literary criticism of Shakespeare is that it too often lends itself to facile interpretations. In the case of Barbara Hodgdon’s article (“Katherina Bound; or, Play[K]ating the Strictures of Everyday Life”), we can dismiss the trivializing aspect of the punning in her title and turn rather to the argument itself. For example, in discussing the Burton-Taylor *Shrew*, Hodgdon starts a paragraph off by alluding to the titular figure’s “refusal to listen to dirty jokes” (546); surely the subject of salacious humor should be as foreign to *PMLA* as to the playwright himself. To introduce such a stereotype into discussion of such a drama (which was basically a response to the medieval wife-beating farce and not itself farcical) is to belittle the play’s value. It might also be contended that any notion that sexuality is “dirty” would have been the furthest thing from the minds of Shakespeare and of his characters (who had common sense enough to know that what is “natural” is not in itself smutty). The distance between the play and the film is particularly evident when Hodgdon admits that some of the “box-office success” of the Zeffirelli production derived from what she allows was “viewers’ voyeuristic fascination with its stars.”

Further, in asserting that “*Shrew* is (always) already popular culture,” she minimizes the impact of this

nonfarcical drama, putting it in the same category as Hollywoodish slapstick. Clearly, the very term *popular culture*, stressing the adjective to the detriment of *Kultur*, almost always has drawbacks. The basic value of this play is partly in its mythic relation to the *Märchen* tradition, granted, but that is no reason to go out of one’s way to be anti-intellectual. The claim that “George Sidney’s 1953 film of Cole Porter’s *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) moves ‘Shakespeare’ even more definitively toward its popular origins” is beyond the pale, for a musical comedy is surely as far from the true man from Stratford as a Verdi opera is closer to him. To add to the demotion, Hodgdon enlists no less than “*Playboy*’s inaugural issue” in her defense (547), as if pornography were not at the opposite end of what a dramatist “not of an age, but for all time” was truly after. (I applaud the correspondent in the *English Journal* who protests that “a reference made to” *Playboy* there is improper in a learned, academic periodical [81 (1992): 97].)

Taking the perspective of some feminist critics, Hodgdon reports on Carol Neely’s observation about the “tendency . . . to tame Kate’s taming in order to fracture the play’s patriarchal panopticism” (541). This drama, however, was historically not geared to any patriarchal tendencies; if anything, what shines through at the end is what even feminists often acknowledge is true “mutuality” in Kate’s final big speech. The major taming device used throughout is rather that of falconry: the image of the falconer artfully controlling his bird (what was called “manning the haggard”). The relation of falconer to falcon, moreover, is scarcely “patriarchal.” It is key imagery like this that is missed in the filming of some of Shakespeare’s plays. Instead we get in Hodgdon’s account passing gratuitous innuendos on such matters as Taylor’s “frequent successes in ‘bitch’ roles” (surely her support for AIDS victims is not one of them) and on how “the game in Zeffirelli’s film is to exchange ‘Hump the Hostess’ for ‘Get the Guests’” (545; as if the dramatist would ever have allowed for “gamey” delights of this sort).

All this is not to insist that Hodgdon is stagestruck (she is obviously well qualified to speak on her subject), though an element or two of that tendency does shine through. But it does show how far we have got from what Shakespeare wanted.

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To the Editor:

Barbara Hodgdon’s “Katherina Bound” repeats the notorious tale that the 1929 Pickford-Fairbanks *Shrew*

includes the credit “by William Shakespeare with additional dialogue by Samuel Taylor” (543). The story has appeared frequently, sometimes with seemingly reliable derivation—in mentioning the credit in *Shakespeare and the Film*, Roger Manvell, for instance, cites Laurence Irving, a scenic director on this *Shrew*, as his source. The story is so good that it’s a shame it isn’t true.

The print of the film held by the Museum of Modern Art—Fairbanks’s own copy, which he donated to the museum—has only “Adapted and Directed by Sam Taylor.” Scott Eyman, whose *Mary Pickford, America’s Sweetheart* is much the most reliable work on the actress’s career, corroborates the credit and reports that it appears as well in the film’s script and press book.

