

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

# THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

EDITED BY WILLIAM C. CARROLL



B L O O M S B U R Y



THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

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THE TWO  
GENTLEMEN  
OF VERONA

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THE TWO  
GENTLEMEN  
OF VERONA

Edited by  
WILLIAM C. CARROLL

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*The Editor*

William C. Carroll is Professor of English at Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts. His publications include *The Great Feast of Language in 'Love's Labour's Lost'*, *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* and *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare*; in addition, he has edited Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* for the New Mermaid series and *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts* for the Bedford Shakespeare.

For Carol and David



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# GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The Arden Shakespeare is now over one hundred years old. The earliest volume in the first series, Edward Dowden's *Hamlet*, was published in 1899. Since then the Arden Shakespeare has become internationally recognized and respected. It is now widely acknowledged as the pre-eminent Shakespeare series, valued by scholars, students, actors and 'the great variety of readers' alike for its readable and reliable texts, its full annotation and its richly informative introductions.

We have aimed in the third Arden edition to maintain the quality and general character of its predecessors, preserving the commitment to presenting the play as it has been shaped in history. While each individual volume will necessarily have its own emphasis in the light of the unique possibilities and problems posed by the play, the series as a whole, like the earlier Ardens, insists upon the highest standards of scholarship and upon attractive and accessible presentation.

Newly edited from the original quarto and folio editions, the texts are presented in fully modernized form, with a textual apparatus that records all substantial divergences from those early printings. The notes and introductions focus on the conditions and possibilities of meaning that editors, critics and performers (on stage and screen) have discovered in the play. While building upon the rich history of scholarly and theatrical activity that has long shaped our understanding of the texts of Shakespeare's plays, this third series of the Arden Shakespeare is made necessary and possible by a new generation's encounter with Shakespeare, engaging with the plays and their complex relation to the culture in which they were – and continue to be – produced.

## THE TEXT

On each page of the play itself, readers will find a passage of text followed by commentary and, finally, textual notes. Act and scene divisions (seldom present in the early editions and often the product of eighteenth-century or later scholarship) have been retained for ease of reference, but have been given less prominence than in the previous series. Editorial indications of location of the action have been removed to the textual notes or commentary.

In the text itself, unfamiliar typographic conventions have been avoided in order to minimize obstacles to the reader. Elided forms in the early texts are spelt out in full in verse lines wherever they indicate a usual late twentieth-century pronunciation that requires no special indication and wherever they occur in prose (except when they indicate non-standard pronunciation). In verse speeches, marks of elision are retained where they are necessary guides to the scansion and pronunciation of the line. Final -ed in past tense and participial forms of verbs is always printed as -ed without accent, never as -'d, but wherever the required pronunciation diverges from modern usage a note in the commentary draws attention to the fact. Where the final -ed should be given syllabic value contrary to modern usage, e.g.

Doth Silvia know that I am banished?  
(*TGV* 3.1.219)

the note will take the form

219 **banished** banishèd

Conventional lineation of divided verse lines shared by two or more speakers has been reconsidered and sometimes rearranged. Except for the familiar *Exit* and *Exeunt*, Latin forms in stage directions and speech prefixes have been translated into English and the original Latin forms recorded in the textual notes.

## COMMENTARY AND TEXTUAL NOTES

Notes in the commentary, for which a major source will be the *Oxford English Dictionary*, offer glossarial and other explication of

verbal difficulties; they may also include discussion of points of theatrical interpretation and, in relevant cases, substantial extracts from Shakespeare's source material. Editors will not usually offer glossarial notes for words adequately defined in the latest edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* or *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, but in cases of doubt they will include notes. Attention, however, will be drawn to places where more than one likely interpretation can be proposed and to significant verbal and syntactic complexity. Notes preceded by \* discuss editorial emendations or variant readings from the early edition(s) on which the text is based.

