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W. SHAKESPEARE'S "THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"
AS A PLAY OF MANIPULATION

Despite all the controversies concerning the source dependencies between an anonymous play "A Pleasant Conceited History Called The Taming of A Shrew" (1594) and Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" (published for the first time in the First Folio - 1623) there has never been any doubt that in general the plays are very similar¹. In both the plays we have an age-old² motive of a drunkard who while sleeping is transported to a life of luxury by a lord and in both cases his adventure provides an excuse for the presentation of a players' play constituting the bulk of the respective works. "A Shrew" and "The Shrew" seem to share then the same play-within-the play structure which was especially popular in the 1580's and early 1590's in the English theatre when it was "one way of exploring the new selfsufficiency of a stage world which had only recently become entirely secular and needed to redefine its relationship

¹ See: "The Arden Edition of Shakespeare - The Taming of the Shrew, ed. B. Morris, London 1961. The Taming of A Shrew in appendix I, p. 303-305. All the references to the texts of the plays will be to this edition.

² See: G. B u l l o u g h, The Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, London 1964, vol. I, p. 100-124. It is interesting to note here that via Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" we also have Polish versions of the same story: a carnival comedy "Peasant into King" ("Z chłopów król") by Piotr Baltyka (1640) and "Mr Jovial" ("Pan Jowialski") by Alexander Fredro (1832).

with an audience coming to the theatre now less for instruction than delight"³.

Here however the problem begins, since the play-within-the-play structure is only fully realized in "A Shrew", where Sly after the Induction does not disappear from the stage but similar to the Citizen and his wife of "The Knight of the Burning Pestle"⁴, takes a lively interest in the performance staged for him. He wants to see the fool again, is very much against sending people to prison and he likes the play so much that the Lord has to give him more drink to make him fall asleep when the end of the play approaches and he is to be taken back to the tavern. The purpose of the Induction with the reference to the play is made perfectly clear by Sly's returning to the opening setting of the play after the play-within-the-play is over. When he awakes at dawn, he believes that he has had "the best dreame that ever I had in my life" (s. xix). This ending suggests that the successful subjugation of a wife by the will of her husband he has just watched, has been imaginary. The reality of Sly's situation is his own shrewish wife awaiting him at home and thus he starts off to try out on her the methods he has just acquired:

[...] I know now how to tame a shrew,
I dreamt upon it all this night till now,
..... but Ile to my
Wife presently and tame her too
and if she anger me.

(s. xix)

Thus in "A Shrew" we have a circular structure of the play and are left with the feeling that Sly will re-enact the taming scenes⁵. Moreover, Sly's return to reality draws a definite

³ A. B a r t o n, The Taming of the Shrew: Introduction, [in:] The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, Boston 1974, p. 108.

⁴ F. B e a u m o n t, The Knight of the Burning Pestle, ed. M. Hattaway, London 1969,

⁵ This perhaps explains why in I. Nunn's production for the Royal Shakespeare Company (1967) the same actor was used for the roles of Sly and Petruchio while producing "The Taming of the

border between the real and the imaginary; the real applying to Sly and the imaginary to the play-within-the play. It leaves us in no doubt that the taming of Katherina, and indeed the whole of the players' play should not be accepted as reality. The closing speech of Katherina is distanced by Sly's scene and because of that it loses much of its impact.

Shakespeare's "The Shrew" does not follow the same pattern. The first and most obvious deviation is its volume. Although as in "A Shrew" the Induction consists of only two scenes Sly does not return at the end of the players' play. In fact, apart from one intrusion which he makes at the end of scene 1 act I he disappears from the play altogether. All kinds of explanations for this state of things have been proposed⁶, the most popular being that the last page of the manuscript in which Sly returned was somehow lost, that perhaps Shakespeare forgot about his opening character and setting when he finished the play, or that his scene was left to the improvisation of the actors and was never written. Indeed some directors have felt so strongly about this, apparent lack of conclusion to the play that they have supplied an extra scene, drawn from the anonymous "A Shrew"⁷.

