

A sexist play?

Some people think this play should be issued with a government health warning! The portrait it offers of the relationship between Mm" and women arouses strong feelings:

'There is, however, a larger question at stake. It is whether there is any reason to revive a play that seems totally offensive to our age and society. My own feeling is that it should be put back firmly and squarely on the shelf.'

(Michael Billington, 1978),

'Kate has the uncommon good fortune to find Petruchio, who is man enough to know what he wants and how to get it.'

(Germaine Greer, 1970)

'One cannot help thinking a little wistfully that Petruchio discipline had something to say for itself.'

(Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1928)

'Kate is less powerful, less wealthy, less cheerful, less in die playwright's confidence - less everything than Petruchio. When the conflict with women is stressed but unequal, as it is here, we are surely justified in levelling the charge of sexism.'

(Linda Bamber, 1984)

'This Shrew was being played as Sly's dream, a male supremacist's fantasy of revenge upon women.'

(Royal Shakespeare Company programme note, 1978)

'I think it's an irresponsible and silly thing to make that play into a feminist tract. It (is) not simply the high jinks of an intolerably selfish man who was simply destroying a woman to satisfy his own vanity, but a sacramental view of the nature of marriage.'

(Jonathan Miller, 1988)

'The play shows a possibility of marriage as a rich, shared sanity.'

(David Daniell, 1986)

I will be master of what is mine own.
She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household-stuff, my field, my barn,
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.'

(Petruchio, 3.2.218-21)

'Shakespeare underwrote the idea that the state, whether it was the small state of the family or the larger state of the country, required and needed the unquestioned authority of some sort of sovereign.'

(Jonathan Miller, 1981)

'Altogether disgusting to modern sensibility.'

(George Bernard Shaw)

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

(Katherina, 5.2.155-6)

'I believe Shakespeare was a feminist.'

(Michael Bogdanov, 1988)

'File truth is that Kate's great victory is, with Petruchio's help, over herself, she has come to accept herself as having enough merits so that she call be content without having the last word and scaring everybody off.'

(R. B. Heilman, z966)