Headnotes to acts or scenes discuss, where appropriate, questions of scene location, Shakespeare's handling of his source materials, and major difficulties of staging. The list of roles (so headed to emphasize the play's status as a text for performance) is also considered in commentary notes. These may include comment on plausible patterns of casting with the resources of an Elizabethan or Jacobean acting company, and also on any variation in the description of roles in their speech prefixes in the early editions.

The textual notes are designed to let readers know when the edited text diverges from the early edition(s) on which it is based. Wherever this happens the note will record the rejected reading of the early edition(s), in original spelling, and the source of the reading adopted in this edition. Other forms from the early edition(s) recorded in these notes will include some spellings of particular interest or significance and original forms of translated stage directions. Where two early editions are involved, for instance with *Othello*, the notes will also record all important differences between them. The textual notes take a form that has been in use since the nineteenth century. This comprises, first: line reference, reading adopted in the text and closing square bracket; then: abbreviated reference, in *italic*, to the earliest edition to adopt the accepted reading, *italic* semicolon and noteworthy alternative reading(s), each with abbreviated *italic* reference to its source.



Conventions used in these textual notes include the following. The solidus / is used, in notes quoting verse or discussing verse lining, to indicate line endings. Distinctive spellings of the basic text (Q or F) follow the square bracket without indication of source and are enclosed in italic brackets. Names enclosed in italic brackets indicate originators of conjectural emendations when these did not originate in an edition of the text, or when the named edition records a conjecture not accepted into its text. Stage directions (SDs) are referred to by the number of the line within or immediately after which they are placed. Line numbers with a decimal point relate to entry SDs and to SDs more than one line long, with the number after the point indicating the line within the SD: e.g. 78.4 refers to the fourth line of the SD following line 78. Lines of SDs at the start of a scene are numbered 0.1, 0.2, etc. Where only a line number and SD precede the square bracket, e.g. 128 SD], the note relates to the whole of a SD within or immediately following the line. Speech prefixes (SPs) follow similar conventions, 203 SP] referring to the speaker's name for line 203. Where a SP reference takes the form e.g. 38+ SP, it relates to all subsequent speeches assigned to that speaker in the scene in question.

Where, as with *King Henry V*, one of the early editions is a so-called 'bad quarto' (that is, a text either heavily adapted, or reconstructed from memory, or both), the divergences from the present edition are too great to be recorded in full in the notes. In these cases the editions will include a reduced photographic facsimile of the 'bad quarto' in an appendix.

## INTRODUCTION

Both the introduction and the commentary are designed to present the plays as texts for performance, and make appropriate reference to stage, film and television versions, as well as introducing the reader to the range of critical approaches to the plays. They discuss the history of the reception of the texts within the

theatre and scholarship and beyond, investigating the interdependency of the literary text and the surrounding 'cultural text' both at the time of the original production of Shakespeare's works and during their long and rich afterlife.

# P R E F A C E

Editing comedy is no laughing matter, as I have discovered. Still, editing *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has been a distinct pleasure as well as a challenge. Like all editors, I stand on the shoulders of those who came before me, and I want to express my particular admiration for the Arden First Series edition of *Two Gentlemen* by R. Warwick Bond and the Arden Second Series edition by Clifford Leech: I learned much from both of them, and I am still amazed at the depth of their scholarship. Among other modern editions, I also found much to admire and ponder in the New Cambridge edition by Kurt Schlueter, the Bantam and *Complete Works* by David Bevington, the Penguin by Norman Sanders and the New Folger Library edition by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine.

All current Arden editors enjoy an enormous, invaluable resource: the wisdom, imagination and industry of the general editors. David Scott Kastan and Ann Thompson have been wonderfully supportive throughout and helpful in their suggestions and comments. This edition of *Two Gentlemen*, though, owes its single greatest debt to the third of the general editors, Richard Proudfoot, who has served virtually as my co-editor (as I suspect he does for all the editions), making helpful suggestions, probing my suppositions and reading everything in this edition rigorously, imaginatively and sympathetically. He has brought a director's eye to the project as well (after much prompting, I learned of his production of the play at Worcester College, Oxford, in 1960), raising questions about stagecraft as frequently as those about F lineation. I wish to express my particular gratitude to him.

