

Friendship: Perspectives From Two Modern Plays

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Abstract—From ancient times until the nineteenth century, loyalty, trust, understanding, forbearance, and empathy were only some of the merits one expected to find as the foundation of true friendship in Western culture. For instance, Aristotle insists that friendship must be “reciprocal” and “must involve a wish for the good of the loved one as an end in itself”. Any friendship based on personal gains, whether tangible or not, would have been dismissed as false friendship. The transition from the relatively simple life of Aristotle’s time and the following centuries to the complex modern age has produced a dramatic change in the Western culture, a change that evidently encompassed the concept of friendship. Whereas the Industrial Revolution initiated a gradual change, shifting the world’s economy from an agricultural to an industrial one, the transition from friendships of ‘excellence’ to friendships of ‘utility’ and ‘pleasure’ was rather more accelerated, in the sense that what was viewed as superficial relationships became, over a short period of time, dominant in modern Western culture and recognized as manifestations of friendship. This study explores this cultural change as depicted in two modern dramas— *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov and *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen.

Index Terms—friendship, modern drama, Western culture, Chekhov, Ibsen

I. INTRODUCTION

It is appropriate to start the discussion of friendship in modern drama with a preliminary remark on the concept of friendship as illustrated in literature of the pre-modern era. From ancient times until the nineteenth century, loyalty, trust, understanding, forbearance, and empathy were only some of the merits one expected to find as the foundation of true friendship. Pangle (2002) informs us that the great Greek critic, Aristotle, gave a solid definition, insisting “firmly that friendship must be reciprocal” and “must involve a wish for the good of the loved one as an end in itself” (p.38). Any friendship based on personal gains, whether tangible or not, would not have been classed as a true friendship. The point to be made here is that the transition from the relatively simple life of Aristotle and his contemporaries to the complex modern age has produced a dramatic change in the nature of friendship. Whereas the Industrial Revolution initiated a gradual change, shifting the world’s economy from an agricultural to an industrial one, the transition from friendships of ‘excellence’ to friendships of ‘utility’ and ‘pleasure’ was rather more accelerated, in the sense that such superficial relationships.

Thus, the question to be posed: What is the nature of friendship in modern culture? At first glance, the prevalence of materialism and the diminishing of human values appear to have undermined this highly important relationship. Most of us would agree that people in modern times are much more self-centered and possess more of a material view of the world than that held by our predecessors. Unsurprisingly, the number of modern plays that address the theme of friendship is remarkably few. It would seem that, for playwrights, as well as many ordinary people, the relationship itself has diminished. This study suggests that what is clear from the small body of modern drama that addresses the tie of friendship is that it still exists, but in a different guise. The study argues that friends in modern times settle for a much less fulfilling relationship, with ‘friendship’ slipping into a ‘gray’ space, in comparison to the snow white space of friendship portrayed in historical sources. Friends of modern time know that they do not match up to Aristotle’s vision of friendship based on ‘excellence,’ but still consider themselves bound to each other by the tie of friendship, albeit in its modern form. Materialism and friendship may not seem to be compatible, but the complexity of modern times has imposed a new slant on the term friendship, tending towards a somewhat practical type of friendship based on ‘utility’ or ‘pleasure’, which is nevertheless accepted by people of our day. Under this fresh definition of ‘utility friendship’, modern time friends are not required to love each other in themselves, but only in so far as each accrues some benefit from the other. Whereas the traditional form of friendship would necessarily have entailed a deep trust on both sides, modern friendships can survive with a lower standard of trust. The ‘friends’ settle for such a foundation to make friendship claim its existence. While in ‘utility friendship’, friends are aware that the bond that brings them together is established on personal gains; in that of pleasure, “the friends cherish one another’s company” and no “useful goods” (Pangle, 2002, p.40) are sought in this type of friendship. This article is an attempt to illustrate the meaning of friendship in modern time by examining two plays: Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879) and Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* (1903).

II. IBSEN'S *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, the relationship between Nora and Christine can be considered an example of modern friendship where friends stand in a gray area - still friends, but not in the traditional way. We are made aware that Nora and Christine's friendship is one that began years before the action of the play when Torvald, Nora's husband, identifies Christine as "a childhood friend" of his wife (Ibsen, 1879, p. 404). Their friendship is validated to a large extent by the fact that it began at school, a sphere free from male domination and power. Remembering the old days, Christine says to Nora, "When we were at school, you were a terrible little spend-thrift" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 400). The fact that Christine is not only aware of this trait, but feels free to make direct reference to it can be taken as a sign that they were indeed close friends at school. It also shows Christine's disapproval of Nora's tendency to overspend, which is natural as Christine's home life was not as affluent as Nora's. In Act II, we are informed that Nora was an only child and we can assume that her mother died in childbirth because Anne-Marie, her nurse, says, "Poor little Miss Nora, you never had any mother but me" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 409). Thus we see that the only figure of authority was her father, and there were no siblings with whom to vie for fatherly affections. Thus, she enjoyed the company of a loving and indulgent father prior to entering into married life, as shown in her comment to Dr. Rank: "When I was at home, I loved Papa best" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413). Both her father and her husband have loved her, but neither has allowed her to flourish as a person - "I've been your doll-wife, just as I used to be Papa's doll-child" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 423).

