

UNDERGRADUATE PAPER

**“Is there any record of any two that loved
better than we do?”: Male Friendship
in *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Two Noble
Kinsmen***

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In early modern England, male friendship had a significant influence on various areas of everyday life, including the social, political and economic spheres. Contemporaries such as Michel de Montaigne and Francis Bacon therefore attempted to conceptualize and articulate a definition of an ideal male friendship. According to Montaigne, in an idealized friendship, “there is general, universal warmth, tempered, moreover, and even, a constant and settled warmth, all gentleness and smoothness that has nothing harsh and stinging about it.”¹ To such an ideal friendship, Montaigne explains, marriage is an impediment because, unlike friendship, marriage is “forced” since it is a “business or commerce,” and it can thus “upset the course of keen affection.”² This opinion is also shared by Francis Bacon, who states that “he that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises.... Unmarried men are best friends.”³ Both Montaigne and Bacon, then, accord friendship a higher value than family since, in contrast to marriage, which is based on economic motivations, ideal male friendship is of an immaterial nature, characterized by altruism and mutual emotional support. Furthermore, because it is such a central aspect of human life, male friendship is fundamental to identity formation. As

Montaigne states, friends “mingle and blend so completely into one another, in so complete a mixture, that they efface the seam between them.”⁴ Such a Humanist understanding of ideal male friendship thus suggests a spiritual conceptualization, in which friends figuratively merge into one another and, in this way, share and determine each other’s identity, dissolving the boundaries of selfhood. As a result of this spiritual union, friendship not only affects individual identity, but it also shapes all other bonds, including romantic, social and political relationships.⁵ Idealized male friendship is thus universally potent.

Shakespeare’s romances, including *The Winter’s Tale* (1611) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613-14), dramatize friendship relations. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Leontes’s and Polixenes’s idealized friendship is put into question because Leontes imagines that his wife, Hermione, and Polixenes are having a sexual relationship. Rather than destroying their friendship, however, Leontes’s jealousy is in fact a necessary element which allows the play to challenge and renegotiate the early modern ideology of idealized friendship. Similarly, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Arcite’s and Palamon’s friendship is complicated as the two men enter into a rivalry because of Emilia. However, whereas Leontes’s and Polixenes’s initial friendship is an idealized one, Arcite’s and Palamon’s friendship at the beginning of the play is more ambiguous.

To explore the ideology of idealized friendship in William Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* and Shakespeare’s and John Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, this essay will be informed both by early modern accounts of friendship by Montaigne and Bacon and by work done by various critics, including Tom MacFaul, Allan Bloom, Jennifer Forsyth, Alan Stewart and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. The essay will focus on the friendship between Leontes and Polixenes and that between Arcite and Palamon, and it will argue that both plays challenge the early modern ideology of idealized male friendship, characterized by altruism, spiritual unity and universal potency, because the male friendships depicted are more dynamic and multifaceted than acknowledged by early modern contemporaries, which allows Shakespeare’s characters to renegotiate their relationships.

The friendship Leontes and Polixenes enjoyed during their childhood conforms to the idealized male friendship as outlined by

Montaigne. When Hermione asks Polixenes about his childhood friendship with Leontes, Polixenes answers:

We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i'th' sun
And bleat the one at th'other: what we changed
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill doing, nor dreamed
That any did. (1.2.67-71)⁶

In this speech, Polixenes stresses their innocence, which is highlighted by both the repetition of the word itself in line 68 and by the imagery of “lambs,” which is conventionally associated with innocence and purity as it is the “Christian symbol for Christ.”⁷ In addition, the word “twinned” highlights both their physical and emotional closeness, which echoes Montaigne’s claim that true friends are “indivisible”⁸ as they “mingle and blend ... completely into one another.”⁹ This idea is reinforced by the imagery of the sun, which figuratively stands for the “universal warmth” in idealized friendships.¹⁰ Furthermore, Polixenes’s statement that he and Leontes did not know “[t]he doctrine of ill doing” conforms to the early modern notion of idealized friendship as being characterised by “gentleness and smoothness that has nothing harsh and stinging.”¹¹