Other members of the Arden team have proven equally important. Three of my fellow editors, Virginia and Alden Vaughan (*The Tempest*, 1999) and James R. Siemon (*Richard III*, forthcoming), read drafts of my Introduction, talked through various issues with me over the years and provided strong support, especially through the occasional meetings, usually over dinner or drinks, of our informal group, or conspiracy, the Boston Arden Editors. I am additionally grateful to Virginia Vaughan for inviting me to present a portion of my Introduction to her advanced seminar at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, and to Jim Siemon – for everything, as a colleague and friend of nearly thirty years.

In the period when this edition was first proposed and while most of the work was done on it, the entire Arden project was headed by the incomparable Jessica Hodge, whose work as publisher was exemplary in every way. She has an uncanny ability to judge her editors' capacities and to support and nudge them in just the right combinations. It has been astonishing to see how quickly and how effectively Margaret Bartley has taken over the reins, in my case providing the same kind of support and leadership over the last stages of this edition. Giulia Vincenzi has proven to be enormously helpful in a variety of ways, from connecting me to the various elements of production to helping secure photos and permissions from many different sources. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the superlative work done by my copy editor, Nicola Bennett, who has served as virtually another co-editor (indeed, she is herself co-editing *Edward III*); her scrupulous eye, her suggestions, her sense of both the textual and the dramaturgical elements of the project have been of the greatest importance, and this edition is vastly the better for her involvement.

Much of the work on this edition was done at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. I have profited from conversations with many wonderful people there, including Barbara A. Mowat, Gail Kern Paster, Richard Kuhta and Georgianna Ziegler. The Reading Room staff – under the expert

direction of Elizabeth Walsh – makes the Folger not only the most efficient place on earth in which to do research in the early modern period but also, in my opinion, the friendliest and most inviting. The good humour of the staff, in the face of my often bumbling questions and requests, made the daily experience of work pleasurable as well as rewarding. I am also grateful to the Cambridge University Press for permission to reprint a revised version of “‘And love you ’gainst the nature of love’: Ovid, Rape, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*”, originally published in *Shakespeare’s Ovid: The ‘Metamorphoses’ in the Plays and Poems*, ed. A.B. Taylor (Cambridge, 2000).

Closer to home, I wish to thank Provost (and earlier, Dean) Dennis B. Berkey for important financial support on a number of occasions, which most recently allowed me to employ Melissa Ware Pino for a summer’s meticulous assistance in gathering resources for the stage history of *Two Gentlemen*. My colleagues in early modern studies, Laurence Breiner, Christopher Martin and William Riggs, along with Jim Siemon, have been a source of intellectual stimulation and great collegiality for many years, and daily life is much the richer because of them – as it also is because of Coppélia Kahn, my co-chair of the Shakespeare Seminar at Harvard’s Humanities Center for several years. A number of my former doctoral students – now embarked on their own careers – have enriched my teaching and scholarly life over the years, and although I did not inflict any part of this edition upon them, their influence is still palpable: Michael Friedman (who has himself written interestingly on *Two Gentlemen*), Andrew Hartley, Claudia Limbert, John McKernan, Kirk Melnikoff, Kaara Peterson, Marie Plasse, Dana Sonnenschein, Penelope Staples, Edward Washington and Bin Zhu among others.

And closest to home, I owe the greatest debt, as always, to my wife Carol and son David, who have watched and supported my work on this project with unfailing love and confidence.