Despite all the carefully worked out suppositions concerning the ending of Shakespeare's "The Shrew" the fact remains that the play has been left to us in its present form and Heminge and Condell did not see anything wrong or unusual in it while preparing its first edition. H. G. Goddard's opinion that Shakespeare saw his chance for a slyer and profounder relationship between the Induction and the players' play than it is usually supposed⁸, is quite plausible.

Taking that Shakespeare's play has no missing scenes the

Shrew" with the addition of the scenes from "The Taming of A Shrew".

⁶ The Arden Shakespeare - The Taming of the Shrew, p. 12-50.

⁷ A. L e g g e t t, Shakespeare's Comedy of Love, London 1974, p. 42.

⁸ H. C. G o d d a r d, The Meaning of Shakespeare, Chicago 1951, p. 73.

question arises of what he was hoping to achieve; why he decided against the conventional ending and created in fact a two-part play. The obvious conclusion is that the lack of a scene returning Sly to the alehouse is also a lack of return to reality. This throws an ambiguous light on the states of reality and the supposedly less real scenes of the play. The distancing between Katherina in her final speech and the audience becomes minimized by the omission of such a scene and the entire action of the play is brought closer to us. The suspension of disbelief is fully enforced and not negated by Sly as soon as it has become effective and permitted the players' play to make its point.

The uncertainty as to what is real and unreal in the play is brought about in the first place by the distribution of these two notions. The episodes that would be considered as real i.e. the main taming plot of Katherina and the sub-plot of Bianca, occupy the majority of the play (12 scenes) and they constitute the focal point of concentration. While Sly, being the focal point for a relatively brief time and only at the beginning of the play, makes it quite possible for the audience⁹ to forget that the Katherina plot is, in fact, a players' play and dispensing with him, there is a suggestion that the reality which he represents is also dispensed with.

The end of Shakespeare's Induction leaves Sly elevated, if not actually to the position of the lord, at least to a life-style which can be compared to that of the lord. We have really no choice but accept this end, as thinking past the end of the play to what might happen and what might be the outcome, would be no more or less ridiculous than trying to establish how many children Lady Macbeth had¹⁰. Not only must we accept

⁹ This probably happens more often to theatre-goers than to readers of the play, as the latter have more time to consider the nature of Sly's role. The BBC 2 production of "The Taming of the Shrew" by J. Miller (shown on the Polish TV in 1986) cut the whole Sly episode and this may have been because he felt that if the episode was not important, or if we were likely to forget about it during the action, it might as well not be included.

¹⁰ See: L. C. Knights, How Many Children Had Lady Mac-

an elevated Sly, but also a tamed Katherina, an almost shrewish Bianca and a victorious Petruchio, and all these states are established in a play that has depicted characters changing roles throughout its action. This role-switching exaggerates the unreal aspects of the players' play, and in doing so, makes the more real and gradual change of Katherina more acceptable by comparison.

Sly's elevation is brought about by the intervention in his life by the Lord and the direct manipulation of his environment and social position. In his case, as A. Leggatt observes, "the new life is accepted as truth, and he moves into it with some difficulty, but with increasing confidence. Moreover in the play, as we have it, we never see him disillusioned. His acceptance of his new role set off a chain reaction that runs through the rest of the play, as new experiences are opened out for the characters and for the audience"¹¹.

Katherina, too, is a changed person, subservient to Petruchio, and prepared to play the role of the ideal wife. Her change has been brought about by her "lord" Petruchio, who also manipulated her environment, and life-style. "The Shrew" then deals with a kind of metamorphosis for both Sly and Katherina, brought about by the external manipulation moving them from one reality to another, permanently. It seems to be more than coincidence that in the Induction the Lord while convincing Sly of his present wealth and status draws his attention to the paintings presenting the metamorphoses of gods and men¹².

Sec. Serv.: "Dost thou love pictures? We will fetch thee
straight
Adonis painted by a running brook,
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath
Even as the waving sedges play with wind,

beth, [in:] Explorations; Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century, London 1964, p. 13-50.

¹¹ Leggatt, op. cit., p. 42.

¹² P. Swinden, An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies, London 1979, p. 13-50.

