

Male friendships in
the taming of the
shrew and as you like
it



In many of Shakespeare's comedies, we see people from all social ranks being portrayed – from the highest of nobles, to the lowest of servants. In cases of male friendship, there is a common pattern to see friendship develop through master-servant relationships, which aid and benefit each other. Two pertinent examples of this type of relationship is seen in Lucentio and Tranio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and between Adam and Orlando from *As You Like It*. In both cases, these master-servant friendships can be compared to other friendships in the play that feature varying degrees of equality/inequality, to specify what makes these friendships different. In this essay, the nature of both of these friendships, and how they are portrayed will be explored, as well as their intended roles and functions in progressing the narratives of their respective plays.

In order to examine the friendships of Lucentio and Tranio, as well as Adam and Orlando, it is important that we first define a concept of male friendship of which to compare them to. I have formed my definition around that of Lorna Huston's, who theorises that male friendships were “ an economic dependency as well as an affective bond.”[1] Viewed from this angle, male friendships in Shakespearean plays are treated not simply in terms of shared thoughts and feelings between characters, but a relationship of reciprocity – where members of a friendship work in order to help benefit and aid the other[2]. This definition of friendship is active in both the relationships between Lucentio and Tranio, and Adam and Orlando, as despite both being master-servant relationships, they both work to benefit each other with the knowledge that it will serve themselves, as well as satisfying the emotional needs of the other. From the start of *The Taming of the Shrew* we see a solid

representation of male friendship in the bond between Lucentio and Tranio. Lucentio is a love-struck noble from Pisa, who has come to Padua to attend the prestigious university[3]. He is accompanied by his “ trusty servant”[4] Tranio. Throughout the narrative, Tranio works to aid Lucentio in his mission to woo Bianca. It is clear that on one hand, Tranio does recognize his official role as Lucentio’s servant. In the end of Act 1, scene 1, Tranio declares that he is “ tied to be obedient”[5] and refers to his promise to Lucentio’s father to be useful to Lucentio. However, Tranio concludes that he has no problem with carrying out Lucentio’s wish “ Because so well I love Lucentio”[6]. this suggests that while Tranio recognizes and acknowledges his duty as a servant to Lucentio, his actions are motivated primarily by love.

The friendship between Lucentio and Tranio is portrayed as being similar to the bond between a wise mentor and his eager student. In the beginning of Act 1, scene 1, Lucentio asks Tranio’s opinion “ Tell me thy mind...”[7] about his decision to move from Pisa to Padua. Whereas Lucentio respected Tranio enough to ask for his opinion, so too did Tranio feel comfortable enough to respond honestly. In his monologue, Tranio gives Lucentio sage pieces of advice, such as “ No profit grows where is no pleasure ta’en. In brief, sir, study what you most affect”[8]. Lucentio also has much faith in Tranio, as seen when he implores for his help after falling in love with Bianca; “ Counsel me, Tranio, for I know thou canst. Assist me, Tranio, for I know thou wilt.”[9] Tranio reinforces his role as a mentor when he immediately springs into action after realizing the immediacy of Lucentio’s love for Bianca, by first defining the problem for Lucentio; “ That til the Father rid his hands of her, Master, your love must remain a maid at home.”[10] Then feeding him the

solution “ You will be schoolmaster, and undertake the teaching of the maid.”[11] According to Jeremy Taylor’s understanding of friendship, Tranio proves his usefulness as a friend, as he “ gives advice”[12] and proves himself as an “ active and useful individual”[13] when he willingly plays the role of Lucentio, and never fails to act in Lucentio’s best interests. The friendship between Lucentio and Tranio is integral to advancing the narrative of *The Taming of The Shrew*, in that without Tranio, Lucentio would most likely not have been able to produce a plan to attract Bianca, and have successfully carried out. In fact, the plan mostly works due to the dedication and intuition that Tranio puts into acting as Lucentio. He is easily able to fool the rest of the characters into believing that he is Lucentio, and capably bluffs his love for Bianca “ And I am one that love Bianca more”[14] (2. 1. 323). Tranio also acts quickly on his feet when tricks the Merchant into pretending to be Vincentio in order to maintain the charade, and fool Baptista.