*William C. Carroll*  
*Boston, Massachusetts*



# INTRODUCTION

## THE PLAY

### *'Cease to Persuade'*

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona* occupies a prominent position in the First Folio of 1623 – the second play, after *The Tempest*. Its position may only reflect the fact that it was one of the plays prepared by the scrivener Ralph Crane, four of which are grouped together at the beginning of the Folio (see p. 117), but *Two Gentlemen* does amply demonstrate Shakespeare's richly exuberant comic powers at work. When Francis Meres in 1598 listed six of Shakespeare's comedies as examples, proving that he 'is the most excellent' author of both comedy and history, *Two Gentlemen* was the first play mentioned (Chambers, *WS*, 2.194). Exactly four centuries later, the screenwriters Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman, in their 1998 Academy Award-winning film, *Shakespeare in Love*, show the beautiful Viola De Lesseps (played by Gwyneth Paltrow) joining a dashing young Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes) as a male-disguised actor in a play that starts out as *Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter* and winds up as *Romeo and Juliet*; Viola becomes Shakespeare's muse, and his professional career takes off. Viola's original incentive to meet Shakespeare (often overlooked in accounts of the film) is a production of a Shakespeare play, full of high comic scenes with a dog and rich, romantic language. Unnamed in the film, the play is of course *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. We see Viola listening to the opening lines of the play, clearly thrilled by its poetic language, and Queen Elizabeth (Judi Dench) openly laughing at a scene with 'Will Kemp's' Lance and

throwing his dog Crab a piece of food. Shakespeare, however, watching offstage, shakes his head at the audience's low taste as they enjoy the performance of 2.3 with Lance and Crab.<sup>1</sup> The popularity of *Two Gentlemen* continues as a running joke throughout the film as the 'Henslowe' character hopes that Shakespeare will have a dog in the next play, *Romeo*, as well ('You mean, no dog of any kind?', Norman & Stoppard, 86).

Like all of Shakespeare's plays, *Two Gentlemen* has attracted the attention, if not the unfailing admiration, of the greatest editors and actors of the past four centuries and its stage history proves surprisingly rich. However, many readers and audiences have judged *Two Gentlemen*, as one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, to be aesthetically inferior to most of his others: 'early' comes to connote 'immature', hence relatively incompetent, in contrast to a play written later, which is more 'mature' (how could it not be?) and (almost by definition) therefore more successful. The final scene of the play, with Proteus's attempted rape of Silvia and Valentine's forgiveness of his friend, ranks as one of the most controversial in the Shakespearean canon. Its dramaturgical difficulties have been seen as the inept product of a callow and inexperienced playwright, consequently leading to questionable conclusions about the play's composition (see p. 129).

I aim to break this critical cycle, not by mounting a new (and doomed) argument about the play's aesthetic perfections, but by enlisting and, if possible, augmenting some stimulating recent critical and theoretical work on the early modern period and also related texts to cast light on Shakespeare's dramatic strategies in *Two Gentlemen*. Thus, the Introduction that follows begins by placing the play in relation to sixteenth-century discourses of

1 Later, Viola is shown in a near-swoon as she listens to the mediocre actor playing Valentine speak the lines at 3.1.174–84 (Queen Elizabeth dozes off at this point); Viola will herself recite these lines – and is vastly superior to the professional actor – later in the film, in her audition for a part in Shakespeare's new play. Speaking as one who is about to be banished from his beloved, as Valentine does in these lines, is a perfect foreshadowing of Viola's fate.



friendship, which have been seen to contextualize (although not satisfactorily for modern tastes) Valentine's behaviour at the end of the play. I hope that this edition, in exploring the early modern discourse of male friendship, will show how Shakespeare's use of the tradition is more complicated and indeed more searching than what has sometimes been seen as a rather immature, incompetent appropriation of it. Indeed, the fact that Shakespeare re-engages with the friendship tradition in his last play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (written around 1613 in collaboration with John Fletcher), counters any argument that the interest was merely one of an immature playwright. The controversial ending of *Two Gentlemen* presses the social demands of male friendship to their absurd limits, deliberately unsettling the audience by providing the form of closure but also leaving unresolved disturbing questions about desire, friendship and identity.

