

Resistance and Reconciliation in Roundabout's "Feminist Update" to *Kiss Me, Kate*

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Abstract

Roundabout Theatre's 2019 production of *Kiss Me, Kate* is the most recent node in a long history of attempts to make sense of the gender oppression of its source text, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. While Cole Porter's 1948-9 musical reads Kate as an unruly woman, this feminist update moves Kate's physical retaliation into the category of resistance. Along with lyrical changes that make the tamed shrew advise not wives but a divided America, the production suggests that a woman's place is at the vanguard of political change.

Introduction

Discussing the Royal Shakespeare Company's "embarrassment" over its productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 2003 and 2008, Ann Thompson asks, "If they (the RSC, not the reviewers) hate the play so much, why do they put it on? [. . .] The answer, a troubling one, is presumably that it remains a huge crowd-pleaser even when it is not presented as rollicking good fun of the *Kiss Me, Kate* variety" (Thompson 2010, 229). Thompson concludes that *Shrew* is "the acceptable face of sadomasochism" with many productions offering "the spectacle of a man torturing a woman which is given respectability by the name of Shakespeare" (Thompson 2010, 230).

Roundabout Theatre's 2019 revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* — the 1948-9 Cole Porter musical about exes Lilli Vanessi and Fred Graham reuniting to perform Kate and Petruchio in *Shrew* — treats the musical's Shakespearean intertext as more than "rollicking good fun." In fact, Roundabout's production responds to the embarrassment Thompson identifies in recent *Shrews*. Strikingly, the show is publicized as a "feminist update" (Clement 2019), with Scott Ellis's directorial intention borne out in performance choices as well as in changes to Porter's lyrics.

In the first section of this essay, I focus on the ways in which the production situates Kelli O'Hara's performance as Lilli/Kate within a pop feminist aesthetic of female achievement and

optical representation, as well as in relation to ongoing public conversations such as the #MeToo movement. Looking closely at what director Ellis and composer Amanda Green say about the production, I then argue that Roundabout's *Kiss Me, Kate* pairs this aesthetic with an emphasis on Lilli/Kate's retaliation as powerful, necessary resistance to patriarchal oppression. Of course, readings of Kate's subversive potential have a long history in *Shrew* criticism and performance (Davis 1975, 135; Brown 2003, 139-40; Korda 2011, 55; Richardson 2018, 150; Wayne 1985, 182). Roundabout Theatre's production centralizes this feminist reading of the Shakespearean intertext, as performance choices in "I Hate Men" and "Kiss Me, Kate" illustrate.

In the second section, I survey past criticism and adaptations of *Shrew* in order to characterize how this *Kiss Me, Kate* participates in a long tradition of contesting *Shrew*'s gender politics. Scholarly accounts of *Shrew* range from an idea of "festive" comedy (Barber 1959, 2), in which patriarchal authority is re-inscribed by the shrewish wife's taming, to the notion that representations of "women on top" genuinely challenge the status quo (Davis 1975, 124-51). On the one hand, this legacy illuminates how Roundabout's *Kiss Me, Kate* adheres to a feminist account of *Shrew*. However, these readings largely see Kate's insistence on personal autonomy (and her tempering of Petruchio's authority) as gesturing toward equality in marriage. Yet, Roundabout's feminist reading points not so much to adjustments in a domestic relationship as to hoped-for changes on a national political scale. In this way, Roundabout reflects another critical discourse, according to which shrews like Kate play an important role in speaking truth to power (Bushnell 1990, 66; Crocker 2011, 409-10).

The final section looks closely at Green's final number, which changes Porter's "I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple" to "I Am Ashamed That People Are So Simple." As the production pivots from male-female relations to a politically divided America, Lilli-as-Kate's resistance becomes a stepping stone toward a more equitable future that includes and transcends gender equality.

"I Hate Men": Kelli, Lilli, and Kate (and Janet and Sarah)

Roundabout implicitly and explicitly positions *Kiss Me, Kate* as a feminist production. The company has a history of taking "familiar and lesser-known" canonical plays and updating them for a modern audience (Roundabout 2019). The company's season programming, its marketing, and its directorial concept for *Kiss Me, Kate* highlight public conversations about gender and power. As performance choices in "I Hate Men" and "Kiss Me, Kate" show, the production also moves Kate's retaliation into the category of resistance.