Leontes’s and Polixenes’s mutual love is further reinforced by Camillo’s description of their childhood “affection” for one another: “They were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now” (1.1.21-4). MacFaul reads this description as an indication that their friendship challenges the notion of idealized friendship, arguing that the word “branch” highlights a “separation” between Leontes and Polixenes.¹² However, while this is true for the word “branch” on its own, MacFaul overlooks the first part of the metaphor, which states that their affection is “rooted betwixt them.” This imagery of a botanical root suggests a common origin, indicating a unity between the two friends’ selves, which are symbolized by the branches. Leontes’s and Polixenes’s intimate connection echoes that of Baucis and Philemon, an old married couple in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.¹³ Similar to Leontes and Polixenes, Baucis and Philemon are characterized by benevolence, innocence and generosity. As a reward for their hospitality shown to Zeus and Hermes, the two gods grant Baucis’s and

Philemon’s wish to stay united even after death by transforming them into intertwined trees. Therefore, rather than suggesting a separation between Leontes and Polixenes, Camillo’s metaphor of a tree illustrates the indivisible bond underlying their (childhood) friendship.

In contrast to Leontes’s and Polixenes’s childhood friendship, Arcite’s and Palamon’s friendship at the beginning of the play complicates the early modern ideology of idealized friendship, specifically its claim to spiritual unity and permanence. While Alan Stewart¹⁴ and MacFaul¹⁵ claim that Arcite’s and Palamon’s idealized friendship is challenged only *after* they see Emilia, which implies that they enjoy an idealized friendship before that event, I argue that these critics overlook finer nuances, and that Arcite’s and Palamon’s friendship is in fact more ambiguous from the very beginning. In the following conversation, Arcite and Palamon talk about their friendship while they are in prison, shortly before they see Emilia:

Arcite: While Palamon is with me, let me perish
If I think this our prison!

Palamon: Certainly,
‘Tis a main goodness, cousin, that our fortunes
Were twin’d together. ‘Tis most true, two souls
Put in two bodies,

...

Arcite: We are one another’s wife, ever begetting
New births of love

...

Palamon: Is there any record of any two that loved
Better than we do, Arcite?

Arcite: Sure there cannot

Palamon: I do not think it possible our friendship
Should ever leave us. (2.2.61-115)¹⁶

The exchange in lines 112-113 seems to confirm Stewart’s and MacFaul’s readings as it echoes the description of Montaigne’s friendship with Etienne de La Boétie, which Montaigne describes as being “so complete and so perfect that surely nothing like it can be read of and no trace of it can be seen practiced among the men of today.”¹⁷ By juxtaposing Arcite’s and Palamon’s friendship with that of Montaigne and La Boétie, claiming that it is unique, the play seems to suggest that Arcite’s and Palamon’s

friendship corresponds to the early modern notion of idealized friendship. However, lines 61-65 contradict this reading. While the word “twin’d,” which is also used by Polixenes as discussed above, is reminiscent of Montaigne’s claim that true friendship is “indivisible,”¹⁸ the metaphor of them being “two souls / Put in two bodies” contradicts the early modern ideology of true friends figuratively being “one soul in two bodies.”¹⁹ Arcite’s and Palamon’s relationship further challenges the early modern notion of ideal friendship as Arcite states that they “are one another’s wife” (2.2.80). As already mentioned in the introduction, according to Montaigne²⁰ and Bacon,²¹ love and marriage are inferior to true male friendship, and by comparing their friendship to a marriage, Arcite undermines his own argument that they are true friends. Palamon’s claim that it is not “possible [their] friendship / Should ever leave [them]” thus creates an ironic effect, setting the stage for their rivalry over Emilia shortly afterwards. In other words, rather than describing an idealized friendship, both Arcite’s claim that their love is unique and Palamon’s assertion that their friendship is permanent seem to be hyperbolic, a promise they cannot keep.