The Introduction then moves on to a consideration of other topics of significance: the bearing on the play of the story of the Prodigal Son, the problematics of the cross-dressed boy actor (the first in a Shakespearean comedy), metamorphosis as a central motif revealing the play's indebtedness to Ovid and Lyly, the use of letters, the identity of Crab's breed, the play's confused geography and its dramaturgy. The Introduction concludes with an examination of the play's stage and critical histories and issues relating to its text and date.

#### *The Early Modern Discourse of Male Friendship*

The dominant cultural context of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* appears to be registered in the discourse of male friendship, derived from an amalgam of advice pamphlets, courtesy books (see Fig. 1), personal essays, letters, epigrams, paternal advice to sons, ballads, prose and verse romances (e.g. Book 4 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the legend of friendship), plays (e.g. John Lyly's) and debates, among other written texts, as well as from an unwritten code of behaviour reflected in the fading glories of an honour culture (as James, 308–465, has described it) and a common set of foundational texts in the Tudor educational



1 Title-page of Richard Brathwait's *The English Gentleman*, 1630

system.<sup>1</sup> The dissemination of the precepts of friendship was extraordinarily widespread, yet two figures stand out as essential in every account: Aristotle and Cicero. Aristotle's comments on friendship were widely known and quoted, though they were not concentrated into a single essay. Cicero's essay *De Amicitia*, on the other hand, was at the heart of the entire textual field. Generations of schoolboys read and translated this essay and took up its moral lessons, even more than its style, in a widening arc of transmission.<sup>2</sup> Cicero's essay was translated into English three times before 1600,<sup>3</sup> yet almost anyone could have learned the essay's basic insights elsewhere, from both elite and popular culture. Among the most important of friendship texts was one evidently known to Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Booke Named the Governour*, published in 1531, reprinted seven times by 1580, and widely cited and imitated.<sup>4</sup> Elyot devoted two chapters in Book 2 to themes and legends of friendship.

Cicero's essay establishes, if it does not historically originate, the basic tenets of friendship theory.<sup>5</sup> The first of these, as in John Harington's translation (reprinted by Ruth Hughey), is the moral necessity that 'friendship can bee but in good men' (Hughey, 147, l. 361). Cicero notes that 'there shoulde be among all men, a certain felowship' (Hughey, 148, ll. 387–8) and also that there are forms of natural friendship that are very strong (parent–child, for example), yet these are not so strong as the real thing. True friendship completes or perfects the individual. So close do true friends

1 For the play's other major contextualizing discourse, the tradition of romance derived most directly from George of Montemayor's *Diana*, see pp. 41–6.

2 See Baldwin for the authoritative study of Cicero's place in the early modern school curriculum.

3 By John Tiptoft (first Earl Worcester), from the Latin, printed 1481; by John Harington of Stepney, from a French version, printed 1550; and by Thomas Newton, who reworked Harington's translation but also made use of Latin texts, printed 1557 (Hughey, 295).

4 See the useful survey of Elyot's importance in the tradition by Mills; Hutson and Shannon further analyse the friendship literature from different perspectives.

5 In *A Type or Figure of Friendship*, A4<sup>r-v</sup>, Walter Dorke's codification lists them in numerical order, from 1 to 20, with a final definition that includes all the others: 'Friendship is a perfect consent and agreement with benevolence and charity in all things, appertaining as well towards God as men.'

become that, in the most famous phrase of the entire tradition, ‘of two he wold almost make one’ (Hughey, 172, l. 1233).<sup>1</sup> Later writers erase Cicero’s modifier ‘almost’ and assert the paradox of unity more forcefully: for Sir Thomas Elyot friendship is ‘a blessed and stable connexion of sondrie willes, makinge of two parsones one in havinge and suffringe’ (Elyot, 129–30); for Richard Edwards in 1564 ‘true friends should be two in body, but one in minde, / As it were one transformed into another’ (*Damon and Pythias*, ll. 333–4); and for John Bodenham in 1600 ‘The summe of friendship is, that of two soules / One should be made, in will and firme affect’ (Bodenham, 94). Similar examples could be multiplied almost indefinitely. With true friends, Montaigne, in his essay ‘Of Friendship’, argues,

All things being by effect common betweene them; wils, thoughts, judgements, goods, wives, children, honour, and life; and their mutuall agreement, being no other than one soule in two bodies, according to the fit definition of *Aristotle*, they can neither lend or give ought to each other.