Whereas Lucentio and Tranio are an example of a close, but unequal friendship, they are paralleled in the play by the friendship of Petruchio and Hortensio, who are both wealthy men of high status. Petruchio considers Hortensio to be his “ best-loved and approved friend”[15], and Hortensio often acts in Petruchio’s best interests. Such as when he mentions Katherine in response to Petruchio’s desire for a landed wife, but is quick to warn him that she would make a “ shrewd, ill-favoured wife”[16]. In this scene, Hortensio acts in a way that is beneficial to himself, as Katherine must first be married before Baptista will think of allowing anyone to marry Bianca. While also aiding Petruchio in his search for a wealthy wife, and warning him

of her nature. In comparing the friendships of Hortensio and Petruchio and Lucentio and Tranio, we discover that their friendships are shaped by their respective equality and inequality. Hortensio's friendship towards Petruchio is unaffected by matters of status and service, but Tranio performed the greater feat of friendship by pretending to be Lucentio, and doing it willingly. The next male friendship that fits into the previously outlined definition of friendship is that of Adam and Orlando in *As You Like It*. The noble, but uneducated, Orlando seeks shelter in the Arden Forest, accompanied by his elderly servant and companion, Adam, after he learns of his brother Oliver's murderous intentions towards him[17]. Whereas in *The Taming of the Shrew* the relationship between Lucentio and Tranio was portrayed as relatively equal, with Lucentio looking up to Tranio, but Tranio working to benefit and aid Lucentio. The friendship between Adam and Orlando has Adam behaving more in the traditional role of the servant, but we see Orlando and Adam working equally to aid and benefit each other. It is clear that Adam has clearly served within the de Bois family for a long time, he refers to Orlando and Oliver's father as "old master"[18] and declares that he has "lost my teeth in your service"[19] when reprimanding Oliver. Adam also refers to Orlando as his 'master', such as when he cries "O my gentle master, O my sweet master".[20] However, he also expresses love, adoration, and concern over Orlando's wellbeing. In the same scene, he praises Orlando as being "gentle, strong, and valiant"[21]. Based on the fact that Adam probably played a central part in Orlando's upbringing, and his expressed fondness towards Orlando, we can gather that Adam has consequently taken on a familial role in Orlando's life – probably something akin to a grandfather.

When discussing the concept of the household-family, Tadmor points out that people that lived in the 16-18th centuries often did not limit the concept of family to direct blood relatives, but often extended the concept to all who lived in the household[22]. Tadmor also observes that friends were also alluded to as friends[23]. When Adam informs Orlando of his need to flee, due to the imminent threat on his life, he performs a fantastic act of giving, when he offers Orlando his life savings of “ five hundred crowns the thrifty hire I saved under your father, which I did store to be my foster nurse”[24]. Furthermore, he offers to accompany him and offers “ Let me be your servant”[25]. In this substantial show of generosity, Adam fits the criteria for what makes, according to Jeremy Taylor, a good friend. While also being “ true and honest”[26] he is also “ free with his money”[27]. Later on, we see Orlando reciprocate the favours he owes to Adam, when he carries Adam to a sheltered spot in Act 2, scene 6 when Adam is bound to collapse from hunger and exhaustion. He is also willing to humiliate himself in front of Duke Senior, Jaques, and the rest of their entourage when he clumsily enters their gathering with sword drawn, and exclaims that they “ forbear, and eat no more!”[28] Although Orlando and Adam’s friendship does not progress the play’s narrative in any substantial way, it does perform the function of providing a touching example of devotion, love, and loyalty to the audience. On the behalf of both Orlando and Adam. Orlando and Adam’s friendship also serves as a means for Orlando to be introduced to Duke Senior and his entourage, as he interrupts their gathering to search for food on Adam’s behalf. Another male friendship in *As You Like It* that could be used as a counterpoint to Orlando and Adam’s is between Duke Senior and his lords – particularly Amiens and Jaques. Again, these friendships are forged on <https://assignbuster.com/male-friendships-in-the-taming-of-the-shrew-and-as-you-like-it/>

inequality, as Duke Senior occupies a higher position than any lord. However, their difference in status is blurred by the fact that Duke Senior has been banished from court, and currently holds no formal power. He even refers to the lords that have accompanied him as his equals when he calls them his “co-mates and brothers in exile”[29]. It is important to note that all of the lords have made a substantial sacrifice by leaving their lifestyles to follow Duke Senior into the Arden Forest. A decision that was motivated no doubt partly by a sense of service, as the lords still refer to him as their superior, like when they address him as “ your grace”[30] and “ my lord”[31].