It is somewhat surprising that the tale has persisted so long, since the film contains almost nothing in the way of additional dialogue for Taylor to claim. There is “O Petruchio, beloved” (which Hodgdon cites), spoken by Kate after she unintentionally combs his noodle with the three-legged stool. There is her howl of pain, which passes for an “I do,” when Petruchio steps on her toes during the wedding. Beyond these, the one significant addition is lifted from David Garrick’s adaptation, *Catherine and Petruchio*. Both at the end of the wooing scene and after arriving soaked and shivering at Petruchio’s house, Kate mutters, with grimly comic determination: “Look to your seat, Petruchio, or I throw you / Cath’rine shall tame this haggard; or if she fails / Shall tie her tongue up and pare down her nails.” The imagery is strange, if not incoherent; but in relation to the version’s “sexual negotiations,” the speech is significant. Although Shakespeare leaves the audience to infer Kate’s motives for entering the marriage, Garrick—and Taylor after him—offers a shrew who intends to win the taming match.

THOMAS A. PENDLETON
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Reply:

What strikes me immediately about all three letters is that each aims at instructing me and amending my essay’s “faults.” It is tempting to suggest that Petruchio’s position as teacher-tamer seems to come naturally to all these gentlemen—that is, I would say so if I did not consider “naturally” such an extremely vexed term. Thomas A. Pendleton chides me (explicitly) for perpetuating a bit of cinematic gossip that even he admits is tantalizing, if untrue, and (implicitly) for ignoring Scott Eyman’s biography of Pickford. I admit

that the credit line attributing additional dialogue to Taylor does not match that on the Library of Congress film print, but the cartoon, which does exist, neatly sends up Taylor for disrupting Shakespeare’s author-ity, a question also at issue here. Quite rightly, Pendleton pinpoints Garrick’s *Catherine and Petruchio* as the source of some of that dialogue. However, my point is that Kate, not Petruchio, speaks the raided lines. On the one hand, Taylor’s additions accord her greater agency; on the other, that choice underscores Kate’s unruly nature. Pickford, not Fairbanks, changes “Shakespeare.” And, according to Pendleton himself, it is male ownership of texts that counts: he cites *Fairbanks’s* copy of the film as his authority and describes a man’s account as the “most reliable work on [Pickford’s] career.” Women, it appears, may be seen but heard only selectively, their voices circumscribed and managed by those of men.

However problematically, at least Pendleton evokes an empirical base; one cannot say the same of Lucien Goldschmidt and Robert F. Fleissner. Their letters claim a space for old readings of old plays that has been regularly excavated in *PMLA*’s pages (the return of the repressed?), most notoriously in the “Bardgate” controversy between Richard Levin and the feminist Gang of Twenty-Four (104 [1989]: 77–79). Goldschmidt’s letter contains a host of anxious, even hysterical, objections, all characteristic of a foundationalist, antitheoretical position that bears absolutely no relation to my work. Moreover, his scattershot strategy attempts to reinstall a “general consensus” remarkably uninflected by recent historical work that uncovers how early modern social practices demeaned and punished women (see, for example, Lynda E. Boose’s “Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman’s Unruly Member,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 [1991]: 179–213), by any awareness of how present-day representational strategies position “woman,” or by how current sociopolitical discourse seeks to regulate real women’s bodies.

I do, however, find it immensely heartening that feminist critics of early modern texts now have new allies in those whose critical practice engages with “performance-oriented literary criticism” (Fleissner’s phrase). By pulling the dirty materiality of the stage into the same space as cultural-materialist feminist critique, Fleissner puts me among excellent good company; the association is especially comforting when one is so roundly blamed for degenerative effects—an aspersion like that cast by Matthew Arnold’s anxiety about the inroads of mass culture and by modernism’s pointed exclusion of women writers. Of course, Fleissner claims an even more authoritative position than