

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*
and Traces of Spanish Influence:
Or, Exemplary Tales and Picaresque Fictions

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The literature of the Spanish Golden Age lies submerged like a sunken Spanish galleon, transformed into “something rich and strange”. Like salvage, the wreckage awaits rediscovery, but unlike Aztec gold, Inca silver or Spanish doubloons, Shakespeare's plays and the masterpieces of Spain's Golden Age were never the exclusive ‘property’ of a single personage or people. Literature is part of the general heritage of all mankind: whoever learns to read and comprehend it, in a manner of speaking, possesses it. Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, spiritual goods are inexhaustible: the more we share, the more there is.

The literature of the Spanish Golden Age haunts the scholarship of the English Renaissance. In this presentation I would like to suggest that the influence of Spanish literature on Shakespeare has been seriously underestimated and deserves further investigation.¹ In the first part of my essay I will defend the unfashionable view that Spanish literature probably influenced Shakespeare's plays. In the second, I will argue for the probable influence of at least two Spanish masterpieces on Shakespeare's *Taming*. In the third section, I review some of the controversies which swirl around Shakespeare's play. In the last section I will attempt to show how Spanish literature might illuminate *The Taming of the Shrew*.

THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF A FORGOTTEN CONTROVERSY

In 1581, Stephen Gosson claimed that contemporary playwrights acted like privateers: they plundered a wide range of literature for plots, “bawdy comedies in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish, have been thoroughly ransacked to furnish the playhouses in London”.² Unfortunately, the hint in Gosson's

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Jesús Cora, Dr. Rosa Flotats, and the organizers of the 9th Conference of the Spanish Society for the Study of the English Renaissance (Sociedad Española de Estudios Renacentistas Ingleses – SEDERI) for the opportunity to address the assembly. Brian Chilton and Ashley Seay Bass, two of my students, helped trigger my ideas. Professors Gustav Ungerer and Gordon Campbell made helpful suggestions, and Carole Carroll helped eliminate some oversights. This essay is a revised version of my presentation.

² This passage is in Albert Frey (1886: 11), even though it cuts against his skeptical argument.

complaint was dismissed and largely forgotten. Authoritarian repression discouraged, and ill-tempered controversy intercepted, research. The extent of Spanish influence on Shakespeare is an aspect of the debate over Shakespeare's learning which emerged during the 18th century. The earliest denial of Spanish influence on Shakespeare precedes the development of modern literary scholarship and coincides with the relative decline of Spain during the 18th century.

In 1758, Richard Farmer published an influential essay which challenged extravagant claims for Shakespeare's erudition and the notion that the poet was an Homeric polymath privy to all knowledge (Farmer 1966: 352-353). Echoing the sarcasm imputed to Ben Jonson in the *Conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden*, Farmer disparaged Shakespeare's learning, and mocked the proclamation of far-fetched sources for Shakespeare's ideas. Fearing that Shakespeare might be accused of having appropriated ideas and hints from a wide array of *foreign* sources, Richard Farmer posed as Shakespeare's 'rescuer'; he celebrated Shakespeare's originality at the expense of his learning. Although many of Farmer's positions, like his denial that Shakespeare's could read French or Italian, or his suspicion that Shakespeare did not write most of *The Taming of the Shrew* are no longer widely accepted, Samuel Johnson and Edmond Malone assimilated Farmer's skepticism about foreign influence. Although David Garrick, George Colman, John Churton Collins (1904: 1-95) and others objected, the opinions of Farmer, Johnson and Malone prevailed.³

Continental scholars have been willing to entertain the possibility that Shakespeare was familiar with Spanish literature, perhaps in the original language. Erudite German scholars were especially receptive to the possibilities of Spanish influence on Shakespeare. For instance, in 1850 M. Karl Simrock (Halliwell 1850: 105-115) argued that Shakespeare used Jorge Montemayor's *Diana* in the construction of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In 1874, Julius Leopold Klein (1865-1886: 10, 347-48, qtd. by Villejo) suggested that Shakespeare probably read Lope de Vega's untranslated play, *Castelvines y Monteses*, before he wrote *Romeo and Juliet*.⁴ In 1885, Edmund Dorer (see Frey 1971 [1886]) argued that Shakespeare might have been exposed to Antonio Eslava's *Las noches de invierno* (1609) before writing *The Tempest*. Notwithstanding this, native Anglo-phone Shakespeareans, following Farmer, tend to dismiss the idea of Spanish influence, sometimes vehemently.

The suggestions of dissidents provoked allergic reactions, but some of them were too prominent to ignore. In 1886, Albert Frey gave a lecture to the New Shakespeare Society in which he argued against any suggestion that Spanish literature might have significantly influenced Shakespeare. Frey disparaged Spanish drama and dismissed the alleged Spanish analogues to half a dozen of Shakespeare's plays. He disparaged Julius Leopold Klein as "the accuser," and mocked the possibility that Shakespeare could have read Spanish. Frey seems to have been especially anxious to squelch any insinuation that Shakespeare 'plagiarized' Spanish literature, and he adamantly denies that Shakespeare could ever "steal a thought," but his invidious defense of Shakespeare is tendentious and ill-conceived for several reasons (Frey 1971 [1886]: 5, 34, 39, and 41).

First, Frey is clearly biased against Spanish literature. Second, he ignores the Renaissance doctrine of *imitatio*. In Shakespeare's era aspiring artists were taught to emulate the ancients by creative imitation. Even in recent memory, art students were taken to galleries and assessed by how well they

³ For a brief overview of the controversy and an account of the views of David Garrick and George Colman, see Arthur Sherbo (1992: 94-119). D. Nichol Smith (1963: xxvii) felt that Farmer overstated his case, and Farmer's most recent biographer, Sherbo (1992: 101) thinks Farmer deployed his formidable erudition "*on the wrong side of the question*" (my italics).

⁴ Villejo seconded Klein, and Donald McGrady wrote an angry rebuttal (1969). McGrady inadvertently misrepresents Villejo and, in my opinion, his article is not compelling.