Lord: W'll show thee Io as she was a maid,
And how she was beguiled and surpris'd,
As lively painted as the deed was done".

(Ind. ii, 50-57)

The structure of "The Shrew" as it is now, without the return of Sly, suggests that such metamorphoses are possible in reality, through manipulation, and indeed they are, as the whole play is a manipulation of actors and audience by Shakespeare. A. Richter's observation that in Elizabethan times "men who watched a dramatic performance of any kind, or pondered a classical comedy in manuscript, seem to have been tempted to equate the real world with the imaginary kingdom of the stage, to describe Man as an actor and assign either to fate or to God Himself the double position of dramatist and audience"¹³ is in fact with the twentieth century modifications' valid today.

The dichotomy of real and unreal is fuzzy throughout the play. Sly waking in the Lord's castle is unsure of what is a dream and what is reality:

Or do I dream? Or have I dream'd till now?

(Ind. ii, 70)

We, the audience, and the Lord's men feel superior in our knowledge of Sly's position in the Lord's household. This surely must have also happened in Shakespeare's times, but the identity and the nature of Sly's supposed wife were unknown to the audience because in an Elizabethan production all the female parts were played by boys¹⁴, and thus the audience equally were gulled while suspending their belief and they were not superior to Sly in their perception of the situation he is presented with.

Scene v act Iv when Petruchio and Katherine are on their way to Padua presents the same theme which continues the ex-

¹³ A. Richter, Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play, London 1962, p. 65.

¹⁴ A. Gurr, The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642, Cambridge 1980, p. 78-112.

ploration of the relationship between the real and the imaginary. Their meeting with Vincentio brings back the questions of sexual identity. Petruchio insists that Vincentio is a fair gentlewoman and Katherine agrees in a way that suggests it matters not what he is (36-40; 44-47). Remembering that in the Elizabethan theatre male actors played female parts Shakespeare by such treatment of identity of the sexes draws our attention to the fact that everything in the theatre is far from being fixed, as the role-switching in "The Shrew" demonstrates.

In the same scene Petruchio insists that it is the moon which shines while it is the sun. In symbolic terms the Moon stands for the imaginary, dreams, intoxication, illusion and the female¹⁵. The Sun is the symbol of reality, perceptivity and masculine principle¹⁶. Katherine, having learnt the rules of her husband's game and creating her own role of an obedient wife¹⁷, accepts the imaginary (the moon) for the real (the sun), and in doing so she is eventually able to agree with Petruchio on the real (the sun) - 12-15; 16; 18-22. There must be some significance in the fact that the male-female ambiguity combined with the real-unreal ambiguity constitute the pivotal point in Katherine's taming¹⁸. Moreover, seeing this scene in the context of the relationship between the Induction and the players' play, perhaps, it is possible to suggest that the application of the imaginary to the real, can bring about a new perception of the real.

In "The Shrew" Shakespeare is portraying an image of the relationship between the Spectator and the play. I. N. Greenfield while analyzing this relationship very rightly says that

¹⁵ A Dictionary of Symbols, ed. J. E. C i r l o t, London 1962, p. 214-217.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 317-320.

¹⁷ J. R. B r o w n, Shakespeare and His Comedies, London 1968, p. 98.

¹⁸ I. N. G r e e n f i e l d, The Transformation of Christopher Sly, "The Philological Quarterly" 1954, No. 33. This relationship seemed to haunt Shakespeare as he often consciously reflected on his own art later in his career e.g. "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

Shakespeare brings his Induction into organically related condition with the main play, while the contrast between the literal world of Sly and the world of dramatic poetry seems to be emphatic and meaningful¹⁹.

Manipulation and transformation of the characters are present both in the Induction and the players' play. Sly is manipulated by the Lord, removed from one scene and awakes in another which is wholly stage-managed by the Lord.

What think you, if he were conveyed to bed,
Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
A most delicious banquet by his bed,
And brave attendants near him when he wakes,

Carry him gently to my fairest chamber,
And hang it round with all my wanton pictures.
Balm his foul head in warm distilled waters,
And burn sweet wood to make the lodging sweet.
Procure me music ready when he wakes,
To make a dulcet and a heavenly sound.

