MEANING WELL: STATUS AND SIGNIFICANCE IN THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Karl F. McKimpson

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Approved by

Advisory Committee

______________________  _________________________
Colleen Reilly           Michael Wentworth

______________________
Lewis Walker
Chair

Accepted by

Dean, Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

Working from Katharina’s accusation of a “mean meaning” in 5.2, I examine how the dialogue between the English Renaissance status anxiety and personal subject in the play pressures Katharina and Petruchio into molds of lower status, and therefore significance. In challenging this social stigma, the pair separates the public and private spheres to regard nobility (status) as an aspect disjunct from class-oriented labels (shrew). The pair is then able to reinvent “nobility” as a personal identity resistant to social mobility and peer pressure, as well as relieve their personal status anxieties.
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INTRODUCTION

The continuing popularity of The Taming of the Shrew is a strange hybrid. The brutishness of Petruchio’s taming and the easy acceptance of his acts by his peers in the play is disturbing as it is enticing. Yet ironically, Shrew also invites enthusiastic devotion for the target of the taming because of the fierceness of Katharina’s resistance even after her eventual capitulation, leaving us to wonder whether Katharina is in fact broken, or merely pretending. This strange contradiction of meaning has held our attention since its inception, because it resists easy interpretation while simultaneously seeming to beg that we try to do so.

The strength of Katharina’s words in the final scene is troubling, regardless of interpretation, because it produces self-contradictory explanations for her person at the end of the play. If Katharina is truly subdued, the discrepancy created between the creative force and authority of her words with her supposed obedience to Petruchio undermines treating her as a subdued figure. If Katharina is breaking her chains, then the willful capitulation communicated by her content undermines any thoughts of complete freedom.

Interpreting Katharina’s contradictory behavior would therefore seem to require an ironic subordination of one conclusion to the other: either Katharina asserts her person and mocks the expected norms for obedient wives, or she has become so obedient that she far outpaces the other prototypical wives. Most critical studies up to this point have accordingly taken one side or the other in this dispute, presenting explanations as to why Katharina should be seen as leaning towards either position. The most recent studies of the past thirty years have also introduced an additional wrinkle; Katharina and Petruchio are assumed to end in an amiable, if not loving, relationship by the final scene. In an attempt to resolve Katharina’s strange behavior, while still
accounting for this happy ending, the more ambitious studies have moved beyond the content of
the play itself, arguing that what we see is only the end result of other forces at work.

Juliet Dusinberre examines the play as an iconic power struggle between male players in
her “The Taming of the Shrew: Women Acting and Power,” (67) while Lesley Soule focuses on
the “presentational structure” of Shrew, viewing the play as an archetype for actor-audience
interaction during performance (164). Moving towards the actions within the play itself, Wayne
Rebhorn argues that the events of the play are a commentary on the “Renaissance discourse of
rhetoric” as Petruchio’s attempts at rhetorical control fail, succeeding only when he refrains from
the use of rhetoric (295).

Jeanne Roberts and Robert Schules contend that the events of Shrew should not be taken
literally, and suggest readings that approach allegory. Roberts uses the abundant number of
animal and ovidian transformations to suggest that Shrew presents a kind of “green” romance
(171). Schules presents possibly the most ambitious reading of the play, arguing that the violent
language and evil imagery in the play suggest reading the events as a Renaissance witch-hunt,
placing Katharina as the witch and Petruchio as a combination devil and witch-hunter (388).

The majority of critical attention to The Taming of the Shrew has stayed within the
context of the literal events taking place, presenting the taming action as a means of educating
Katharina to the appropriate mannerisms for a wife and gentlewoman, reflecting the “sweeping
changes” in education during the sixteenth century (Wall 17). Representative studies can be
found in Tita Baumlin’s position that Petruchio is a Sophist in “Petruchio the Sophist and
Language as Creation in The Taming of the Shrew,” as well as in Marion Perret’s observation
that Petruchio pretends to be a “model wife” to teach Katharina by his example (228). Katherine
Sirluck similarly reads the taming action as education in her study of patriarchy in the play,
arguing in “Patriarchy, Pedagogy, and the Divided Self in The Taming of the Shrew” that Petruchio is educating Katharina to understand marriage as “the ideologically correct resolution of the conflict between desire and social order” (417).

In light of these studies, the difficulty in assigning an interpretation to the taming action in the play is therefore paramount. To resolve this difficulty, I believe a solution can be found in the words of Katharina to the Widow in 5.2, where Katharina dismisses the accusation that she herself is a shrew, calling such a notion a “mean meaning,” and therefore without significance to a person of her status (5.2.34). Under this reading, Katharina’s words in 5.2 do not necessarily present a contradiction with her earlier actions, because they assume the existence of two disjointed modes of discourse in the play, a public discourse between peers in society that relies on status and decorum for social identification, and a personal discourse that concerns personal identity (subject). In dismissing the Widow’s “mean meaning,” we can see that Katharina places a distinction between these two modes, assigning one as “mean” (lower status) and the other as “meaning” (what is significant to her subject). Katharina denies having a shrewish identity by emphasizing that the Widow’s words are inappropriate for their current social discourse. In deliberately juxtaposing status with significance, Katharina invites us to examine the events of Shrew in a new light, searching for how the language of status serves as the controlling aspect of the play, rather than the fronted taming action.

Examining the The Taming of the Shrew for this language reveals numerous instances where “mean,” “means,” “meaning” are presented. These three words are invoked a total of thirty-three times over the course of the play in various contexts, indicating that this dialogue on status and significance is not only present, but suggests that it is also vital to understanding the much-vaunted taming action. These references therefore serve as a backbone to Shrew that is
spread throughout the text, setting up a status dialogue between what is mean and vulgar, and what is meaningful to personal identity.

From the opening episode with Sly and the Lord to Katharina’s return to society, this language of status dominates Shrew. Combined with clothing as a visual index to the juxtaposition, the use of “mean” and “meaning” discusses how the status of nobility can be defined sans money, sans clothes, and sans voice. Kate’s shrewishness is itself a low-born trait, derived from numerous folk-tales in the oral tradition. As commoner behavior, her shrewishness and Petruchio’s visually vagrant clothing serve to set the two of them up as strangers to the nobility, creating dissonance between a nobility defined by appearance and tradition and a nobility defined by voice and through personal choice, where an individual chooses to serve. At the end of the play, it is Katharina, despite her expected meanness, who has the most compelling voice and steals the scene.

Admittedly, examining Shrew for status and the separation of public from private is not entirely a new idea. Sirluck’s study, while not treating status as its focus, nevertheless invokes social order as a vital assumption to interpreting the play. Of greater note is Kurt Hochenaur’s parallel examination “The Art of Class Delineation: The Aesthetic Disparity Between The Shrew and A Shrew.” While The Taming of a Shrew will not be examined in my study, Hochenaur’s recognition of a self-referential kind of class consciousness as a defining theme of The Taming of the Shrew that is not present in the opposing play, highlights the importance of the Shrew’s status dialogue in interpreting the final actions (101). However, Hochenaur fails to move much beyond recognizing the status fixation in Shrew and thus ignores the integral role that the status dialogue plays in creating and resolving the taming action, as well as the overly public function of status that separates it from the subject discourse.
The difficulty of separating the public and private spheres is also well-known. Both Gary Schneider’s “The Public, the Private, and the Shaming of the Shrew” and Alexandra Shepard’s “Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in early Modern England c. 1580-1640” present similar statements as to the difficulty of separating public from private. Schneider comments that “a strict division between the spheres was not viable” (237), while Shepherd takes this thought a step further by applying the statement to women exclusively, arguing that “women defied any simple separation of ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres (76). However, these statements refer to the inability to separate day-to-day responsibilities such as money and work. In regards to the separation of discourses in Shrew this sort of interaction does not apply. One, the separation is solely in and of discourse, i.e. how language is used and what it can affect. Two, Shrew can be classified as an artful fiction, and is not reality itself, as is exemplified is Schneider’s later conclusions that while “a strict division” between private and public was unrealistic, “the theoretical speculations of Renaissance thinkers frequently sustained a rigorous separation between private and public” (237). This latter point argues that a fictional portrayal of the separation of public and private, while unrealistic, could still function as a viable consideration of the differentiation between a private, personal status identity (subject) and the public perception of the same status.

Over the course of Shrew, the language of status and subject repeatedly clash, from the opening episode with Sly and the Lord, to Katharina’s return to society, as characters of gentle birth (Petruchio and Katharina) are made mean, and characters of mean birth (Sly and the Pedant) find themselves thrown upwards to assume supposed gentle clothes and gentle manner. The success of both to their new states is questionable.
This project began, like most, as a concept and grew organically under sometimes deliberate, sometimes serendipitous, alterations as the project moved forward in time. Originally, I intended to examine the creation of a secondary, holographic love language between Petruchio and Katharina from mimetic and diegetic language intersections. However, as I began to identify the specific uses of diegetic language in the play, I found that almost entirely, the diegetic language was directed at maintaining one thing: social identity. This led me onward to explore how status interacted with the mimetic dialogues spoken between Petruchio and Katharina. What was emerged was a central discussion on the relationship between social status and the personal subject (identity). As I expanded my observations to consider status and subject within the scope of the play, it soon became apparent that this dialogue provides an essential complement to the fronted taming action.

The assumption many have made about The Taming of the Shrew is that the “taming” of Katharina is the controlling locus for the play, both because of the play’s title and undoubtedly from the audience’s strong emotional response when faced with Petruchio’s apparently brutal tactics. Taking such a critical approach ignores the status identity conflict that generates the need for taming. Rather than serving as the structuring locus, the taming action serves to identify a deeper process: the formation of a new status identity that breaks with the social conventions that a woman like Katharina needs to be tamed.

If there is a unifying linguistic theme in Shrew, it is the presence of a wealth of status signifiers that transpose the demanding social context of Elizabethan England into the drama, creating a status preoccupation for the characters of the play. The elite of Shrew are pressured by these societal norms to conform to the conventions of their community and therefore come to reject Katharina for her apparently aberrant behavior. Status was the make-or-break point of the
elite community. Without status, membership was impossible. But, status was a quality of lineage, blood, and economy, and could not be easily identified merely from a glance. Thus, many took advantage and only claimed to be of the nobility in the form of false documentations, rented land, and an emerging mercantile capital. At best, a discerning individual would have to investigate his apparent peer for days to have a chance at dispelling falsehood, and even then there was no certainty of success, leading to the creation of a brutal method of symbolic reduction that socially transformed others to the appearance of beasts and vagrants at the mere suspicion of falsehood until their identity could be confirmed.

The presumption that Katharina needs to be tamed derives from this anxiety. As a “shrew,” Katharina resists the social conventions for her identity and is accordingly ostracized. If Katharina is purged of her socially deviant nature, she can regain her place among the elite community. Petruchio, as her husband, is himself under social pressures from his wife’s behavior, as “thei two shalbe one flesh” (Book of Common Prayer 1559), and therefore has a compelling need to reform Katharina.

Throughout Shrew, these social pressures take the dominant form of clothing, echoing the social anxieties and formations of the period within which it was written. Like the symbolic reductions into beast and vagrant, the appearance of clothing was tied directly to status because of the economic costs of material and length of fabric, as well as to a series of proclamations and laws established by the crown that directed clothing to represent status. It comes as no surprise then that clothing is the primary field within which the dialogue about status takes place. So ubiquitous is apparel that it might be tempting to consider entitling this work “Clothing in The Taming of the Shrew.” Such a title, however, would be an oversimplification.
The intense focus on apparel in Shrew is subordinate to the status dialogue; the focus on clothing serves to represent status rather than the other way around. So closely linked was clothing with status in the Elizabethan mind that it is impossible to discuss status without as well spending a significant amount of time on clothing. However, it is status and the status anxiety, and not clothing itself, that rejects, creates, and reconciles Katharina’s identity to that of her peers’.

Katharina’s transformation from outcast to model gentlewoman is complex and subtle, easily concealed behind Petruchio’s verbosity. Only by simultaneously addressing both Katharina’s condition and the Renaissance social status anxieties that created its context can this well-hidden, yet integral process be revealed. In examining the transformation, my discussion takes three parts. In the first chapter, I reveal the presence of the Renaissance status anxieties of the subject that create the social context for Shrew, which in turn creates the condition whereby any use of the clothing index must represent the social status anxiety of the period. In my second chapter, I again invoke these anxieties to show how the status formations are systematically dismantled by Shakespeare’s presentation of clothing in the play to create an open field of ambiguous meaning from which to construct a new status dialogue. Chapter three then examines how the open ambiguity of clothing allows Petruchio and Katharina to construct for themselves a new identity that is immune to the social status anxieties that plague their peers.

Katharina’s “mean meaning” is a call to her peers to recognize just how solipsistic their social anxieties have made their lives, but it is also a pronouncement of her independence. She will no longer allow her person to be defined by the narrow perceptions of the public, nor will she renounce her public entirely. She learns to recognize that public perception is at best a
surface level fixation, creating in her person an enduring quality of independence that remains in our minds long after the play has ended.
THE INVOCATION AND EVOCATION OF CLOTHING
IN ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY AND DRAMA

One of the most memorable scenes in *The Taming of the Shrew* is Biondello’s description of Petruchio and Grumio’s arrival at the wedding. Both are hideously under-dressed for the occasion in a motley assortment of rags and discards. Petruchio’s clothing matches a “new hat” to “an old jerkin,” and his breeches are ridiculously “thrice turned” with a rusty, broken sword hanging at his hip, to name a few of his articles (3.2.43-47). His servant and horse fare no better. Grumio is aptly summed up as “a very monster in apparel” while Petruchio’s horse is home to probably more diseases and conditions than any such beast could bear and still breathe. In short, the two men enter in a mess. So much does the two men’s appearance grate against those gathered that Baptista exclaims, “But thus, I trust, you will not marry her” (3.2.115). In this, Baptista is not just voicing the complaint of a father, he is voicing the complaint of the company, and through it, the society in which the play is enacted.

Studies of the Elizabethan period portray a population, if not obsessed, then possessed by a preoccupation with the ideal that the outward should match the inward. Susan Vincent notes that the population of Early Modern England felt that “social advance was achieved […] through the medium of dress” (79). By arriving in rags, Petruchio defies this expectation, and quite understandably, Baptista and those assembled desire him to conform. In defying expectations, Petruchio is presenting the very problem that made Shakespearian gentility anxious; the social hierarchy is collapsing.

This anxiety played out simply: it was the desire for a scaffolding framework to justify the social hierarchy while that same social hierarchy was witnessing its first buckling as new blood rose to money. Eager for the esteem of their peers, these rising men invested in the
conspicuous consumption of apparel to imitate their peers, making clothes “second only to hospitality as a status symbol” (Stone 257), because of its close link to income and its ease of visual identification. At a glance, a man’s rank could be known. But, the advantages of clothing came along with its disadvantages. Clothing could also be easily put on that disguised the status of the wearer. Thus, the need was born for a codification of significance in clothing. Clothing served as a paradigmatic semiotic center for the early modern society, condensing and reflecting the nobility’s need for a visual index to status. It is only from first understanding how great was the need for the separation of status levels and their corresponding regulations that the full audacity of Petruchio’s entrance can be examined, and thereby find “some meaning in his mad attire” (3.2.124).

Keith Wrightson and Lawrence Stone have separately remarked upon this period of England’s history from circa 1560 to the Civil War as a “crisis of order” that grew increasingly more and more concerned with not only the presence and population of the elite, but also the need for proof of status. During this period numerous proclamations and laws were established to regulate the appearance of status in clothing, as well as related laws that included the criminal in the regulating system, making begging a crime rather than a social effect. While the Elizabethan preoccupation with status is undoubtedly less obvious to today’s reader in Shrew than the fronted taming action, this is not because it is less significant, but rather because today we no longer possess the commonplace ideologies that reveal the actions within Shrew as not only a woman “tamed,” but a vital commentary on the place of status in everyday life. So integrally linked are clothing and status that to consider one is impossible without also considering the other.

Tudor clothing policies began with Henry VIII. Wilfrid Hooper notes that all of the restricted “richer” fabrics came from outside England, concluding that these apparel restrictions
were likely a reaction to the growth of foreign imports and foreign merchants in an attempt to
protect the native businesses (434). Hooper concludes that “the trading classes would hardly
have submitted to the passing of these vexatious restrictions unless they had anticipated some
substantial benefit in return for the limitations imposed on their own style of apparel” (434). By
Elizabeth’s reign, fashion had emerged as an object of popular interest, “expressing therein a
governmental and cultural preference for a particular ordering of society” that “acknowledged
and addressed widespread underlying anxieties, that ranged from moral degradation to social and
financial chaos” (Vincent 143).

In her time as queen, a total of twelve orders restricting clothing were made by Elizabeth,
primarily through proclamation (Vincent 118). These proclamations are scattered throughout her
reign, and it is thus unlikely that they were ever followed with much dedication. Nevertheless,
Elizabeth’s persistent return to clothing restrictions over her reign indicates a public awareness
of clothing as an indicator of status, and, if a queen can be assumed to reflect at times the
prevailing attitude of her people, a cultural concern about clothing as status. This is not so far-
FETCHED AS IT SOUNDS. Elizabeth, despite her love of proclamations, still had to take her advisors
and landowners into consideration, as did Mary, Edward, and Henry before her, and it is likely
that the repeated attention to clothing as an index for status conveys those monarchs’ concerns.

Previous to Elizabeth, clothing restrictions were designed and passed by Edward VI and
Mary. Queen Elizabeth drew upon their principles, as well as those of Henry VIII in designing
her own. Henry VIII excluded all women from his restrictions (Hooper 433). Henry VIII also
levied fines for violations and the additional enforcement that unlawful apparel would be seized
by the state. If he wished, the king was allowed to grant exemptions (Hooper 433). Mary was the
first to include the label in her clothing acts “the meaner sort,” juxtaposing “mean” and “sort” to
imply that vagrancy in clothing ("mean") was indicative of lower status ("sort"), labels that would later return, coming from the mouth of Shakespeare’s Katharina.

Queen’s Elizabeth’s first clothing proclamations were largely reminders to follow the previous clothing acts passed by Henry VIII and Mary. This pattern continued until proclamation 154 in the 16th year of her reign (1574), where Elizabeth included specific directions for the apparel of women as well as for men, an gender inclusion that continued until the last clothing proclamation in her 39th year (1598).

At the heart of these proclamations is a developing ideology of the subject in the face of the rising land mobility and social mobility, as increasing numbers of newly titled gentry. The rise of land mobility was of direct consequence to the rise of these “new men.” Stone observes that “the dominant value system remained that of the landed gentleman” (24). Representation in the House of Lords was contingent on the titleship of land. Thus, when land became available, “all hastened to turn their wealth into landed estate” (24). Titleship of land, however, was by no means a guarantee of income, especially in light of the trends toward conspicuous consumption. In examining Petruchio, Linda Boose concludes that for all that Petruchio boasts himself “heir to all his [father’s] lands and goods” (2.1.117), that he (Petruchio) is in fact a “land-poor yeoman,” meaning that he has titleship of land, but little in the way of money (215). In marrying, Katharina and Petruchio create “an alliance between gentry and the mercantile classes and thus between land and money, status and wealth” creating an ideal kind of status identity (Korda 120).

New men like Baptista played a significant role in the developing ideology of the subject and were in fact a large part of the concern. Their mercantile income allowed for their own consumption served as a valid substitute for “true social recognition” (Korda 121) by providing a means to upward mobility. The period between 1558 and 1641 witnessed the greatest rate of
social mobility, both downwards as well as upwards, of any other period in England before the 19th century (Stone 22). The period of 1558 to 1603 was the beginning of a sharp rise in mobility that would crest just before 1620 as the conspicuous consumption of the nobility led to an increasing need to rent out land for income (22). A whole lot of land was available to new men seeking status, provided they were willing to part with ready coin. However, “since there was plenty of land on the market there arose no proud dynasties of merchants [and] the social prestige and the standards of value of the landed classes were never seriously challenged” (Stone 24).

Instead, the primary concern was in consolidating the status of the existing nobility, rather than on the prevention of new titles. While wealth was not the only, or even the primary indicator of status, it was still a significant one, and a family that did not have the wealth to support itself was reduced to renting out both land and name. Thus, one significant distinction of being “noble” was in the free expenditure of wealth, that is, the ability to spend without going into debt (Stone 27). Simple induction leads to the conclusion that families and individuals that spend more appear to be wealthier, and therefore seems to possess a higher degree of nobility.

In order to appear of a higher status, individuals would conspicuously spend large amounts of money on fashion, producing a “taste for extravagant clothes among courtiers and men of fashion [that] was a serious drain upon all but the wealthiest of magnates” (Stone 258). Given that additional square feet and finer material are both more costly, it can be inferred that outfits began to use more material and became more ornate in an attempt to give their owners the appearance of being well-off. Today, our theatre culture seems to have focused intensely on the presence of elaborate ruffs as signature apparel of the period (Vincent 19). Going to watch a performance of Jonson, Webster, or Shakespeare virtually guarantees the appearance of a ruff on someone, somewhere. Such a focus is not without good reason. Ruffs were both an incredibly
versatile piece of apparel and at the same time, a labor-intensive section of the wardrobe, making it a perfect fit into the noble niche for separating those below from those above. Vincent explains this paradoxical, if vital item of apparel:

Rather than having an enduring form, the ruff was remade at every wash.

Cleaned, and then dipped in starch, the pleats of the ruff were then shaped into ‘sets’ with heated metal called poking sticks. The sets were further arranged and held in place by pinning.”