However, it must have been dually motivated by a sense of friendship and genuine preference of Duke Senior over Duke Frederick. In comparing the two, both friendships are similar because they are motivated by multiple senses of service, friendship, and in Orlando and Adam’s case; familial love.

In comparing the friendships between Lucentio and Tranio and Orlando and Adam, there are several points of similarity. Firstly, both friendships occur between masters and servants, and both friendships work to aid and benefit one another. Of course, the glaring fact that these friendships involve masters and servants inevitably brings up the question of, to what extent can these friendships be considered genuine? In concern to this question, Taylor alludes to the importance of choice; who we pick for our friends is just as important as who we do not[32]. The fact that Orlando and Lucentio chose to include Tranio and Adam as friends, instead of choosing to have them remain as purely servants to them, is telling. Furthermore, Taylor discusses the benefits of inequality in friendships, specifically on the behalf of Tranio and Adam, as they may reap the benefits bestowed upon them by their

richer companions/masters, Orlando and Lucentio[33]. Despite their similarities, these friendships also have a fair amount of differences. For a start, there seems to be a disparity in ages between the two friendships. Lucentio and Tranio act as if they are relatively closer in age than Adam and Orlando, and as a result Lucentio views Tranio as a wise mentor and companion. Whereas, Orlando is a young noble and Adam is his elderly servant, which explains why Orlando views Adam as being a grandfather-figure.

The plays *The Taming of the Shrew* and *As You Like It* both portray significant male friendships of varying differences in equality and inequality. In the friendship between Lucentio and Tranio, Tranio exemplifies the friendship traits of confidentiality, wit, and intuition to help Lucentio in securing the object of his affection; Bianca. In the case of Adam, he fulfils the 16-18th century ideals of friendship through his touching and overwhelming displays of personal and economic sacrifice on Orlando's behalf. The plays also feature reciprocal friendships in the form of Petruchio and Hortensio, and Duke Senior and his lords, but nowhere is the sacrificial and supportive nature of friendship more apparent than in the master-servant friendships of Lucentio and Tranio, and Adam and Orlando.

[1] Hutson, Lorna. *The Usurer's Daughter, Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in 16th Century England*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1994. Pg. 3. [2] Ibid. Pg. 3-6. [3] Shakespeare, William. "The Taming of the Shrew" In *Modern Critical Edition*. Edited by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan. The New Oxford Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. [4] Ibid. 1. 1. 7. [5] Ibid. 1. 1. 202. [6] Ibid. 1. 1. 207. [7] Ibid. 1. 1. 21. <https://assignbuster.com/male-friendships-in-the-taming-of-the-shrew-and-as-you-like-it/>

[8] Ibid. 1. 1. 39-40. [9] Ibid. 1. 1. 147-148. [10] Ibid. 1. 1. 170-171. [11] Ibid. 1. 1. 182. [12] Tadmor, Naomi. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pg. 241. [13] Ibid. Pg. 241. [14] Shakespeare, William. "The Taming of the Shrew" In *Modern Critical Edition*. 2. 1. 323. [15] Ibid. 1. 2. 3. [16] Ibid. 1. 2. 55. [17] Shakespeare, William. "As You Like It" In *Modern Critical Edition*. Edited by Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan. *The New Oxford Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. [18] Ibid. 1. 1. 63. [19] Ibid. 1. 1. 62-63. [20] Ibid. 2. 3. 2-3. [21] Ibid. 2. 3. 6. [22] Tadmor, Naomi. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*. Pg. 18-21. [23] Ibid. 18-21. [24] Shakespeare, William. "As You Like It" In *Modern Critical Edition*. 2. 3. 38-40. [25] Ibid. 2. 3. 46. [26] Tadmor, Naomi. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*. Pg. 241. [27] Ibid. Pg. 241. [28] Shakespeare, William. "As You Like It" In *Modern Critical Edition*. 2. 7. 88. [29] Ibid. 2. 1. 1. [30] Ibid. 2. 1. 18. [31] Ibid. 2. 1. 26. [32] Tadmor, Naomi. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*. Pg. 167-175. [33] Ibid. Pg. 167-175.