⁵ To take a minor instance, see the shallow, dismissive discussion in H. R. D. Anders (1965: 74-76).

could imitate the old masters. Finally, Frey ignores the critical question of repression. Censored Protestant authors might hesitate to cite suspected Spanish authorities.⁶

In 1910, James Fitzmaurice-Kelly felt obliged to replicate many of Frey's prejudiced attitudes, but he was willing to admit that it was "conceivable that Shakespeare contrived to plod through some of the Spanish books which were reprinted in the Netherlands and brought thence to England." (qtd. in Thomas 1969: 3). In his 1922 speech, Henry Thomas continued the tradition of minimizing Spanish influence. Speaking before the British Academy, Thomas disparaged Spanish literature and tried to offer alternate derivations for Shakespeare's plots and motifs. Thomas conceded the possibility of Spanish influence, but he assumed a very limited notion of Shakespeare's linguistic competence. In 1923, Felix Schelling reiterated the sentiments of Farmer (1758), Frey (1971 [1886]), and Thomas (1922) in the words of Horace Howard Furness, the editor of the *New Variorum Shakespeare* (1964 [1899]). Other prominent Shakespeareans like G.B. Harrison (1923: 366) echoed the commonplace judgment that Shakespeare probably didn't know Spanish.

Although some scholars deny that Shakespeare could have read Spanish, others argue that the evidence suggests he could.⁷ Still, whatever the case, given the availability of translations in a number of languages, the claim of Spanish influence is not really contingent on whether or not Shakespeare could read the language (Schmidgall 1966; Carroll and Bagby 1971; Morón Arroyo 1980; Everett 1982; and Twombly 1992).

Despite the weak, inconclusive argumentation, and cursory documentation, the opinions of Farmer and Frey have become dominant, and deterred research.⁸ With a few cautious or isolated exceptions, most English speaking scholars appear to have accepted their dicta, and as a consequence, even the exploration of the possibility of Spanish influence on Shakespeare has been discouraged. Nonetheless, aside from those already mentioned, a number of scholars have made important contributions to the investigation.⁹

For most of this century, Frey's opinion has been orthodoxy, an article of implicit faith accepted by default. Similarly, Sir Henry Thomas pronounced the opposing opinion "heresy" from the *rostrum* of the British Academy and invoked the rhetoric of an interdiction (Thomas 1922: 29, 32). Even though Continental scholars have been more open-minded, the work of dissidents from the consensus is not routinely accessible. The effect of these speciously 'authoritative' denunciations of Spanish influence is still perceptible. An examination of Nancy Lenz Harvey's 1994 annotated bibliography of the 20th-century criticism on *The Taming of the Shrew*—or a search of *MLA Bibliography*, whether on-line or hardbound—will reveal few articles relating Shakespeare's *Taming* and Spanish literature. Many of the cited entries concern connections between Shakespeare and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Despite an occasional dissent, Frey's opinion has prevailed among English and American scholars.

⁶ Although P.E. Russell is a hostile witness, he admits that in Shakespeare's era, "the pursuit of Spanish letters in England was liable to carry greater risks than it does to-day" (1953: 75-84). Although Russell follows Thomas in belittling Spanish influence on Shakespeare, he readily concedes that James Mabbe, the accomplished translator of Spanish literature was Ben Jonson's friend, and possibly Shakespeare's.

⁷ Thomas makes vague reference to unspecified comments by Aubrey Bell and Martin Hume (1905). Other scholars include Thomas G. Tucker (1966: 221); A[braham] S. W[olf] Rosenbach (1903: 54 n2); Joseph de Perott (1905), unseen; T.P. Harrison (1926a, 1926b); Oscar Villejo (1967); Donald Wadley (1979), and Thomas Amherst Perry (1989).

⁸ Even Thomas admits that suggestions of influence "were made by responsible people in reputable publications" (1922: 31). From the *rostrum* of the ever so neutral "British" Academy, he belittles his opponents as "Spaniards and Hispanophiles" (1922: 31).

⁹ John Garrett Underhill (1899); Martin Hume (1904); James Fitzmaurice-Kelly (1910); Rudolf Grossman (1920) (unseen, cited by Ungerer); Hilda Stubbings (1968-1969); and Pedro Juan Duque (1991). Given my library facilities and time constraints, my listings are necessarily incomplete. Professor Duque's study, which I have yet to assimilate, contains a fuller bibliography.

Nonetheless, in the century since Frey wrote, many of the beliefs that helped buttress Frey's opinion as orthodoxy have come in to question. Our general conception of Shakespeare's knowledge has been enlarged; his frequent utilization of multiple sources is better understood. The case against Spanish influence on Shakespeare rests on a number of grounds –linguistic incapacity, the absence of unimpeachable parallels, social incompatibilities or political antipathy– but in my opinion, none of these arguments are adequate to rule out the possibility of influence.

According to what might be called the linguistic argument, Shakespeare couldn't read Spanish. Of course, proving a negative is difficult, and there is no decisive evidence in this case. Shakespeare left no *affidavit*. After making a sarcasm about Arabic, Frey claims that Shakespeare couldn't read Spanish, and G.B. Harrison suspects he couldn't, but neither of them can prove it. When Frey wrote, it was still customary to assume that Shakespeare was a relatively untutored romantic genius. Nonetheless, Thomas Whitfield Baldwin's study of Shakespeare's "small Latin, and less Greek" (1944) has called that hoary orthodoxy into question.¹⁰ In all likelihood, Shakespeare had a substantial background in Latin literature; he was probably a more accomplished Latinist than most Professors of the humanities outside of Classics departments. Source studies strongly suggest, and most scholars concede that Shakespeare could read French and Italian; if so, the idea that Shakespeare could comprehend some Spanish is not out of the question.¹¹ Even if Shakespeare couldn't read Spanish, he had friends or associates like James Mabbe and John Fletcher who did. In addition, many major and minor Spanish works were translated in languages he probably knew, French, Italian, Latin –or English.

The argument from the absence –or rarity– of overt reference is politically naive in a context where writers fear social stigma, economic disadvantage or political repression. Although Max Weber never explicitly referred to a certain German philosopher in *Capitalism and the Protestant Ethic*, his more astute readers still knew who provoked the book.¹² The argument which relies on the relative paucity of uncontested references misconceives the manifold ways in which one writer can influence another. Verbal echoes are only one kind of influence. Aside from verbal traces, influence can operate through the choice or assimilation of themes, through the manner of treatment, through the adaptation of genres, or the assumption of a perspective.

Next, what might be called the "social" argument against Spanish influence has chauvinist overtones. Thomas tries to dismiss exponents of Spanish influence as "Spaniards and Hispanophiles" (1922: 31); Felix Schelling, echoing the words of Dr. Horace Howard Furness, remarks that Shakespeare's drama is

through and through an English [drama], on English soil, in English air, beneath English oaks; and it will be loved and admired, cherished and appreciated by English [speaking] men [and women] as long as an English word is uttered by an English tongue. (Thomas 1922: 31; Schelling 1971 [1923]: 138-139; the bracketed emendations are Schelling's own)

Furness speaks as if Shakespeare were private property, and he seems to insinuate that Shakespeare had an insular antipathy to all things foreign and continental, Catholic or Iberian. In less polite

¹⁰Baldwin's massive work was pivotal, but see also Plimpton (1933).