(32)

Vincent later qualifies the versatility of the ruff by citing Jenny Tirimani, the associate designer at the Globe: “‘By varying the sets into which the ruff is ironed and the arrangement of pins, a different configuration can be given to the ruff each time it is laundered’” (32). This allowed the ruffs to find a place in a myriad number of different outfits, serving to shape the visible body definitively. Karen Newman notes in her study “Sartorial Economies and Suitable Style: Woodstock and Shakespeare’s Richard II” that, by contrast, the poor of this period wore “typically coarsely cut, shapeless, sometimes loosely belted or buttoned garments with an open knee length shirt and loose fitting pants for men, skirts for women, that produced an undifferentiated body, a body whose shape could barely be discerned” (p 20).

Beyond status, Vincent’s study of elite clothing reaches significant conclusions on the reflection of the internal through external displays of apparel, noting that in “full breeches” and “corseted bodices” “this distension and constriction meant something for the wearer, and influenced not only physical behaviors, but also such intangibles as perception of beauty, grace, and health” (29). The relationship of external appearance to subject in women was enhanced to
such a degree that the women felt their clothes “enhanced their physical well being and protected against ill health and misfortune” (47).

At the same time, a counter-current in public opinion criticized many of these views. One of the more extreme critics was the puritanical Phillip Stubbes, who notarized a long list of what he saw as essentially unholy offenses in clothing. In his “Anatomy of Abuses” of 1583, Stubbes saw a crisis in the abuse of clothing by gentlemen that would eventually result in the loss of land, and, as land was one of the main distinctions of status, the gentlemen’s status. He connects outward style to internal status. At one point, Stubbes directs his attention to the “monstrous kind of attire” he saw men wearing:

There is no amendement in any thing that I can see, neither in one thing nor in other, but every day worser and worser, for they not only continue their great ruffes still, but also use them bigger than euer they did. And whereas before they were too bad, and now they are past al ltheme & honestie, yea most abhominable and detestable, and such as the diuell himselfe would be ashamed to weare the like. And if it be true, as I heare say, they haue their starching houses made of purpose, to that vse and end only, the better to Houses to trimme and dresse their ruffes to please the diuels eies withall.

(35).

This “crisis of subject” led to a critical problem in assessment. Under an inward-outward dualism, an individual’s status could be easily determined by a quick survey of that person’s actions and clothes. Rather than seeing the growing trend of deceptive clothing as proof of the separation of private from public, and nature from appearance, such acts were seen as degenerative aberrations to be remedied. This was a crisis among the newly landed men as well,
who felt—because they could not claim actual pedigree or royal relations, though many did end up forging fictional relations—a need for some outward index of their position. Among the gentlemen, this was also a problem; because “a gentleman by his very nature pursued no profession or occupation with an agreed system of advancement, social prestige was the sole outlet into which his competitive instincts could be channelled” (Stone 38). The years between 1570-1590 accordingly saw the greatest increase in grants of arms to accommodate the new gentlemen and other gentry with visible proof of their new status during the period from 1558-1641 (Stone 39).

The language of Elizabeth’s proclamations directs itself toward this problem and attempts to accurately merge status once again with clothing in a comprehensive manner. The language of the clothing proclamations is encyclopedic in its regard for proper dress but not always clear, due in no small part to the way the restrictions were presented.

A look at the sum total of Elizabeth’s clothing proclamations in Humphrey Dyson’s printing of her proclamations post-reign, reveals that the majority of time new proclamations were written by tacking new documentation onto an existing statement from an earlier reign. As a result, most of Elizabeth’s clothing proclamations were in part presented as a chart listing exceptions to the rule for each stratum of gentry, and in part directions in prose, as seen in the chart half of proclamation 186 pictured on the following page. Exceptions were by no means necessarily gathered in one place. The section of 186 from Mary’s reign adds additional restrictions to the son or daughter of a knight well below the initial restrictions for knights. In order to understand what a subject could or could not wear, said individual could not easily scan and locate his or her section, but would have to carefully read
The brief content of certain Acts of Parliament, agast thyn sbinate use of Apparell.

Cloth of Gold, Scarlet, or Cinnele.
Wollen Cloth made out of the Remaine.

Nure.

Furres.

Worke in Scarlet, or better.

Furres of Leather.

Furre of Stuffe.

Curtaine, otherwise than in makers cloths.

Hatte, Bonet, Nightcap, Capell, Headberde, for use in spurre letters.

C The same be the briefe contents but of certaine parties of the laws where re-maing in force, to the observation whereof, his Maiestie commanded to indue his subjects by this statute memorand, and yet nevertheless without that all of sowe cities, shalbe noe. The rest of the same laws, let it theys be bound to continue these spurre letters, they may sell the payne of the rest.

C There be certaine other exceptions in the statute: As for such as base licence by the interne of Abate, as such as shall furne in any bulles, or shall furne in warre, or shall base apparell gotten them to be borne by any of the shalbe, and such reste. All which are well to be considered by them that will use any privilege therin, and that at their perill.

C And where there is mention made of banes of purdy warmes and goades, the be apperit that to be made by the execution of this last statute, so as any may be excused by exempt of his truelobe or subsistence, to offend, it is as mere that be appurtenance to the prince in that statute for that banis, as if in defence to break any good law, whereof her Maiestie grace to all men admonition.

Ann. M. D. LIX.  
Maj. Wiltia.
over every detail, looking for which of several exceptions his rank fell into. Restated as prose, the directions for non-purple velvet in proclamation 186 reads,

None may wear...hat, bonnet, girdle, scabbards of swords, daggers, etc.; shoes and pantofles [overshoes] of [non-purple] velvet: except the degrees and persons above names [King, Queen, King’s mother, brethren and sisters of the King/Queen, uncles and aunts of the King/Queen, Dukes, Marquises, Earls, and their children, Order of the Garter, Viscounts, Barons, members of the Privy council, and the Queen’s personal attendants] and the son and heir apparent of a knight.

The layout and wording of the proclamations echoes the Elizabethan preoccupation with order in its hierarchical structure. Clauses in the later proclamations typically end with some derivation of the phrase “except for those above,” detailing first those restrictions that apply to everyone, then including a special section on the apparel of women and wives. If these restrictions were ever followed to the letter, it might have indeed been possible, as Petruchio denies doing in 3.2.119 of _Shrew_, to “marry unto […] clothes” as a substitute for marrying unto one’s status identity.

Returning briefly to _Shrew_, Petruchio’s wedding outfit is of particular relevance to the language of these proclamations. In three of Elizabeth’s proclamations, she directed her commands to those of the “meaner sort,” referring to those of the lower social class, such as servants, but including beggars and vagrants (Vincent 131). By appearing in rags, Petruchio likens himself to the appearance of such a vagrant person. However, as Vincent further notes, these proclamations spend very little time on the clothing of the appellant “meaner sort,” but instead are chiefly concerned with restricting certain kinds of apparel to those of the upper class...
What is presented is a subversive address of upper class clothing that recasts aberrant nobility as vagrants. In directing the proclamations towards servants and other “mean” individuals, but presenting specifics to the upper classes on clothing, the Elizabethan proclamations lower public status solely because of appearance. Semiotically, this is a shift in the status portrayed by social identity, whereupon inappropriately “high” clothing shares a correspondence with lower status, repairing the inward-outward dualism of status identity. Sociologically, this sort of situation can be likened to an awakening, a growth in awareness, where the public becomes privy to the truth of the subject’s actual nature—of the lower sort—that had been concealed previous to this point by reasonable clothing. Any offenses against apparel proclamations therefore confirm and recognize the necessity of the inward-outward dualism for status, rather than presenting it as a flawed system. In dressing in rags, Petruchio undermines the simple confidence of this system by demonstrating that his apparel incorporates no outward manifestation of identity.

Of similar interest is the close relation of clothing to appearance. In a printed statute for May 7th, 1562, a large section on the appearance of horses is found, illustrating just how close this connection was, as well as illustrating the Elizabethan reliance on visual appearance to account for status. The statute claims to address “the decay and disfurniture of all kinds of horses for service within the realm,” (par. 2) but links the “decay” of horses to spending too much money on clothing, disallowing subjects to have horses in poor condition “by reason of their wives’ apparel mentioned in the statute” (par. 6). The horse restrictions also reveal a third more subtle use of the apparel acts as an economic incentive to keep business within England. The statute mentions “the decay of horses within the realm, which partly riseth by stealing and carrying numbers of horses […] out of the realm” (par. 3). The underlying assumption is that
improper social-climbing individuals can be identified, not only by their extravagant and “monstrous abuse of apparel,” (par. 2) but by the poor condition or foreign breeding of their horses, and therefore a situation easily exposed and punished.

To ensure that clothing and status continued to reinforce one another, Elizabeth tried to put some teeth into the enforcement of the law by appointing officers in a Westminster proclamation for May 6th, 1562 for “the execution of the Statutes of Apparel, and for the reformation of the outrageous excess thereof grown of late time within the realm,” (par. 1) to apprehend and remove violators who enter “her Highness’ Chamber,” “her Majesty’s Household,” and, fourteen days following the ordinance, “the Court” (par. 4). Punishment would then be meted out according to “how long and how often they have…worn the said apparel, who is their master, and how long they have served him, and how long it hath been he hath known them to wear any part of the same apparel” (par. 3). It is useful to note here that while the primary targets of the ordinance are not necessarily servants, there is a deliberate association of apparel abuse with the servant-class. However, the punishment itself centers on the offender’s relationship to his/her master. Because of this, the master becomes the central focus in assigning blame. The above ordinance language is subtly inquisitorial, hinting through “how long it hath been he hath known them to wear” that the master shares the blame for those beneath him.

In assigning punishment based upon the master, this law creates a status reversal whereby the aberrant actions of lower society members are reflected in the upper classes. Implicit in this concept is the responsibility of the upper classes as caretakers for those beneath them, while the “servants” work to provide for those above. Many of the actions of the lower class could be justified as stemming from the inattention of these said “caretakers,” and such actions were therefore acceptable. Poor individuals that were too old, sick, or young to work were considered
the “impotent” and “deserving” poor; individuals who were able to work, but could not were the “able,” as well as “deserving” poor; and those individuals who possessed the ability to work, but chose not to, such as beggars, were the “idle” poor. Those in this last category are an exception to the caretaker relationship, neither serving individuals above them, nor benefiting society. Linking an individual metaphorically or literally to the vagrant, “idle” poor in social circles, such as is done with clothing in the above 1562 proclamation, portrays the individual socially as a criminal.

One of the lowest of the vagrant class is the beggar, the same position that Petruchio deliberately likens himself to by dressing in rags. The Poor Act of 1572 describes the punishment for a beggar (and other rogues) as initially isolating the individual from the public by imprisonment, but once he is proved guilty, punishment becomes noticeably public:

Committed to the common gaol, there to remain without bail or mainprise until the next Sessions of the Peace…if such person or persons be duly convicted of his or her roguish or vagabond trade of life…that then immediately he or she shall be adjudged to be grievously whipped and burnt through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron.

(par. 2)

The public nature of these two punishments is significant, echoing the need for a visual appearance that matches the criminal’s nature. While a whipping was not necessarily public, the mark on the right ear of the perpetrator is an indelible outward icon so that the public might recognize the nature of the individual in question immediately.

Idle poor included those
Persons going about using physiognomy, palmistry, or other abused sciences, whereby they bear the people in hand they can tell their destinies, deaths, fortunes, and such other like fantastical imaginations […] and can give no reckoning how he or she does lawfully get his or her living; and all fencers, bear-wards, common players in interludes, and minstrels not belonging to any baron of this realm, all jugglers, peddlers, tinkers, and petty chapmen.. all common labourers refusing to work on such reasonable wages as is commonly given in such parts, and all scholars of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge that go about begging […] all shipmen pretending losses by sea, and all persons delivered out of gaols that go by for their fees or do travel to their countries or friends.

(par. 5)

This language also brings to light the second underlying theme of class in regard to beggars. Such individuals are not only defined by their inability to “lawfully get [their] living,” but also by their relation to status. These individuals were “arrested not because of their actions, but because of their position in society” (Vincent 154). A minstrel is only classified as a “rogue and vagabond” if he does not “belong to a baron of this realm,” it being implied that a minstrel employed to a noble of higher status, be she/he a Duke, Marquiss, Earl, or Viscount, would similarly be immune. The aristocracy itself was completely immune to this sort of punishment altogether. Stone writes that “they [the aristocracy] could not be arrested except for treason, felony, or breach of the peace. They could not be outlawed, they were free of various writs designed to force men to appear in court, [and] they were not obliged to testify under oath” (29).

Proclamation 186 uses similar language in its first half (prose portion), directing its commands to those under the gentry:
Rogues, Vagabonds, and all Idle persons [beggars] and Masterlesse men, having not wherewith to liue in no liuing by any lawfull Labour or Occupation, and being her naturall borne Subjects, that they and euery of them doe within two dayes next after the publishing of this Proclamation, depart and avoide themselues from the said Cities of London and Westminster…and from thence to repaire to the Countreys and places where they were borne, there to tarrie and abide in some lawfull worke and exercise, as they ought to doe, upon the paines and penalties limited and expressed in the Lawes and Statutes prouided against such offenders.

(Dyson)

Here the notable language is the association of beggars with “masterlesse men,” i.e. idle servants, students, or some of the minstrels described above. Being “masterlesse,” these individuals were outside the society of subordination conceived in the Elizabethan mindset.

With the label of “masterlesse,” these lower individuals outside the acceptable mores completed the system. Because of their social displacement, the “meaner sort” therefore came to function as scapegoats for the elite. Lower class individuals were demonized by the upper, and presented a justification for those above them to consider the upper class as more socially acceptable. However, this system had a distinct quandary. While a member of the elite might have justified her or himself by this separation from the “meaner” sort, she or he could not do so without first acknowledging that both belonged to the same social system. In short, the elite created an anxiety of the subject by trying to exclude the same class (lower) that the elite needed to justify their existence as a superior sort.

Because of their strong correlation with income, appearance and clothing became vital to the distinction between the upper and lower classes. The acts of apparel and the Poor Act of 1572
were a product of this anxiety. Intending to remedy the situation by reuniting appearance and clothing to the subject, the proclamations instead increased their society’s reliance on clothing and appearance as the primary means of subject identification, and the basis for the resulting anxiety. Clothing and appearance were thereby so closely linked and relied upon that any invocation of clothing or apparel became an evocation of the Elizabethan social status anxiety. When Petruchio enters in rags, he breaks the social parameters for upper class appearance and evokes the recognition of his clothing as deviant. In doing so, the assembled cannot help but protest his appearance, because it renders their method of subject identification uncertain, especially if he is also considered a peer among those assembled.

Petruchio’s rags demonstrate the degree to which the Elizabethan status and subject anxieties were felt, stepping beyond the real into the world of drama. In Shrew, there are several instances where clothing becomes the center of attention because of its ability to conflate status with appearance. The Lord fools Sly into thinking himself a noble by changing his clothes and surroundings while Sly sleeps (Ind 1.46-76). Lucentio and his servant Tranio switch clothing and thereby switch status (1.1.19-215). Bianca threatens to “pull off” her “raiment to my petticoat” (2.1.4-5). Petruchio rides in in rags (3.2.42-70). One of the final scenes has Katharina cast off her cap at Petruchio’s command (5.2.135-136). In each of these situations, more occurs than merely changing clothing or taking clothes off or putting them on. In removing clothing, the characters remove their outward, and therefore social, status indicator, creating a null situation where the character paradoxically has abandoned what should be an unalterable condition. On the stage, the removal of clothing has the additional dimension of identification, serving as a surface indicator of actual inward identity.
Clothing was an important factor on the Renaissance stage, serving as the primary visual index to the personae taken on by the players. A beggar or fool can be indicated by rags, a lord by a fur mantle, a king by a crown, and a woman by a dress. By utilizing dramatic irony and clever associations between other characters, such costumes can be used as a wry commentary on the nature of the subject, revealing the beggar beneath the mantle, or the lord beneath the rags.

This also meant that in many cases, players would be “acting up” above their class. There were exceptions. Shakespeare himself was a member of the gentry, and is recorded as performing in Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in his Humour*. This, however, was not the norm. Often, players would to portray kings and queens—as is often done in Shakespeare’s plays—requiring the players to “act up” above their social class (Harris 365). The clothes used to do so were of great importance. If the production was to provide a comfortable degree of verisimilitude for the audience, it would need to use clothing with which the audience was familiar. The best place to obtain this clothing was from the greater persons who wore such clothing.

Amanda Bailey notes that the majority of costumes were “aristocratic cast-offs” (252). Players—and in some masques, the audience—portrayed the elite through these clothing cast-offs. In doing so, the players confirmed the hierarchical relationship between status and apparel, rather than constructing a new method of identification. In the later chapters, I offer the hypothesis that the deliberate juxtaposition of lower with upper on the representative stage can serve as a confirmation of social distinctions and nature. As a secondary world, the stage provides a semantic space where real issues pertaining to subject and status anxieties can be tested and resolved.

In approaching how status and subject interact on the stage, *The Elizabethan World Picture* provides a helpful look at status as a presence in Renaissance drama, even if not as grand
or overarching as Tillyard envisions in his book. The argument Tillyard presents is that the Renaissance mind primarily formed itself around the belief that all existence was hierarchically structured and ordained by God, creating a perfect cosmic order, and that this ideal was then reflected in drama of the period. Every object in the universe had its own specific location that governed its relations and responsibilities with the other objects in the universe, which included subordination. An elephant was above a mouse, an angel above Man, and husband over wife. Essential to this world view is the understanding that subordination did not indicate oppression as we often believe today. Instead, each object had its own duties and location because at such a spot, said object functioned better than anyone, or anything else. Husband governed wife because he was better suited to governing and business, while the wife managed the home and children because she was more suited for that. Within each hierarchical section the divisions continued, so that angels were made up of seven ranks and so on, until the smallest object in creation was included in the cosmic order. Synecdochically speaking, this object was then representative of greater and greater circumscribing entities and formations until the system finally arrived at God.

In view of Tillyard’s study, it would not be untoward to say that the concept of a status order in drama was a continual consideration, mirroring the real life anxiety of its audience. In this secondary world, a status anxiety could be discussed and played out without destabilizing social opinion, in serving as a creative outlet easily dismissed as fantasy. Associations with lower class individuals or lower class characteristics could be dismissed as whimsy. Shakespeare provides several examples of the above in his plays. Iago belittles Othello’s reputation by picturing him and Desdemona as making “the beast with two backs,” playing off the sexual connotation of the lower class savage image (Othello 1.1.127). Queen Titania’s infatuation with the vulgar Bottom (as an ass) in A Midsummer Night’s Dream is presented as whimsical humor.
Returning to *The Taming of the Shrew*, we find Katharina labeled as a shrew, with both her and her husband on occasion ridiculed because of this label.

The character of a shrew is anything but a noble distinction. It comes from the common folk tradition. When Petruchio refuses Katharina her cap, he does so by alluding to her shrewish condition as that of the lower class, saying, “When you are gentle…And not till then.” He once again connects clothes to status and, in doing so, belittles her lower class behaviors (4.3.71-72).

Unlike studies of literary influence, those of the lower class folk tradition have little or no written record to rely on; they depend heavily on oral tradition as stories are passed down from one person to another. Despite this, many studies have now demonstrated how widely integrated folk stories have been in literature and drama, where the same motifs occur time and time again. *Shrew* is no exception and possesses at least two overt folk motifs and a possible third: the Shrew motif which the play is titled after, as well as the King Thrushbeard motif, and to a lesser degree, the story of Griselda.

The Shrew motif is well-known to Shakespeare scholars because it comprises the main believed source of *Shrew*, the ballad “A Merry Ieste of a shrewde and curst Wyfe.” In the ballad, the husband tames his shrewish wife through the clever device of a horse-skin. Socially, it was and is improper for a man to beat his wife. To solve the problem, he clothes his wife in the horse-skin and then beats it, though of course she remains inside and still suffers the beating (par. 142). Many elements of this story place it in the folk tradition of the lower classes, specifically the use of a clever insight as the dénouement, the treatment of plowmen as peers, and the brutishness of the taming method. However, as a source, the ballad seems questionable. There are few one-to-one correspondences; Petruchio does not beat Kate in any form, and the physical act of taming is
often pushed into the background in favor of the relationship between the two. Instead, I think, at best, the ballad and Shrew arose from the same tradition, two branches on the same trunk.

A slightly more useful folk motif in Taming can be found in King Thrushbeard (Early Comedies 213). This story also begins with a shrewish woman, this time a king’s daughter. She repeatedly insults and rejects her suitors, one of which she calls “King Thrushbeard,” seemingly out of pure cruelty, until finally her father declares in rage that she shall instead marry the very first beggar who shows up at the castle door. Such a beggar arrives and takes the princess as his wife. On the walk to their house they pass through a beautiful forest, which the beggar assures his wife would have been hers if she had married Thrushbeard. They arrive at a hovel, and the beggar makes his wife live there doing all manner of lower-class activities such as basket-weaving, sewing, and selling pots in the market, and eventually becoming a kitchen maid. This continues until one day she is dragged into court, and her food scraps scatter on the floor. The princess collapses in grief until it is revealed that her husband is indeed “King Thrushbeard,” and now that she has become humbled, she again lives in royalty as a loving wife (“King Thrushbeard”).

The King Thrushbeard motif, like the Shrew motif, uses public humiliation as a form of grotesque punishment for the wives, effectively lowering their status as human beings through the attachment of the shrewish label, the wife being metamorphized into a horse in the shrew motif, and the princess becoming lower-class in the King Thrushbeard motif. This humiliation then becomes a crucible for improvement as the wives, because of the torture, are re-created as proper wives to assume their proper position in the domestic hierarchy.