(Ind. i, 35-38:44-49)

The Lord also gives directions how the servants should act, and provides the story to convince Sly that he is now within the realms of reality (50-66). The Lord then assumes the roles of stage-manager, director, actor and the author of the play. Finding himself in this new environment Sly does not know how to behave and he in turn receives tuition in the way he must act from the Lord's servants.

When we meet Sly for the first time he is a man who does not want to accept his place in reality. He has exalted ideas about himself and is almost pathetic in trying to impress the Hostesses with his ancestry which he connects with the unreal "Richard Conqueror" (Ind. i). Thus, he aspires to a better life he leads and once the opportunity is given he insouciantly adjusts himself to his new identity and the treatment he receives, by becoming a part of this surroundings. He even tries to change his way of speaking by slipping into verse with some

¹⁹ S. C. Sen Gupta, *Shakespearian Comedy*, Oxford 1977, p. 98.

attempt at dignity²⁰. He wants to do nothing that will send him back to the life he knew, and even agrees to forget about bedding his newly acquired wife because of the danger of such a relapse:

[...] But
I would be loath to fall into my dreams again. I will
therefore tarry in despite of the flesh and the blood.

(Ind.ii,126-128)

From the outset we are aware that Katherina is also dissatisfied with her lot. Her younger sister Bianca appears to be her father's favourite as his comments on her and conversations with her are all in a positive vein, whereas his attitude towards Katherina is generally negative or indifferent (I,i). We should however remember that although Shakespeare is careful to make it clear that Katherina has good reasons to protest against her father's and sister's treatment of her. She is a stubborn and unsubmitive woman who tries to assert her own will quite overtly. She, for example, objects to being treated as part of Bianca's wedding arrangements: "I pray you, sir, is it your will to make me stale amongst these mates? (I,i, 57-58) and makes her father agree that whoever marries her must be accepted by her (II,i,127-128). By the Elizabethan standards²¹ she is really "intolerable curst, and shrewd, and froward" (I,ii,87-88). It cannot be coincidental that Katherina (like the drunken Sly by the Lord) is compared by Petruchio to an animal. He says"

Thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And 'tis my hope to end successfully.
My falcon now is sharp and passing empty,
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorg'd,
For then she never looks upon her lure.
Another way I have to man my haggard,

²⁰ B. V i c k e r s, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose*, London 1968, p. 13-14.

²¹ L. J a r d i n e, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, Brighton 1983, p. 103-140.

To make her come and know her keeper's call,
That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites
That bate and beat and will not be obedient.

(IV,1,175-183)

The main aim of Petruchio's taming of Katherine is to give her an understanding of her nature and position in society, as a woman and wife, which she preaches at the end of the play:

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,

.....

Such duty as the subject owes the prince
Even such a woman oweth to her husband.

.....

I am asham'd that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey.

.....

Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
And place your hands below your husband's foot.

(V,ii,147-148,156-157,162-165,177-178)

Resuming the idea that everything is fluid in the theatre we do not know whether Katherine, in fact a boy-actor, was expressing here her own newly acquired point of view or whether she was acting as a mouthpiece for Petruchio or even Shakespeare-man himself²². It is however important to remember that although our modern sensibility may be offended or even disgusted by her speech, in Shakespeare's times it might be the expression of the "chain of being", a hierarchy which descended from God to inanimate nature, and on this ladder a wife stood one rung lower than her husband²³. The Elizabethan Church enforced this by referring to St. Paul's letter to Ephesians: "Wives, sub-

²² It is interesting to note here that even the modern directors found it fascinating to cast a man as Katherine. See: S. Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades*, Oxford 1982, p. 189.

²³ E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, London 1978, p. 33-44.

mit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church²⁴. The common people were thus indoctrinated while listening to the Homily "Of The State of Matrimonie" (1563): "For the woman is a weake creature, not indued with like strength and constancy of minde, therefore they bee the sooner disquieted, and they bee the more prone to all weake affections and dispositions of minde, more than men bee, and lighter they bee, and more vaine in their fantisies and opinions"²⁵. In this matter as E. K. Chambers observes: "Shakespeare is instinct with the spirit of his age, and vital largely because he is instinct with it; and, without the historic sense, his ethical standpoint is in many respects incomprehensible to those who come after him"²⁶.