¹¹The average scholar can probably puzzle out the gist of an article in Spanish on a topic that excites their interest; we can safely assume that Shakespeare might do as much.

¹²See Weber (1958). In the foreword R.H. Tawney readily acknowledges that Weber's discussion of his topic "began with the epoch-making work of Marx". Although his unacknowledged influence is pervasive, neither Weber, nor Parsons, nor the index ever mention him (Tawney 1958: iv).

contexts, this attitude issues in the kind of routine dislike of Hispanics which generates ethnic epithets.

The political argument seems more plausible than any of the others until one reflects a bit. During Shakespeare's maturity England and Spain were commercial rivals, champions of rival theologies, partisans of opposing sides in the Low Countries, and in general, bitter political enemies. The Royal Navy, assisted by privateers like Drake and Hawkins, and subsidies to the "revolted Dutch" posed a threat to Spanish trade and imperial interests; Spanish armies, the Inquisition and the Armada posed a threat to England's imperial ambitions and its domestic security. Elizabeth I confronted Phillip II. The liberties of dissidents were suppressed in both countries.

Nonetheless, consider a roughly analogous situation: the Cold War. Despite the antipathies of governments, unremitting propaganda, and cultivated suspicion of all things Russian, readers in the 'West' never stopped reading Gorky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Pasternak or Pushkin. The solidarity of writers and readers, scholars and thinkers, can sometimes transcend national frontiers, religious dissensions, and political divisions. Despite profound differences in theology and political ideology, John Milton, the great Puritan poet, admired the Catholic Dante, and the royalist Abraham Cowley.

Even if the possibility of mutual influence were utterly excluded –and it has not been– the roughly simultaneous achievements of English and Spanish dramatists would invite investigation in its own right.¹³ The unimpeachable fact of political repression on both sides would naturally discourage authors from making open acknowledgment of influence, and hide its presence. Nonetheless, even political conflict itself can inspire an intent curiosity as people aspire to understand what they have been taught to fear.

EXEMPLARY TALES AND PICARESQUE FICTIONS

In the case of *The Taming of the Shrew*, I would like to argue for the possible influence of at least two Spanish works: Don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor* and the anonymous picaresque masterpiece, *Lazarillo de Tormes*. In some respects I have rediscovered what was fairly obvious to others; my first suggestion does not originate with me. Two of my former students awakened my interest in the possibility of an unnamed Spanish source, and further research showed that many other scholars have long suspected –or denied– Don Juan Manuel's influence on Shakespeare.¹⁴ As early as 1839, Francis Douce had suggested that "the outline of *The Taming of the Shrew* might be found in a Spanish work entitled *El Conde Lucanor* " (1839: 212).¹⁵ George Ticknor felt that Manuel's 35th *enxiemplo* "remarkably resembles the story Shakespeare has used in his *Taming of the Shrew*." (1965: I, 77, 77n).¹⁶ In the words of John Keller, the protagonist of Don Juan Manuel's story faces the same problem as Petruchio: each man resolves to marry "a rich woman who had one terrible fault: she was a fierce and strong woman, a perfect shrew" (1975: 46; see also Keller and Keating 1977: 141). The action of both stories involves prompting the wife to submit. Despite passing mention in specialized articles, most of the scholarly editions of Shakespeare's play omit any mention of *El Conde Lucanor* or give the work short shrift (Hosley 1964: 289-308; Bullough 1957: I, 57-68). In 1945, Manuel

¹³ See the books by Cohen (1985); Loftis (1987); Fischer (1989); and Fothergill-Payne (1991).

¹⁴ Brian Chilton and Ashley Seay Bass Chilton, casual conversation.

¹⁵ Douce (1839) was tentative, probably because he only knew the 1643 edition of Don Juan Manuel's collection, not the 1575 imprint.

¹⁶ See also Tucker (1966: 219-220); Hume (1964: 47-48); Fitzmaurice-Kelly (1910: 48); and Ralph Boggs (1927: 418-22).

Alcalá even published a learned article arguing that influence was “impossible”.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the dates work out, and there were few other works in print with a greater resemblance to the main plot of Shakespeare’s play. *El Conde Lucanor* was published in Seville in 1575, and books have a way of getting around. Don Manuel’s Spanish is straight-forward, elegant Castilian prose; a modernized version of his 35th *exiemplo*, “Mujer Brava,” is still used in textbooks designed to teach English students rudimentary Spanish (Flores 1987: 2-11). Even if Shakespeare couldn’t read Spanish, he had friends –or friends of friends– like Ben Jonson or John Fletcher who could. In addition, James Mabbe, the great seventeenth century translator of Spanish literature, was one of Ben Jonson’s friends, and editors of the first Folio have suggested that he knew Shakespeare personally (Russell 1953: 76, 79).

With the major exception of *The Taming of a Shrew* –whose exact relationship to *The Taming of the Shrew* is bitterly contested– Don Juan Manuel’s *exiemplos* are far closer to the situation and the spirit of Shakespeare’s play than the brutal anonymous poem, *Mery Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel’s Skin* (Collier 1875: IV, 415-448), or Erasmus’ Colloquy on *Shrowde Shrewes, and Honest Wyves* (De Vocht 1928: 57-93).

At least two of Don Juan Manuel’s *exiemplos* seem pertinent. In *exiemplo* 35, “Mujer Brava”, Patronio, the worldly wise advisor to Conde Lucanor, tells the story of how a “certain Moor” broke the spirit of a rich wife by means of intimidation. Immediately after his marriage, the husband successively butchered a dog, a cat and a horse when each of them “refused” to obey absurd commands. His new wife took the hint, and like a character in a fairytale, ever after she obeyed his every wish. This tale is more brutal than Shakespeare’s play, but the husband’s goal and the eventual outcome appear to be the same. From Patronio’s (or Petruchio’s) patronizing perspective, this is an exemplary tale of how to handle a difficult woman. In the stereotyped refrain which echoes through the collection, the Count “thought this good advice and he took it and profited from it” (*The Book of Count Lucanor* 1977: 141). Nonetheless, Don Juan Manuel mitigates and humanizes his fable by appending a whimsical coda which recalls the fatuous mimicry of the ‘taming’ planned by the drunkard in *The Taming of a Shrew* or by Hortensio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. As the Spanish tale concludes,

A few days later the groom’s father-in-law decided to do what his son-in-law had done, and so he killed a rooster. But his wife said: ‘Well now, Mr. So-and-So, you are a little late. It wouldn’t matter to me now if you killed even a hundred horses. You should have begun sooner, for now we know each other’. (Don Juan Manuel 1977: 140)

Don Juan’s compassionate irony softens and mitigates the message of his tale.