The company's 2018-2019 season features two woman-centered Shakespeare spin-offs: *Bernhardt/Hamlet* and *Kiss Me, Kate*. In the former (directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel), Janet McTeer plays turn-of-the-century French actress Sarah Bernhardt as she takes on the title role in Shakespeare's play. Besides performing traditionally male roles, over her long career, Bernhardt cultivated a personal brand so powerful that she became one of the first "celebrities" in the modern sense (Marcus 2019, 14-18). The production depicts Bernhardt as a pioneer in life and across media, ending with a clip from an early silent film in which she acted. Furthermore, *Bernhardt/Hamlet* uses Shakespeare's cultural status to underscore women's achievement in defiance of patriarchal expectations. With her blonde bob and pants (in a play where most female characters appear in cumbersome, corseted dresses), McTeer's Bernhardt pays subtle homage to 2016 Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton; Bernhardt's colleagues, balking at Bernhardt's insistence on making *Hamlet* a breeches role, invite comparisons to those who scorn the idea of a woman in the White House. Thus, McTeer-as-Bernhardt-as-Hamlet juxtaposes female firsts in the theater with female power on the political stage.

Bernhardt/Hamlet throws into relief *Kiss Me, Kate*'s own emphasis on female representation and achievement. The promotional poster leans into the pop feminism ethos of *Bernhardt/Hamlet* (fig. 2). It depicts a half-grimacing, half-laughing Kelli O'Hara planting a high heel atop a pyramid of the cast's men. The man directly beneath her stares up in admiration, his Elizabethan garb contrasting with O'Hara's modern, gold halter dress. The man whose shoulder supports her foot (perhaps recalling Kate's final lines in Shakespeare's original [5.2.177-9]) appears to be diving away, looking askance at O'Hara's impertinent heel. Five more men form the pyramid's bottom level, all wearing black early modern costumes, their expressions ranging from surprise to disgust. Will Chase, who plays Fred/Petruchio, perches on a chair in the foreground, staring broodingly out at the viewer as if to say, "Can you believe this?" The image suggests a scrappy heroine's struggle to overcome the obstacles to her success more so than it does a shrew who needs to be tamed — or a starlet who must humble herself to love. And, to state the obvious, O'Hara is visually above the rest, set apart as the show's star. Reviews of the production in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Vulture* praise the production for the four principals' performances (Green 2019; McNulty 2019; Holdren 2019). But even with such high-powered actors as Will Chase, Corbin Bleu (Bill Calhoun/Lucentio), and Stephanie Styles (Lois Lane/Bianca), Roundabout has O'Hara-as Lilli-as-Kate at the top.

This marketing strategy is not incidental; in fact, it foreshadows the production's more explicit artistic intentions. For, in comparison to a tradition of marketing *Shrews* and even *Kiss Me, Kates* with images of Petruchio spanking Kate (Thompson 2010, 230), Roundabout's poster both

presents Lilli as a trailblazing actor in the mold of Bernhardt and portrays Kate as a woman who defies patriarchy rather than receive its discipline. Just as *Bernhardt/Hamlet* centers on the story of a female actor pushing forward in the world of Shakespearean theater, *Kiss Me, Kate* focuses on a female actor — and the Shakespearean character she plays — pushing back. The contrast between O'Hara's modern costume and her male supporters' Elizabethan garb bolsters the sense (also palpable in *Bernhardt/Hamlet*) of an encounter between the present and the past.

Indeed, director Scott Ellis and composer Amanda Green (whom the company commissioned to revise Porter's lyrics for the production) describe their desire to update *Kiss Me, Kate* in order to articulate a feminist message. Speaking to *Playbill* before *Kiss Me, Kate*'s premiere, Green explains that the show needs to be modernized:

The prism that we look through at relationships between men and women is different than the time it was written [. . .]. I'm not re-inventing the wheel with *Kiss Me, Kate* [. . .] but we felt that it was our responsibility to see if there were changes we could make [. . .]. You can't erase it or pretend that 1949 is 2019, but there are things that you can adjust to make [Lilli] more of an equal. (Clement 2019)

Taking for granted that Lilli's role is circumscribed by sexism, Green argues that modifying Porter's book is a matter of moral responsibility. For Green, equality is at stake — not just between heterosexual partners, but also among people of different sexes and genders more broadly. In this way, Green echoes the poster's visual logic of the present (linked to female empowerment) triumphing over the past (identified with patriarchy). In a similar vein, Green's interviewer calls the production a "feminist update" and Ellis, quoted in the same article, goes so far as to say that the revival will "inspire generations of young girls" (Clement 2019). Green echoes this sentiment when she states that "a nine-year-old girl seeing *Kiss Me, Kate* can be empowered by it" (Clement 2019). Ellis and Green's remarks reveal that they intend not only to centralize female characters, nor to merely elevate examples of female achievement; they also intend to make Lilli/Kate a model for action. Their update involves helping Lilli/Kate rise above the men — and the musical — that would like to keep her down.