Returning to *The Winter’s Tale*, Leontes’s and Polixenes’s idealized friendship at the beginning of the play as discussed above is challenged when Leontes imagines himself to be cuckolded by Polixenes:

Leontes: How she [Hermione] holds up the neb, the bill to
 him [Polixenes],
 And arms her with the boldness of a wife
 To her allowing husband. Gone already
 Inch-thick, knee-deep, o’er head and ears a forked
 one! (1.2.182-5)

The expression of looking “forked” alludes to the early modern imagery of horns that cuckolds supposedly wear on their foreheads, as illustrated in Fig. 1, a print from *English Customs*²² of 1628. In addition, Leontes’s description of Hermione linking arms with Polixenes mirrors the position of the pair on the left-hand side of the illustration, which further highlights Leontes’s imagined identity as a cuckold. According to Allan Bloom, the jealousy Leontes feels as a cuckold “destroys” the “perfect friendship” he shares with Polixenes.²³ Rather than *destroying* their friendship, however, I argue that Leontes’s jealousy in fact transforms it.



Fig. 1: *English Customs*: “My Dotard Husband Gives Not Mee” (1628)

As described by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, male homosocial bonds can take various forms, including friendship and rivalry.²⁴ In her seminal work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1983), Sedgwick envisages male homosocial desire as a triangular structure, building on René Girard’s theory of the erotic triangle, which describes the rivalry between two individuals (usually men) over a third, the “beloved” (usually a woman).²⁵ While Girard considers the erotic triangle as symmetrical, Sedgwick argues that in fact the distribution of power in such a triangular relationship can never be even; indeed, the relationship between the two (male) rivals is stronger than that between a rival and the beloved, which is necessary in order to maintain and transmit patriarchal and heteronormative power in a “male dominated society.”²⁶ Sedgwick illustrates this by analysing the connection between cuckoldry and sexuality in William Wycherley’s play *The Country Wife* (1675), and she argues that in the play, to cuckold “is by definition a sexual act, performed on a man, by another man [through the medium of a woman].” Heterosexual love is thus “a strategy of homosocial desire.”²⁷ This homosocial desire, then, is “not detrimental to ‘masculinity’ but definitive of it” as it is a way men “arrive at satisfying relationships” with one another.²⁸ In other words, rather than destroying the homosocial bonds between

men, cuckoldry is another form of strengthening them. Such a relationship which involves both bonding and competing can be compared to Montaigne's concept of "ordinary friendship." As Montaigne explains, in contrast to a "noble relationship," in which friends are "indivisible" because "everything between them is [...] common," including their children, wives, thoughts, opinions, life and honour, in an ordinary friendship, "you must proceed with reins in hand, with prudence and precaution" since "the knot is not tied so well that you have no reason to mistrust."²⁹ Montaigne's emphasis on prudence, precaution and mistrust thus implies that in an ordinary friendship, friends can potentially turn into deceivers, and friendship into rivalry. In *The Winter's Tale*, rather than destroying his relationship with Polixenes, Leontes's jealousy strengthens the underlying homosocial bond of his rivalry with Polixenes, transforming their idealized friendship temporarily into an ordinary friendship.

Challenging the early modern ideology of idealized friendship has significant implications for identity formation. As noted by MacFaul, the notion of idealized friendship presupposes male friendship as "crucial to a man's sense of identity" as men form their identities in relation to their friends,³⁰ and Forsyth observes that without friendship, men could not live "a fulfilling life."³¹ These descriptions suggest a lack of independent individuality since identity was dependent on and determined through friends. As MacFaul explains, this Humanist view of identity as being determined by social relationships resulted in an alienation of the self because it "can only be found in or through others."³² By challenging the idealized friendship between Leontes and Polixenes, *The Winter's Tale* allows Leontes to form an identity, however wretched and despairing (3.2.207-13), outside these bonds and thus to experience a sense of individuality which would not have been possible within the constraints of idealized friendship. Furthermore, as MacFaul notes, "friends are essential to the proper playing of one's part before others" and to displaying "virtuous thought and action."³³ This metaphor of performance and artificiality is, however, a "denial of subjectivity."³⁴ Leontes's rivalry with Polixenes thus allows Leontes to shatter the façade of his "virtuous" identity performed in public in favour of an authentic inner self characterised by jealousy: "[Leontes's] heart

dances, / But not for joy, not joy” (1.2.110-11). Leontes is thus able to circumvent social conventions and behaviour that reduce and stifle subjectivity and authenticity.