As John Keller and Clark Keating observe, *exiemplo* 27 also has important affinities with Shakespeare’s play. Patronio anticipates Petruchio’s pre-emptive strategy when he explains that “it is very important on the first day of a man’s marriage for him [the husband] to let his wife know that he is master” (Don Juan Manuel 1977: 120). This *exiemplo* includes an episode on the road in which an allegedly exemplary wife makes up an elaborate lie in defense of her husband’s rather blatant misrepresentation of obvious facts (Don Juan Manuel 1977: 117-119). Patronio’s story recalls the “sun/moon” episode from Petruchio’s pedagogy of oppression on the road to Padua. From reading the

¹⁷As a careful, responsible scholar, Professor Alcalá offers an impressive list of those who disagree with his contention, and I have benefitted from his article despite my demur. Alcalá cites George Ticknor, Meléndez y Pelayo, James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, Juan Hurtado, Manuel de Montoliú, Valbuena Prat, F. J. Sánchez, Henrique Ureña, Eduardo Juliá, Hermann Knust. In his recent edition of Don Juan Manuel’s collection, Amancio Bolaño e Isla (1991: xx-xxi) defends the possibility of Don Manuel’s having influenced Shakespeare.

critics, one might think Katherine's 'epiphany' resembled St. Paul's revelation on the road to Damascus, but the episode can be read quite differently. Petruchio refuses to allow his wife to return to her father's house until Katherine makes a public endorsement his wilful misrepresentations of the truth. The tale and the play have a similar logic. In each, a wife is encouraged to lie for her husband, her "lord and master", then praised or rewarded when she does. Perhaps from the satisfied perspective of Patronio, Petruchio, and the Count, such is as it should be. One suspects that their wives had a rather different perspective.

The suggestion that Shakespeare knew *Lazarillo de Tormes* was made by Johann Eschenburg in his revision of Wieland's translation of Shakespeare's plays (1775-82) (discussed by Furness 1964 [1899]: 77n). Although the suggestion is not uncontested, several scholars have conceded the likelihood that a passage in *Much Ado About Nothing* alludes to the episodes involving Lazarillo and his blind master in *Lazarillo de Tormes*.¹⁸ (The frontispiece of one of the English translations shows Lazarillo stealing sausages from his mean-spirited blind master, see Appendix, Figure 1). The popularity of the Spanish masterpiece is evident, Richard Bjornson points out that *Lazarillo* "appeared in four different sixteenth-century English translations" (1977: 139). Although Barbara Everett (1982: 108-109) has recently argued for Shakespeare's familiarity with picaresque themes with reference to *Othello*, as far as I can tell, no critic has previously invoked *Lazarillo* with specific reference to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Nonetheless, the anonymous Spanish masterpiece, *Lazarillo de Tormes*, may have been part of the constellation of influences in effect on the nativity of Shakespeare's play. In *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the attitude of the author toward his creation sometimes recalls the poignant attitude of Velázquez toward the chilly interlude between the cold-eyed hidalgo and the wide-eyed water carrier of Seville in his famous painting. Picaresque literature sheds light on a number of the controversies surrounding Shakespeare's play.

DEBATES OVER *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

Before I launch into a discussion of the relationship between Shakespeare's play and picaresque fiction, it seems appropriate to review some of the long-standing controversies surrounding *The Taming of the Shrew*. Scholars do not agree about the genre of the play, its tone or the significance, the completion or incompleteness of the frame which includes the delightful Christopher Sly. Scholars disagree about Petruchio's character and Katherine's characterization. They disagree about the identity of the shrew.¹⁹ They disagree about the propriety of the attempt to tame Katherine, and about the efficacy of her 'domestication'. Scholars argue about the sincerity of Katherine's last speech, the imagined attitudes of Elizabethan or Jacobean audiences, and the stance of the dramatist toward the actions he recounts.

Some scholars regard the play as a mere farce to be enjoyed, but not to be taken too seriously (Van Doren 1953: 49; Heilman 1966: 147-161). Most prefer to regard the play as a romantic comedy emerging from the chrysalis of crude farce. Still others see the play as the tragedy of Katherine, which involves the humiliation of an abused woman. In turn, the way readers construe the plot, affects their reading of the tone. In the minds of some readers, the tone of the play is uproarious and

¹⁸Hume (1964 [1904]: 166-167); Hannigan (1926: 632); Craig (1931: 372); Chandler (1958: 235n; 1961: 200-201); Craig (1961: 538); Bjornson (1977: 143); Childers (1977: ix-x); Humphreys (1981: 233-4); Rico (1984: 58 & n); Mares (1988: 73); Wicks (1989: 233). Dedicated opponents of the possibility of Spanish influence (Anders 1965 [1904]: 74-75; Entwistle (1926: 654); Chapman (1960: 565-567) have tried to fight a rear-guard action here, trying to deny what seems fairly obvious. Furness (1967 [1899]: 77-78) denies allusion, but even he grudgingly concedes the possibility that *Lazarillo* was Shakespeare's remote.

¹⁹Most scholars assume that Katherine is the shrew of the title, but there are dissenters. For instance, Harold Goddard (1951: 68) argues that Bianca, not Katherine is the real shrew. Coppelia Kahn suggests that "if Petruchio were female, he would be known as a shrew and shunned accordingly by men" (1981: 109).

rollicking; others see it as an affectionate and affecting love story while still others see hints of a hidden tragedy which involves the breaking of a woman's spirit (Kahn 1981: 109; Haring-Smith 1985).²⁰ Some scholars and directors ignore or dismiss the frame narrative, while others argue that the fairytale frame ironizes the entire interior drama. Some scholars accept the propriety of the taming plot, while others repudiate it as an ethical abomination. Common reading strategies include trivializing the taming as the *donnée* of a farce not to be taken seriously; historicizing it as an awkward period convention in accord with imagined Elizabethan attitudes; or construing the play as a spontaneous charade hiding an unorthodox romance between two people who really love (or learn to love) each other. Although some scholars presume the efficacy of Petruchio's methods, others deny that Katherine is ever truly broken or tamed at all. Accordingly, they disagree over the sincerity or straightforwardness of Katherine's last speech. Some scholars assume that Katherine means every word she utters while others read the entire oration ironically.