The production articulates this idea of feminist resistance through Kate's physicality. Several reviewers note the violence of O'Hara's performance. Charles McNulty writes, "When the farce turns physical, [O'Hara] rises to the challenge with some good hard kicks" that are "almost certain to leave bruises" as "Ellis' staging doesn't pull any punches" (McNulty 2019). Jesse Green goes further: "Though even Shakespeare let [Kate] fight back, with words and elbows, the serious glee with which Ms. O'Hara pummels Mr. Chase — you could call the show 'Kick Me,

Kate' — goes a long way toward defanging the usual impression of violence from only the other direction" (Green 2019). By emphasizing the location of the fighting in *Shrew*, the production encourages comparisons between Roundabout's Kate and Shakespeare's. Despite Amanda Green and Ellis's equation of the past with Porter, their feminist intentions are primarily realized in the *Shrew* material. That is, the update's target is not so much Porter himself as the way in which Porter uses Shakespeare — or, more particularly, the way in which the tamed shrew analogizes the twentieth-century domestic, subservient wife. Kate's violence has a point; it resists and disarms Petruchio's control. Implicit in this account is a surprising assumption: bringing 1949 up to 2019's standards involves going back to 1593.

For example, in "I Hate Men," directorial and performance choices emphasize Kate's resistance to Petruchio's and Baptista's attempts to control her. Lilli sings,

I hate men —

I can't abide 'em even now and then.

Than ever marry one of them, I'd rest a virgin rather,

For husbands are a boring lot and only give you bother.

Of course, I'm awfully glad that Mother had to marry Father,

But I hate men. (Porter 2019)

The song, according to one Porter scholar, traditionally "conveys Kate's stubborn, shrewish personality through its pointed lyrics and its declamatory style" (Siebert 2016, 296). But in O'Hara's rendition, the "increasingly elaborate recurrences" that evoke "a sense of variations on a theme" (Siebert 2016, 297) are appropriated to represent Kate's justified insistence on her autonomy rather than her shrewishness. O'Hara's delivery of these lines is accompanied by more than a harmless tantrum or farcical slapstick. Her performance implies a reading of Shakespeare's Kate as an indictment of patriarchal oppression.

Just after being promised to Petruchio, Lilli/Kate delivers the song in a tavern (represented by a picnic table), drinking a pint of beer. This gives her a self-possessed, even carefree air. No maiden in a tower, she appears much like a twenty-first century woman grabbing a drink at the bar and complaining about a bad date. O'Hara drew enormous laughs at the performance I attended with the line, "He may have hair upon his chest, but sister so has Lassie," delivering it wide-eyed and arch-browed with an "I mean, really?" air that transcended the dated reference. Standing on the picnic table in a stage tableau that recalls the promotional poster, she looks down at two men seated on the bench beneath her and shoos one with her foot, saying, "Down, boy!" Additionally, although many of Porter's penultimate lines in each stanza reiterate the imperative of procreation, O'Hara

renders these ironic. When she delivers the line, "But ladies you must answer, too, what would we do without 'em?" she opens the door behind the picnic table, revealing a group of men drinking, burping, and hooting. Muttering "Yeah, no," O'Hara slams the door shut. Sarah Holdren calls this song "a ball-buster for Lilli Katherine" (Holdren 2019). Jesse Green calls it a "scalding take" that is "subtly shaded to demonstrate that hate is only part of the problem" (Green 2019). Though he does not refer to #MeToo directly, Jesse Green's allusion to "mistreatment," wryly noting, "men being what they are," points to the way in which the staging of "I Hate Men" resonates with the discourse of the #MeToo movement, which encourages survivors of sexual assault to seek justice against their abusers (Green 2019). The beer-chugging suitors recall accounts of fraternity parties, all too frequently the scene of campus sexual assaults. This is not to say that this version of "I Hate Men" implies that Petruchio is a rapist. Rather, the performance choices suggest that *Shrew's* coerced marriage is as reprehensible as the behaviors targeted by #MeToo. Roundabout updates "I Hate Men" by having Kate point out the injustice in a way that invites agreement rather than ridicule.