The fact that, in contrast to Arcite and Palamon, Leontes merely imagines his identity as a cuckold and thus his rivalry with Polixenes further troubles the early modern view of idealized male friendship, which neither MacFaul nor Bloom acknowledge. In various scenes, in which Leontes stares at Hermione and Polixenes, such as the one in which they are linking arms as discussed above, Leontes projects his own fantasies onto them. According to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “staring establishes a social relationship between starrer and staree. It is an interpersonal action through which we act out who we *imagine* ourselves and others to be.”³⁵ Leontes’s act of staring thus suggests that he creates identities through imagination, and that his rivalry with Polixenes is one-sided since Polixenes does not actively play a part in it. In their essays on friendship, neither Montaigne nor Bacon account for such an uneven male friendship which is perceived differently by two friends. While Montaigne does make a distinction between “ordinary friendship” and “noble” friendship, he presupposes that both friends look at their friendship in the same way.³⁶ *The Winter’s Tale* can thus be read as addressing this gap and attempting to fill it, defying the early modern notion of idealized male friendship as a homogeneous construct.

In contrast to the relationship between Leontes and Polixenes, the rivalry between Arcite and Palamon is very real to both parties, creating a “division”³⁷ between them. After Arcite and Palamon have seen Emilia from their prison window, their rivalry is evident:

Palamon: I that first saw her, I that took possession
First with mine eye of all those beauties in her
Revealed to mankind! If thou lovest her,
Or entertain’st a hope to blast my wishes,
Thou art a traitor, Arcite, and a fellow
False as thy title to her. Friendship, blood,
And all the ties between us, I disclaim,
If thou once think upon her.

Arcite: Yes, I love her
And, if the lives of all my name lay on it,
I must do so; I love her with my soul:
If that will lose ye, farewell, Palamon.

I say again,
 I love her and in loving her maintain
 I am worthy and as free a lover,
 And have as just a title to her beauty,
 As any Palamon, or any living
 That is a man's son. (2.2.169-85)

Arcite's and Palamon's "division" is linguistically highlighted by both Palamon's and Arcite's use of anaphora through the pronoun "I" in line 169 and at the beginning of lines 178-82, which stands in contrast to the plural pronouns "we" and "our" in their conversation praising their friendship discussed above (2.2.61-113). Their rivalry is further emphasised by their verbal dispute over Emilia's body. Both Arcite and Palamon position themselves as the owners of Emilia since Arcite claims that he has "as just a title to her beauty" as Palamon, and Palamon insists that he "took possession / First with [his] eye." Arcite's and Palamon's language, then, commodifies Emilia's body, moving their rivalry into the realm of economics, contrasting the ideal immaterial and spiritual friendship.

Palamon's act of asserting his ownership of Emilia through gazing and thus objectifying her corresponds to the concept of the "male gaze." According to Garland-Thomson, "the male gaze is a position of privilege in social relations which ... positions women as objects of that look."³⁸ This objectification of women is also a central idea of Sedgwick's theory on homosociality and rivalry, according to which the relationship between two (male) rivals is based on a "traffic in women," since women are considered to be "an exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men."³⁹ Therefore, similar to the relationship between Leontes and Polixenes, rather than breaking the bond between Arcite and Palamon, their rivalry transforms it so that it becomes another form of "cementing" their bond. Their rivalry is further rendered ambiguous by Palamon's statement that: "Friendship, blood / And all the ties between us, I disclaim, / If thou once think upon her" (2.2.174-6). Rather than claiming that their friendship is over, Palamon uses the conditional "if," suggesting that he only disclaims their friendship if Arcite thinks "upon her" again, thus opening up a possible future in which their friendship continues to thrive.

