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Review of The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays Ed. Dana E Aspinall (New York: Routledge, 2002).

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Dana E. Aspinall, Ed.
The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays
New York: Routledge, 2002. xi+387p.
£65 hardback
ISBN: 0-8153-3515-6

As might be expected from a book of essays on what is arguably Shakespeare's most provocative study of sexual politics, the main focus of the readings presented here is gender. The collection is divided into three parts: a survey of the play's critical history from the book's editor, a collection of reprinted critical essays, and a section on the play in performance, on stage, and in film and television. Aspinall's introductory essay is a useful overview of the play's early textual and stage history, although the scholarship is not cutting-edge: Joseph Quincy Adams's edition of Henry Herbert's records, cited by Aspinall, has been superseded by N. W. Bawcutt's (Oxford, 1996). Also, the introduction rather skimps on the twentieth century, giving it just two pages. Of course, the rest of the book fleshes out the twentieth-century responses, but there is still a gap since almost every essay reproduced in this anthology is post-1980. Although it would have been interesting to see a range of decades represented it might be objected that this is not the remit of the series which, as the general editor makes clear, seeks to provide "new essays" (p. ix) on a particular Shakespeare play or poem, although the essays here are not "new" in the sense of 'specially commissioned' but were gathered from other publications. Thus it is difficult to know who this book is directed towards, since being available only in hardback it will not be bought by students and at this price most scholars were better to acquire offprints of the essays as they originally appeared in their respective journals.

Joan Fitzpatrick