(Montaigne, 1.203–4)

Such ‘perfect amity’, he continues, ‘is indivisible’ (Montaigne, 1.204).<sup>2</sup>

Along with ‘One soull . . . in bodies twain’ (‘Of Friendship’, Tottel, 1.106), the other most frequently quoted tenet of friendship is that, in Harington’s translation of Cicero, ‘he surely is a

1 The phrase seems already common by the time of Aristotle: ‘all the proverbs agree in this; for example, “Friends have one soul between them” [and] “Amity is equality”’ (Aristotle, Book 9, Chapter 8). The Latin is ‘*efficiat paene unum ex duobus*’ (Cicero, *De Amicitia*, 188). Aristotle devotes the entirety of Books 8 and 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to the subject of friendship.

2 As Potter, 55, notes, Montaigne’s essay was ‘clearly in Shakespeare’s mind at the time when he wrote *Two Noble Kinsmen* . . . not in the relationship of Palamon and Arcite, but in Emilia’s dialogue with Hippolyta in 1.3’. Shakespeare seems not yet to have read Montaigne as early as 1593. Florio’s translation of the *Essays* was only printed in 1603, but there is evidence that Shakespeare might have seen a manuscript version around 1600 (see Yates, 213, 244).

freend, that is an other I' (Hughey, 172, ll. 1223–4). The Latin here is '*alter idem*' (Cicero, *De Amicitia*, 188), which might be better translated as 'another the same', but most writers took up the idea that the friend is indeed an '*alter ego*', another I or self.<sup>1</sup> Thus for Erasmus, in his *Adagia* (Book 1, section 1, adage 2), 'A friend is another self' ('*Amicus alter ipse*') and 'a second self'; for Elyot, 130, 'a frende is proprely named of Philosophers the other I'; and for Walter Dorke, B2<sup>r</sup>, the friend is 'as it were an *Alter ego*, that is another himselfe'. For Bacon, even this mystical paradox does not go far enough:

it will appeare, that it was a Sparing Speech of the Ancients, to say, *That a Frend is another Himselfe*: For that a *Frend* is farre more then *Himselfe*. Men have their Time, and die many times in desire of some Things, which they principally take to Heart; The Bestowing of a Child, The Finishing of a Worke, Or the like. If a Man have a true *Frend*, he may rest almost secure, that the Care of those Things, will continue after Him.

(Bacon, 86)

Among the other key elements of the Ciceronian tradition are the frequently repeated insights that true friendship is generally not found 'in them, whiche live in honour and rule' (Hughey, 166, l. 1031) and that true friendship must be carefully distinguished from flattery. These two precepts link friendship theory to political concerns. For some writers, no one needs a true friend to speak the blunt truth more than princes and kings, yet no one is less able to accept such friendship, in part because 'it is a chiefe point in freendship, the higher to bee equall with the lower . . . the betters in degree, ought to equall them selves with their inferiours' (Hughey, 168–9, ll. 1095–6, 1120–1).<sup>2</sup> This levelling effect, and

1 Henry H.S. Croft (Elyot, 130, n. 1) says that 'Zeno . . . originated the expression which afterwards passed into a proverb', and notes that Cicero also uses '*alter ego*' in the *Letters to Atticus*.