A second example helps to support this point. The wedding scene at the end of Act 1 coincides with Lilli's attempt to leave *Shrew*, following her discovery of Fred's romantic overtures to Lois. As Fred restrains Lilli, his manhandling of his co-star overlays Petruchio's abuse of Kate, who in Shakespeare is forced to marry the man against her will with him dressed in rags — and is denied the wedding feast to boot. Throughout the dialogue and the song "Kiss Me, Kate," O'Hara displays some of her most forceful physical resistance. When Fred/Petruchio places his hand over her mouth to gag her, she bites him — hard. She stomps on his foot; she punches; she kicks. McNulty notes the moment in which "O'Hara is flipped upside-down in a maneuver designed to make a sexual joke" with concern for O'Hara's safety (McNulty 2019). Holdren shares McNulty's unease, deriding a marriage "where happiness is predicated on breaking a woman like a horse" (Holdren 2019). In the moment McNulty describes, Fred/Petruchio grabs Lilli/Kate and hurls her over his shoulder in a reverse fireman hold. Her face suspended over his crotch, he then turns upstage, so that the audience can see her feet kicking wildly at his back. When he sets her down, she goes limp, looking up at him with a dead-eyed expression. Far from the quarreling of well-matched pranksters that Thompson identifies with Porter's musical, "Kiss Me, Kate" styles Kate's force as a necessary resistance.

Reading Kate's Resistance in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Of course, the legacy of *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of perpetually contested gender politics, as scholars such as Lynda E. Boose, Diana E. Henderson, Valerie Wayne, David Wootton, and Graham Holderness have shown (Boose 1991, 179-80; Henderson 2003, 120-53; Wayne 1985, 159; Wootton and Holderness 2010, 1-10). Though the physical violence (biting,

kicking, scratching) in Shakespeare's play text comes almost entirely from Kate, Petruchio's project of "kill[ing] a wife with kindness" (4.1.189), which includes starvation and sleep deprivation, is undergirded, as Boose argues, by the "silenced history of women's silencing" (Boose 1991, 212). Many have linked the taming plot to cultural practices such as dunking women underwater on a cucking stool and clamping their mouths shut with a scold's bridle (Boose 1991, 179-213; Dolan 1994, 59-88; Wayne 1985, 160-1). The fact that Petruchio's violence in the text primarily resides in metaphors (e.g., taming Kate is like breaking a horse or training a falcon) does not deter these critics from arguing that marriage to Petruchio results in Kate's "social death" (Schwarz 2016, 272).

Stagings and adaptations of *Shrew* over the centuries have, in fact, characterized Petruchio's taming with physical force. In John Lacy's *Sauny the Scot* (1698), an additional scene sees Sauny strip and humiliate the Kate character, his "crude phallic violence" alluding to her sexual assault (Aebischer 2001, 29). David Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio* (1754) introduces Petruchio's whip, as enduring a symbol for the play as Yorick's skull is for *Hamlet* (Haring-Smith 1985, 24). In Sam Taylor's 1929 film, both Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks enter the dinner scene with "snake-whips" (Haring-Smith 1985, 124). However, Pickford drops her whip before entering the bridal chamber, where she dons her wedding gown and veil in preparation for the last scene.

"Thus have I politicly begun my reign," says Petruchio, "And 'tis my hope to end successfully" (4.1.169-70). The question for most scholars — and for most artists who perform or adapt *Shrew* — is not so much if Petruchio attempts to master Kate. Rather, the question is how to read Kate's response to his efforts and, by extension, Petruchio's level of success. It is perhaps for this reason, as Henderson notes, that *Shrew* has proved a popular choice for re-reading and re-imagining in feminist terms (Henderson 2003, 120). This is the legacy into which Roundabout's *Kiss Me, Kate* intervenes.

On the one hand, many argue that *Shrew* supports the idea of a husband's control. C.L. Barber asserts that comic festivity provides "a temporary license, a 'misrule' which implied rule, so that the acceptance of nature was qualified" (Barber 1959, 9). For Barber, nature is patriarchal, and Kate is a topsy-turvy figure who must be defeated — or tamed — in order to re-inscribe patriarchy, moving "through release to clarification" (Barber 1959, 2). Similarly, for Northrop Frye, the shrew is on par with the clown, the foreigner, and the monster, who exercise power only in the "green world" of fantasy (Frye 1965, 142). Some feminists, like Lisa Hopkins, note the "disruptive" potential of shrews, but ultimately concur with Barber and Frye, arguing that the play contains the shrew's disruption (Hopkins 1998, 40-7). In Hopkins' formulation, marriage is "the simplest way of ensuring the continuation of civilized society" (Hopkins 1998, 191). Similarly, for Kathleen McLuskie, "the popular literary versions of gender relations organized [audience] responses so that

they were not in conflict with the ideology of male supremacy" (McLuskie 1989, 49). For these scholars, Petruchio's mastery is total.