This is true in the Griselda motif as well. Griselda, unlike the two above women, is not a shrew. Instead, she is lower-class, but beautiful. Her troubles occur as a test of her faithfulness,
as her husband claims her children have died, her home has been destroyed, her relatives slain in
a sequence of disasters akin to those suffered by the Biblical Job, until she is rewarded for her
faithfulness in becoming an acceptable wife. Unlike Job, many of Griselda’s troubles are
explicitly and publicly humiliating, such as being exhibited without clothing before her
husband’s friends. Viviana Comensoli notes that the underlying commentary to Griselda is that
“rather than allegorizing the afflicted soul’s progression towards virtue” as we might expect in
such didactic story, “Griselda’s trials assume a broader social and political significance” (49).
Griselda must prove she can overcome her lower-class and, by implication, potentially unfaithful
roots to become a proper lady.

In each of these tales, the clothing of lower class individuals serves an essential function,
identifying those dressed—or undressed in Griselda’s case—as belonging, however temporarily,
to a lower status. By being clothed as a horse, the shrew’s status is lowered to that of an animal,
presenting, it should be noted, an ideology that links horse to clothing as later seen in
Elizabethan proclamations. The princess in Thrushbeard is forced to dress and serve as a
commoner. Griselda is paraded naked before her husband’s friends, implying that only when she
is able to reject her common roots can she be recognized as a lady and able to wear gentle
clothes. As an iconic representation of the lower class, the juxtaposition of folk behaviors with
upper class personae in Renaissance drama serves as a commonplace dramatic index of class.
When Titania woos Bottom in MND, it would have been clear to Shakespeare’s audience that
her actions are absurd not only because she is wooing an ass, but because she, a lady, is wooing a
lower class mechanical.

In reviewing the folk tradition, I find it hard to ignore the frequent references to class and
hierarchy found in these stories, let alone the similarity between Elizabethan excessive apparel
and the “excessive” clothing of the shrew’s horse-skin, the princess and Thrushbeard as beggars, and Griselda’s nakedness. The diverse levels and methods by which status and hierarchy permeate Elizabethan theater and day-to-day practice display just how powerful and far-reaching the idea was, not only creating social anxieties about status and subject, but also molding the uses of dress and stage drama to a point where the preoccupation with status became a veritable commonplace ideology.

The use of clothing in The Taming of the Shrew cannot help but evoke these ever-present anxieties in its use of clothing as a visual index for status. In order to interpret clothing in this manner, the audience must rely upon social perceptions of apparel and status. These perceptions are governed by the proclamations and folk traditions that regulate clothing because of an assumed relationship between social class and clothing. In doing so, the audience only reinforces this notion, and reciprocates it by accepting and expecting that clothing and status must therefore be linked, thereby going a full circle in creating a self-fulfilling system. Curiously, this begs the question on how this cycle might be broken, and whether any recognition of such a cycle only reinforces the initial assumption that status can best be evaluated through the public presentation of clothing. As a social system, the status-clothing ideology seems fairly stable and even productive if we assume an ideal condition where status and clothing continue to be validated ad infinitum as referencing one another. In this incarnation, the elite would continue to be the elite without threat. After all, this is an anxiety of the elite worried about their status as elite, and not of those beneath them clambering for their positions. But, when the system becomes skewed by ambitious new men and crafty apparel switching players that break the system to promote their own ambitions, it becomes increasingly uncertain and only serves to increase the initial anxiety that formed the cycle in the first place. This begs a solution whereby the elite could relieve their
anxiety without losing their status in a world that is becoming increasingly populated by new men.

Taming Katharina and obtaining Bianca becomes more a question of status than of taming. The index for success is as much clothing as it is behavior. It is clothing that signifies the union between status and appearance in the play. Any change shown in the use of clothes is a change of status. In light of this, Petruchio’s mocking phrase that Katharina is married “To me […] not unto my clothes” takes on new meaning (3.2.119). To marry unto clothes, especially his clothes in the scene, is to understand that here, perhaps more than anywhere else, it is of great importance to take note that there is indeed a “mean meaning” about status in the shrewish appellation and in Petruchio’s willingness to marry despite it (5.2.34).
CONSTRUCTING AMBIGUITY

A fixation on status permeated Elizabethan society. This fixation focused upon clothing due to its ability to “define not only who one is, but how one is: that is, how one fits into a culture’s moral and religious value system” (Jaster 93). Clothing was not only emblematic of status, it became representative of the perceived “crisis” resulting from the gratuitous displays of costly materials, lengths of fabric, colors, and ornate designs. It is not surprising, then, that the language of status in The Taming of the Shrew is closely tied to that of clothing and the reactions to these clothes, from the vagrant Sly to the noble Kate.

The relation between clothing and the status it confers are explicitly referenced throughout Shrew, transcending Shakespeare’s well-known use of clothing as a convenient device of transposition, mixing gender and/or position. This type of basic transposition is still present in the play as Lucentio and Tranio switch from master and servant to servant and master, and the Pedant hired by Tranio dupes Vincentio by dressing like the father. Such a transposition of gender and position, while humorous, only scratches the surface of a deeper semiotic current that runs throughout the play. Clothing in Shrew is also used to provide a secondary transposition, controlling social presentation between characters within the drama, moving vagrant to noble and noble to vagrant. Petruchio travels to his wedding dressed as a beggar; Sly the tinker, a beggar, is dressed as a lord. This kind of disguise does not appear at first any deeper than appearance: we are always aware that it is Sly, and not a lord underneath his robes. But as the presentation develops, confidence in characters’ identities becomes less certain, as Petruchio’s choice of apparel for himself and his wife, for all his claims to nobility, seems to betray his vulgar estate, and Kate’s shrewishness seems out of place in the context of her gentle demands for cap and dress. The clothing demands become less literal and more figurative as the
play progresses, creating an open cognitive space of ambiguity. In the next chapter I will show how this ambiguity provides a clever battlefield to discuss the apparent contradiction in the idea of a vagrant, and thus conceptually lower-born, nobility.

The event of transposing position—master for servant and vice-versa—is an ideal entry into the use of clothing to promote ambiguity. The practice is common in Shakespeare, and likely was common in the theatre tradition of the period. While the transposition of clothing and status provides an ambiguous situation on paper and in discussion of the events in abstract terms, it may not be so to the performance audience. Rather, such situations are always apparent to us as spectators. By way of dramatic irony the audience always knows that it is indeed the Lord of the induction who is master; Lucentio who is master to Tranio; and Vincentio who is Lucentio’s father, rather than the pedant—despite each of the three men (the Lord, Lucentio, and Vincentio) being temporarily assigned to a lower position. The transposition is ambiguous not in that it provides for confusion concerning the ambivalence of the two roles, but instead in regard to how status is used as an index by the other characters in Shrew. Examining the transpositions described above provides an opportunity to see that the change is a change in the perception of status, rather than any actual transformation of nature. The engine of this perception is the clothing that the men wear.

Perhaps the most vital comment on clothing comes not from Petruchio and Katharina, but from the Lord and Sly. Their performance during the induction sets the foundation for much of the clothing dialogue that follows. However, The Lord and Sly are often ignored in productions of The Taming of the Shrew, which will often dispense with the induction scenes to the play entirely. While The Taming of the Shrew possesses an induction, it does not possess a closing action. The play begins with the Lord encountering Sly, while the actions that make up what we
typically refer to as *The Taming of the Shrew* are in fact a play-within-a-play that occurs after Sly calls to “let the world slip” (Ind. 2.139). Yet, the characters of Sly and the Lord are never returned to at the end of the production, leaving a feeling of incompleteness that Karl Wentersdorf notes is “artistically less satisfactory” (215). However, these two characters, despite their absence at the conclusion, also present their own dialogue on the relation of clothing to transformation; they provide as well not only a point-counterpoint to the situation of Petruchio and Katharina, but also the beginning of a dialogue on the importance of clothing and appearance to status that anticipates and reinforces the taming action. Upon returning from hunting, the Lord finds Sly, a tinker and vagrant, lying drunk in the street (Ind 1.35). Sly is dubbed a “monstrous beast,” who lies “like a swine,” presumably in the mud of the road, making his clothes caked and soaked with mud. (Ind 1.35). The Lord then conceives an elaborate joke, and has his men lift Sly and bring him home. Thereupon the still sleeping Sly is dressed and surrounded by finery. A page is assigned to play Sly’s wife, while the Lord himself becomes a servant. Sly’s “servants” then encourage him to hunt, hawk and ride (Ind 2.41-45), images later found in Petruchio’s and Katharina’s courtship. Most importantly, the Lord and Sly exchange social ranks, the Lord descending to the role of servant, while Sly is raised to that of a Lord. When he wakes, Sly finds himself a fantasy lord and becomes convinced of the illusion.

On Shakespeare’s stage, the donning of apparel represents the reality of transformation. Put simply, changing clothing is among the easiest ways to signify to the audience that the character changing needs to be seen for a time as someone else. In the main body of the play, the use of clothing to indicate a transformation is even more prominent than in the induction. Tranio, despite being a lower class individual, nevertheless consistently acts appropriately in his guise as Lucentio.
Sly, unlike Tranio, bucks this time-honored strategy in the theatre. When Sly is a Lord, we find that although he begins to believe himself a lord, his actions do not change. As a social signifier, clothing fails to distinguish Sly as a lord. He continues to display his low-born roots. As a lord, Sly shows himself as a vulgar drunkard and demonstrates that he has no idea of proper lordly decorum. When he first shows signs of being convinced that he is, in fact, a lord, Sly asks for his wife and a pot “o’ the smallest ale,” the drink with which he is most familiar, though he was offered the much finer sack when he first awoke (Ind. 2.75, 2.2). Upon seeing his “wife,” Sly expresses confusion about how to address the “woman.” When informed that his wife should be addressed as “Madam,” Sly then calls her “Madam wife,” addressing her as if she were the head of a brothel (Ind. 2.113). Despite his seeming transformation, Sly’s actual nature has not been transformed and calls into question the validity of determining status by appearance alone.

The Lord’s trick is based on the following assumption: a man wearing fine clothes is commonly assumed to be of gentle birth, and worthy of the clothes he wears. That the Lord plays off this assumption and dresses a beggar in fine clothes to challenge the association does nothing to destroy its general application. Without the assumption that clothes are an index to status, questioning that association means nothing. Thus, even though the Lord tries to visibly demonstrate that fine robes cannot produce fine breeding, he must also on some level confirm the validity of the initial association, keeping it in play on a semiotic level. The Lord’s trick does not so much defy and contradict the notion that clothes can be an index for status, as it instead introduces uncertainty into the validity of clothing being representative of actual status.

Given the discrepancy between Sly’s use of the clothing transformation and the theatre tradition of clothing as transformation, the inclusion of the induction is puzzling because it calls the practices of the theatre itself into question and obscures the power of clothing transposition to
switch and create identities. However, given the amount of clothing transposition that follows this encounter, it is unlikely Shakespeare intended to disrupt this time-honored use. Instead, the ploy to dress Sly presents and frames the open-ended uncertainty of identity in the accompanying play-within-a-play.

As the play-within-a-play commences, a second transposition of clothing and status soon takes place when Lucentio and Tranio conspire to find a way for Lucentio to court Bianca while slipping past the watchful eye of Baptista. This transposition, unlike that of Sly, is successful. Tranio, in his guise as master, consistently acts the part and does not betray his presumed subject. The outer transformation is authentic to other characters in the play, particularly Baptista. It is also at odds with the earlier unconvincing transposition of Sly and the Lord and thus fails to confirm; though it does not completely destroy, the universality of transposition as an interpretative device.

When Lucentio and Tranio are first introduced, Shakespeare gives no stage direction on how the two should be dressed, nor does their conversation give any clear clues as to clothing. The status of the two men is instead first identified, then linked to their persons by the words the men speak. Tranio is quickly identified as “My trusty servant well approved in all” by Lucentio, whereas Tranio responds in kind with a similarly unambiguous ”gentle master mine” (1.1.7, 1.1.25). Undoubtedly, the social positions of the two men can be identified visually as well as in their clothing. As a servant, Tranio would walk behind his master. It is also likely that Shakespeare’s audience saw Tranio as not just a man walking behind another, but dressed as a servant.

Tranio’s servant livery helps the actor mimetically bridge the gap between what is real in society and what is real in the secondary world of the stage, and thus—like the other clothing in
the play—functions to visually present his role as a servant to the audience. The exact nature of this presentation was not static, and varied with actual practice in society, as well as each servant’s position and household. This is due in a large part to the idea of livery as an essential part of the servant’s income (Jones and Stallybrass 18).

A servant’s clothing was more a result of his or her master’s personal preference for outfitting his household and did not necessarily include emblems or levels of finery. Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass note that during this period, social identification through livery was a rapidly declining phenomenon (18). At best, a servant might be identified from a lack of finery, i.e. a lack of participation in the realm of social anxieties, than by the inclusion of a type of clothes. Any participation of the servant in the social anxieties of the elite was for the most part vicarious, as the responsibility for servant clothing rested in the person of the master, rather than that of the servant. A printed Westminster statute of May 7, 1562 punishes masters for servants dressed to “outrageous excess,” but does not specify what clothing would constitute the captioned “outrageous excess.” In seeing Tranio, the audience can determine his role not only by his position relative to Lucentio, but by unimpressive, plain apparel, representing his tacit removal from the social elite.

Like his servant Tranio, Lucentio can be identified by his clothing. As he enters the stage at the beginning of Act 1, he identifies himself as “Vincentio’s son [who has come] to deck his fortune with his virtuous deeds” (1.1.14-16). In short, Lucentio is a man of means with enough income available to dress himself in finer clothing, at the very least a “colored hat and cloak” (1.1.213). His family is not originally noble, but become rich from “my father first,/ A merchant of great traffic through the world” (1.1.11-12).
In this way, the two men are linked to their status and position by clothing, and conversely, the clothing is tagged to designate one as servant, and the other as master. When the two conceive of a plan to switch roles, gaining the confidence of Baptista and thereby access to Bianca, this marking is no longer reliable. This is noted by the two men as they plot. Lucentio says,

We have not yet been seen in any house,
Nor can we be distinguished by our faces
For man or master. Then it follows thus:
Thou shalt be my master, Tranio, in my stead,
Keep house, and port, and servants, as I should.
I will some other be, some Florentine,
Some Neopolitan, or meaner man of Pisa.

(1.1.200-206).
The men then switch clothing, exchanging Lucentio’s “colored hat and cloak” for the Pedant’s clothes (1.1.208). Lucentio suddenly finds himself, not as a personal servant, as the clothing switch might portend, but as a schoolmaster.

In switching clothes, Lucentio and Tranio do more than merely switch their outfits and apparent roles. They do not, it should be noted, change their status, whatever their actions in front of the other characters during the course of the play. By Act 3, Tranio is still in truth in the servant’s role, acting for “my master’s sake, Lucentio” (3.2.150).

Semiotically, the initial correlation between signifier (clothing) and signified (status) is destabilized by the clothing switch, and grows altogether more unreliable as an index of status. As the two men exchange their clothes, Lucentio’s status as a gentleman slides downward into
his role as a “meaner man” (1.1.211). However, his internal nature is unchanged. He is still the
same person he was before and desires to woo and marry Bianca as an appropriate wife for his
status. But, by doing this, Lucentio’s place in society has declined in accordance with his
clothing, if only temporarily.

Thus, the situation is that Lucentio is and is not a noble in public, just as his servant is
and is not the master in public, a seeming contradiction that undermines the otherwise clear-cut
inward-outward connection between appearance and status. To the other characters in the play,
and to the audience, the clothing can no longer be relied upon as a satisfactory index to character
identification, encouraging the characters and audience to turn towards other means of
identification. However, this is a problem, because social perception and clothing identification
continue to function as a means of social recognition, creating a state of confusion at the
ambiguity surrounding the transpositions. Thus, those undergoing the transposition try to subvert
the visual identification of peers through clothing, but paradoxically, the ambiguity they create
from this subversion cannot function unless the social system of visual identification continues to
exist.

The underlying assumption and end result of this mismatching of clothing and status is
that the subject of the person undergoing the transposition is still somehow independent of
whatever clothing restrictions are adopted and paid lip-service. Tranio, we know is still the
person known as Tranio not matter how much he looks like and is referred to as a gentlemen, just
as we know that Sly is still the collection of characteristics we have come to name as the beggar
“Sly,” no matter that he thinks himself a lord. Status, be it Sly’s status as a vagrant or Lucentio’s
as a gentleman, seems to be hinted at as an entity immune from social presentations and
transformations.
This paradox is the central issue in the final transposition. In the case of the Pedant and Vincentio, the transposition is unlike the previous two between the Lord and Sly, and Lucentio and Tranio, in that this transposition is performed in ignorance of the second party. Of the three transpositions, it is the most complex. Tranio, in need of a father to satisfy Baptista’s demand for proof of parental income and approval, must therefore supply one to substitute for the absent Vincentio. However, unlike the previous cases, this transposition of two men involves four characters: Tranio, Lucentio, Vincentio, and the Pedant. Because the real Vincentio cannot be assumed to accept—as he is not present, nor aware of the switch—whatever claims are made towards his wealth, the trick relies on the apparent authenticity of the previous transposition between Tranio and Lucentio.

The situation is thus: Tranio (as Lucentio) has argued down Gremio by claiming that his (Lucentio’s) father has

Three great argosies, besides two galliases
And twelve tight galleys. These I will assure her,
And twice as much, whate’er thou off’rest next.

(2.1.376-378)

Faced with this veritable fleet of ships, Gremio admits, “I have offered all. I have no more” (2.1.379), and backs down. However, in bragging so proudly of his father, Tranio has overplayed his hand. Perhaps suspecting treachery, Baptista slyly directs Tranio to “let your father make her assurance,” leaving Tranio with his unfortunate problem (2.1.385). Baptista has called his bluff, and now the

Supposed Lucentio

Must get a father, called supposed Vincentio—
And that’s a wonder. Fathers commonly
Do beget their children; but in this case of wooing,
A child shall get a sire, if I fail not of my cunning.

(2.1.405-409)

This speech in particular has much to say about the use of clothing, transposition, and ambiguity. Tranio’s language is specific as he calls himself the “supposed Lucentio,” calling attention to the discrepancy between the aspect he is presenting by his clothing and actions to the other characters within the play, and himself. He likewise is careful to note the discrepancy between the real Vincentio and whoever he will find to play the part. In doing so, Tranio does not draw attention to the recognizable personae of Lucentio and Tranio, or Vincentio and the yet to be assigned imposter, but to the ambiguous gap that exists between the two. The implication of this statement is that it is the ambiguity—the gap—that is most important, rather than the roles that the men of either set assume. In this situation, the reference of the signifier to the signified is so loose that “a child shall get a sire.”

Their need noted, Tranio and his fellow servant Biondello look for a man of fatherly disposition that they might cast in the role of Vincentio. Biondello enters in Act 4.2 with the results of this search, having identified a man on the street by his visual appearance as a possible solution to their troubles. The individual Tranio and Biondello discover turns out to be a pedant, dressed in “formal apparel.” Biondello describes him as

A marcantent, or a pedant,
I know not what, but formal in apparel,
In gait and countenance surely like a father.

(4.2.61-66)
This is somewhat of a coincidence, considering that a “pedant” is another name for a schoolmaster, the very same role that Lucentio had earlier assumed by lowering his class dress to that of his servant Tranio (1.1.205-208). Also, the Pedant admits that “in Pisa have I often been” (4.2.95), bringing to mind Lucentio’s earlier wish to disguise himself as a “meaner man” of his own city of Pisa (1.1.206). Deciding that the Pedant is therefore much “like to Sir Vincentio/ His name and credit shall you undertake” (4.2.107), Tranio ushers him quickly off-stage with the final words: “Go with me to clothe you as becomes you” (4.2.122).

That the pedant is “formal in apparel” is significant; it calls attention to the importance of clothes in Biondello’s identification. Had the man been dressed in rags or servant’s livery, it is likely Biondello would have passed him over completely. In these two forms of apparel—rags and servant livery—the class disqualifies the man. Rags would have indicated a beggar or vagrant of some form. As we have seen above in the case of Sly, a beggar would not be able to succeed in the role of a noble father. Moreover, a servant’s livery would have indicated foremost loyalties to another lord first, and thus an unwillingness or inability to participate in the transposition.

In this scene, Biondello not only locates a pedant from observing formal apparel, but relies upon the man’s clothing to make the primary identification. In this, Biondello is no different from Sly before him. Like Sly, Biondello places himself within a contradiction of meaning. The difficulty arising from Biondello’s effort is not that he locates the Pedant, but that he ignores the contradiction between his use of clothing as an index for class and the transposition he is about to help create that both relies upon and denies this earlier belief.

Like the previous two transpositions, the substitution of Pedant for Vincentio creates an ambiguous situation by rendering the clothing index unreliable, so unreliable that when the real
Vincentio does arrive with Petruchio, Kate, and Grumio, dressed presumably as himself and accompanied by his entourage as described in the stage directions, his identity and Petruchio’s claims to the contrary are ignored, overcome by the contradictory claims of the Pedant, Biondello, Gremio, and Tranio.

The whole situation, it should be noted, takes place after the “game is up” so to speak. Lucentio has already revealed his identity to Bianca—the stage directions direct Lucentio to appear undisguised with Bianca at the beginning of 5.1—but Baptista is still in the dark. Tranio, in continuing to act as Lucentio, is doing so only to fill time until Lucentio and Bianca are wed. The bride and groom hurry off, but Gremio stays to view the ensuing scene.

After various insults and claims of knavery from one side to the other, Tranio steps in as Lucentio to presumably end the chaos. He, of course, does not, but only exacerbates it, confronting Vincentio, his master: “What are you that offers to beat my servant?” (5.1.59). Vincentio, however, sees right through Tranio’s attempts to play the master, citing the discrepancy between clothing and man:

What am I sir? Nay, what are you, sir? O immortal gods! Oh, fine villain! A silken doublet, a velvet hose, a scarlet cloak, and a copintank hat! Oh, I am undone, I am undone! While I play the good husband at home, my son and servant spend all at the university.