2 Cf. Dorke, A4<sup>v</sup>: 'Among Friends all things should be common.'

the privileging of personal autonomy over the power of the state, leads, as Laurie Shannon has shown, to an overlapping of friendship discourse with resistance theory. The Tyrant is, in the political field, the equivalent of the false friend; as Shannon notes, in many friendship narratives there is a triangle of desire among two friends and the ruler or tyrant who demands their loyalty (Shannon, 50–3, 125–55). But not all stories move in this direction, and in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Shakespeare follows another track.

For almost all (male) writers, friendship is a possibility among men only, not among women; ‘the ordinary sufficiency of women’, Montaigne asserts,

cannot answer this conference and communication, the nurse of this sacred bond: nor seeme their mindes strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable . . . this sex could never yet by any example attaine unto it, and is by ancient schooles rejected thence.

(Montaigne, 1.199)

Women’s friendships, of which there are numerous examples and accounts, are ‘commonly portrayed in the Renaissance, but normally as coexistent with marriage’, rather than in opposition to it (Shannon, 55, n. 2). Shakespeare, however, does depict some women as strong friends, as in Helena’s reminiscence in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which employs the standard tropes of friendship:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods  
Have with our needles created both one flower,  
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,  
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,  
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds  
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,  
But yet an union in partition,  
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;  
So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,  
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
Due but to one and crownèd with one crest.  
And will you rend our ancient love asunder,  
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?  
(*MND* 3.2.203–16)

As with male friends, romantic love here injects discord into the now past-tense ideal friendship; ‘two seeming bodies but one heart’ have now split apart, and at the end of the play the two couples will leave behind same-sex friendship for marriage. In *As You Like It*, Celia defends Rosalind’s loyalty in similar terms:

If she be a traitor,  
Why, so am I. We still have slept together,  
Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together,  
And wheresoe’er we went, like Juno’s swans  
Still we went coupled and inseparable.  
(*AYL* 1.3.70–4)

They will be coupled in a different way at the end of the play, however, each going off to marriage. Interestingly, the language of these two female friendships is similar to the language Shakespeare uses for the male friendship in *The Winter’s Tale*, that of Polixenes and Leontes, expressed by Polixenes as a matter of past union:

We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i’ the 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. Had we pursued that life,  
And our weak spirits ne’er been higher reared

With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven  
Boldly 'Not guilty,' the imposition cleared  
Hereditary ours.

(*WT* 1.2.67–75)

These accounts of ideal friendship are all about lost childhood innocence. Hermione's ironic response to Polixenes – 'By this we gather / You have tripped since' (*WT* 1.2.75–6) – confirms this in *The Winter's Tale* and could be directed at any of these Shakespearean friends, male or female. All these same-sex friendships are changed by romantic desire and ultimately marriage.<sup>1</sup> Yet despite the use of similar language to describe both male and female same-sex friendship (and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* even explores conflict between friends over love), none of these plays really derives from the Ciceronian friendship tradition of idealization, which took men as its exemplars: Damon and Pythias, Orestes and Pylades, Theseus and Pirithous, Achilles and Patroclus, and Titus and Gisippus, among other pairings; women's friendships were not the same.

If female–female relations could not really be true friendship, neither could male–female relations. The question, again, was one of stability, as Montaigne argues:

the affection toward women . . . is a rash and wavering fire, waving and divers: the fire of an ague subject to fits and stints, and that hath but slender hold-fast of us. In true friendship, it is a generall and universall heat, and equally tempered, a constant and settled heat, all pleasure and smoothnes, that hath no pricking or stinging in it, which the more it is in lustfull love, the more is it but a ranging and mad desire in following that which flies us.

(Montaigne, 1.198)

1 Cf. the friendship of Emilia and Flavina described in *TNK* 1.3.49–82, which seems to contradict this. Emilia's powerful description ends with the assertion 'That the true love 'tween maid and maid may be / More than in sex diuidual' (81–2), yet Flavina died when each girl was eleven years old (54), hence before 'stronger blood' came into existence.