Petruchio's motives for taming Katherine have also been misunderstood²⁷. By modern standards he is regarded as an aggressive male who by marrying Katherine for her money bullies her into total submission²⁸. Shakespeare's audience would not, however, have seen anything strange in hard-bargaining over the dowry for at that time fiscal matters were inseperable with courtship²⁹. Undoubtedly he wants to "wive [...] wealthily in Padua" (I,ii,75) but he is also intrigued by Katherine's description (I,ii,103-106) and eventually he treats her as a challenge to his own exotic and unsubmitive nature (I,ii,197-209).

Similarly to the Lord in the Induction he stage-manages his treatment of Katherine (II,ii,169-180). He also stages his wedding and plays his role so convincingly that not only Katherine

²⁴ The Arden Shakespeare - The Taming of the Shrew, p. 146.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, London 1964, p. 40.

²⁷ W. Hazlitt, Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, Oxford 1962, p. 247.

²⁸ The Arden Shakespeare - The Taming of the Shrew, p. 144.

²⁹ L. Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800, London 1979, p. 37-51.

obeys him but so do the priest, her father and all the wedding guests (III,iii). In taming his wife he uses two complementary techniques, which he fully discusses. He "kills her in her own humour" (IV,i,189) and is "more shrew than she" (IV,i, 85-86). Katherina, like Sly is removed from the familiar, her father's house and finds herself living a life directed by Petruchio who decides how she will live, sleep, eat, dress and act.

There can be no doubt that Katherina's first week of marriage to him is unbearable and there are times when it seems impossible that she will stand so much. One of the possible explanations is that she is attracted to Petruchio, that she does not want to live in isolation as she more or less did prior to his arrival. She tells her father about Bianca's marriage:

What will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see
 She is your treasure, she must have a husband,
 I must dance bare-foot on her wedding day,
 And for your love to her lead apes in hell.
 Talk not to me, I will go and weep,
 Till I can find occasion of revenge

(II,i,31-36)

Considering Katherina's shrewish reputation, her refusal to marry Petruchio is far from convincing, she had after all her father's promise that she would be allowed to accept her future husband. (Bianca has no such promise). The tears she cries when Petruchio is late for the wedding ceremony (III,ii,26) seem not the result of wounded pride but more the result of yet another rejection and further isolation, as are the tears, she says, she will cry in the above passage. The deprivation that she undergoes in her husband's house is to improve her, and brings her to a happy relationship with him and a return to society³⁰. Both Katherina and Sly acquire a new found domestication. She, as Sly did, needed help and tuition to know how to act. In her case it is Horensio who gives her the vital clue; "Say as he says, or we shall never go" (IV,v,11).

³⁰ Barton, op. cit., p. 106-107.

Petruchio rids her of her shrewishness, originally a defense not intrinsic to her nature, and permits her to escape into freedom and love within the bonds of marriage. M. French has expressed it in the following way:

Her eventual acceptance of the inlaw feminine principle, her renunciation of its outlaw aspect (Kate's rebellion is not rooted in the desire to accomodate herself to it), led to her acceptance of the role defined for her by the social structure. She becomes "conformable as other household cates" with the result of "peace ... loove, and quiet life, an aweful rule, and right supremacy" (V,ii,108-109)³¹.

N. Frye remarks that the Katherina of the beginning of the play is not really dissimilar from the Katherina of the ending³². She is persecuting her sister Bianca but she has learnt how to do it with social approval.

Petruchio, as a very experienced man, realizes from the very outset what is pretence and illusion in Katherina's character and what is real (II,i,236-249). These are the qualities in her which he fosters and cultivates. He wins because he succeeds in showing Katherina both the unloveliness of the false personality she had adopted and the emotional truths which she had led herself to believe³³.