(5.1.60-65)

The scene continues as the certainty of clothing as an index continues to fail. Gremio assures Baptista that “this is the right Vincentio” (5.1.94-95). Baptista is convinced by Tranio’s words that Vincentio is a lunatic and sends him to prison (5.1.100).
The results of this final transposition reveal just how much certainty has eroded. The comments of Vincentio and Gremio reveal not only the men’s inability to use clothing as an indicator, but in Vincentio’s case, his continued unwarranted reliance on clothing as an indicator. With Vincentio jailed as a vagrant, the transposition also comes full circle, as the one-to-one correlation of clothing with rank is not only rendered ambiguous, but eventually shifted to rest upon a new target, so that clothing which, for example, originally identified a noble, now identifies a servant. In this adaptation of the wheel-of-fortune, the servant Tranio wore clothes to become master; the noble Lucentio switches clothes twice—once to Tranio’s garments, and then to the Pedant’s—to become a schoolmaster; the schoolmaster wore clothes to become a noble father; the father, despite his clothes, becomes the lowly vagrant, lower even than a servant. None of the initial clothing schemes can now be relied upon to provide any certainty about a single rank or status; at best, clothing is an ambivalent indicator for two or more ranks of individuals. It has become ambiguous.

Vincentio suffers for this loss. He is unable to rely on other means of identification, falling back on clothes as he does with Tranio. As a reward for his obedience to what has become a flawed means of identifying rank, Vincentio finds himself accused of lunacy. Attacking this weakness, Tranio boldly answers his master’s clothing accusations with the situation of clothing as it now stands:

Why, sir, what 'cerns it you if I wear pearl and gold?

I thank my good father, I am able to maintain it.

(5.1.70-71)
Vincentio, bereft of his ability to prove that Tranio is a servant, finds himself without hope. Gremio, having been present previously, should be able to help before the situation becomes too dire.

However, while Gremio is in possession of the truth, having seen Lucentio unmasked just moments before, he is paradoxically unable to confirm Vincentio’s identity:

Gremio

Take heed, Signor Battista, lest you be coney-Catched in this business. I dare swear this is the right

Vincentio.

Pedant

Swear, if thou dar’st.

Gremio

Nay, I dare not swear it. (5.1.93-98).

Gremio is too uncertain. He will not trust his ability to discern Vincentio’s identity. The means of identification, clothing and appearance, are not reliable enough for him to make his decision with certainty. Thus, after his brief appearance, Vincentio finds himself carted off to jail.

Vincentio’s predicament is akin to the two other transpositions. Because of the transposition, his traditional method of identification through clothing has become unreliable. Socially, these transpositions subvert the Renaissance system of the cosmic order, diverting the visual signifier from one stratum to the signified of another, so that the clothing of the servant indicates master, the clothing of the father indicates the servant, and the tutor becomes the father. Outside the sphere of the individuals involved in the transpositions—Lucentio, Tranio, the Lord, Sly, Vincentio, and Pedant—we might assume the system of cosmic order appears and functions normally, given that the other characters in the play continue to rely dualisms to determine status.
Outside the transpositions, clothing as a visual index continues to deteriorate in the actions of the other characters, most notably in the lead roles. Whereas the previous transpositions problematize the connection of clothing to social rank, the incidents involving Bianca, Petruchio, and Katharina deny the relation entirely, making the clothing not only unreliable, but incapable of revealing anything at all about status. However, status itself is not under question, rather the presentations and recognition of status based upon these presentations that is at risk. Status itself is a given that continually rears its head from underneath whatever confining apparel. Sly cannot hide that he is a vagrant just as “Cambio is changed into Lucentio” (5.1.115), and we find that Vincentio cannot be carted off to jail like a vagrant, remaining in the scene even after Baptista’s admonition contrary (5.1.100). Clothing, for all that it can be used to deceive is unable to change each character’s status.

Bianca presents the first of these clothing instances. Her presentation early in the play as an ideal gentlewoman that is fully at ease with the use of clothes to represent her status, the inconsistency she displays by refusing to accept that her apparel can represent her status is unexpected. Throughout the play, Bianca is portrayed as the more noble of the two sisters. Lucentio concludes of her that she has a “maid’s mild behavior and sobriety” (1.1.72). Curiously, we know by the end of the play just how little this applies and how much her appearance has deceived Lucentio. He comes to the above conclusion regarding her nature purely from visual observation, judging by “the other’s [Bianca’s] silence,” that she must have a “mild behavior” (1.1.71-72). At the end of the play we learn that Bianca’s appearance has given Lucentio the lie when she refuses appear at Lucentio’s command, claiming that “she is busy, and she cannot come” (5.2.90). When she is brought in with Katharina, Bianca calls her husband “the more fool you for laying on my duty” (5.2.143). At this point Bianca appears more shrew than Katharina,
completely reversing Lucentio’s initial conclusion about his wife-to-be’s appearance. However, until this point, the discrepancy between Bianca’s perceived nature and her actual nature is kept hidden, which allows her to appear the dutiful maid and daughter.

The first—and only—time we see Bianca and Katharina talking alone, they enter at the beginning of Act 2 with Bianca’s hands tied. While this scene may be seen as a parallel to Petruchio’s later treatment of Kate, it is never fully explained to the audience, and we must guess at the cause of Katharina’s tying up her sister. A careful examination of Bianca’s defense gives a hint that her nature may indeed be different from what she presents:

Good sister, wrong me not, nor wrong yourself,
To make a bondmaid and a slave of me.
That I disdain. But for these other goods—
Unbind my hands, I’ll pull them off myself.
Yea, all my raiment to my petticoat,
Or what you will command me will I do,
So well I know my duty to my elders.

(2.1.1-7)

Given Bianca’s actions and attitude at the end of the play, we might hypothesize about the events that occurred previous to this entry. Katharina knows her sister’s nature, as they are sisters. We get some hint that Katharina suspects that Bianca is being overly coy with her suitors, leading them on. Katharina charges her sister, “see thou dissemble not” (2.1.9), and then quizzes her sister about her interest in Hortensio and Gremio. Judging that Kate is envious of their attentions, Bianca assures her sister with the following words: “Is it for him you do envy me so? Nay, then you jest […] You have jested with me all this while” (2.1.18-20). Bianca’s accusation likely
holds some truth, but there is also truth in Katharina’s response that “If that be jest, then all the rest was so,” which reveals a discrepancy in Bianca’s innocent responses, which are at odds with her intent (2.1.22).

Bianca’s “raiment” in this scene is an iconic representation of the proposed discrepancy in Bianca’s nature. As clothing, raiment should connect to her status, and in removing that clothing, she would be discarding her status. However, the language of her speech makes an explicit separation between clothing and the duties expected from a woman of her social standing. She assures her sister that she would remove “these other goods [...] yea, all my raiment down to my petticoat,” if her sister “commands,” so long as in removing her clothes, Katharina does not take it to mean that she is becoming “a bondmaid and a slave.” A partial paraphrase of Bianca’s words about her “raiment” is that she will do anything Katharina demands because of her duty to her “elders.” Bianca mocks Katharina with this last reference, accusing her sister of thinking herself the parent, rather than the sister, and calling attention to Katharina’s unwillingness to present herself as the dutiful daughter. The word “duty” is also loaded, calling to mind the concepts of “privilege” and “gentleness,” and their accompanying obligations to their inferiors, subtly accusing Katharina of lacking in gentility. A further explication of the scene is that Bianca is noting a difference between the way she is presented by her clothes and her status as a noble. The one does not necessarily serve as an index for the other.

Bianca is also making an additional statement about herself, beyond her belief in the inability of clothing to present status. In reading the two parts of her argument, we see that she is also revealing a discrepancy between her own nature and the appearance she presents with her clothing and actions. In admonishing her sister that she disdains being made “a bondmaid and a slave,” Bianca reveals her contempt for the role she presents to the male characters (2.1.2). She
presents herself to Katharina as a servitor, saying “to your pleasure humbly I subscribe,” but her other words show just how much she disdains to be the loyal slave and servant (1.1.82). When Bianca mocks her sister about duty, the venom behind her words reveals her disdain for this life and, by extension, her disdain that her clothing and actions make people think her devoted to them.

Lucentio’s conclusion about Bianca’s nature is ill-minded and, at the worst, inaccurate. Lucentio reveals that his tendency to judge on appearance is unreliable when it concerns Bianca. Considering that he himself tries to capitalize on the uncertainty of a shifted clothing index in his later transposition into a schoolmaster, Lucentio’s initial statement shows evidence of clothing and appearance functioning on dual levels in the play. On one level, clothing is reliable and accurate; on another level, clothing and appearance are inaccurate. The first is the level of the ideal cosmic order where each person has their own place and status. The second erodes the first as the play progresses, indicating that the system is inconsistent: this unreliable system of clothing and appearance needs to be reconciled with the notion of a social cosmic order. But, the system continues to degrade as the play continues.

Petruchio presents perhaps the best and most well-known example of the degradation of clothing as a status indicator. He rides to his wedding dressed in what can be only described as a cacophony of absurdity, containing elements such as “old breeches thrice turned” and a sword “with two broken points” (3.2.44, 47-48). However, the bulk of the description is not of Petruchio himself, but his horse. Biondello describes the man:

Why, Petruchio is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin; a pair of old breeches thrice turned; a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another
laced; an old rusty sword ta’en out of the town armory, with a broken hilt, and
chapeless; with two broken points.

(3.2.43-48)

Accompanying his master is Grumio, dressed in similar fashion:

With a linen stock on one leg and a kersey boot-hose on the other, gartered with a
red and blue list; an old hat, and the humor of forty fancies pricked in’t for a
feather—a monster, a very monster in apparel, and not like a Christian footboy or
a gentleman’s lackey.

(3.2.65070).

The similarity of these men’s appearances to that of Sly in the induction indicates a similar
perception. Tranio, who acts as if he is familiar with Petruchio’s behavior, comments that
“oftentimes he goes but mean-appareled” (3.2.71). Each of three men (Sly, Petruchio, and
Grumio) is judged by his appearance to be “a very monster in apparel” (3.3.68-69). That this
case involves a noble and his servant, albeit a land-poor noble, and not a beggar refutes the easy
association of monstrosity with status. The one-to-one correspondence of vagrant nature to
monstrous apparel does not appear to apply. As the play continues, Petruchio’s actions render
this conclusion to be moot, as his actions can be very easily seen as monstrous, given his
treatment of Katharina.

An alternative explanation is that Petruchio, in fact, is himself monstrous, and his
clothing enables his nature to be revealed and acknowledged. In interpreting Petruchio as devil
and witch-hunter, Schuler definitively paints Petruchio as monstrous, assigning him four
different types of devil:
First he is the lordly devil in his own upside-down house; then he paradoxically assumes the stance of a demonized shrew-taming witch-finder; third, he enacts a Vice-like temptation of Katharina, only to gloat piously at his victim; and finally he devilishly ‘charms’ his wife into submission.

(399-400).

However, while interpreting Shrew as a witch-hunt may be useful as a casual allegory to reveal the influence of cultural stereotyping onto the play, his conclusions are overly grandiose, as they ignore much of the literal events of the play in favor of metaphor. Emily Detmer questions Petruchio’s nature in another fashion; she asks the underlying question of whether “husbands who rely on physical strength rather than reason [are] to be regarded as less manly and less human” (278). She concludes that many readers find in Shrew “the fantasy of masculine domination” (289), and justify this fantasy by noting that Petruchio never hits Katharina. This decision is unsound, she claims: “Just because Petruchio never hits Katharina, or whips her and wraps her in the salted hide of his favorite horse, does not necessarily mean his treatment is better or less oppressive than if he had” (275). In deciding on Petruchio’s monstrosity then, at least two separate issues need to be taken into account: monstrous by motive and monstrous by method.

In reference to the method, Detmer calls attention to a whole series of wife-beating reforms present in Elizabethan England. However, these reforms limited abuse to battery: quoting from “An Homily on the State of Matrimony,” Detmer observes that “only the ‘common sort’ was expected to use ‘fist and staff’” abuse (278). We can therefore conclude, however unfortunately, that within the context of Shrew in regards to Renaissance anxieties, that
Petruchio’s non-physical abuse was not considered ultimately “monstrous,” leaving us to consider whether Petruchio is monstrous by his motives.

This argument is cancelled to a suitable degree by Petruchio’s response to the gathered gentles of the wedding party that “to me she’s married, not unto my clothes” (3.2.117), signaling to readers that his outrageous appearance is intentional, as well as calling attention to the concept of appropriate clothing as a social construction. Both of these thoughts imply the existence of a carefully cultivated view towards appearance at odds with him as a low-minded brute. Tranio’s statement that Petruchio is “mean-appareled” helps examine this strange situation, rather than just labeling him as a monster (3.2.71).

Petruchio is very likely a land-poor noble (Boose, 215). Admittedly, this conclusion is at odds with his words: “Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home” (1.2.56). However, Petruchio we see is not above lying if it suits his ends, informing those assembled that Katharina is “modest” when they are alone (2.1.290); moreover, his insistence that he “wive it wealthy” (1.2.74) suggests that he is in more dire economic straits of income than he admits to Hortensio. Using Petruchio’s pun on “Katharina as a “cate,”” Korda points out that “Petruchio’s taming strategy is accordingly aimed not at his wife’s productive capacity—he never asks Kate to brew, bake, wash card, or spin—but at her consumption” (112) to limit the cost of her upkeep, because “the housewife” Korda continues, is “expensive” (114), and therefore we can infer that Petruchio might have trouble supporting her consumption. The implication from Korda’s conclusion is that, like Boose’s conclusion, Petruchio is land-poor. A curious extrapolation of Korda’s work allows us to re-interpret Petruchio’s well-known pun that Katharina is his “super dainty Kate [Cate],” to reveal that Katharina may in fact be his only cate, because Petruchio can’t afford more than one.
Despite his financial situation, Petruchio does have land and status as a member of the elite. In and of itself, this situation creates a rift in the relation of money to status and, through money, clothing and status. Though he may on occasion wear clothes underneath his station—as we see when he arrives for the wedding—Petruchio retains his status. This rift between nature and presentation, while inherent in the dualism of appearance for status is not normally considered. While we must admit that there is a gap of some sort in order to differentiate appearance from status, the gap is subtle and easily ignored. Petruchio deliberately exaggerates this rift to an absurd degree. Petruchio’s exaggerated, monstrous, clothing denies any one-to-one ratio of status to apparel and makes it obvious that his clothing relates in no way to his gentility.

The latter part of Petruchio’s description further displaces him from expected decorum by showing the condition of his horse:

His horse hipped, with an old mothy saddle and stirrups of no kindred; besides, possessed with glanders and like to mose in the chine, troubled with the lampas, infected with the fashions, full of windgalls, sped with spavins, rayed with the yellows, past cure of the fives, stark spoiled with the staggers, begnawn with the bots, swayed in the back and shoulder-shotten; near-legged before, and with a half cheeked bit and headstall of sheep’s leather which, being restrained to keep him from stumbling, hath been often burst and now repaired with knots; one girth six times pieced, and a woman’s crupper of velour, which hath two letters for her name fairly set down in studs, and her and there pieced with packthread.

(3.2.48-62)

Horses, as can be seen in the proclamation of 1562, were of great significance for status. The language of the proclamation makes clear that a sick, poor-looking horse is to be taken as
evidence that the owner is spending too much on clothes; he hasn’t enough money to look after his horse. Thus, a mangy horse indicated a man of lesser means. As is usual for him, Petruchio confidently throws this steady identification of status to the winds, and not only rides a thoroughly diseased horse, but dresses in rags as well. In combining mangy horse with mangy clothes, yet while still being treated by those assembled as a noble, Petruchio again defies indexing status on the basis of appearance.

Grumio’s outfit provides a second consideration of the relation of status to clothing and, through it, the notion of a cosmic order. As a servant, it is Grumio’s place to be governed and ruled over by his master. In following his master’s lead and dressing abnormally, Grumio complicates the philosophy of a cosmic order: he confirms the cosmic order in allowing and his clothing to be governed by his master’s clothing, but undermines it by concealing his status under rags, even though it is at his master’s direction.

Petruchio’s and Grumio’s entry is monstrous, but only so because it defies the social preconceptions of how a gentleman and “gentleman’s lackey” should appear. This presents a quandary for those with whom they interact, on the basis of how status is primarily recognized in the social arena, even if it is defined by internal nature. Status is defined by blood, income, and land. It is recognized by behaviors towards others and in public. In defying prescribed social conventions in clothing, Petruchio contradicts the notion of clothing as a major index for status identification, as a result of which the standard signs are obscured and unreliable. He then enforces this ambiguity not only on himself and his servant, but on his wife Katharina.

Katharina is unlike her sister, and in many ways is the polar opposite to Bianca, on more levels than just proper behavior for a lady. From her initial appearance with her family in Act 1 through her fight with Bianca at the beginning of Scene 2, to her confrontations with her tutors
and later with Petruchio, Kate is presented as the quintessential shrew, rather than as a noble lady. Bianca, with her “mild behavior and sobriety” is seen as the ideal lady. In the same scene, just previous to Lucentio’s initial observation of Bianca, Katharina is described by Tranio as “that wench” (1.1.70). By this remark, Tranio classifies Katharina as belonging to the lower, vagrant class, most likely a common barmaid, in complete opposition to Bianca’s “gentle” nature. This reputation haunts Katharina over the course of the play.

Admittedly, her reputation is to some extent justified. Katharina does not sit quietly by while her father gives the men leave to “court her at your pleasure” (1.1.54). Instead, she delivers insults, accusing her father of making a “stale of me amongst these mates” (1.1.58) and taunts Hortensio that were she inclined to marry him, she would “comb your noddle with a three-piece stool/ And paint your face and use you like a fool” (1.1.65-66). She ties up her sister. But, whereas Bianca’s attitudes towards clothing reveal her own presentational discrepancies between personal nature and social decorum, Kate’s attitude and presentation bear no such discrepancy. Katharina asserts her right to clothing fitting her station, first for a cap and then for a dress. However, Katherine is denied the relation of her clothing to status by Petruchio.

Katherine, unlike her sister and those involved in the transpositions, desires clothes that confirm her status. This certainty is established when Petruchio steps in and seems to deliberately distance Katharina’s desires for gentle apparel from her ability to actually possess the clothes themselves, so that she cannot infer that she will get the clothes she desires. He sets up the expectation that Katharina will, in fact, be able to dress as a noble upon their return to Baptista. This passage is notable for its intense focus on apparel:

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 brav’ry,
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knav’ry.
What, hast thou dined? The tailor stays at thy leisure,
To deck thy body with his ruffling treasure.

(4.3.52-60).

Petruchio’s tone when he lists these items to Katharina is mocking, likening the clothes and accessories to mere “things,” “knav’ry,” and “ruffling treasure.” Also, the tone of this passage changes to lilting attitude of lifting labio-dental fricatives in “ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales,” suggesting that the targets for his language are superfluous, ethereal articles of no real substance to weight them down. Petruchio also structures his list in couplets, bringing to mind the shift to couplets found in the play-within-a-plays of Hamlet and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, which “employ a rhymed, highly irregular style of iambic pentameter that contrasts with Shakespeare’s looser blank verse idiom” (Womack 10). In both of these play-within-plays, Mark Womack notes how the change to couplets from blank verse and prose is self-conscious (10) as attention is deliberately drawn towards the incongruity of the couplets in a play largely in blank verse, in order to lend an air of superficiality and comic effect to the couplet performance. At the same time, this draws the audience’s attention instead to the action of these scenes, exposing the absurdity of Snout playing a wall (Dream 5.1.155) or the malignity of Claudius, who acted to “kill a king, and marry with his brother” (Hamlet 3.4.31). In Petruchio’s presentation, his choice of a parodic style emphasizes the superficiality of apparel affectations. Any significance that
social expectations might attach to these clothing affectations is undermined in a manner akin to the Lord’s joke on Sly, rather than strengthened as Katharina desires.

When the haberdasher and tailor visit, Katharina makes it clear that she desires clothes that fit the current fashion and her station as a “gentle” woman. When Petruchio turns down her request for a silken cap, asking for a larger one, Katherine responds, “I’ll have no bigger. This doth fit the time” (4.3.69), arguing that all “gentlewomen wear such caps as these” (4.3.70). When Petruchio again rejects the cap, telling Katharina, “When you are gentle [you will have it] And not till then” (4.3.71-72), she again tries to obtain the cap: “it I will have, or I will have none” (4.3.84-85). But, Katharina’s attempt to reconcile her clothes to her status fails, and the haberdasher leaves.

In the incident with the tailor and her gown, Katharina has very little to say. In the dialogue regarding her gown, Katharina speaks only three lines:

I never saw a better fashioned gown,

More quaint, more pleasing, nor more commendable.

Belike you mean to make a puppet of me.

(4.3.101-103)

Katharina’s choice to describe the gown as “better fashioned,” “more quaint” (skilled), “more pleasing” and “more commendable” indicates that she finds the gown desirable, and in light of her previous comments about the hat, fit for a gentlewoman of her status, confirming the relationship of apparel to status. However, her final lines are much less clear. In asking Petruchio if he means to make her a plaything, Katharina further undermines confidence in her place as a gentlewoman, despite the certainty with which she made known her earlier desires.
Unfortunately for Katharina, it does not matter why she likens herself to a puppet, whether from weary resignation or from waspish retort, the semblance itself erodes her status.

The matter rests not only on what Petruchio “means,” but on how Katharina understands the relationship of her status to her clothing. Katharina’s complaint is that Petruchio seems to be treating her like a doll, regarding his wife as something pretty to look at that he can dress up or undress at his whim. He doesn’t seem to care that she has an opinion on her own clothing. In responding to Petruchio, Katharina spitefully associates the clothing she desires (the gown) to a nature that she does not (a puppet), altering her own attitude towards the gown into rejection.

