



About *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*

William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is a "problem play" in its own way. Often play-goers are disconcerted by both Petruchio's abuse of his wife and Kate's eventual submission; certainly in the twenty-first century the play reads like profound contempt for women, and acceptance of domestic violence.

Evidently the play's patriarchal tone struck a sour note with many of Shakespeare's contemporaries as well. The proof can be found in this remarkable comedy, *The Woman's Prize, or The Taming of the Tamer*, produced during Shakespeare's lifetime and written by his only acknowledged collaborator, John Fletcher, who also succeeded him as the chief dramatist for the *King's Men* players.

The play is in every sense a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew* and can also be regarded as a satire, a burlesque, and a *tour de force* that takes the earlier play into some remarkable philosophical and feminist territory. It was written and premiered during Shakespeare's lifetime (the actual date is unknown, but likely between 1603 and 1611) and may well have been presented on a double bill with *The Taming of the Shrew*—or at least produced on close to the same dates at neighboring theaters—on one or more occasions during Shakespeare's lifetime.

In 1633 the play was revived, and its bawdy language provoked the wrath of Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels and the overseer of London theatre in the Caroline era. On Oct. 19, 1633, Herbert ordered the King's Men not to perform *The Woman's Prize* that day, because of the "foul and offensive matters" it contained. Fletcher's play was cleaned up in time for a Court performance the next month: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Woman's Prize* were acted before the King and Queen at St. James's Palace on Nov. 26 and 28 respectively. According to Herbert, Shakespeare's play was "liked" but Fletcher's was "very well liked."

The play was popular and was revived early and often in the Restoration era. Samuel Pepys saw it performed at the Cockpit Theatre on Tuesday, Oct. 30, 1660; it was played at the Vere Street theatre in Dec. 1661, and at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in Nov. 1668. It was revived once in the next century, at Drury Lane on April 30, 1757.

After more than two centuries of absence from the stage, *The Woman's Prize* was revived by the Royal Shakespeare Company in early 2004 (as *The Tamer Tamed*), in repertory with *The Taming of the Shrew*; their production ran from January 15 to March 6 of that year.

Sources:

Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Woman's_Prize

"The Voice of the Dramaturg: Artist, Adaptor, or Scholar? Creating an [Acting Version](#) and an [Annotated Edition](#) of John Fletcher's *The Taming of the Tamer*." Presented by Alex Gross at the LMDA Conference in Atlanta, 1994. <http://language.home.sprynet.com/theatdex/atlanta.htm>