Aside from the uncertainties of the plot, the characters provoke arguments. Petruchio is especially controversial. Assessments range from glowing admiration to scathing contempt. Some critics see him as a man's man (and a lady's man) whose actions ought to be imitated by other men; others see him as a bully and a thug. Some critics seem to praise Petruchio as a homeopathic pedagogue administering 'tough love'; other critics describe him as role-player participating in a 'wooing dance' or a lover's game; still others see him as a chauvinist attempting to subjugate his wife by breaking her spirit.

Katherine is controversial as well.²¹ Some readers—usually, but not exclusively men—see her an outrageous woman who needs the strong hand of a master; a milder form of this theory assumes that she is a wayward student who needs a benevolent teacher to show her who she 'really' is. Others see her as a spirited, unwilling subject of patriarchy, either perpetually resisting domination or eventually submitting to being made into a "puppet".²² Some scholars see her blissfully submissive while others see her primarily as a passive victim put upon by an irresistible society. Some readers envision her as having negotiated a tacit arrangement in which she renders public submission while enjoying real equality with Petruchio in private. Others see her as a covert resister making a temporary tactical concession in a protracted struggle. Nonetheless, whatever their stance on the issues in dispute, the preponderance of scholars appear to assume that contemporary moralists and audiences would have endorsed or condoned Petruchio's behavior.²³

Similarly, scholars are divided over where Shakespeare stood. Some assume that his views were akin to those of his imagined audiences; others credit him for humanizing an oppressive tradition by removing its most violent aspects. These scholars claim that Petruchio never resorts to outright physical abuse of Katherine. Some scholars intuit a romantic ethos which transforms roughed farce into a rousing romance. Still other scholars sense the presence of irony and deny that Shakespeare would have ever endorsed the events he depicts. They argue the implausibility of Katherine's abrupt transformation, its patent insincerity, or argue that the central plot is a fantastic wish fulfillment for a drunken tinker abused by his wife. Although most critics are convinced that Kate is the shrew of the

²⁰Kahn 1981: 109. Haring-Smith remarks: "[t]he main plot of the play, the tale of a man who brazenly declares that he is marrying for money and then breaks his bride's will by cruelly depriving her of food and sleep, appears to be downright sadistic and thoroughly offensive (...)" (1985: xi).

²¹Even her name is controversial. The stage directions call her Katharina, and she says she expects people to call her "Katharine". With insolent familiarity, Petruchio calls her plain "Kate". Such nomenclature matters, and the name readers choose usually reflects their attitudes toward her. See Maguire (1992). To avoid affected singularity, I have adopted the common convention of calling her "Katherine".

²²In 3. 2., Katherine remarks, "I see a woman may be a made a fool / If she had not a spirit to resist". In 4. 3., she protests: "Belike you mean to make a puppet of me".

²³This assumption is very dubious. Jean Howard (1997: 136-137) avoids it.

title, some argue that Bianca and the widow are the real shrews. A very few readers even argue that Petruchio is a real shrew, not just a pretended one for the sake of pedagogy.

Some scholars think the anonymous play, *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594) is the source or even the first draft of *The Taming of the Shrew*; others argue that the first mentioned play is a corrupt derivative. Many scholars regard *The Taming of the Shrew* as an early play; others suspect revision, or date it with Shakespeare's later plays.²⁴ More and more contemporary scholars tend to see *The Taming of the Shrew* as a disturbing, sobering, problem play.

PALIMPSEST

So much for the controversies. I would like to suggest that a consideration of the Spanish analogues or sources of the play will shed light on all of these debates. The precedents of his suspected sources suggest that Shakespeare combined a narrative expressing the ideology of the patriarchal subordination with the dissident posture of picaresque literature. He combined a conservative 'exemplary tale' told by an omniscient narrator with an innovative form which raises the question of social injustice through the medium of first person narration. By fusing an exemplary fable which celebrates patriarchal hierarchy with a satiric negative *exemplum* which questions the moral legitimacy of that same hierarchy, Shakespeare created an enigma which has perplexed critics for generations. Picaresque fiction can help unravel the riddle.

In order to illuminate the controversy, in the rest of my paper I will focus on the 'principals', Petruchio and Katherine. David Cole has recently argued that Petruchio is a bankrupt hiding his impoverishment with the credit of his ancestry while living in landed poverty. His financial situation –but not his style– resembles that of the "fake hidalgo" depicted in the third chapter of *Lazarillo de Tormes*.²⁵ Petruchio's wardrobe betrays a financial predicament that his effrontery hides. As Katherine remarks, sometimes he is "A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack, / That thinks with oaths to face the matter out (2. 1. 281-282; Morris 1993 [1983]: 211). "Facing the matter out" is a pun referring to effrontery and to the shoddy patching of old clothes, a motif which would later appear in Quevedo's *Buscón*.²⁶ In addition, Petruchio resembles the *miles gloriosus* of Plautine comedy: his military exploits are very questionable. In the play he domineers over women, servants, and old men. Contrary to the chauvinist endorsement of his behavior or its sentimental palliation, I will argue that Shakespeare depicts Petruchio as a cony-catcher, a shrew, and a picaro.

Cony-catching is the craft of the con-artist, and the concept of cony-catching was popularized by Robert Greene during the 1590's (see Greene 1923). The term "cony-catching" was taken from the slang of the underworld. As the *OED* observes, and as a search of the Chadwyck-Healey database of English drama tends to confirm, the word and its cognates were in vogue for roughly seventy years – *circa* 1590 through 1660– before it slipped out of use and was forgotten. As I have explained in a previous paper, although scholars haven't explicated the implications of the concept, the word occurs three times in Shakespeare, and twice in this play.²⁷

²⁴*The Taming of the Shrew* is not in Francis Meres' 1598 catalogue of Shakespeare's plays, and it was not published until the First Folio of 1623. The earliest unambiguous reference to it –and not *The Taming of a Shrew*– appears in 1607. Thompson (1982; 1984) argues for an early date; Sams (1985) argues for a later one.

²⁵When *Lazarillo* first sees this gentleman, "[h]e was quite well dressed, his hair was neat, and he looked pretty well-off" (*Lazarillo* 1969: 49). Subsequent events reveal his new master's utter destitution.