The ideas of role-playing, transformation and manipulation which are so important in the Induction and the taming plot are also present in the story of Bianca and her three suitors. The courting of Bianca follows the literary convention of its source G. Gascoigne's "The Supposes" (1566) which in itself is an adaptation of Ariosto's comedy "I Suppositi" (1509). They are plays of masquerading, the plots turning on disguise bring about mistakes of identity, whereby a young man may secure access to his mistress³⁴. Thus, in the Bianca plot we have the

³¹ M. French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, London 1983, p. 84.

³² N. Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*, New York 1965, p. 80.

³³ Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

³⁴ The relationships between these sources and Shakespeare's

exchange of identity of nearly half of the cast e.g. Tranio becomes Lucentio, Lucentio becomes Cambio and Hortensio becomes Lito. B. Evans rightly observes that "it is all composed of false supposes and unperceived realities"³⁵. There, however, are no psychological transformations but superficial theatrical illusions. In the course of the action the characters stage little plays in which they themselves or their friends play parts e.g. Tranio schools Lucentio and Biondello in their newly assumed roles (I,i,191-243), Hortensio tutors Petruchio in how he is to present him as Lito to Baptista (I,ii,130-136), Pedant is instructed how to play the part of Vincentio (IV,ii,100-130;iii,1-8). Their aim is to deceive the others but they themselves are never in doubt about their own identities. As in a typical theater the main attribute of playing a new role is the costume, and they easily restore to their true nature by changing back into their original clothes.

The archdeceiver and manipulator at this level of the play is Bianca. Although she does not change her clothes, she manages to fool almost all the other characters³⁶ as to her nature. She plays her part of a sweet, docile young lady in such a convincing way that her gullible audience, her admirers, overlook her occasional failings e.g. when she tells her tutors:

I am no breeching scholar in the schools,
I'll not be tied to hours nor pointed times,
But learn my lessons as I please myself.

(III,i,18-20)

At the end Bianca shows herself petty, and even shrewish (V,ii,126,13) when she achieves her good marriage to a

play are fully discussed in H. B. Charlton's *Shakespearean Comedy*, London 1949, p. 73-99.

³⁵ B. Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, Oxford 1960. p. 26.

³⁶ In fact it is only Katherine who is not deceived by her sister's behaviour:

"A pretty peat! it is best put finger in the eye, and she knew why". (I,i,78-79).

husband desperately in love, she casts off her obvious pretences and theatricality.

The stage-managing and manipulation present in "The Shrew" do not end here, but can be taken a stage further. Shakespeare, writing the play, has set the scene and provided the characters, and his treatment of the play forces us to accept these ambiguities within the play. And if we are able to accept these theatrical ambiguities we must be prepared to accept the play as a whole. We, too, are being manipulated in how to act in relation to the play. "The Shrew" seems to be about the concept of the play itself, its alternative reality, interchangeability of characters, sexual ambiguities and authorial manipulation, as well as being a play about people living in isolation, emotional poverty and about achieving maturity. Besides that it is also a play about the taming of the audience by manipulation of their reception. Thus, as Q. Daniell³⁷ says, it is high time the play stopped being called a farce or a prentice work, as it announces a new kind of Elizabethan comedy.

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"POSKROMIENIE ZŁOŚNICY" W. SZEKSPIRA
JAKO SZTUKA O MANIPULACJI

Autorka analizuje sztukę z punktu widzenia zależności pomiędzy Wstępem i główną akcją utworu, utrzymując, że brak sceny w której Sly powracałby do rzeczywistości ma wpływ na odbiór wydarzeń rozgrywających się w świecie "realnym" i świecie iluzji teatralnej. Przybieranie przez postacie dramatu roli (na skutek manipulacji zewnętrznej lub z własnej woli) podkreśla dychotomię tego odbioru. W konsekwencji utwór ten to nie tylko sztuka o osamotnieniu, ubóstwie uczuciowym i dojrzewaniu lecz, i to przede wszystkim, autorskie studium alternatywnej rzeczywistości, zmienności postaci, seksualnej dwuznaczności i teatralnej manipulacji.

³⁷ D. Daniell, Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy, [in:] The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. S. Wells, Cambridge 1980, p. 106.