That Katharina asks what Petruchio “means” is significant. In likening the clothes of nobles to “knav’ry” and then treating her gown and cap as dress-up, Petruchio reduces their value from the signifier of a gentlewoman to the signifier of a vagrant. The metaphor in this transformation is complex, but understandable when considering the idea of the elite as ideal persons. The elite would never, in this way of thinking, be moved to such brutish, common acts as beating or treating their wives as objects of no worth. In likening Katharina to a toy, Petruchio reduces her status metaphorically to this state, an object with no real worth. Petruchio’s use of meaning (significance) drops them down to a mean (vagrant) level. Katharina’s transformation into plaything is only social and does not affect her true personal nature. As a result, Katharina’s shrewish nature does not change: when she and Petruchio are later on the road to Baptista’s in 4.5, Katharina still initially responds by refusing to acknowledge Petruchio’s claim that the sun is the moon (4.5.5), demonstrating that her argumentative, shrewish attitude is still present. In returning to the gown scene, Petruchio confuses the relation of clothes to status so that it is unclear how we should index Katharina’s status in accordance with her apparel. Should a
Katharina in fine clothes be indexed as a mere plaything? While such a label does not necessarily indicate that she loses her status as a noble, the certainty of the system is less reliable and more ambivalent, as there are now four valuations that can be made by clothing, rather than one: Katharina is a noble; Katharina is a plaything; Katharina is both a noble and a plaything for her husband; or Katharina is neither.

In analyzing the cap and gown, we must consider whether or not Katharina gets the clothing she desires. Hortensio is directed to pay for the gown, and hence it is bought despite all Petruchio’s objections (4.3.159). Katharina does in the end, we might infer, get her gown. At the very least Petruchio owns the gown. The question then becomes whether or not Katharina will ever obtain the gown? We have his earlier statement to Katharina that she shall have it “when [she is] gentle,” (4.3.71) and judging from her behavior at the end of the play we might consider that she will now obtain the gown. Also, Petruchio’s request that Hortensio pay for the gown allows us to further infer that, unless Petruchio is interpreted as a cruel brute who purchases the gown only to later torture by Katharina by denying it to her, the gown was bought with the intention that it be later given to Katharina—it was after all, made to his request. In denying Katharina her gown, Petruchio made his point, at least for the moment, that Katharina’s status is not bound by her clothes, and I do not see any reason, if we assume Petruchio to have “method to his madness,”—and therefore, not a cruel brute—that Katharina should not later obtain her gown. In order to understand Petruchio’s character in a manner consistent with his place as a man of “method,” the question of whether or not Katharina receives the gown and cap needs to be resolved.

Katharina’s cap is a different story altogether, and it is of the greatest importance that she receives her cap. Whether or not she gets the cap is not settled, by line or stage direction. Most
productions seem to suggest that she does not in light of Hortensio’s aside that “I see she’s like
to have neither the cap nor gown” (4.3.93). However, as Katharina’s gown is paid for, it seems
likely she should get the cap as well given Hortensio’s aside, which direct the audience to
consider whether Petruchio will give the cap and gown to his wife after they are purchased.

In Katharina obtaining the gown and cap are rested the undercurrents of status and
subject operating at the core of this play. Margaret Jaster concludes that in denying Katharina her
cap and gown Petruchio is acting to “strip Katharina of her social position, and the sartorial
slight is an attempt to demonstrate [later] to all that Katharina’s identity and will are now subject
to her husband” (104).” In this Jaster is basing her decisions off Petruchio’s earlier claim to make
of Katharina “a second Grissel” (2.1.292), invoking Griselda’s humiliation, arguing that
“in both stories, reshaping the body is imperative before one can reshape the mind” (104). The
difficulty in Jaster’s position, however, is that she does not consider the beginning assumption
found in the Griselda motif. Griselda is not tamed, but instead undergoes the humiliation to
prove her virtue of patience (Comensoli 49) to her husband, implying that her status was always
present from the start, merely concealed by her position as a commoner. Subordination is found,
not in Griselda, but in “society’s disapproval of a sovereign’s marriage to a subordinate” (49).
Thus, Griselda does not by necessity present the need for subordination, the argument Jaster
affirms as requisite for Katharina.

Ervin Beck argues that this conversation concerning the cap “raises the issue of who will
decide which cap Kate will wear” (p 3), commenting upon which individual will have the most
authority in their marriage. In ordering Katharina to dispense with her cap in Act 5, “Petruchio is
actually freeing Kate from patriarchal subservience to him” (p 9). However, Beck gives no
answer on “whether or not the actual physical cap in act 5 is the one the haberdasher offered in act 2,” (p 3) despite raising the question.

If Katharina does not get the cap after asserting her status as a gentlewoman, then the message is that she does not possess the traits of a gentlewoman. But, this thought seems at odds with Petruchio’s purchase of the gown, which, like the cap, is cut “according to the fashion of the time” and reinforces her status as a gentlewoman (4.3.95). To deny Katharina her cap, therefore, creates only confusion by presenting contradictory motives to Petruchio’s actions. While this does lean strongly towards defining the play as farce—given his madness and unreasonable demands—it does not fit with the discussions concerning clothing that have been carefully woven into the play.

If Katharina does get her cap, the scene remains consistent and allows Katharina to keep her status as a gentlewoman, while at the same time allowing her to separate her status and apparel later in the play, indicating then that her status does not rely on her clothing. Also, allowing Katharina her cap supports period models for female subservience. While the later scene could be assumed to be accomplished with any old cap, having it be the same cap from 4.3 in particular helps communicate clearly that Katharina is reiterating the patriarchal mores of male dominance and female subservience displayed in that scene, as Katharina relinquishes her clothing to her husband rather than asserting her own authority over him.

Katharina’s cap becomes not only an article of clothing, but a symbol of her preoccupation with status; the same anxiety that has been repeated in all the events leading up to this point. In each of the previous instances, Katharina’s desire for her clothing to represent her subject led to a growing sense of ambiguity as the easy one-to-one correspondence of status to clothing became increasingly problematic. The transpositions redirect the apparel index to new
roles, so that the clothes of a servant indicate a noble, those of a noble a servant, those of a schoolmaster a father, those of a father a vagrant, those of a vagrant a lord, and those of a lord a servant. As an index, clothing is not reliable, without redefining the system. Even redefining the system, however, would not provide a solution as Bianca, Petruchio, and Katharina deny that clothing has any relationship at all to status, preventing any semantic foothold by which to create certainty and an accompanying faith in the system. In relinquishing her cap, Katharina overcomes the clothing-status fixation that it represents. It is the least ambiguous action in regard to status and apparel in the entire play.

In Katharina’s last cap scene, Petruchio and the other husbands have made their wagers on the obedience of their wives and only Katharina appears as directed. She then leaves and returns with the other wives, and Petruchio boasts:

Nay, I will win my wager better yet,

And show more sign of her obedience,

Her new-built virtue and obedience…

…………………………

Katharine, that cap of yours becomes you not.

Off with that bauble. Throw it underfoot.

(5.2.120-126)

Typically, this scene is performed so that Katharina removes her cap. However, such stage directions are placed by later editors and are not present in the First Folio. We are left to decide whether or not Katharina obeys, or even removes her cap at all. The dialogue immediately following these lines makes no mention or comment about Katharina’s refusal to doff her cap, so I think it safe to assume that she does indeed remove her cap².
The act of putting her cap at or beneath Petruchio’s foot invokes any number of possible traditions, from doffing a cap to one’s lord to show fealty to symbolically echoing the commandment to a wife to submit to her husband in the wedding ceremony in the Book of Common Prayer. Whatever its antecedents, the emphasis on clothing in this action is hard to miss. Katharina places her cap, apparently at Petruchio’s direction, under his foot. About this there is no dispute.

Semiotically, Katharina is discarding not only her cap, but whatever symbolic value has been attached to it and laying both at her husband’s feet. However, interpreting this scene with the understanding that the cap is the same as the one in the previous encounter in 4.3 leads us to see this scene as Katharina’s definitive declaration on status: she symbolically separates herself from the preoccupation with status she formerly held and places it at her husband’s feet. Katharina’s cap provides the closure to the open ambiguity of apparel presented throughout Shrew, it is therefore is a fitting place to leave the discussion of ambiguity to examine how these ambiguities are exploited and eventually resolved in this final apparel-related action.
IDENTITY: SOCIAL DEVIANCY VERSUS SOCIAL INDEPENDENCE

The previous chapters have discussed how the Elizabethan obsession with status led to the creation of a status anxiety of the subject that was rooted in the presentation of clothing\(^3\), as well as how the presentation of clothing in *Shrew* destabilizes social expectations for clothing\(^4\). This creates a semantic battlefield of ambiguity where social expectations for clothing clash, as apparel appears to both confirm and dissuade notions of an externally discernible personal identity. The primary clothing index of the community is rendered moot and uncertain, and status as a result becomes separated from the community’s demands and can only be resolved independently. Katharina and Petruchio are able to recognize themselves and their status as independent entities immune to the constrictions and limitations of the community, and can then return to it as acceptable peers.

Katharina’s two crowning acts at the end of *Shrew*, removing her cap at Petruchio’s command and commanding the other wives to submit to their husband’s, are at the heart of the confusion between whether she is “tamed” or not, but also whether or not readers are willing to accept either state. Deciding that Katharina has been tamed or that she reasserts the indomitability of her own person rests on the assumption that we accept that she has the ability to display either state, and that this vital aspect of her identity can be displayed on stage. Kate McLuskie deconstructs revisionist criticism of Katharina’s actions, stating that it has tried to “distance Shakespeare from the evident anti-feminism in the text” in order to promote the “underlying mutuality between [Petruchio] and Katherine” (35). McLuskie brings up an important point, and asks whether we can accept that Katharina arrives at anything resembling a “feminine” identity when to do so we must categorically reject a large portion of the play that acts contrary to this, particularly in Petruchio’s taming abuses (35). Barry Weller takes a similar
position and considers “if one accepts Katharina’s transformation in the final scene as genuine
and unconditional, it would be reasonable to ask, in the tones of Millamant, if she has not
‘dwindled’ into a wife” (349).

Both critics above argue that assuming Katharina is transformed from her initial state as a
shrew to a final state as an ideal wife stems from readers deliberately ignoring what occurs in the
play in order to arrive at a pleasant outcome. Seeing Katharina’s transformation as acceptable
requires, Y. M. Rowe writes, we must accept that “Katharina is not the loser by her taming,” and
reveals a “shrewish feminine self” that is constructed to need “ongoing assistance to address
[the] ‘emotional deficit’” (6). Rowe argues that Katharina’s transformation as we see it is
imperfect, and implies that Petruchio needs to continue to assert his authority over Katharina to
assure the efficacy of her treatment. Asserting that Katharina’s nature has been changed into a
more acceptable “feminine” is therefore shaky.

The likely initial presence of a boy player, rather than a woman, further undermines the
model of a probable feminine identity for Katharina. Noting that Petruchio “can move between
his masculine and feminine⁵ positions because his own subjectivity is at risk” (540), as he is
being played by a boy, Barbara Hodgdon remarks that the portrayal of the feminine is such that
“claiming to be female is equivalent to claiming from the female” (540). This, she continues,
Hollows out the category of ‘woman’ and suggests that no unified modal of
female subjectivity exists, while contradictorily affirming shrewishness as the
ground for feminine representation. For by the play’s ‘law,’ shrewness much be
seen and spoken as feminine: only when Kate slips out from under the sign of the
shrew and moves toward the phallus ‘she’ be admired as a spectacle.

(540)
By transforming, the boy playing Katharina is once again able to move out form the purely representational view of feminine subjectivity and reaffirm the male prerogative. Addressing Katharina as both capable of owning her own subject as well as reforming to the expectations of her social peers is therefore tantamount, if she is to be judged to have any identity for herself that is not instead the projection of masculine desire.

The common conception in readings of Katharina’s final speech is that her nature is singular, i.e. she can either have her own identity or she can have that of her peers. Margie Burns concludes in her analysis of “The Ending of The Shrew” that Katharina’s words are the language of “mutual support between the sexes” (48), citing similar readings in studies by Ranald (1974) and Barton (1974). She further identifies that “paradoxically, even the men’s wager sustains the reciprocity (unbeknownst, probably, to Hortensio and Lucentio); after all, the men bet on their wives’ willingness to appear rather than simply compelling their wives’ appearance” (48). However, to attain this state of “reciprocity,” Katharina must “give herself and her image unto Petruchio’s protection” (49), presenting Katharina as essentially a tamed and subordinated being. Burns’s suggestion that Katharina must subordinate herself to attain acceptance, even if it leads to reciprocity in the marriage, is troubling to the notion of an independent feminine subject because it requires that the feminine must first subordinate to, and be defined in terms of, masculine desire. Katharina’s final state then, must be of a woman that submits.

Burn’s assumption of viewing Katharina’s success through submission seems to be the dominant view. A brief survey of five studies presented from 1983-2004 interpreting the end of Shrew, finds that all arrive at the conclusion that Katharina and Petruchio arrive at a state of mutuality through Katharina learning and/or realizing that she needs to define herself through subordination to the androcentric society in which she exists. Since this view relies on Katharina
subordinating her identity to the masculine desires of her androcentric community, it cannot be considered an independently feminine subject. Constructing a feminine subject for Katharina must escape this need for subordination to create her personal identity.

Here it is important to reconsider the Renaissance belief of the “subject.” Elizabeth Hanson writes that ideas of the subject were two-fold: the first as the “meaning which proclaims the subordination of the governed” (2), and the second “as the origin of discourse and action” (3). The flaw in interpreting Katharina’s final state thus far has been to assume that her subject, her personal identity, is solely determined by how she relates and presents herself to others. These studies have ignored the second aspect of subjectivity, the “origin of discourse and action” which Katharina can use to define herself regardless of how she ends up relating to others. Thus, what has been missing is the acceptance that Katharina’s identity can be dual, a subject by which she defines herself to herself, i.e. her nature, and a subject by which she presents herself to others. In possessing a dual identity, Katharina does not necessarily have to define herself through subordination, but can willfully cast off the symbolic social mobility of her peers’ labels while at the same time appearing to conform to their expectations. Status is revealed in Katharina as an essential part of her personal subject, and can therefore never be shifted upward or downward, let alone removed, by her peers.

A solitary individual would not, of course, have any need to refer to his or her own status, except to communicate or understand the relationship of said status to the status of others. In this, clothing serves an essential public function; it presents status to others, enabling the individual to function and be categorized within the social strata. Thus, apparel serves to present the individual to the community. However, the converse also occurs, whereby the community presents the individual. The community will attempt to shape the individual’s subject to fit itself, establishing
a social order reliant on such issues as economics, behavior, peer relations, and clothing standards. Any aberration or deviation—for example, in clothing—by the individual in regard to the community must therefore be shutout of the social order to maintain its consistency. Today we call this peer pressure: the pressure to conform to the crowd for fear of exclusion. This is the pressure that Katharina both uses and is abused by in her dealings with the other characters in the play. She is labeled by the community as a “shrew,” because her identity does not conform to its standards.

As is all too often seen with peer pressure, the identity of the group is not necessarily the identity of the individual. The group, in order to justify itself as a collection of common members with similar characteristics, must assume that each member is indeed the group in microcosm. The differences between the individual and the group become blurred and merged in the eyes of the group. In Shrew this is Katharina’s difficulty. She considers herself as a member of the elite class, but she is perceived by that class to be a social deviant, who is therefore categorically shunned. She is prevented from joining as they label her nature as aberrant. Katharina leads a life in the middle in a state of identity confusion, because she cannot be herself and still part of the upper class community, and she cannot be a member of the upper class community while being herself.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Katharina does represent the collection of characteristics that her peers rely on to identify group membership. Jonathon Culpeper defines this sort of action, saying “People frequently perceive others as members of social groups rather than as individuals[…] i.e. knowledge of a person’s social role places one in a particularly strong position to make inferences about other aspects of the person” (294). Thus, when Katharina does not display expected behavior patterns for the stereotype of a woman, rather than speculate as to
what her characteristics do display about her person, her community rejects her as an Other and therefore abhorrent. In Katharina, the attempts by her peers to identify the characteristics of clothing and behavior which show her to belong to their community fail, causing her peers to shift their attention to the well-worn schema of shrew (Culpeper 300).

Katharina’s status further complicates the issue. While her community may label her as a shrew and symbolically lower her status, she is still present in the community. Ironically, her community cannot label their peer Katharina a “shrew” without also at the same time acknowledging that she is as much peer as they. As she is a gentlewoman by blood, she cannot be excluded from the upper class, but paradoxically, she is unable to be accepted, and ostracized to it outer edges.

Petruchio can be found at a similar outer edge of his community. While it is Katharina that seems to be at the center of the status conflict, she cannot be considered without Petruchio. Petruchio’s situation is like Katharina’s in more ways than might be initially appreciated. As a land-poor yeoman, Petruchio would also be ostracized from the upper-class community if his income becomes known. It is therefore imperative that he find a wealthy wife. Petruchio’s choleric nature could also lead him into trouble if his brash nature becomes commonplace without due cause. In Katharina, Petruchio finds an ideal person who can match his fire and secure “an alliance between […] between land and money, status and wealth” (Korda 120) and through them, secure his own social subject among the upper class.

To secure their subjects, both personal and public, Petruchio and Katharina must accomplish two things: they must be able to define themselves apart from the demands of the community, as well defining themselves as part of the community. The two must create dual
identities. For this to occur, Petruchio must first separate Katharina’s reliance on the views of the community to define herself so that they can both succeed.

Prior to her first encounter with Petruchio, Katharina has scenes with her family in public and alone with her sister. In the street scene of Act 1, Culpeper notes that “Katharina herself provides us with evidence” of her shrewdom:

Her first utterance, though apparently deferential (‘I pray you, sir’ (1.1.57)), questions her father’s will. In her second, she asserts that if she were married she would beat her husband’s head with a stool, scratch his face and use him as if he were a fool (1.1.63-65). Clearly, her behavior purported intentions are unusual. These utterances if taken at face value, might lead to an inference that she is disrespectful, violent, and malicious […] the configuration of information about Katharina neatly fits the shrew schema.

Katharina seems determined to reciprocate her public “shrew” label, indicating her initial dependence on her community for identity.

Curiously, Katharina’s insult to Hortensio does have merit. Noticeably, Hortensio has not met Katharina yet, far as we know. Therefore, when Hortensio sardonically tells her “No mates for you,” he is basing his comment entirely on what he has heard of her publicly, rather than actual experience (1.1.59).

Katharina’s comments towards Baptista are protests against his commands. First, Baptista openly gives leave to Hortensio and Gremio to “court her at your pleasure” (1.1.54), which Katharina compares to a pimp giving out his harlots, making “stale of me amongst these mates” (1.1.58). The second protest is directed once again against Baptista, when he informs Katharina
that she may stay when he leaves to talk more with Bianca (1.1.100). Katharina interprets this as being told what to do like she is a little child, resenting the implied appellation that she has “appointed hours” (1.1.103). It should be noted that each of these protests is made publicly to an audience. Publicly, she rejects her father’s commands, a behavior which is socially aberrant. For whatever reason, Katharina feels compelled to reciprocate her community’s label of “shrew.”

Later, at the beginning of Act 2, Katharina and Bianca enter together with Bianca’s hands tied by her older sister. This is the scene where Bianca states her willingness to cast off her “raiment” (2.1.5). In addition to tying her sister up, Katharina also hits her sister (2.1.22). Thus, once again Katharina is shown to reinforce her “shrew” label.

As the play progresses, Katharina is able to move slowly beyond defining herself along the lines of her community’s label. In her initial scene with Petruchio, we see her continuing to imitate her publicly assigned stereotype of a shrew. She not only acts the part of the shrew by throwing insults and punches, and possibly objects, but continues by degrading Petruchio’s status with her insults. Yet, at the same time, her actions indicate a willingness to debate Petruchio at his level of aggression and semantic flexibility.

In approaching this scene, Rebhorn contends that Katharina upsets Renaissance rhetoric by not allowing Petruchio the role of “orator” and she “auditor,” by acting “anything but silent and passive; her words are swords every bit as much as Petruchio’s are. As a result, his attempt to overpower her in wooing her ends in his defeat, not hers” (317). David Daniell comes to a similar conclusion in regards to Petruchio’s person, noting that “Petruchio is surprised to lose some rounds of the wit-contest on points” (80). At the heart of this context, Katharina has disputed Petruchio with wit, rather than the pure insubordination she has displayed up to this point in the play. Against Petruchio, she shifts her insults just as fast as he, giving the first hint...
that she has an identity (wit) apart from that of a shrew. She likes to play the word game just as much as Petruchio.

The courtship scene is Petruchio’s and Katharina’s first scene together, and perhaps their most engaging. They do not know each other’s natures. Previous to this encounter, Petruchio has revealed his plans to the audience that he will repeatedly give her praise despite whatever attack she may make:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Stanzas</th>
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<tr>
<td>Say that she rail, why then I’ll tell her plain</td>
<td>(2.1.170-171)</td>
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<tr>
<td>She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Say that she frown, I’ll say she looks as clear</td>
<td>(2.1.172-173)</td>
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<tr>
<td>As morning roses newly washed with dew.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Say she be mute and will not speak a word,</td>
<td>(2.1.174-175)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Then I’ll commend her volubility</td>
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<td>And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.</td>
<td>(2.1.176-177)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If she bid me pack, I’ll give her thanks,</td>
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<td>As though she bid me stay by her a week.</td>
<td>(2.1.178-179)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If she deny to wed, I’ll crave the day</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I shall ask the banns and when be married</td>
<td>(2.1.180)</td>
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The comprehensiveness of Petruchio’s plan seems to imply that he doesn’t really care at all about Katharina’s reputation, let alone her identity as a person. She is an object, an appearance representing an income. His planned responses seem almost canned; he has a ready response to any and all occasions. The language he contemplates using is commonplace and overdone, such as “sings as sweetly as a nightingale” and “as morning roses newly washed with dew.”
Yet, Petruchio’s plan also reveals his plan to present a discrepancy to Kate, a deliberate schism between her shrewish behavior and her presentation to him. If Petruchio cared only about marrying Kate for income, then why does he play this game? It does not further his chances at income, nor does it enhance his public reputation as someone that can “tame a shrew.” However, his plan does separate Katharina from the label the community has applied to her, and emphasizes her personal nature.