In John Lyly's *Endymion*, 3.4.114–16, Eumenides, torn between his desire for Semele and his friendship with Endymion, comes to realize that 'The love of men to women is a thing common and of course: the friendshippe of man to man infinite and immortall' and wise old Geron confirms, at 3.4.122–6, 'all thinges (friendship excepted) are subject to fortune: Love is but an eye-worme, which onely tickleth the heade with hopes and wishes, friendshippe the image of eternity, in which there is nothing moveable, nothing mischeevous' (Lyly, 3.50). Cicero asserts that 'it is love (*amor*), from which the word "friendship" (*amicitia*) is derived' (Cicero, *De Amicitia*, 139) or, as Harington more ambiguously translates, 'love, wherof freendly love and freendshippe commeth, is the chiefe cause, to fastne good willes together' (Hughey, 152, ll. 519–21), but all of Cicero's examples, as with later writers, are men, and in the early modern period a clear misogynist line emerges.<sup>1</sup> True friendship, in virtually all cases, could only exist between men. At first glance, Edmund Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship* (1573) might seem to be the exception. The flower of friendship is in fact marriage, but though Tilney does move a certain distance towards defining marriage as a companionate relationship or friendship, he never connects marriage to the traditions of Aristotle and Cicero.<sup>2</sup>

The idealization of the power and transcendent virtue of male–male friendship lies at the heart of the male friendship tradition as Shakespeare explores it in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In most pre-Shakespearean works engaged with the

1 Elyot, 122, follows Cicero more closely: 'love, called in latine *Amor*, whereof *Amicitia* commeth, named in englishe frendshippe or amitie'.

2 Metaphors of marriage were, however, often inserted into friendship theory, as in Thomas Churchyard's *A Spark of Friendship* (1588): friendship is 'the only true love knot, that knits in conjunction, thousands together: and yet the mysterie and maner of the working is so great, that the ripest wittes may waxe rotten, before they yeeld reason, and shewe how the mixture is made: that two severall bodies shall meete in one minde, and bee as it were married and joined in one maner of disposition, with so small a shewe of vertue, and so little cause, that may constraine both parties to be bound and fast locked in a league of love' (Churchyard, C1'). Cf. *Son* 116.1–2: 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments.'

tradition, the bonds of friendship between two male friends – what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms homosocial bonds – prove stronger than male–female desire. Usually, one of the young men falls in love with a woman, but the prior friendship with a male friend produces enormous anxiety and conflict; or one male friend falls in love with his friend’s beloved, leading to conflict and anxiety on both sides. The nature of such male–male friendship is both platonic and to some extent erotic, and its power is sufficient to cause a man to renounce his own life to save his friend (as in the stories of Damon and Pythias and Titus and Gisippus), to renounce his wife or fiancée in preference to the bond with another man, or even, in perhaps its most extreme form, to offer his female beloved to his friend.

This idealization of male–male friendship reflected a Neoplatonic exaltation of both selfless devotion to and ideal union with another, as well as mastery over sexual desire. Once achieved, such friendship produced powerful, even therapeutic, effects, such as, in Bacon’s phrasing, ‘the Ease and Discharge of the Fulnesse and Swellings of the Heart, which Passions of all kinds doe cause and induce . . . no Receipt openeth the Heart, but a true *Frend*’ (Bacon, 81), while some formulations of friendship’s power moved toward the mystical, as in Cicero: ‘Wherefore in frendship the absent be present, the nedie never lacke, the sicke thincke them selves whole, and that which is hardest to be spoken, the dead never die’ (Hughey, 150, ll. 453–6).

Early modern texts stressing the powerful emotional bonds of male–male friendship frequently figured this closeness as a clearly physical intimacy. A typical example may be seen in Lyly’s description of the friendship of Euphues and Philautus:

after many embracings and protestations one to an other, they walked to dinner, where they wanted neither meate, neither Musicke, neither any other pastime, and having banqueted, to digest their sweet confections,