

Foghorn Bellow, Sly Bitchery Spark Shakspeare's Worst Play

By W. H. Auden

First, an exclamation of dismayed dissent. Why, with some 36½ to choose from, select Shakespeare's worst play, a play which is not only totally lacking in poetry and wit, but which also leaves a very unpleasant taste in the mouth? Let me explain hastily that I am no feminist; I am with the most reactionary in believing that a woman's place is in the home, not an office, factory, druggie, or cocktail lounge, that she should have lots of children, and that she can be neither happy nor fully herself until she finds a man to whom she surrenders completely and for life. But for that very reason, a great deal is required of the man, and if he is no better than Lucentio, Baptista, Hortensio, Gremio, and Petruchio—God, what a crew—then she'd better remain a stenographer or become a nun. In the Little Theatre Club production, as in most, the prologue was omitted, but readers of the play will remember that its "wittie and pleasant comedie" is performed for the delectation of Christopher Sly, which suggests, at least to me, Shakespeare's own wry comment on the whole boiling. "Well, here it is"; he seems to be saying, "this is the daydream of every resentful, ineffectual, not-so-male loafer—to have absolute and irresponsible power over a woman who is vital, beautiful, and very very rich."

"So Lively, So Awful . . ."

However, if the play itself turned my stomach, it was quite otherwise with the performance, and I do congratulate Mrs. Rubin and the Little Theatre Club on a production which was in almost every respect, very good indeed.

The two most remarkable performances were, for me, Michael Wertheimer's Gremio and Winnifred Poland's Bianca, not because they were better than the principals, but because their parts are so much more difficult to make anything of. The temptation to ham the Pert Servant, is even for professionals, almost irresistible. (Stefan Machlup succumbed, I'm afraid, as Biondello, but, then, what is one to do with him? Ward Edwards as Tramo, on the other hand, was too genteel), yet Wertheimer managed wonderfully to be at once so lively and so

awful. Similarly, the very idea of the good gentle sister makes one yawn, but Miss Poland surprised and delighted me by playing Bianca as a sly little bitch.

Hold That Foot!

Petruchio (Vaughan Chambers) with his drearily masculine presence and his foghorn bellow was an admirable job of casting and acting; my kicking foot never stopped itching. As for Katharina (Helen Glenzing), my only complaint is that she was too sympathetic. I suspect that in an effort to get some interest into the play, Miss Glenzing tried to make it the drama of a spirited girl's surrender to her destined hero. Unfortunately, Petruchio's character makes this impossible with the result that I couldn't dislike her when she was supposed to be a shrew, and I disliked Petruchio even more after she yielded, since from start to finish she was so obviously immeasurably his superior.

I have no space to do more than mention one or two others. Lucentio (John Rosselli) was as soft, well-washed, and nice-looking as a boy-friend should be. Hortensio (Robert Alfandre) was a real camp, Baptista (Richard Southworth), Gremio (Robert Gilkey), Pedant (David Chalmers) and Vincentio (Philip Gilbert) were convincingly dingy old men, the Widow (Eleanor Gillam) was a just reward for Hortensio, and the Lower Orders, especially the seamstress (Merry Brown) made one nostalgic for the good old days in Europe when servants were servants.

Swarthmore's Own

Richard Southworth's set was simple, effective, and professional, as were the lighting (Fisk et al) and the costumes (Kemp et al). Personally, I have a preference for Shakespeare in modern dress, partly, perhaps, because I detest Elizabethan clothes.

Last, but not least, there was Robbins Landon's overture. Perhaps it was not very original and seemed only vaguely related to the play, but it was music, it sounded nice, and, more important still, it gave the performance what every amateur production should have, a local uniqueness. It made it Swarthmore's show.

Kohler and Wilcox Discuss Problems Of Postwar World

"Is a Democratic Germany Possible?" was the subject of discussion at the SSA meeting held on Sunday in Bond. The speakers were Dr. Kohler, who discussed the educational problems, and Clair Wilcox, who discussed German economy.

Dr. Kohler averred that to educate the Germans we should bring them facts. They should be given complete freedom of thought during the occupation. It is important that the armies of occupation set an example of democratic fairness. There should be no power politics.

Dr. Kohler went on to say that the German people should show a greater interest in politics. Public trials should be held so that every German might understand the legal reasons for punishment. He concluded by describing the condition of Germany as an acute symptom of the whole world's moral illness. There is no black and white of good and evil. We, as well as the Germans, are guilty.

Russia Dominant

Clair Wilcox, the next speaker, then gave his opinion of the status of post-war Germany. He believes that Germany will be too weak to threaten world peace. It is Russia that will dominate Europe: if Germany figures at all importantly, it will be as a subsidiary to Russia.

After saying that for the Germans the results of a harsh or a soft peace would not be very different, Mr. Wilcox gave some of the probable results of a harsh peace. Germany, he said, will be a small country with a comparatively large population. Their heavy industry will be taken away, so that they will have no means of earning their livelihood. Under these circumstances Germany could not possibly become a democracy, and we shall thus defeat our own purposes. Since milder terms would render a democratic Germany more possible, it is the United Nations that would profit from leniency.

Preceding this program, there was a short business meeting. Pierson McLean spoke on Delaware County politics. The SSA decided that nothing will be done in this line until the beginning of the year. A drive for membership will soon be started. Dues are set at fifty cents.