Petruchio’s discrepancy results in not one identity for Katharina and himself, but two. Here, Weller notices that Petruchio emphasizes the dual nature of his words, creating a mask that conceals his own nature as well as it conceals Katharina’s, so that “by the end of the play it may be no easier to distinguish Petruchio’s mask from what it presumably conceals and shelters than Katharina’s” (347). “Personal identity,” Weller argues, “turns out to be not a fact, but an act of faith” (347) as the community must choose with which identity it cares to use for daily interaction. However, for all that Petruchio may be creating a dual identity, Katharina nor he has necessarily yet come to accept it in their own person.

When the two do encounter each other, Petruchio sticks to his plan, but not until after they exchange some barbs. Katharina balks at Petruchio’s entreaty of “Kate” (2.1.182) responding, “they call me Katharine that do talk of me” (184). In this she is defining herself by how she is presented by others. But Petruchio will have none of this, and ignores this connection to her state, pointing out that he will not yield to others’ definitions of her subject:

But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom
Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all Kates, and therefore, Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation;
Hearing thy mildness praised in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

(2.1.187-194)

Here Petruchio recognizes how Katharina appears to their peers and at the same time makes it clear he rejects these labels. While she may be a shrew, to Petruchio Katharina shall be his “super-dainty Kate” in direct opposition to her public persona.

Katharina next addresses him as a “movable” (196). This word has a specific allusion to status. A “moveable” was a piece of furniture that one took while moving, the implication being that anybody who did this was too poor to buy new furniture. In calling Petruchio a “moveable” Kate is delivering a status insult, which Petruchio ignores. He takes the insult literally, and invites Katharina to come “sit on me” (198). She next likens him to a common “ass,” which he changes into a sexual pun (199-200). Katharina continues to toss out status barbs, labeling Petruchio as a “jade” (201) and as a “swain” (204). After she strikes him, Katharina points out that if he returns in kind, he is “no gentleman” (222). Yet, none of these labels seem to take hold of Petruchio’s identity. He flits from insult to insult with ready banter, presenting the picture of a man at ease with himself and immune to her labels, be they “ass” (2.1.199), “buzzard” (206), or “withered” (236). For all that Katharina tries to link Petruchio’s status and subject to metaphorical appearances, she fails. Petruchio always defers the meaning of her insults and prevents any link to status or subject.

The alacrity with which Petruchio and Katharina exchange their insults suggests that they recognize and appreciate each other’s wit, and gives credit to Rebhorn and Daniell’s reading of
this scene. Barely have we, as audience, had time to register the elegant wit behind Katharina’s insult to Petruchio that he has not the wit to even understand that she insults him (2.1.212) before Petruchio swiftly deflects the attack to her person with the lingering sexual innuendo “Whose tongue?” (2.1.216). To this Katharina again swiftly retorts, changing “tail” to “tale,” leaving us rushing to keep up with the dialogue. The tone and witty fervor of the scene, for all the insults, suggests that the two are at play. While the majority of the insults relate to status, they don’t stick, as if the words have no solid connection to subject.

Through this first scene together, Katharina takes great pains to show that she really is the public shrew she has been labeled as. She throws insults from the beginning and accepts commonplace representations of herself as a social outcast, dubbing herself “light” (2.1.204) and “waspish” (210), and striking him (220). In many productions of the play, Katharina also throws various household objects.

Katharina’s repeated attempts to label Petruchio imitate the social community’s process of public identification. Her insults primarily attack his status through metaphor. The assumption is that Petruchio functions under the same assumption as Katharina at this point, i.e. an individual defines herself by how the community defines her person, and therefore that changes in the perception of her gentle status can result in exclusion from the community.

A question that should be asked here is why Katharina fails to shape Petruchio’s identity. Criticism to date has focused almost exclusively on Petruchio as a dominant presence in the scene, placing him in the role of a teacher that guides Katharina towards enlightenment. In exploring “The Varieties of Education in The Taming of the Shrew,” Brooks argues that Petruchio “educates Kate under the guise of courtship” (20). In portraying Petruchio as a sophist, Baumlin arrives at a similar conclusion, asserting that “Petruchio’s discourse, then, will refuse to
mirror her own verbal reality but will rename it, and in renaming her reality, he will transform it” (242). In a sense, Petruchio is untouchable because he chooses to be. In some degree this is true. Petruchio’s strategy of repeatedly shifting meaning away from a defining index is undoubtedly his choice and gives the scene much of its vibrant tone and feeling of playful banter. Katharina’s role seems to be to spit out phrases for Petruchio’s use. However, many of Katharina’s phrases indicate a witty mind, as she also engages in the same sort of shifts of meaning, altering Petruchio’s comebacks to where they again become insulting. When Petruchio shifts her warning to “beware my sting” (2.1.210), for example, she redirects his sexual innuendo to a suggestion of ignorance, questioning whether he in his ignorance could even “find it where it lies” (212). This sort of behavior continues between the two throughout the encounter.

As both Petruchio and Katharina engage in deliberate differance with equal alacrity, the argument that Petruchio is dominant because of his playful verbosity is tenuous. Both Petruchio and Katharina engage in verbal play. Rather, I would suggest that the labels do not take hold because Petruchio is aware that such labels are just words and do not hold any actual relation to his status.

Towards the end of their banter Petruchio returns to his initial strategy, claiming that

For thou are pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous,
But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time flowers:
Thou canst not frown, thou canst not look askance,
Nor bite the lip, as angry wenches will,
Nor hast thou pleasure to be cross in talk,
But thou with mildness entertain'st thy wooers,
(2.1.242-247)
Petruchio’s “pleasant” labels suffer the same fate as Katharina’s insults. They do not seem to take hold and directly contradict what we have seen of her nature up to this point. Of particular note is Petruchio’s choice to emphasize that “wench,” a word of lower-class connotations, does not apply to Katharina. This is a direct contradiction of Petruchio’s earlier public statement to Hortensio and Baptista that Katharina is a “lusty wench” and suggests that his attitude about her nature is quite different from his attitude about her public persona (2.1.160).

When Petruchio and Katharina are again joined by others, Petruchio acts to control Katharina’s public persona and emphasizes the separation between it and her actual nature, especially the labels placed on her as a result of the public perceptions of her subject as “curst” (2.1.289):

Petruchio  Yourself and all the world
          That talked of her have talked amiss of her.
          If she be curst, it is for policy…
          For patience she will prove a second Grissel,
          And Roman Lucrece for her chastity….

Tranio   Is this your speeding? Nay then, good night our part!

Petruchio  Be patient gentlemen. I choose her for myself.
          If she and I be pleased, what’s that to you?
          ‘Tis bargained twixt us twain, being alone,
          That she be curst in company.

(2.1.287-303)
Petruchio’s words construct a public Katharina drastically different from the one with which the audience is familiar. He draws upon the oral folk tradition to portray her as a “second Grissel” and “Lucrece.” The story of Grissel is all too appropriate, placing Katharina into the role of a woman of common reputation who then becomes noble by her faithfulness in public, reversing the actual descent from noble to Katharina’s public reputation as a shrew. The invocation of Lucrece draws upon the public perception of the private Katharina, transforming her identity into a woman who would rather die than be unfaithful. Both of these invocations of oral stories draw upon the public reputation of faithfulness.

Publicly, Petruchio portrays Katharina as a privately faithful woman. As his audience of peers was not present for the conversation between the two, they have little choice but to take his word regarding her nature. After all, their thoughts must run, if Katharina were as much shrew in private as she is publicly, then Petruchio, a member of their peer group, would have rejected her as they have done. If Petruchio’s lie is believed, then he has deflected the public’s social construction of Katharina possessing a shrewish nature.

This clever device by Petruchio breaks Katharina’s ability to rely on her public persona for identity. His words have undermined her presence, so that no matter what presentation she makes publicly, “her speech will merely reinforce society’s imagined view of her true ‘tame’ personality in the private company of Petruchio” (Baumlin 243), an area in which the public has no experience. As Petruchio comments, “If she and I be pleased [that is if he be pleased since he is the one talking], what’s that to you?” (2.1.301).

The signature of this change in Katharina’s public perception is once again clothing. After appointing that they shall be married on the following Sunday (2.1.322), Petruchio twice claims that he will mark the occasion with clothing. He tells Kate that “I will unto Venice/ To
buy apparel gainst the wedding day“ (2.1.313) and tells Baptista that at the wedding they will have “rings, and things, and fine array” (2.1.321). Petruchio’s invocation of clothing represents Katharina’s change in the public perception of her status. He has established that her subject is that of a lady, a move upward from shrew, and she is entitled to wear fine clothes. However, as clothing has already been shown to be unreliable in the play, this foreshadows Petruchio’s arrival in rags in a direct affront to the expectations of his peers and Katharina. At the same time, Petruchio’s invocation of clothing highlights the status of clothes’ inability to actually denote Katharina’s subject. To herself, she has not changed. All through the courtship she has continued to see herself as a shrew. The only thing that has changed is the public’s perception of her subject; the clothes themselves hold no influence on her personal identity.

Prior to their wedding, Katharina waits dejectedly for Petruchio to arrive. Her discontent seems less based on being married against her will to a “mad-brain rudsby” (3.2.10) but on being stood up at her wedding. While it is tempting to conclude that, consistent to Katharina’s shrewishness, she does not wish to married at all, this runs counter to Katharina’s words earlier in the play. Katharina’s reaction to Bianca’s impending courtship at the beginning of the second act implies that, rather, Katharina desires to be married. She accosts her father:

What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see
She is your treasure, she must have a husband;
I must dance barefoot on her wedding day.

(2.1.31-33)

Her jealous tone is antagonistic and at first seems to place her well within the “shrew schema” (Culpeper 308). However, the content of Katharina’s complaint reveals that she also wishes to be married, and clarifies Katharina’s fears prior to Petruchio’s arrival. In desiring marriage,
Katharina is conforming to societal expectations in this scene, suggesting that she on some level, however subtle, is not completely rejecting all social conceptions of her behavior; rather, she has to this point only rejected specific restrictions concerning her person.

Returning to the wedding, we see that Katharina repeatedly emphasizes her “poor” condition at being jilted, and not the condition of marriage:

No shame but mine: I must, forsooth, be forced
To give my hand opposed against my heart
Unto a mad-brain rudesby full of spleen,
Who wooed in haste and means to wed at leisure.
I told you, I, he was a frantic fool,
Hiding his bitter jests in blunt behavior.
And, to be noted for a merry man,
He'll woo a thousand, 'point the day of marriage,
Make feasts, invite friends, and proclaim the banns,
Yet never means to wed where he hath wooed.
Now must the world point at poor Katharine
And say, 'Lo, there is mad Petruchio's wife,
If it would please him come and marry her!

(3.2.8-20)

In the course of her despair, Katharina specifically notes the discrepancy between Petruchio’s public appearance as “a merry man” (gentleman) and his nature as a “mad-brain rudesby” (vagrant). She targets the class disparity in his behavior, accusing him of being “blunt,” (3.2.11) and a “frantic fool” (3.2.12). Her remark upon Petruchio as a “merry man” may also function as
a dual reference to Robin Hood stories, thus likening Petruchio to both being publicly popular and a vagrant in the same word (3.2.14). The tone of the passage suggests that Katharina is worried that Petruchio’s disparate behavior indicates that he is not the dutiful gentleman that he appears, but is actually unreliable at heart.

Katharina’s words highlight Petruchio’s failure to arrive as an indication of unreliable vagrancy while simultaneously displaying herself as a member of the elite, reversing the previous discrepancy in behavior between herself and Petruchio in earlier scenes. She worries he is unreliable and “means to wed at leisure” (3.2.11); “never means to wed where he hath wooed” (3.2.17); and marry her only “if it would please him” (3.2.20). Also, it should be noted that nothing Katharina does in this scene is really all that shrewish. Here, when she is revealing her personal concern. She seems distinctly unlike a shrew, giving direct evidence that her nature is not necessarily imitative of how she has been labeled. She then exits the stage in tears (3.2.26).

Examining the tears in regards to the shrew schema, Culpeper observes that “these are not the tears of anger and frustration which we saw earlier (2.1.35-6), but the legitimate tears of suffering […] a facet that is consistent with the shrew schema” (308). Culpeper’s words suggest that Katharina is capable of acts which do not justify the shrew paradigm. In her tears for a paradigm that it does fit then, Baptista’s sympathetic words to Katharina indicate that he and the other guest sympathize with her suffering. Speaking for all others present, he suggests that here, Katharina is acting appropriately for her status as a gentlewoman: “Go, girl, I cannot blame thee now to weep./ For such an injury would vex a saint” (3.2.27).

Juxtaposing Katharina’s attitude towards Petruchio’s absence with her emphasis on the disparity between Petruchio’s nature and his public intent reveals that Katharina is still bound by seeing identity as singular, rather than dual. Her concern is rooted in the worry that Petruchio’s
nature is other than she thought. She thought that, however “irregular” he seemed, he would come and marry her. Here we see Katharina’s desire to know Petruchio’s subject, evidence that she is treating him as a person worth her attention, even if it is just to worry. In doing so, she treats her own nature differently, and presents herself as a lady might.

Petruchio’s eventual arrival at the wedding is reported by Biondello (see chapter 2). We do not, it should be noted, actually see if he rides in dressed in rags and on a diseased horse. Instead, we must rely on how Petruchio is perceived and described to others by Biondello, whose description therefore is a scene of public reputation, rather than of subject. Biondello is placing a public label on Petruchio. “Kate’s status,” Detmer comments, “depends on his arrival” (285).

Petruchio ignores this label. His peers protest Petruchio’s dress, scolding: “doff this habit, shame to your estate,/ An eyesore to our solemn festival” (3.2.100-101); “See not your bride in these unreverent robes” (3.2.112); and “But thus, I trust, you will not marry her” (3.2.115). Petruchio responds by emphasizing the distinction between his subject and their purely public response to his presentation of clothing:

To me she's married, not unto my clothes.

Could I repair what she will wear in me,

As I can change these poor accoutrements,

'Twere well for Kate and better for myself.

(3.2.117-120)

Marriage is between two individual persons, and not two models of public perception. Petruchio’s words contain a hint that his subject is not only immune to external accoutrements, but that he is at ease with his own identity, and therefore not pressured to change it. He concedes that could he “repair” his character, it would make his relationship easier for both him and
Katharina (3.2.119-120). However, this is not a difficulty, given that the courtship scene revealed that he and Katharina are possessed of similar temperaments. The clothes he wears only control how he is treated within the public sphere, a perception that he notes does not affect his ability to be married. Nor do they define his person. In dressing in mean rags, Petruchio draws the emphasis away from the flawed clothing index, and instead towards his own independent subject.

The wedding itself repeats this motif. This time it is Grumio who reiterates the event for the on-stage audience. Grumio describes Petruchio as a rude, foul-mouthed brute:

When the priest

Should ask, if Katharina should be his wife,

“Ay, by Gogs-wouns,” quoth he; and swore so loud,

That, all-amazed, the priest let fall the book;

And, as he stooped again to take it up,

The mad-brained bridegroom took him such a cuff

That down fell priest and book and book and priest:

“Now take them up,” quoth he, “if any list.”

(3.2.158-165)

As this is Grumio’s description, we have no way to verify his fidelity to the actual event. Katharina is given no voice, as she “trembled and shook” at her husband-to-be’s behavior (167). The whole event as presented by Grumio seems almost absurd given the behavior attributed to Petruchio. Heightening the absurdity, Detmer observes, “no one intervenes in Petruchio’s aggression during the wedding” (286). Through this, Petruchio “demonstrates his power to do as he pleases” (286). For Petruchio to act so strongly seems unlikely for a person as calculating as
his plans and witty returns in the courtship suggest. We should then have some doubt as to whether Petruchio’s behavior is indicative of his nature. In appearing acting “mad” Petruchio produces a further discrepancy into his public presentation. Roberts juxtaposes Petruchio’s image at the wedding against “interpretations of the play that depict Petruchio as the wise teacher […] and yet, the text does not necessarily support such responses [as the wise teacher]” (165). Petruchio’s inconsistent acts serve to emphasize that while marriage itself is between two individual persons, the marriage ceremony is noticeably a public affair, and should be examined in terms of a social interaction, rather than solely as the joining of two natures.

This distinction is important because it demonstrates that Petruchio’s behavior is public and therefore a presentation to an audience, and is not necessarily connected to his personal subject. The role that he takes on at the wedding is only that, a persona that serves to force Katharina away from any reliance on public perception for her own identity, removing her from the public perceptions that have resulted in her label of “shrew.” Publicly, Petruchio has become a mad-man. As she is his wife, Katharina’s reputation is tied up in her husband’s reputation. If he is mad and a brute, then Katharina must be at the very least considered a fitting consort to such a brute, if not vulgar herself, unless she forces a divide between the public label and that of her own subject.

At Petruchio’s house, he and Katharina continue to separate the external from their subjects. After Petruchio rails at his servants, calling them “villains” and throws them out, “trenchers, cups, and all,” he and Katharina have an eleven line conversation, which seems to revolve around the supposedly burnt mutton that he just refused (4.2.149). But, on another level, Petruchio’s comments are directed towards the recognition of his and Katharina’s subject. He makes a distinction between the meat and their personal identities, arguing that it would be better
if “both of us did fast,/ Since, of ourselves, ourselves are choleric,/ Than feed it with such overroasted flesh” (4.2.161-163). This distinction is subtle in that while Petruchio freely admits that he and Katharina are “choleric,” they are still unlike the choleric mutton, because it, unlike them, is “overroasted.” This short scene is not public; no one other than Petruchio and Katharina would profit, let alone index them based on this label. Instead, Petruchio is making an essential statement about his and Katharina’s subject. Petruchio is noting that his and Katharina’s inward natures are not subject to external representation.

The meal is cut short by the arrival of the haberdasher and tailor. After the cap and dress conversations are over and Petruchio has separated Katharina’s clothing from her status (chapter 2), he announces his intention that they travel to Baptista’s (4.3.165). He consoles Katharina by explaining that humble appearances and clothing do not necessarily belittle the subject they are publicly taken to represent. He says they will go

Even in these honest, mean habiliments.
Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor,
For ‘tis the mind that makes the body rich;
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honor peereth in the meanest habit.
What, is the jay more precious than the lark
Because his feathers are more beautiful?
Or is the adder better than the eel
Because his painted skin contents the eye?
Oh, no, good Kate; neither art thou the worse
For this poor furniture and mean array.
Petruchio argues that no matter how low and “mean” they appear, their “honor” cannot be quenched or hidden by their garments. Such a conclusion rests on the vital assumption that status not only exists, but can be recognized without the standard method of social identification through clothing and appearance. Appearance, therefore is a matter of perception, rather than reality. Petruchio’s can say whatever “o’clock it is” (4.2.191) that he desires, appearing to follow Hortensio’s exasperated exclamation that Petruchio will “command the sun” (4.3.192), because his saying so does not actually change anything, let alone the time.

Petruchio’s last claim slips dangerously close to solipsism, except that he plays with language in a manner akin to that of the earlier courtship. His labels do not bear any actual authority over their targets; by recognizing the temporary nature of the signifier, Petruchio shows how tenuous the relationship is between objects and subjects. Once he, Katharina, Grumio, and Hortensio do hit the road, Petruchio delights in his language play.

Petruchio exclaims, “how bright and goodly shines the moon!” at which Katharina quickly points out the reality and corrects him: “The sun, It is not moonlight now” (4.5.2-3) But, as Hortensio points out, Petruchio will not let them move on until Katharina acknowledges that Petruchio can say whatever he pleases (11). Katharina gives in and responds,

And be it moon, or sun, or what you please;

An if you please to call it a rush candle,

…it shall be so for Katharine.

(4.5.13-22)
When the two encounter Vincentio on the road, Petruchio keeps to his game calling Lucentio’s
father “gentle mistress” (4.5.26). Katharina appears to join in, embracing Vincentio while calling
him a “young budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet” (4.5.36), as the “‘game’ turns suddenly
into a kind of shared vision” (Roberts 167). Whether Katharina participates in this game
willingly, let alone learns from her experience is in some doubt.

At least one production has portrayed Katharina as cruelly prompted by Petruchio in this
scene10, while others have presented her in the polar opposite condition, embracing the game
whole-heartedly, or agreeing after some mild hesitation. Rebhorn argues that Katharina’s
apparent capitulation to Petruchio “invites an ironic reading; it can mean that she certainly knows
the difference between the sun and the moon, but is willing to call them whatever Petruchio
wants, simply in order to humor him” and uses this as an indication that and criticism of “her
husband’s madness” (323). Roberts dispenses with the notion of treating the scene as
subordination entirely, and stresses the mutuality of the game itself, viewing Vincentio’s
transformation into “Hermaphroditus,” a male and female character invoked Ovid’s
Metamorphoses, placing Katharina in the role of Salmacis (167). Roberts concludes that the
transformation of Vincentio into Hermaphroditus is a metaphorical projection of the
“consummation” Katharina and Petruchio undergo by finally finding themselves in perfect
agreement (169).