On the other hand, some claim that *Shrew* gives real weight to the idea of a wife's resistance. To take a cue from Natalie Zemon Davis' formulation of "women on top," the shrew's reign could be seen to mark dissent, gesturing toward the possibility of a revolution (Davis 1975, 124-51). Jonathan Dollimore writes of "inversion and misrule" as an instrument of critique in early modern drama, at times not so much "reinforcing the status quo" as helping to "endanger it, stimulating rebellion" (Dollimore 2004, 26-7). Pamela Allen Brown links Kate and other shrews in drama to what she calls "jesting literature," from the misogynistic legend of Bicorn and Chichevache to Rachel Speght's proto-feminist satire *A Muzzle for Melastomus* (Brown 2003, 216). For her, "jesting texts can help scholars measure the fissures between the theory and practice of subordination," providing "a means for ordinary people to contest social practices that ordain them as subordinates" (Brown 2003, 8). These scholars doubt Petruchio's success, focusing more on the signifying power of the "haggard" he attempts to "man" (4.1.174).

A range of scholarly accounts may be assigned to a third camp according to which an untameable wife suggests tension, instability, or the ongoing negotiation of the status quo as such (Fineman 1991, 120-42; Schwarz 2000, 29; Schwarz 2016, 277-8; Traub 1992). For, as Frances Dolan writes in her study of gendered representations of criminality, women's "subjectivities" themselves were "produced as resistant, criminal, and violent" (Dolan 1994, 5). Wendy Wall expands on this, claiming that "'woman' is used to mark contradictory positions in national and domestic ideologies," ensuring "dominant representations [. . .] did not go uncontested" (Wall 2002, 10-11). Similarly, Catherine Richardson argues that Petruchio and Kate's "various types of verbal and physical violence [. . .] work as a form of comic deliberation — not necessarily funny — in which domestic encounters comment on one another" (Richardson 2018, 150). Likewise, Natasha Korda reads Petruchio's efforts to control Kate through puns on "cates," or delicacies, arguing that the taming plot responds to "cultural anxiety surrounding the housewife's new role as a keeper of household cates" (Korda 2011, 55). Additionally, many see Petruchio's taming as educative (Herzog 2011, 191-203; Hutcheon 2011, 315-37; Mathie 2020, 257-76). In Elizabeth Mathie's reading, for instance, *Shrew* is neither feminist nor misogynist, but rather "demonstrates to its audience that gentlemanly mastery is difficult to identify from the outside," as Petruchio is "the tamer who tricks" (Mathie 2020, 270). In these accounts, tamer and tamed are in a dialectical relationship.

Roundabout's reading of Kate chimes with the scholarly accounts that see Kate as resistant, whether the end result is revolution or compromise. In so doing, this *Kiss Me, Kate* foregrounds

the musical's intertextual relationship with *Shrew*. And as Amanda Green and Scott Ellis update *Shrew*, they also insist on the play's continuing political power.

"I am ashamed that people are so simple": Toward Reconciliation

Indeed, though the production emphasizes Kate's retaliation against Petruchio's husbandly reign, it also moves away from marital dynamics to make its ultimate point. Through Green's revisions to "I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple," which Porter takes mostly word-for-word from Kate's final monologue in *Shrew* (5.2.136-79), the production changes the problem of the unruly woman to that of partisan dissension, replacing the call for submission with a call for reconciliation that resonates with a divided America and redirects resistance toward tyranny.

Of course, the prevalent early modern analogy between patriarchy and monarchy has always enabled readings of Kate and Petruchio's home as a microcosm of the nation (Orlin 1994, 137-82). Karen Newman connects processes like Petruchio's taming to an emergent absolute monarchy: "Managing femininity so as to insure the reproduction of the commonwealth, great and small, was a significant ideological feature of early modern England" (Newman 1999, 16). Similarly, Holly A. Crocker builds on Rebecca W. Bushnell's interpretation of the tyrant as the "sovereign counterpart" of the shrew in order to illustrate "feminine 'shrewdness' as an everyday safeguard against masculine misgovernment" (Bushnell 1990, 66; Crocker 2011, 409-10). Moreover, Wayne writes that "the character [of the shrew] certainly arose from a patriarchal society and a hierarchical view of marriage, and she was often used to affirm those structures; but she was also the very best character to call those structures into question when kings and husbands misused their power" (Wayne 1985, 182).