²⁶Like Quevedo's protagonist, Petruchio might be described as a "merry adventurer married at last to the daughter of a rich merchant" (Beasley 1994: 98).

²⁷"She Stoops to Conquer: Falconry, Cony-Catching, and the Plotting of *The Taming of the Shrew*". This paper was presented to the Seminar of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare Association of America. For the direct references to cony-catching, see 4. 1. 38. (Morris 1993 [1983]: 241); 5. 1. 90 (Morris 1993 [1983]: 284).

Notwithstanding Petruchio's assumption of the airs of a moneyed man of leisure, his "trusty servant" Grumio longs for a good dinner. Although one might invent another reason, it would seem that either Petruchio is stingy with his servants or the presumptively generous Petruchio is impecunious. Poverty is a common rationalization for mercenary behavior, and in view of the recent death of Petruchio's father, Petruchio might have inherited little or he may have squandered his inheritance. Whatever the reason, Petruchio has apparently deleted his ready money; he seems not to be the man of means he purports to be. (His situation might recall that of the impecunious hidalgo in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, but his response is much more aggressive). Petruchio is land proud, and purse-poor; as David Cole observes Petruchio has to borrow money from Hortensio in order to pay off the tailor. In his eagerness to marry off Katherine, Baptista never checks Petruchio's credentials the way he interrogates the claims of Bianca's suitors. Petruchio is a self-proclaimed adventurer and fortune-hunter; marriage provides him an avenue to affluence.

These observations tend to support a new reading of the play. As far as I can tell, no previous commentator has argued that Petruchio's courtship is an outright confidence trick and that his dinner party wager is considerably less than honest. Although *Lazarillo* personifies the picaro who scrounges for food in rags, sometimes picaros use fashionable clothing and plausible demeanor in order to enjoy—and take advantage of—better company.²⁸ By consciously misleading Baptista, and by disingenuously flattering Katherine into thinking he loves her just as she is, Petruchio achieves *entrée* into the Minola family. By humoring preconceptions about Katherine, and rumors about his alleged inability to control her and consummate his wedding, Petruchio sets up the dinner party wager over wifely obedience. Once his 'marks' engage to make the wager, Petruchio ratchets up the ante to maximize his take. By a devious sleight of hand practiced in broad daylight, he sends sly Grumio—not the gullible and more honest Biondello—to "summon" Katherine for her command performance. Grumio has time for a few words off-stage, time for Shakespeare's pregnant phrase from *The Spanish Tragedy*: "*paucas pallabris*". Not for nothing has Petruchio encouraged the art of knowing misrepresentation on the road to Padua. Not for nothing has Petruchio compared Katherine to a predatory falcon trained to hunt or "stoop" on command. He has trained her to *lie* on demand, and he has shown her what could happen if she doesn't co-operate. Like an adroit actress responding to her cue—or a falcon taking "pigeons"—Katherine hits her "mark" and delivers.²⁹ She wins Petruchio's bet, and her audience marvels at her transformation.

The idea that Petruchio is the real shrew in the play will inspire initial incredulity, but circumstantial evidence and two redoubtable authorities support it: the first is Shakespeare's play, the second is the *OED*.

After hearing of Petruchio's boorish behavior on the road back to his estate, Curtis remarks: "By this reckoning, he is more shrew than she" (4. 1. 76.; Morris 1993 [1983]: 243). Curtis was not merely playing with words. In medieval, Elizabethan and Jacobean usage, a 'shrew' could be of either gender. Since Shakespeare's time, recrudescing sexism has restricted the use of the term to women,

²⁸The acquisition of affluent clothing is a recurrent theme in Quevedo's *Buscón*. Also see Robert Greene's, *The Black Book's Messenger: Laying open the Life and Death of Ned Browne, one of the most notable Cutpurses, Crossbiters, and Cony-catchers, that ever lived in England* [1592] (Judges 1930: 250-264). Greene explains that Browne "was in outward show a gentlemanlike companion, attired very brave, and to shadow his villainy the more would nominate himself to be a marshal-man, who when he had nipped a bung or cut a good purse, he would steal over in to the Low Countries, there to taste three or four stoups of Rhenish wine, and then come over forsooth a brave soldier" (Judges 1930: 249). See Thomas Dekker's, Episode Taken from *The Bellman of London: Bring to light the most notorious villaines that are now practised in the Kingdome* (Judges 1930: 307). Anne J. Cruz notes that the facetious *Defence of Conny-catching* [1592] "does not hesitate to disclose [that] certain types—gentlemen, actors, brokers—[are] all equally deserving the title of conny-catcher" (1996: 260).

²⁹A 'pigeon' is still a slang expression for the victim of a 'con'. A 'mark' is a slang expression for a target (of a scam), or for an actor's designated position for delivering a speech.

especially to refractory wives like the legendary Xantippe of Socrates, or the Xantippe who appears in the colloquy of Erasmus on shrewish wives.

Putting aside for a moment another meaning of 'shrew –an incorrigible, un-tameable rodent with a painful bite– an examination of the *OED* entry will show that in medieval or Renaissance usage, the devil or any mean-spirited or arbitrary person could be called a shrew.³⁰ The *OED* cites a black letter almanac of 1609, in which Thomas Dekker speaks of *husbands* who were “shrews to their wives”³¹ In my opinion, Petruchio’s treatment of Katherine is indefensible, and George Bernard Shaw was substantially correct in his assessment of Petruchio as a wilful bully.³² The title of the play can even be read to suggest the taming of a shrew by a shrew. In light of the morally suspect action of the drama, the recurrent diabolic imagery may have some serious overtones. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that Petruchio’s ‘character’ wasn’t universally accepted or admired in Shakespeare’s era.

In his *The Woman’s Prize, Or, the Tamer Tamed*, John Fletcher (Shakespeare’s collaborator and successor as chief playwright of the Globe Theatre) implies that Petruchio and Kate fought bitterly, and hints that Petruchio was involved in her death!³³ Fletcher’s play is a serio-comic sequel to Shakespeare’s partly inspired by Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*.

Once Petruchio is recognized as a shrew –and a cony-catcher– the third term in my argument drops into place. A ‘Cony-catcher’ was an Elizabethan term for a person analogous to the leading character in Spanish picaresque fiction. In other words, Petruchio is a disguised rogue, or a picaro.