In understanding Vincentio as Hermaphroditus, Roberts reveals, however metaphorically,
Vincentio to possess dual-natures brought on by discourse. Undoubtedly, we can be reasonably
sure that Vincentio does not truly transform back-and-forth between “young budding virgin” and
father—that is, barring treating the whole thing as a dream sequence, as Sears Jayne suggests in
“The Dreaming of the Shrew”—and that Vincentio is therefore still Vincentio despite the games
that Katharina and Petruchio play. However, Vincentio finds himself defined, not as he might define himself, but through the language and discourse choices of his audience, i.e. Katharina and Petruchio. In Vincentio is reflected the same affliction that initially troubled Katharina, and which will return later to haunt him when he finds his person defined by Tranio in 5.1 as a vagrant. Of note then in reference to Katharina’s eventual state, Vincentio is not trapped into the discourse identity in either situation, but in both becomes recognized as his own person.

This interplay has as its focus, therefore, the flexible discourse of socially identifying language, perhaps even more so than the notion of “game.” Katharina’s play in the courtship scene indicates that she is able, flexible enough, and to some degree delighted to shift signs to fit her intentions. Also, her previous response to Petruchio that the sun is the “moon,” “sun,” “what you please,” or “a rush candle,” seems a bit gratuitous from someone who has been forced to respond. Rather, Katharina’s response displays creativity, a willingness on her part to come up with new variations on Petruchio’s game. It is in this moment that we see Katharina willingly making a creative effort to play with signs, implying that she has now come to recognize how little they are linked to her private subject.

The road scene confirms that Katharina is now at ease with her subject. She recognizes the distinction between public expectations for her behavior and her subject as an isolated self from the community perception. Whether or not Katharina is able to act within the community is still in doubt.

Petruchio’s future in the community rests on how well Katharina functions. Returning to Margie Burns’s comments on the men’s wager in Act 5 (48), the reciprocity which the husbands extend and rely upon their wives to enforce, places the reins of membership in the masculine community in the hands of the women. Aside from the wager scene, Petruchio still finds himself
indebted to Katharina. Boose suggests that Petruchio needs the money she brings as a dowry (110). As well, Petruchio is relying on Katharina’s reformed behavior to supplement his appearance of masculinity among his peers, rested in the assumption that “the only way in which men could achieve manhood in early modern England was by exercising patriarchal privileges,” (Shepard 102) such as being the “master” in marriage. Over the course of their courtship and early days of marriage, Petruchio has vested himself in Katharina’s nature. They fought verbally alike, they woke and fasted together, and now they must present to an audience together. As Petruchio is Katharina’s husband, his reputation in the community as the perfect husband for Katharina rests in his ability to “tame” her. If Katharina reverts to her shrewish behavior in front of their public, Petruchio’s reputation will suffer. Thus, he is in her, she in him, echoing the words of matrimony that “thei two shalbe one flesh” (Book of Common Prayer 1559).

Despite both Petruchio’s and Katharina’s now recognizing the disjunction of their subject and its status from the public arena, they cannot disown their public identities. As much as they may wish to ignore public perception because it does not reflect their subject, they must reflect in each other—they are one individual so far as societal perceptions of husband and wife—their membership within the peer community. The success of Petruchio’s final wager and Katharina’s crowning speech rest in the pair’s ability to recognize first the need for a public identity, and second, that they must therefore present one that is satisfactory to the expectations of the community. However much Petruchio has abandoned the perceptions of his peers in his wedding presentation, he must in the end act respectfully towards them, as must Katharina to be successful politically and financially.

Throughout the play, the community of peers repeatedly displays its reliance on recognizing a common external presentation in behavior and clothing to indicate as prevent
membership in their group. While this must be taken as a premise that Petruchio and Katharina must adhere to because it is how their community functions, it is not necessarily to the benefit of their peers to quantify their community in this way through deviance. Sociologists Harris & Hill observe that “group attempts to identify deviance” resulted in a “weakened group solidarity” (170). They further support their conclusion with the study of Etzioni-Halevy (1975) who found that this sort of behavior is “often typical of elites,” but “may erode rather than build social solidarity” (170). In essence, we may conclude, that rather than preserving the status quo, the efforts of the peers to prevent their status anxieties are only serving to encourage their dissolution. In being able to cast-off their status labels, and define their status in a manner not reliant on social recognition, Petruchio and Katharina are able to avoid this trap. Their peers are not so lucky, and show their continued reliance on external identification to identify membership in their community throughout the play.

The first of several public recognitions is found within the induction. Upon finding Sly lying in the street, the Lord exclaims to his retinue and audience, “O monstrous beast, how like a swine he lies!” (Ind 1.35). In this manner the Lord deliberately creates an association within the mind of his audience (“monstrous beast” and “like a swine”) that Sly is both monstrous and like a pig. This label is then retroactively referred back to Sly (“he lies). Sly’s image and identity are created by his public audience. As the audience’s existence is external to Sly and as the audience never encountered him previously, the image must be designed and referenced solely upon what is visible, reinforcing the appearance-subject dualism as a monad.

A similar process occurs when Lucentio first views Bianca. While it is tempting to view the occasion as the cliché “love at first sight,” Lucentio’s recognition of Bianca is reliant on his place as an external viewer to his audience, Tranio and Biondello. Lucentio tells Tranio, “In the
other’s silence do I see/ Maid’s mild behavior and sobriety” (1.1.70-71). Lucentio’s example here is especially telling considering the shrewish turn Bianca’s nature takes towards the end of the play, indicating just how little Tranio is able to deduce from his first encounter. However, this does not stop him from choosing to fall in love based on Bianca’s apparent behavior as a silent and sober person. Lucentio knows nothing of Bianca’s actual nature, and he therefore creates an image for himself and others by connecting appearance to subject.

Servants are by no means exempt from connecting subject to appearance and status to clothing. Biondello does so on more than one occasion. Biondello uses Petruchio’s clothes to present him as “a very monster in apparel” in the famous wedding entrance (3.2.69). Biondello is again to blame later in the play. He identifies the Pedant to Tranio as “formal in apparel,/ In gait and countenance surely like a father” (4.2.67-68). From his appearance and clothing, Biondello identifies the man to Tranio. While admittedly Biondello accurately identifies the Pedant, his identification of the man as a father is questionable. We never learn if the Pedant is indeed a father. Because he does not know if the man is any of these things, Biondello must connect them to what he sees in order to draw any conclusions about the man’s inward subject and status.

With the possible exception of Sly, Baptista is the prototypical public figure in Shrew. He relies on external representation and recitations for everything and repeatedly addresses Tranio (in his guise) as Lucentio among the group of “gentlemen,” despite Tranio’s real nature as a servant (2.1.44, 91, 115). When Tranio and Gremio compete in tales of their wealth, Baptista seems for the most part to believe both of them (2.1.384). To Baptista’s credit, he does seem a little wary of Tranio’s offer, requiring Tranio to “let your father make her assurance” (2.1.385). The deception of Baptista through this medium is made worse by his stubborn reliance on trusting external symbols for wealth. Eventually, Vincentio is jailed because Baptista refuses to
acknowledge Vincentio’s and Gremio’s claims of clothing as a flawed social index\textsuperscript{11} (5.1.66-71, 100-104). However, neither Petruchio nor Lucentio can function publicly without Baptista. As Bianca and Katharina’s father, wealthy, and a public icon, he is indispensable. His public, and therefore social, approval is therefore a necessity, giving economic, social, and familial motives for Petruchio and Katharina to return to his house.

In returning to Baptista, “the return to society is completed” (Schneider 251). Katharina and Petruchio come to cement their dual identities through their successful reintegration into the public. At the house and on the road, we see them come to an understanding through discourse that the social and private worlds do not have to map onto each other. At Baptista’s home, the pair can now proceed to develop their social identities, and finally separate their subject into two distinct, disjunct personae. Returning to Baptista’s home in \textit{Shrew} cannot be overlooked for its additional significance as an implied transformation. The act brings to mind any number of cycle-completion arcs, from Joseph Campbell’s archetypal hero returning to heal the wasteland, to that of the prodigal son, to folk motifs of the death/rebirth cycle. Whichever, if any, is chosen, Katharina’s return to her father implies a public reconciliation with her peers. As a public shrew she was an outcast. As she is now at ease, recognizing that her subject identity is different from that of her community identity, Katharina must now return with her husband to their community as members.

From Katharina’s willingness to join her husband in playing with Vincentio we can establish that Katharina is entering this scene with a changed perspective of herself. Her easy play with words indicates an understanding that such labels are separated from nature and are at best public presentations, ways of interacting with an audience. Noticeably, with Vincentio, the
tone is light-hearted banter, rather than the direct attacks of the earlier courtships. Vincentio is not insulted, just confused. It is clear that Petruchio and Katharina both are just having fun.

The ritual aspect of all this, as well as of the play itself, cannot be ignored. It signifies the couple not only returning to society to placement among their peers, but acceptance on the part of Katharina, towards the folk tradition that initially resulted in her expulsion. Soule expands the views of Michael west that the issue of Shrew is “‘a kind of mating dance’” (171). She notes that “In mating rituals, the participants are thus assumed to be complementary, different but fundamentally equal co-celebrants,” leaving her to perceive the abuse natures of both Katharina and Petruchio as a series of “tumbling tricks” (171). In interpreting the scene on the road, Soule comments that Petruchio’s “‘magical’ transformations of sun to moon and old man to young maid, recall the proverbial ‘wild man’ of seasonal ritual” (172). This return to folklore presents Katharina participating gleefully in the same tradition that she initially rejected (Renaissance Family 139) and were used to expel her person, first as a shrew, then later in Petruchio’s mold of her as Griselda. Katharina’s treatment of the folk tradition demonstrates her new perspective, treating the as tradition presentation, rather than as a determination of her nature, and does not seem to publicly reciprocate the shrew identity.

In Baptista’s home are gathered the whole assembly of Petruchio’s and Katharina’s peers, those of the upper class: Baptista, Vincentio, Gremio, Lucentio, Bianca, Hortensio and his Widow. These people are accompanied by their servants, Tranio and Biondello. The Pedant is also present, likely as a friend, and Grumio arrives with his master. The house contains the whole public that rejected Katharina and labeled her as a shrew. After the confusion about Vincentio is made clear, and he is released from jail, the group sits down to eat.
Just before dinner, Katharina raises the suspense by refusing to kiss her husband when he asks (5.1.135-137). However, her excuse is not that she dislikes him, but that she is ashamed to do this typically private act—as seen by the public—in public. But Petruchio threatens once again to go homeward, and she kisses him. One way to see this scene is that Katharina is resisting. Another way is to examine how greatly Katharina’s justification for refusal has shifted. She is aware of convention and recognizes the need to at least function as if her nature was reformed. This is opposed to her earlier behavior as a shrew, castigating her father in public. This kiss can also be further contrasted with Petruchio’s previous attempts in the play for them to kiss, illustrating that this really is the first time they have both kissed of their own free will. All other occasions were contrived by Petruchio in some manner: he falsely claims that Katharina kissed him during the courtship (2.1.306); his demand that she kiss him after Baptista agrees to the wedding, and—the directions and language are unclear—either Katharina ignores him completely or Petruchio forces her into a kiss (2.1.322); and Petruchio’s exceedingly audible kiss that creates such a “clamorous smack” during the wedding (3.2.178). Going into the final dinner, Katharina is ready to rejoin her public. She is comfortable with herself and aware of the delineation between public and private conventions, as well as to just how little sway the public labels have over her inner subject.

With the dinner underway, Katharina and Hortensio’s Widow begin to insult each other. However, this situation is different from Katharina’s previous duels; it is the Widow who begins the round. The Widow accuses Katharina of being a shrew (5.2.28), to which Katharina responds by shifting the Widow’s insult to be “a very mean meaning,” implying that the Widow is a mean (lower class) shrew herself because she is imitating Katharina’s earlier shrewish actions by beginning with an unprovoked insult (5.2.31). Katharina then follows up by saying that she
herself must also be “mean indeed” if she were to let the Widow’s insult go by unchallenged (32). That Katharina’s words are a challenge is quite clear, as Petruchio and Hortensio both immediately urge their wives to combat (5.2.33-34). However, Katharina does not challenge the Widow, and the women leave the room, apparently disgusted at their husbands’ antics.

The men then conceive a wager of a hundred pounds to see whose wife is the most obedient (5.2.65-76), and, it is implied, to test whether Katharina is as tamed as she appears. The wager is that

Each one [shall] send unto his wife;

And he whose wife is most obedient

To come at first when doth he send for her

Shall win the wager

(5.2.66-69)

Petruchio waits while first Lucentio and then Hortensio send for their wives and fail, being told that Bianca and the Widow will not come (5.2.85, 94). Petruchio sends for Katharina (5.2.98) and she comes (5.2.104), winning Petruchio the wager, as well as an additional 20,000 crowns from Baptista (5.2.117).

With the wager over, Petruchio and Katharina appear to have accomplished their goal. Baptista’s additional 20,000 crowns would seem to indicate that they have been accepted by him as family and probably within the community. Yet, Petruchio pushes his and his wife’s re-initiation into public perception, commanding Katharina to remove her cap.

It is this cap scene that sets up Katharina’s ultimate moment, showing that Katharina has changed into a new understanding of her subject and its relation to the public sphere. Clothes, as was demonstrated in the first chapter, are so indelibly linked to status that any use of clothing is
an evocation of status and, through it, status anxiety. Clothing has also been shown through the play to be a flawed index, unlikely to provide an accurate representation of a person’s subject to the public. In removing her cap at her husband’s command, Katharina is simultaneously divesting herself of the status-identity fixation she demonstrated earlier in the play in her attempts to reciprocate her shrewish label and of the status anxiety that cap represents. She recognizes that her subject cannot be defined or regulated by clothing, and therefore is not subject to status anxiety. In removing her cap, Katharina is losing nothing, and gaining the public recognition of a wife obeying her husband. Petruchio also gains public recognition because his public thinks that he has “tamed” Katharina, an advantage he would have lost if she had disobeyed.

Katharina’s willingness to remove her cap is regarded as one of the two most troublesome scenes of Shrew. First, we must rely the stage directions given in modern editions really reflect the intentions of the scene (Ch. 2). Second, conflicting interpretations both read this cap scene as confirming that her identity is subordinate to the expectations of her peers, or asserting her independence of those same restrictions.

Interpreting Katharina as a Griselda, Jaster puts Petruchio in the role of the king. By commanding Katharina to remove her cap at his command, Petruchio is metaphorically inviting “the audience of merchants and servants to fantasize Katharina’s nudity and her marital relations with him by sexualizing Katharina’s wardrobe” (105). This submits Katharina to defining herself solely by his presentation of her person. Korda similarly places Katharina’s subject under control of Petruchio, placing him as a microsystem of the economic economy. She relates that Katharina “can prove herself a worthy caretaker of commodities only by destroying her own cherished
commodity, her fashionable cap” (128). To do so, Katharina must demonstrate herself as a “vicarious consumer” that “not for herself, in her own interest, but for that of her husband (128).

Taking a more positive outlook on the scene, Beck and Baumlin see Katharina’s willingness to dispense with the cap as emblematic of her rejection at being defined through the patriarchal system of her peers. Ervin notes that “by telling Kate to discard her cap Petruchio is actually freeing Kate from patriarchal subservience” and “is now at liberty to do and say what she wants” (p 9). Baumlin considers the cap scene a “game,” and therefore is approached by both Petruchio and Katharina with the spirit of play. When Katharina throws down the cap at his command she shows “she is willing now to incorporate teamwork into their marriage” (249).

As noted in the second chapter, it is absolutely essential that the cap Katharina removes be the same cap she was initially refused at her and Petruchio’s house. The cap symbolically displays the removal of her status anxieties. I would like to now return to this scene and examine it more closely as not only presenting the symbolic removal of her social status anxiety, but as the recognition of her own independent identity. When Petruchio initially denied Katharina the cap, he separated her from her fixation on clothing as an unbreakable clothing-status dualism. The invulnerability of this dualism is now broken in Katharina’s current understanding. When Katharina willfully removes the cap, she has recognized her earlier fixation as a fixation, and correspondingly she recognizes that it is indeed a “bauble” (5.2.126) when contrasted to her earlier notions of its worth.

Katharina’s final speech emphasizes performance over substance, denying the agreement between her words and reference to her nature. She commands, for instance, that “it is not love that subjected wives offer to their masters, but the appearance of love” (Sirluck 430). Soule considers the speech for the boy actor “an ultimate demonstration of his impersonative skills,”
noting that here the boy is impersonating, not a woman, but the “Lord’s prescription” (178).

Rebhorn argues that the speech is itself ironic, as it “subverts […] the social order” (326).

In presenting herself as a tool of presentation, rather than as representation, Katharina demonstrates that she is now functioning under a dual identity. On the social level, her identity is purely public, that is this aspect of her person is solely devoted to interacting, and thus reciprocating the value systems of her peers. On the personal level, she recognizes that her nature does not necessarily have to coincide with the public presentation she gives in her speech and in interacting with her peers. Public presentation has no influence over her private nature, and therefore it doesn’t really matter what she says so far as her nature is concerned. When she was angry at Petruchio’s refusal of her cap, Katharina’s response rings true in consideration of the separation of a private subject from public discourse. She was “free/ even to the uttermost […] in words” (4.3.79-80). In this former scene Katharina was heart-broken, but pointed out that even if her heart really did break, her words would continue.

Katharina does have some truth in her speech. Wives must, according to prevailing social expectations, obey their husbands so far as public reputation is concerned. But other sections seem fabricated. Katharina claims,

I see our lances are but straws,

Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,

That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.

(5.2.177-179)

This in particular seems at odds with her behavior, especially considering the great presence on-stage Katharina reveals and revels in by making this speech. She steals the scene.
By re-presenting the subordination commonplaces of Renaissance England, Katharina returns to the status fixations with which she began by her role as shrew. However, the situation has changed. In her initial state, Katharina was ostracized by her peers and labeled as a “shrew” in an attempt to symbolically lower her status. In the final scene at Baptista’s, Katharina is now accepted and has inverted the roles by berating the other wives’ behavior as inappropriate to their status. In this apparent transformation, Katharina has, while returning to her community, not actually changed her nature.

Her static nature is noted by Culpeper, who reveals that, despite her apparent conversion, “Katharina never relinquishes all shrew-like behavior” (310). More importantly, Petruchio seems to encourage, rather than discourage her shrewish acts when she can do so in a more acceptable context (311). Petruchio’s commands,” Culpeper observes, to “physical violence, strongly asserting a particular state of affairs, and hogging conversational space” (311), are all “prototypically shrewish behaviors” (311). Like Sly, Katharina does not become what she pretends to be (Daniell 80). Newman expands this conclusion, likening Katharina’s words to what Jameson called an “‘ideological mirage’” (Renaissance Family 145). These indicate an immunity of subject and the disjointed state of identity, and help solidify Katharina’s and Petruchio’s dual subjects, social and personal. The social identity of the pair rests with status, and comments upon their resistance to the status anxieties of the period.

In my first chapter I revealed how the Renaissance status anxiety permeated every aspect of their culture, including Shrew. Thus, in Shrew status anxiety plays an ever-present role in not only in the rejection and acceptance of Katharina, but in how Petruchio presents himself as a vagrant, and in how the other peers rely on status and accepted indices for status as a method for subject identification. Yet, as Katharina’s and Petruchio’s acts—as well as the numerous
transpositions of class through clothing—demonstrate, the personal subject is by no means
knowable through external identifications.

Thus, the status preoccupations towards knowing another’s subject, and thereby claiming
group membership, become the root of many of the problems in the play. Status is to blame for
why Sly cannot be a lord. It is because her behavior is at odds with the method of determining
status that Katharina finds hers symbolically lowered through the label of shrew. Petruchio is
asked to leave his wedding because his clothes do not befit his status. Vincentio is refused entry
because his status is not recognizable, and experiences the same kind antagonism originally
directed at Katharina. Each of these things, and others, demonstrate that status identification—an
aspect of status anxiety—is a constantly looming threat for all involved.

In constructing themselves with dual discourse identities, Katharina and Petruchio create
Fox-Genovese’s “lived twoness” which Hodgdon describes as “the dialectic of sundered identity,
the double consciousness of individuals who simultaneously identify with the dominant culture
and with the marginal community to which they belong” (542). This dual identity allows them to
function in both realms, private and social, without doing so in terms of one another. In a sense,
Katharina and Petruchio are able to ignore the need for prioritization in bridging personal and
social realms that results in the Renaissance status anxiety. They recognize that the realms are
separate, and therefore acting in either requires adaptability, shifting from one context to the
other, rather than trying to find a way to determine personal subject from social.

As a result, Petruchio, and especially Katharina, do not have to reciprocate the status
labels placed on them by their peers. Katharina’s case at the beginning of the play was unusual in
that she was caught between her public role as a gentlewoman, and her marginalized persona as a
socially deviant shrew. She seemed worried she might be ejected from her social sphere if she did not reflect the shrewish qualities.

In the end, Katharina’s words are like her clothes; they do not indicate her status except in the public sphere. They hold no direct tie to her nature, though they do reveal her intelligence and wit. The words are just an assumed appearance. Katharina’s final speech is just like Petruchio’s wedding performances, except that while he dropped to the lowest of the low, she is raised up. Both are over the top. But she can do this. Just as Petruchio did not lose his status by his behavior at the wedding—after all, everyone involved went through with it and still spoke to him afterward—and Katharina did not lower her status by acting the shrew, so can she as well raise her own status in the eyes of her peers from shrew to gentlewoman, ending the play by paying homage to the societal expectations for her behavior.