Upon realizing that this verbal battle does not lead to a solution, in order to settle their rivalry over Emilia, Arcite and Palamon decide to challenge each other to a duel, which further puts their friendship, especially its insistence on altruism and selflessness, into question. The following conversation illustrates that they are willing to fight until the very end:

Palamon: no man but thy cousin's fit to kill thee.

...

Wilt thou exceed in all, or dost thou do it
To make me spare thee?

Arcite: If you think so, cousin,
You are deceived, for, as I am a soldier,
I will not spare you.

Palamon: That's well said. (3.6.44-9)

As Forsyth notes, according to the early modern view of idealized male friendship, “if true friends must face each other in combat, each would wish for the privilege of sacrificing himself for the other.”⁴⁰ Arcite’s statement that he “will not spare” Palamon thus does not conform to the image of idealized friendship as being based on unconditional altruism or even martyrdom.

Similar to the relationship between Leontes and Polixenes, the rivalry between Arcite and Palamon has a significant impact on their identity formation. As already mentioned in the introduction, in the early modern period, there was an “overall tendency ... to insist on the priority of friendship over all other codes,” including “family as represented through women.”⁴¹ Favouring their relationship with Emilia instead of their friendship allows Arcite and Palamon to create an alternative social order, one in which friendship does not have the highest priority and thus does not primarily determine one’s identity. Moreover, as observed by Arlinghaus, when it comes to asserting one’s individuality in the early modern period, in contrast to modern society, people would “opt for ‘being better’ rather than ‘being different’” than others.⁴² This competitive aspect is an integral part of the rivalry between Arcite and Palamon, who aim to surpass each other in the dual over Emilia, and it contrasts the ideology of idealized friendship, which is based on equality. By aspiring to be “better” than the other, Arcite and Palamon can create a sense of selfhood and individuality outside the constraints of an idealized friendship.

Arcite's and Palamon's relationship is, however, more complex than discussed above because even though they are willing to kill each other, their friendship arguably survives Arcite's death at the end of the play. Indeed, throughout the play, the two men repeatedly stress that death could not separate them. For example, in act two, Arcite states that their friendship goes beyond death (2.2.225-7), and later in the play, Palamon tells Arcite: "if thou killest me / The gods and I forgive thee" (3.6.97-8), and: "I am Palamon, / One that yet loves thee dying" (5.4.89-90). This emphasis on the survival of their friendship beyond death corresponds to Montaigne's description of idealized friendship as characterized by a spiritual unity because it is indivisible.⁴³ Arcite's and Palamon's friendship defying death thus suggests that their relationship is more complex than simple rivalry.

Circling back to *The Winter's Tale*, while Bloom argues that the play's ending "gives a definite primacy to marriage over friendship,"⁴⁴ and MacFaul claims that idealized male friendship "cannot survive,"⁴⁵ I argue that the play does indeed suggest that idealized male friendship can triumph. After Leontes learns from Apollo's oracle that Polixenes is innocent, he declares: "Apollo, pardon / My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle. / I'll reconcile me to Polixenes" (3.2.150-2). Leontes's determination to reconcile with Polixenes is further reinforced by Paulina, who attempts to evoke his guilty conscience, declaring him responsible for Hermione's death:

Paulina: If one by one you wedded all the world,
Or from the all that are took something good
To make a perfect woman, she you killed
Would be unparalleled.

Leontes: I think so. Killed?
She I killed? I did so. But thou strik'st me
Sorely, to say I did; it is as bitter
Upon thy tongue as in my thought. Now good, now,
Say so but seldom. (5.1.13-20)

Paulina's blunt statement that Leontes "killed" Hermione and Leontes's repeated questions "Killed? / She I killed?" as well as his subsequent realisation that "[he] did so" suggest that for the first time Leontes becomes aware that it was his jealous behaviour that resulted in Hermione's death, a thought which he cannot bear.