The case of Katherine is more complicated. As a victim of oppression she deserves some sympathy, but as a possible co-conspirator she may have become a willing accessory. Katherine is, and is not, a shrew. If a shrew is any abusive woman, Katherine’s mistreatment of Bianca makes her one. If a shrew is defined, as it usually is, on the paradigm of Socrates’ Xantippe or Noah’s spouse, as a wife who abuses her husband, then Katherine is not a shrew. Despite great provocations, she never abuses Petruchio *after* their marriage.

Nonetheless, Katherine has affinities with the protagonist of picaresque literature. Petruchio is a picaro, and Katherine is a picara. As Ann Daghistany remarks in another context, the “picara occupies a unique position in the history of literature. She is not glorified as an angel or mother figure, nor can a neat label such as siren, murderess or evil married woman circumscribe her personality”.³⁴

Despite the gendered, but otherwise nearly identical terms of picaro and picara, there are important differences between Petruchio and Katherine. They represent opposite ends of the picaresque spectrum. Petruchio is an oppressive manipulator, but Katherine struggles for autonomy under duress. Petruchio resembles the tough, harsh, unsympathetic picaro like Quevedo’s Buscon. Katherina, more like Lazarillo de Tormes or the little orphan who became Moll Flanders in Defoe’s novel, is, in general, a more sympathetic character. Like Lazarillo, she is corrupted by her environment, and as is

³⁰Edmond Malone’s (1966 [1821]: V, 461) recognition of the ambiguity of the word predates the *OED*.

³¹Unfortunately, my library’s microfilm of Dekker’s *Almanac* was illegible.

³²In a pseudonymous piece, Shaw describes Petruchio as “Shakespeare’s coarse, thick-skinned money hunter, who sets to work to tame his wife exactly as brutal people tame animals or children—that is, by breaking their spirit by domineering cruelty (...)” (Shaw 1971 [1961]: 186).

³³Fletcher’s suggestion may owe something to Mateo Alemán’s novel, *Guzmán de Alfarache*. In the second part of his novel, Alemán insinuates that his picaresque protagonist abused his wife and was implicated in her death. The first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, popularly nicknamed “The Picaro” was published in 1599. This book was a run-away international bestseller translated in several languages; a second part was published in 1604, and James Mabbe’s English translation was published in 1621. I will explore the possibility of a relationship to Shakespeare’s *Taming* in a subsequent paper.

³⁴For an illuminating discussion of the *picara*, see Daghistany. Professor Daghistany’s article was not conceived with Katherine in mind, but her remarks fit.

the case with Lazarillo, we can sympathize with her suffering, her sensitivity to oppression, and her struggle to survive in a hostile environment.

This leads up to my last point. As I have suggested in this paper, and argued in greater detail in a previous essay, the ‘plotting’ of *The Taming of the Shrew* veils a pecuniary scam. There is reason to believe that the wager is a confidence trick. Once that possibility is taken into account, it is nearly impossible to take Katherine’s speech (and Shakespeare’s alleged approbation of the action) at face value. The unambiguous chauvinist reading of the play becomes untenable. Like a typical picaresque novel, the drama ends with a highly questionable moral conversion which previous events tend to discredit. Like Lucentio, we have to wonder at the events we’ve witnessed, and the more clearly we reflect, the harder it is to accept the demeanor of the ending. The shadow of the picaresque negative *exemplum* complicates and clouds the outlines of the exemplary tale. In Shakespeare’s play, the apparent implications of the medieval Spanish *enxiemplo* are challenged by humanist attitudes, questioned by the social criticism which pervades picaresque literature, and undermined by the machinations of the picaro. Once the possibility of fraud is entertained, Katherine’s conversion is seriously discredited. Ambiguous or specious conversions are one of the commonplaces of picaresque literature (see Whitbourn).

Although critics have noticed that the adventure of Christopher Sly, the fable of “The Sleeper Awakened” goes back to Arabic or Persian literature, to *The Thousand and One Nights* and beyond, they seem to have forgotten that Spain was probably most important avenue through which oriental literature was transmitted to Europe. Although the picaro respects no decorums and no frontiers, although his ancestors hark back to the anti-heroes of Petronius and Apuleius –or even to Homer’s *Odyssey*– we owe his modern incarnation to the literature of the Spanish Golden Age.

In closing, Felix Schelling’s forgotten admonition still seems timely,

If we consider, however, the almost incredible mass of the writings of Lope de Vega (to mention him only), unread by English and even by Spanish scholars, and further keep in mind that those conversant with Spanish drama are not always conversant with English and vice versa, it would be rash to affirm that a last word has been said on a topic which as yet has not been seriously opened. (1971: 119)³⁵

A closer examination of the literature of Shakespeare’s era will reveal the presence of the Spanish literature, the spirit and the influence of Spain.

³⁵Pioneering work has been done by Ungerer (1977 [1956]), Duque (1991) and others, but much remains to be explored.

Appendix



FIGURE 1. Title-page and frontispiece from *The Pleasant History of Lazarillo de Tormes a Spanyard...* Trans. by David Rowland of Anglesey. London, Printed by J. H. 1624. [STC (2nd ed.) 15338]

A DISPUTATION,
Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher, and a
Shee Conny-catcher, whether a Theefe or a Whoore, is
most hurtfull in Coufonage, to the Com-
mon-wealth.
DISCOVERING THE SECRET VILLA-
nies of alluring Strumpets.
With the Conuerfion of an English Courtizen, reformed
this prefent yeare, 1592.
Reade, laugh, and learne.
Nafcimur pro patria.
R. G.



Imprinted at London, by A. I. for T. G. and are to be folde at
the Weft end of Pauls. 1592.

FIGURE 2. Title-page from Robert Greene's *A Disputation, Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher, and a Shee Conny-catcher*. Imprinted at London by A. I. for T. G., 1592. Reproduced from Harrison, G. B., ed. (1923). [Copy at the Bodleian Library: Malone 574].