Lucentio ends the play with a question: “’Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so” (5.2.193). He thus challenges the authenticity of Katharina’s speech, hinting that her subject has not been “tamed;” she is as choleric as she ever was. But her public behavior has changed. He and the other peers will never get to see her private subject in public ever again. The truth is that Katharina has not been tamed, but it doesn’t really matter if she has. Her shrewish nature was a public label, an attempt by her community to pressure her socially deviant behavior into the only paradigm they could allow to take such action, lowering her status to a figure from common folk belief. But such labels, Katharina has learned, have no authority over her subject. She could never be tamed, because there was never anything to tame. Both “taming” and “shrew” are public notions, and could not ever change her identity.
CONCLUSION

By the end of The Taming of the Shrew, Katharina has come to understand herself and her subject as entities independent of social expectations, and therefore the adoption of those expectations at the end of the play only reveals her person as a member of her community of peers, rather than her actual nature. The dissolution of the clothing-status matrix allows her and Petruchio to abandon their Elizabethan social dualisms to remedy their own social status anxieties, and are no longer bound by this obsession. She realizes that “shrew” is only a label applied by her peers in an attempt to control her nature, and can therefore be ignored.

Given this result, it is tempting to portray Petruchio as a teacher and mentor, giving credence to interpreting the taming action as a sort of “eikastic education” for the audience, using Katharina’s dramatic actions to “tame humanity’s asocial passions in the interests of civility” (Brooks 8). However, this kind of treatment of the taming action, whether the action itself is an education for the audience, or that Katharina is educated within the drama through Petruchio’s example (Perret 228) and/or rhetoric (Robhorn 295), does not account for the abundant play of status within this education or for the contradictions in Katharina’s final speech. If she is “educated”—which we can read as subordinated to the social expectations for her behavior—then we are left without a motive for the seemingly ironic content of her speech in 5.2. Thus, while seeing the taming action as an education and Petruchio wholly as a teacher for the duration of the play provides a satisfactory answer for the taming action, it leaves far too much unanswered concerning the rest of the events. In truth, at the beginning of the play we see Petruchio as bound as Katharina to social preconceptions, traveling to Padua only to “wive it wealthily” (1.2.74). No statements are given that he has come to educate, or even that he has
heard of some rich shrew in Padua which he will then take to task for her wealth. We have no hint that he or Katharina should come to a mutual understanding.

While Katharina is “educated” at the end of the play, this education is the realization not that she needs to conform her subject to the expectations of her peers, but that she need only conform her discourse while among them. As the Katharina and Petruchio leave, we can infer from their earlier games and Katharina’s speech that they now operate outside the system of social peers, manipulating it for their own benefit. The anxiety is gone from these two, but given the Widow’s insistence during the banquet that Katharina is still a shrew (5.2.28), we can conclude that the other peers gathered have not found this very essential “mean meaning.” This raises the question of whether the performance of The Taming of the Shrew, because it is reliant upon the social status anxieties of the period, can provide any relief for them.

After Katharina’s final words fade, and she gives Petruchio his long awaited kiss, the pair exits the stage happily. But the play does not end on this high happy note. Instead, Hortensio and Lucentio continue speaking, leaving Lucentio to finally end the act with the direction for us to consider how “’Tis a wonder […] she will be tamed so” (5.2.193), emphasizing the inapplicability of taming to Katharina’s person, but also projecting the drama outward into the audience.

Lucentio’s words are troubling. He undermines the feeling of comfort gained from Petruchio’s and Katharina’s success. Lucentio’s obstinate presence signals that the drama does not end with Katharina returning to society, but with the consideration of how we might incorporate the unfolded actions in our thoughts following the drama.

Lucentio’s direction holds particular relevance in whether we interpret the play as farce. If the play is farce, then Lucentio’s words seem to serve no worthy purpose, providing weak
humor with what we can only conclude is bedazzlement at Katharina’s conversion, lessening the high note left to us by the pair’s departure. To assume that Shrew is farce, rather than comedy proper, would also nullify any attempts at assigning a sophisticated interpretation to the play, let alone one that focuses intensely on status as a driving force. So significant is this label that Tillyard devotes several pages of Shakespeare’s Early Comedies to the discussion of whether The Taming of the Shrew functions as a farce or comedy proper. He begins by defining farce as a work that ends with “laughter through incongruity, with [the] object of giving [the] mind a holiday (44). A “comedy proper” instead examines “Man’s relations with his neighbor and society and his need to come to terms with them. Tillyard finally concludes that though the play has a distinctive “primitive strain that coexists with the more civilized one,” “as a whole it is a comedy […] with the excellent social moral that you must always look beneath the surface” (80-81).

In projecting the Shrew outward into the audience, Lucentio’s closing remarks moves the play into a new interpretative context, asking us to examine the ramifications of the revealed social moral. Previous to this point, the actions and characters within the play can be understood based on how they react with one another. In the new context, now it is the experiences and thoughts of the audience which are used to re-interpret the play’s final products: the return of Katharina, the place of clothing in determining subject, and the relation of status to public perceptions. To understand these, further questions emerge: how much fidelity can we admit to Katharina’s success in the play? Does the play seek to deconstruct the status anxieties of its audience? To answer both of these questions, we are forced to consider the play’s influence in regard to the issues of status and clothing. Any interpretation of Katharina’s success must be placed alongside these issues because of Lucentio’s remark.
At its most basic level, the ending of _The Taming of the Shrew_ is a product of anxiety, the Renaissance status anxiety in the characters and the audience, but also a much more prosaic form of anticipation as the audience hangs waiting for Katharina to refuse her husband’s commands. We wait, Michael Shurgot advises in “From Fiction to Reality: Character and Stagecraft in _The Taming of the Shrew,_” for an “authoritative response” from Petruchio as the moment drags on (339). The longer the silence, “the greater the dramatic tension” (Shurgot 339). In short, we stand waiting because we have become involved in the drama that has unfolded, unable to easily reject the events as pure escapism.

When Petruchio and Katharina challenge Padua’s status anxieties, we know that they do so only within the context of the play, being neither “real people” or acting in a verifiably “real” manner, instead presenting what is most likely what Emily Detmer notes as “heterosexual relations which the play’s comedy seeks to romanticize” (283). Nevertheless, by adopting the period standards for clothing and the accompanying status anxiety, _Shrew_ continues to hold a degree of the mimetic, imitating real world issues and giving the audience something to grasp in order to understand Katharina’s transformation, as well as the dissolution of the appearance-subject dualism. We cannot, however, assume that the play is wholly mimetic in representing life as it really occurs, or that the audience would accept the play as such. _Shrew_ concerns the elite and the preoccupations of the elite, yet the elite of London presented only perhaps 10% of the population (Harbage 55), and while we might infer that private performances of _Shrew_ would contain a greater number of elite spectators, the same inference is less certain in regard to public performances. The chance of an entirely elite audience attending _Shrew_ that could be depended upon to see the play as wholly mimetic to their situation, or that such an audience could be expected to react to the play by addressing the status anxieties in their own persons after
watching the drama, is unlikely. Limiting the play’s audience to just the elite by interpreting the play as an elixir remedy to status anxiety is therefore not valid. Instead, the discussion of status anxieties and clothing in *Shrew* needs to be addressed on its relevancy to all strata of society.

When Katharina returns to society, we have the sense that her identity, status, and clothing are now secure against the perceptions of her peers and, as such, this formerly deviant woman echoes Griselda. She has not only been redeemed, but is a laudable, even inspirational, example for other wives. Accompanying this message of redemption is a subversive theme that such standards are easy to mimic, because they have no actual relation to her private subject, thereby paradoxically confirming social pressures while mocking their substance.

Lucentio’s invitation for us to “wonder” at Katharina’s final state seems more a question, asking us to place our own ideas on status and decorum for women alongside Katharina’s new sense of identity. As her new identity runs counter to the prevalent period status anxieties displayed in the text, an Elizabethan audience might find Lucentio’s words unsettling, because they threaten the tenets of the existing social order. We, who are not necessarily bound by these anxieties, still must, in light of Lucentio’s invitation, ask ourselves if we do not also in some way perpetuate the mores that necessitate Katharina’s taming in finding enjoyment at the process.

Lucentio’s words thus act to move the play towards a social critique of the audience. He asks us to reconsider Katharina’s taming, subtly emphasizing that we should second-guess any acceptance of her portrayal as an ideal “trophy wife,” and revise our opinions more favorably towards concluding that she could never “be tamed so.” In this he communicates a negative criticism of the type of narrow role stereotyping that Katharina initially violates and eventually seems to adopt. Interpreting the events of *Shrew* must as well consider how the audience might react to this sort of attack on their persons.
Faced with this sort of accusation, it is not unrealistic to consider that an audience member might try to reject mimesis entirely, viewing Shrew as pure phantasia or dream. Sly’s eagerness to let “the world slip” (Ind. 2.139) seems to suggest this same course of action to the audience. As a dream, the fiction becomes disconnected from reality, removing the sense that the events witnessed were, or should be taken as, real. In such a case, Shakespeare’s later words from the mouth of Puck, that “this weak and idle theme,/ [is] no more yielding but a dream,/ Gentles, do not reprehend” (MND 5.1.422-424) is perhaps the most illuminating. Once judged as phantasia, any social criticism present within Shrew can be easily dismissed by the viewer, being only a “weak and idle theme,” and therefore beneath notice.

The correspondences with reality in the drama, however—such as status anxiety and clothing as an index and unknowable subject—are not so easily dismissed as fiction, and reverberate semantically with the audience because of their close approximations with outer existing social orders, regardless of whether the audience judges the work a dream or not. The idea that a “shrew” can be reformed is likewise not so easy to dismiss as mere fiction, as the concept of a socially deviant woman being classified as a “shrew” bases itself on the understanding that an audience member would recognize that Katharina is acting in a socially deviant manner. At the heart of this recognition may indeed be that the “woman” performing Katharina was to all likelihood a boy actor (Dusinberre 68). In presenting himself as the opposite sex, the boy very likely would have drawn upon accepted stereotypes to portray “a delivery that would have been perceived […] as ‘unfeminine’” (Soule 176) by displaying words that “are not only disobedient and ill-tempered, but also spoken considerably louder than those of the others (176). We can conclude that Katharina’s eventual reformation is marked by similarly stereotyped ideas of submission to her husband’s desires.
Aside from just the submission and accommodation of wifely stereotypes, Katharina comes to adopt other layers of the mimetic in her performance that audience members could identify and in so doing, be forced to recognize that even within a fiction, the result of Katharina’s taming disturbs existing social pre-conceptions. Natasha Korda notes in “Household Kates: Domesticating Commodities in “The Taming of the Shrew” that Katharina presents a comment on the period’s conspicuous consumption, arguing that she “has learned how to consume nothings (voids, empty dishes, insubstantial cates) for her husband’s benefit” (128). Her counterparts the Widow and Bianca “fail to comprehend this novel form of duty,” and they “express their abhorrence at the apparently useless waste of such a fine cap” (128). In learning to “consume nothings,” Katharina has recognized that consumption is at best an adopted index for social recognition, rather than a necessity for behavior as presented in the Widow and Bianca. Thomas Moison takes a similar position, arguing that The Taming of the Shrew leaves “unaffirmed the contemporary mystifications [read ‘idealizing’] of the social order of Shakespeare’s England to which it alludes, while giving voice to the discordancies of class those mystifications would suppress” (290).

The ideal of a reformed shrew is, while satisfying to the concept of an absolute and perfect social order, this ideal also presents a conflict by giving voice to those, such as the deviant, that are supposedly being suppressed. Popularizing reconciliation for the deviant creates a counter-current where the community does not remove a deviant individual—because s/he still has the potential for confirming the social order—despite the threat posed by him or her to the existing social order, but keeps it within the community in hope of future reform, thus emphasizing the shrew over other, non-reformable deviants. While the constant presence of a shrew in an otherwise stable community is immediately noticeable, s/he is not removed.
Interpretation of *The Taming of the Shrew* and Katharina’s actions therein, in regard to the relief of social status anxiety, creates an influence that similarly cannot be easily abandoned. If the play is seen as wholly mimetic—that is the events represent perfectly the mores of its audience—the social and subject expectations for women must be accepted as potentially flawed in the play because shrewish behavior is being subtly encouraged to remain, weakening the formative social preconceptions that necessitated ostracizing the shrew in the first place. If the play is dismissed as fiction or a dream, the mimetic elements necessary to follow the plot development still allow the social and subject expectations for women to be potentially weakened in application to real life.

To avoid this condition, the characters and events are subjected to a societal “safety-valve” that mythologizes successful social deviants like Katharina into the oral tradition, where they can be viewed as unrealistic personae and thus not be expected to portray “real” women. Historical records are replete with stories of successful, and politically powerful mythic women in what seem to be dominantly androcentric cultures: Judith¹², the Goddess Hera, as well as the Griselda and Lucrece, who are deliberately invoked by Petruchio in the play (2.1.292-293). Several deviant¹³ women of England had, by the time of Shakespeare, already been subjected to mythologizing in popular literature and drama of the period. The most notable of these is Queen Elizabeth I¹⁴ in numerous stories, ballads, and dramas, but to a lesser degree the Christian “martyrs¹⁵” of Anne Askew¹⁶ and Queen Katherine Parr¹⁷. By this process, the socially deviant women are created into socially acceptable persons, because even if they did exist—in the case of Elizabeth I the mythologizing of her person began during her reign—the women can now be safely presented as exceptional beings, removed from the everyday person.
Perhaps the most well-known of the above women that undergo this mythologizing treatment are Apocryphal heroine Judith and Queen Elizabeth I. Both of these women transcend the social deviance through their characterizations as mythic figures that preserve, rather than dismiss, the dominant androcentric mores of their cultures. Judith is a widow who defends Israel by offering to sleep with the opposing general Holofernes, then cutting off his head later in the night (Book of Judith12.16-13.8). Judith is deviant in that first, she succeeds by sleeping with the enemy—a task only associated with less respectable women, even today—and second, in acting to save Israel from an opposing army, Judith seems to be acting in the traditional male role of soldier or general. However, Gail Streete notes in The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible that Judith’s actions are excused as “extraordinary” and do not act as exemplary endorsements of women’s sexual freedom” (17). Margarita Stocker finds a similar conclusion in “Biblical Story and the Heroine” that by showing exemplary faith and duty by “loving God and her husband, Judith’s sexuality is voided” (89). Stocker further characterizes “Elizabeth [I as] an honorary man because she is a Virgin Queen,” because her (Elizabeth’s) image confirms ideas of chastity for women (95).

These mythologized figures are no longer real and seem to center around only a few, well-defined characteristics. Judith is repeatedly juxtaposed as an epitome of faith, while Elizabeth is associated with power because of her figurative purity. Similarly, the figure of Griselda that Petruchio invokes (2.1.292) is used as a symbol of faithfulness in the folk tradition. Transformation into one these archetypes makes the figure easy to place into an existing ethos to praise or blame. The women given above ran counter to their male-dominated cultures by holding positions of political influence and authority. In her position as a widow18, Judith is already a social outcast, and therefore “mythologizes the Other” (Stocker 95) in Israelite society.
Yet Judith is seen as a heroine. Her deviant outcast traits are presented as the result of divine selection, enabling her to save her people, and are therefore subordinated to the religious role, mythologizing her person as a divine heroine, rather than a representative everyday woman.

The mythologizing process, while it makes the socially deviant women more acceptable, can result in actually expanding the influence of these individuals. Citing the results of Ridgeway’s study of social deviancy in 1981, Harris and Hill note that it has “experimentally been demonstrated that nonconformity may, under certain circumstances, enhance rather than reduce influence” (164). This discovery is significant. In abandoning reality, the women were made into figures of caricature that emphasized only their most dominant aspects. The portrayals that Foxe paints of female martyrs like Askew and Parr are definitively inspirational. But, in his treatment of Askew, for example, Foxe solders his own conceptions of her identity on her figure, distorting Askew into a new, more compelling persona (Freeman and Wall 1191). Cast within the mythic tradition, these women’s influence expanded. This is what has happened to Katharina.

The idea of this sort of Shakespearian influence is not without precedent. Baumlin suggests that the influence of Petruchio’s use of language for personal gain is “reincarnated” throughout Shakespeare’s works into several character like his own:

From the professional “corruptors” of words, Touchstone and the other sophisticated fools, to the delightful and deadly Falstaff, to the naïve Dogberry, whose passion for sophistry unfortunately cannot insure his mastery over language, to Iago, who fascination with the power demiurgic language is matched only by his intense love of evil, even finally Prospero, who discovers his tragic potential for misuse of linguistic power.

(253)
Admittedly, Baumlin’s assignation of Petruchio may be a little optimistic, as her observation bases itself solely on the characteristic of language for personal gain, but nevertheless the pervasive influence that one character might show is clearly presented. Judith Weil provides a more applicable notion of the influence of Shakespeare on Shakespeare. She argues that *All’s Well That Ends Well* is a direct response to the “effects of desire” in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Weil’s argument is of particular note because Helena sees herself undergoes a purely textual process of degradation (66) quite similar to mythologizing, calling her subject “but the shadow of a wife you see./ The name and not the thing” and unexpectedly by implication confirming her own identity as someone independent of Bertram’s former wife (*AWW* 5.3.309). Helena molds the social perception of her deviancy at the bed-trick (*Weil* 68) by acting at the behest of the king (*AWW* 2.1.204). In returning to the character of Katharina, it is therefore quite possible that process also occurs to her person, achieving a final product that serves to separate what we might consider as her identity, from the societal restrictions she faced as a shrew.

In mythologizing deviant women, their resulting personae have gained influence, continuing to impact their cultures and existing in literature long after their deaths alongside the patriarchal hero figures and values that they were mythologized to protect. This is what has occurred in Katharina, serving to sunder her reliance on the social presentation of “shrew,” and instead re-creating her person in the image of her subject, “Kate.”

Prior to *The Taming of the Shrew* (c. 1590-1593) no “Katharinas,” “Katherines” or “Kates” appear in Shakespeare’s plays. Post-Shrew, several “Kates” and “Katherines” are found who display shrewish natures: Katherine, of *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (c. 1595) is a witty lady that mocks—along with her companions—her lover’s letters (5.2.51-52); Hotspur’s wife Kate of *Henry IV P.1 & 2* (c. 1596-97, 1597-98) meets her husband’s fire by dubbing him a “mad-
headed ape” (1H4 2.3.77), echoing Katharina Minola’s epithet for Petruchio in 2.1; and Stephano of The Tempest (c. 1611) sings that Kate “had a tongue with a tang,/ Would cry to a sailor, Go hang!” (2.2.50-51). Katharina’s persistent nature shows up again and again in these above women, despite her person in Shrew being entirely fictional and initially bound the social label of “shrew,” because her character has been mythologized. Shrew’s influence resonates throughout the rest of Shakespeare’s career, and any reference thereafter brings to mind Katharina Minola and her success against prevailing social pressures.

Finally, The Taming of the Shrew cannot be considered as a remedy to the social status anxiety that underlies its plot. At best, the play can only provide a moment’s relief. But, as time marches on, it grows apparent in Shakespeare’s later works that the separation of Katharina from her social pressures in appearance, clothing, and subject in Shrew has persisted, and her presence lives on in drama, not as a social outcast, but as a woman of fiery and wry tongue. Her success, and her escape from anxiety, is lasting.
NOTES

1 I have seen this play performed over 20 times, and never seen a production yet that allows her the cap, nor have I found one in dramatic reviews.

2 Most editors seem to be of a similar mind. Two representative examples can be found in Bevington and the Folger (1992) editions, which insert the identical command of “[She obeys].”

3 See chapter 1

4 See chapter 2

5 Hodgdon considers three of Petruchio’s acts as feminine: “outdressing” Katharina at their wedding in 3.2; assuming the shrewish role at home (4.1.63) and then in presuming to know about Katharina’s clothes with the tailor (4.3), but she might also have considered Marion Perret’s conclusion of Petruchio pretending to be a wife.


7 Of note here is Franco Zeffirelli’s The Taming of the Shrew 1966, with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in the lead roles.
“Light” functions on multiple connotative levels in the conversation. The word can refer to weight, being lascivious, or musically (footnote in Bevington 125). However, “light” is also a period term for a prostitute (Harbage 75), greatly exaggerating the sense of “lascivious” we might expect from Petruchio’s and Katharina’s meaning.

The story of Grissel (Griselda) rests in the oral tradition, and as such has no official record. For the purposes of comparison, Boccaccio’s presentation of Grissel in Decameron, day 10. tale 10 (New York: Horace Liveright 1925) presents an adequate point of reference, containing all the points central to the Griselda motif (Aarne-Thompson type 887).


See chapter 2


“Deviant” it should be noted again, refers to women operating contrary to social expectations. Queen Elizabeth I then, as a powerful and intelligent woman is therefore deviant.

The list of Renaissance works mythologizing Elizabeth is long and began even during her reign, including works such as William Gager’s Dido (1583), Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene (first three books 1590), the anonymous play Arden...
of Faversham (1592), and several plays post-Shrew, including the non-canonical Shakespeare play Henry VIII.

15 I use this word as both Askew and Parr are mythologized in John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.


17 Foxe, John, Book of Martyrs.

18 Oxford Annotated Bible. Other versions of this story do exist that do not portray Judith as a Widow.


20 The date of LLL is in considerable dispute based which political events are assumed to be alluded to in the play (Bevington A-3). Francis Meres references the play in 1598, but allusions in the play to the King of Navarre seem to indicate an earlier date for first production. However, if the masque of 5.2 is a reference to Gray’s Inn, the play may be the result of a revision at a later date. I am choosing a point in the middle of the time span in light of a satirical account of the King of Navarre appearing in 1594 (Bevington A-3), as well as the presence of an all-too-Katharinaeque [sic] Katherine.
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