In addition, Paulina’s adoration of Hermione, claiming that she was more than “a perfect woman” since she was “unparalleled,” further reinforces Leontes’s guilty feelings, which is evident as he complains that Paulina’s words are “bitter” and strike him “[s]orely” and entreats her to stop her accusations (“Now good, now, / Say so but seldom”). Thus, while the play complicates Montaigne’s notion of true male friendship by staging an imagined rivalry between Leontes and Polixenes, by suggesting that Leontes is able to get rid of his illusion and to develop a guilty conscience, thus preferring to reconcile with Polixenes, the play seems to privilege male homosocial love rather than rivalry. Similarly, the actual reconciliation scene seems to suggest that their friendship triumphs:

Steward: Did you see the meeting of the two kings?

Rogero: No.

Steward: Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of. There might you have beheld one joy crown another, so and in such manner that it seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears. There was casting up of eyes, holding up of hands, with countenance of such distraction that they were to be known by garment, not by favour. ... [Leontes] then asks Bohemia forgiveness, ... I never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it. (5.2.39-57)

By personifying Leontes’s and Polixenes’s emotions (“it seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them” and “their joy waded in tears”), the steward emphasizes their excessive “joy” at their reconciliation. Their joy is reinforced by their gestures of “casting up of eyes” and “holding up of hands,” movements which mirror the religious piety they experienced in their idealized childhood friendship as discussed at the beginning of this essay. Moreover, the description of them as only distinguishable by their clothes (“they were to be known by garment”) rather than their faces echoes Montaigne’s description of his friendship with La Boétie, in which he and La Boétie figuratively share an identity, as emphasized by Montaigne’s statement: “[La Boétie] is myself.”⁴⁶ The mirroring of Leontes’s and Polixenes’s faces and body language, leaving them indistinguishable

to the observer, thus suggest that they enjoy an idealized friendship characterised by unity and indivisibility.

This seeming re-establishment of Leontes's and Polixenes's idealized friendship is, however, more ambiguous than it might seem at first. Even though drama is a form of mimesis, the reconciliation scene is rendered in a diegetic mode. Indeed, the play does not show the readers and the audience members the scene directly; instead, the scene is narrated by the steward, who, as the narrator, has the ability to colour the narrative and thus the nature of Leontes's and Polixenes's reconciliation. The steward's reliability as a narrator is, however, questionable. Not only is the steward personally and emotionally involved in the event he narrates, but in lines 55-7, he also claims that his description of the scene is "incapable of doing justice to it" as he lacks the adequate words, and that the scene can only be "seen" and not told, which thus renders Leontes's and Polixenes's reconciliation inaccessible to the readers and the audience.⁴⁷ While Jan Frans Van Dijkhuizen considers it "ironic" that the reconciliation between Leontes and Polixenes is more prominently placed than the reconciliation between Leontes and Hermione,⁴⁸ I would argue that he fails to acknowledge the significance of this scene for the friendship drama of the entire play. Indeed, by denying the audience and the readers a direct rendition of the scene, the play ends on an ambivalent note, leaving the audience members and readers to ponder different possible futures for Leontes's and Polixenes's friendship.

As has been demonstrated in this essay, male friendship can be more dynamic and multifaceted than endorsed by early modern contemporaries such as Montaigne and Bacon. While friendship is "put in competition with love" in early modern drama,⁴⁹ rather than destroying friendship, rivalry is an integral part of it, enabling characters to reconsider and renegotiate their friendships. As has been shown, Leontes's jealousy and suspicion towards Polixenes transforms their idealized childhood friendship temporarily into an ordinary friendship, which lacks (spiritual) unity. However, through Leontes's and Polixenes's final reconciliation, *The Winter's Tale* seems to suggest that ultimately male homosocial love can triumph over rivalry. Unlike Leontes's and Polixenes's relationship, Arcite's and Palamon's friendship is more unstable throughout the play. While on the one hand, Arcite and Palamon are prepared to

use violence against each other as they fight for Emilia’s attention, on the other hand, they repeatedly affirm the uniqueness and spirituality that underlie their relationship. Challenging the early modern ideology of idealized friendship thus allows the characters of both *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* to carve out a space where they can experience a sense of individuality and selfhood beyond the constraints of ideal male friendship and create a self that is authentic and autonomous.