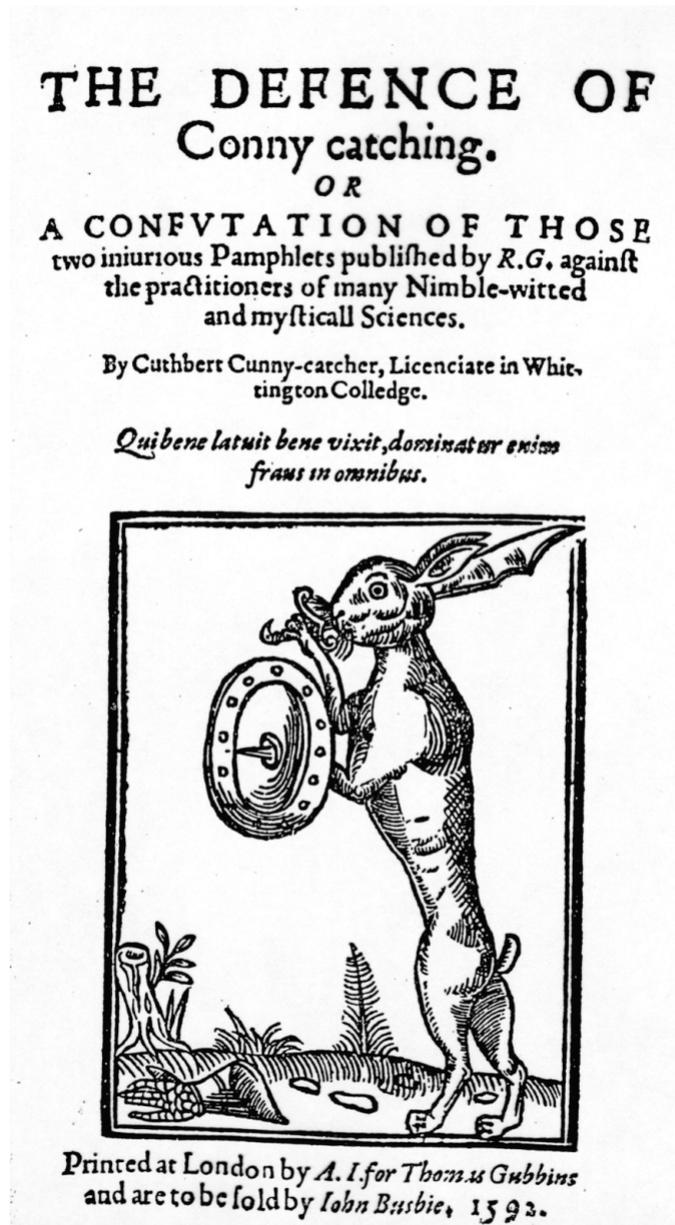


FIGURE 3. Title-page from Robert Greene's *The Defence of Conny catching*. Printed at London by A. I. for Thomas Gubbins and are to be sold by John busbie, 1592. Reproduced from Harrison, G. B., ed. 1923. [Copy at the British Library: C.40.b.6].

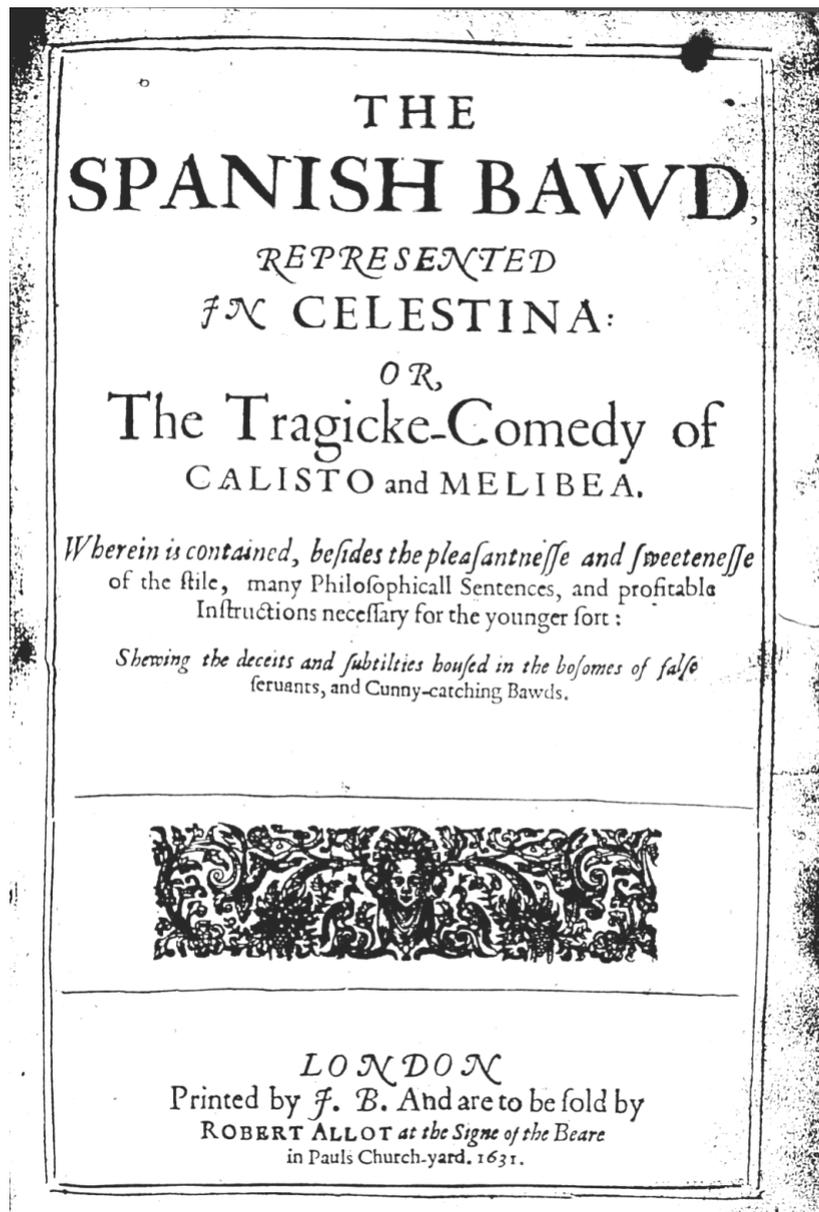


FIGURE 4. Title-page from Fernando de Rojas' *The Spanish Bawd: represented in Celestina: or, The Tragicke-Comedie of Calisto and Melibea...* [Trans. by James Mabbe]. London, Printed by J. B. And are to be sold by Robert Allot *at the Signe of the Beare* In Pauls Church-yard, 1631. (STC 4911).

A
Pleasant Conceited
Historie, called The taming
of a Shrew.

As it was sundry times acted by the
Right honorable the Earle of
Pembrook his seruants.



Printed at London by Peter Short and
are to be sold by Cutbert Burbie, at his
shop at the Royall Exchange.
1594.

FIGURE 5. Title-page from *A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called the Taming of a Shrew*... Printed at London by Peter Short and *are to be sold by Cutbert Burbie, at his shop at the Royall Exchange*, 1594. [Copy in the Huntington Library: RB 69594]

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