Roundabout underscores its feminist reading of Kate — and that reading's implications for national politics — in part through the characterization of Harrison Howell, Lilli's fiancé (played by Terence Archie). Howell arrives as the production of *Shrew* falls apart, threatening to curtail the romance Lilli and Fred have rekindled. Howell, a retired general and ascendant politician, is asked by both President Truman and his Republican challenger, Thomas Dewey, to run as vice president in the 1948 election. However, as Roundabout emphasized, Howell's jokes about the second amendment and crime in Baltimore have an unsettling currency. At the performance I attended, when Howell spouted his opinions on guns, one audience member hollered approval, drawing concerned murmurs from fellow playgoers. Resonating with a Trumpian rhetoric of individual freedom and the need for law and order, Howell reminds audience members of a partisan divide even more contentious than the struggles between a domineering husband and his willful wife.

By subtly shading Howell as a nod to Trump, Roundabout taps into a longstanding tradition of reading political implications into *Shrew's* wife-taming plot. The production then transitions from Kate's violent retaliation against Petruchio to a vision of a reconciled Kate and Petruchio defying another, external authority. That is, the show plays with the slippage between public and private, personal and political, rather than have Petruchio simply stand in for a monarch or, indeed, a president.

In this way, Howell lays the groundwork for Green's most substantive revisions to Porter's lyrics, in "I Am Ashamed That People Are So Simple." A comparison of Green's revisions (top) and Porter's original (bottom) reveals how the production redirects Kate's famous injunctions to women:

Green's Revisions

I am ashamed that people are so simple
 To offer war when we should kneel for peace
 Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway
 When everything but love must die away.
 Why are our bodies finite, bound for dust,
 The time we share so brief and yet so dear
 If not to teach our proud and stubborn hearts
 To love the best we can while we are here?
 So mates, hold your temper and humbly put
 Your hand 'neath the sole of your lover's foot
 In token of which duty if he please
 My hand is ready — ready —
 May it do him ease. (Porter 2019)

Porter's Original

I am ashamed 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.
 Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,
 Unapt to toil and trouble in the world
 But that our soft conditions and our hearts
 Should well agree with our external parts?

So wife, hold your temper and meekly put
 Your hand 'neath the sole of your husband's foot
 In token of which duty if he please
 My hand is ready — ready —
 May it do him ease. (Porter 1949)

Taking Porter's lines, which he preserves from Shakespeare's "Fie, fie, unknit that threatening and unkind brow" speech in *Shrew* (5.2.136-179), Green addresses them to everyone on the stage and, indeed, in the house. She replaces the "weaker sex" narrative of Porter's second stanza with a more general narrative of human frailty, and threads a new theme of "love" through each of the three verses as a substitute for Porter and Shakespeare's theme of wifely submission. Most importantly, she makes "war," "rule," "supremacy," "sway," and "temper" — pejoratives in Shakespeare and Porter for Kate's subversion of societal norms — mean something new: pejoratives for partisan squabbling. Kate's war of resistance is still validated, subsuming a greater war in which both she and Petruchio fight on the same side against the forces represented by Harrison Howell. Avoiding the essentialist reading that melds marital roles of the 1940s with those of the 1590s, Green has Kate advocate selflessness over self-interest and equity over inequality. This re-imagined song posits relationships between "lovers" (a more sexually liberated, and non-heteronormative formulation than "husbands" and "wives") as metaphors for — or starting points of — national unity. The person left out of the final tableau is Howell, a character who has no place in *Shrew*, nor in the "we" of the finale. Though these emendations update the play by reviving the old analogy between the nation and the home, they also elevate women as mediators of change. Kate's hand now signifies not submission, but reconciliation. A coalition between Lilli/Kate and Fred/Petruchio enables resistance to tyranny in all its forms. With a *carpe diem* message that replaces Porter and Shakespeare's chastising tone, this coalition invites the audience to join in.

This latest installment in the legacy of *The Taming of the Shrew* pivots from one kind of domestic violence to another, from fractured marriages to fractured electorates. Through Green's lyrical changes, Ellis's direction, and, above all, O'Hara's performance, the play asserts that women have a major part to play in political change. Roundabout Theatre's *Kiss Me, Kate* argues that reading Shakespeare's shrew as resistant is one way to fight back and move forward.

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