While this essay has only examined friendship between men, future work could also explore bonds between women. As observed by Will Tosh, the early modern period exhibited a “misogynistic view” towards female friendship since women were considered to be incapable of experiencing the “powerful emotions” male friends shared,⁵⁰ which echoes Montaigne’s claim that women’s “souls do not seem firm enough to maintain the grip of so tight and enduring a bond.”⁵¹ Both *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, however, stage intense relationships between women. When describing her childhood friendship with Flavina, Emilia states:

And she (I sigh and spoke of) were things innocent,
Lov’d for we did, and like the elements
That know not what or why, yet do effect
Rare issues by their operance, our souls
Did so to one another. (1.3.60-4)

This speech shows that Emilia has a spiritual notion of her friendship with Flavina, and it echoes the portrayal of Leontes’s and Polixenes’s childhood bonds, thus challenging the early modern notion of female friendship.

Notes

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1. Michel de Montaigne, “Friendship,” in *Selected Essays: With La Boétie’s Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012 [1580]), 76.

2. Montaigne, “Friendship,” 76-77.

3. Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsells Civill & Morall of Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam*. (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1909 [1597]), 22.

4. Montaigne, “Friendship,” 79.

5. Tom MacFaul, *Male Friendship in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

6. William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. John Pitcher (London: Bloomsbury, 2010 [1611]).

7. *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, s.v. "Lamb," accessed January 17, 2022, www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-4200?rskey=IZnzB6&result=4.

8. Montaigne, "Friendship," 83.

9. Montaigne, "Friendship," 79.

10. Montaigne, "Friendship," 76.

11. Montaigne, "Friendship," 76.

12. MacFaul, *Male Friendship*, 75.

13. Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid, Books VIII-XV* ([London]: George Bell & Sons, 1893; Project Gutenberg, 2008), VIII. 613-734, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/26073/pg26073-images.html>.

14. Alan Stewart, "'Near Akin': The Trials of Friendship in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. Jennifer Richards, and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 59.

15. MacFaul, *Male Friendship*, 77.

16. William Shakespeare, and John Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter (London: Bloomsbury, 2016 [1613-14]).

17. Montaigne, "Friendship," 74.

18. Montaigne, "Friendship," 83.

19. Montaigne, "Friendship," 81 (my emphasis).

20. Montaigne, "Friendship," 76-77.

21. Bacon, *Essays*, 22, 82.

22. "My Dotard Husband Gives Not Mee," *English Customs*, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, 1628, [23. Bloom, *Shakespeare on Love and Friendship*, 109.](https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGER-2-2-3985-257467:-English-customs--12-engravings-of-?qvc=w4s:t%2F%25BEnglish%2Bcustoms.%2B12%2Bengravings%2Bof%2BEnglish%2Bcouples%2Bwith%2Bverses%25D%2Fwhen%2F1628%2F&mi=7&trs=26, STC 10408.6, image 008033, used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.</p>
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24. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 1.

25. For a more detailed discussion on his conceptualization of triangular relationships see Girard's chapter "'Triangular' Desire" in his *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

26. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 21-3, 25.

27. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 49.

28. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 50.

29. Montaigne, "Friendship," 81-82.

30. MacFaul, *Male Friendship*, 3.

31. Jennifer Forsyth, "Cutting Words and Healing Wounds: Friendship and Violence in Early Modern Drama" in *Violent Masculinities: Male Aggression in Early Modern Texts and Culture*, ed. Jennifer Feather and Catherine Thomas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 70.

32. MacFaul, *Male Friendship*, 2.

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38. Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 41.
39. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 25-26.
40. Forsyth, “Cutting Words and Healing Wounds,” 70.
41. MacFaul, *Male Friendship*, 89.
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44. Bloom, *Shakespeare on Love and Friendship*, 110.
45. MacFaul, *Male Friendship*, 89.
46. Montaigne, “Friendship,” 83.
47. John Pitcher, *The Winter’s Tale*, editorial footnote.
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