As for Christine, we learn that her father was absent from an early stage of her life and that she carried a lot of responsibility for the care of her two younger brothers. For different reasons, both Nora and Christine lived in households that guaranteed them a considerable level of freedom of movement, as females, thus permitting their friendship to follow its natural course, without obstacles or complications. In her discussion of the movement of adolescent girls to maturation, Hollinger (1998) points out that for adolescent girls' "autonomy is often seen as a way to improve relationships with others" (p. 83). In Nora and Christine's case, their friendship reflects their desire to create an autonomous sense of self, simultaneously "to establish more mature connections that involve a sense of attachment" (Hollinger, 1998, p. 83). Thus, friendship is the sole bond that brings them together. Friendship of this type, according to Grayling (2013), is "special" and different from friendships between relatives because it is "purely elective" (p.1).

The friendship of Nora and Christine, having started some years prior, has been held in animation. Marriage and familial commitments have caused their friendship to be suspended in favor of the new roles they assumed. After marriage, neither party tried to continue their friendship; rather, they allowed their husbands to set the pace of their lives, exchanging neither visits nor letters, for about ten years. This separation between Nora and Christine should not be surprising because, traditionally, male authors always judged female friendship as (Roulston, 1998, p. 217) "trivial, shallow, and inauthentic" bonds that could easily be broken. From our modern perspective, their friendship was not dissolved, but had merely gone into a sort of 'hibernation.' Upon the deaths of Christine's husband and mother, and her younger brothers becoming independent adults leading their own lives, she suddenly finds her life "unspeakably empty" Remembering her old school-friend Nora, she pays her a visit. As she simply states, she "couldn't bear to stay out there any longer, cut off from the world" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 401).

The motivation behind the visit is not a fond deep attachment, nor regret for having put that friendship on hold for almost a decade and a desire to revive it after they both have relegated it to oblivion; Christine is aware that her old friend may be in a position to help her to obtain "a regular job" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 401), of which she is in great need to earn herself a living. We should thus find it quite natural to find Christine saying that her happiness in hearing that Nora's husband has been newly appointed as a manager of a bank is more for herself than for her friend: "When you told me about this luck you've just had with Torvald's new job . . . I was happy not so much on your account, as on my own" (Ibsen, 1879, p.401). It is only in modern friendship that a friend would make so bold as to disclose such a feeling and it still be accepted by his/her friend. Aristotle describes this friendship as utility friendship and considers it "the furthest from perfect friendship" (Pangle, 2002, p.39). However, Nora neither protests upon hearing that statement, nor does she accuse her friend of being selfish or a fake friend. On the contrary, Nora acts as a true friend, as if no hiatus had occurred in the relationship. She replies with a warm willingness to do all she can to convince her husband to find her friend a job in the bank, saying:

He will too, Christine. Just leave it to me. I'll lead up to it so delicately, so delicately; I'll get him in the right mood. Oh, Christine, I do so want to help you. (Ibsen, 1879, p. 401)

Their first meeting after the long separation is marked by general 'catching up' and the two women "openly show affection" (Geoffrey, 2008, p. 20) by checking on one another's well-being. Knowing that their friendship exists in the gray area where that relationship can be mixed with interests or sacrificed for more important matters, neither of the two tries to blame the other for not keeping in touch for the previous ten years. Nora pretends that she is awfully sorry for failing to write to Christine upon learning of her husband's death from the newspaper, some three years ago. She claims her intention to write to express her condolences but she "always put it off and something always cropped up" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 40). She essentially concedes that their friendship, for her, is low on her list of priorities. Christine, hearing that frail excuse, does not appear to harbor any hard feelings for Nora. She assures her that she "understand[s]" and refrains from blaming her for not writing at such a difficult time when friends, in the traditional sense, are most needed. As

follows our argument, friendship of modernity seems to allow a large margin in which friends can maneuver and still call themselves friends.

According to modern principle, a friendship based on utility, with no genuine warmth, is not necessarily a fake or superficial friendship and not, as Aristotle argues, one in which “each loves the other person only incidentally, or rather, he does not precisely love the other person at all but only his own good” (Pangle, 2002, p. 39). Under the modern understanding of friendship, such friends can still trust each other with grave secrets. Nora has no qualms in revealing to Christine, at their first meeting, a secret that she has long kept to herself - that she acted without her husband’s consent or even knowledge and “committed a forgery” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 415) to borrow money to save his life. Interestingly enough, Christine proves to be a good friend, not only keeping the terrible secret, but also standing by Nora. Nora, seeing Krogstad depositing a letter in her husband’s letter box, is on the verge of madness. Christine sets to action to help her friend out, quickly seeking out Krogstad’s lodgings. She talks to him, expressing her desire to revive their old love, and thus convinces him not to destroy Nora’s life. There is obviously a lack here of what Hollinger (1998) calls “emotionally intense personal involvement” (p.86), a characteristic, as she states, peculiar to female friendship. Christine does perform her friend a great service even though it can clearly be seen to be a by-product of her greater gain at the revival of her old affair with Krogstad. Nora and Christine’s friendship, as untraditional as it may seem, still embodies in its essence a major constituent of friendship, namely trust.

Modern life, with its pressures and demanding lifestyle, was the culprit that caused Nora and Christine to neglect their friendship after marriage. Nora has been occupied with her maternal role, her husband’s illness, and the financial problems incurred by being in debt to Krogstad. Apparently, her friend has not been totally forgotten during these hard years, for Dr. Rank remarks upon being introduced to Christine that hers is “A name I have often heard in this house” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 403). Christine, meanwhile, has been carrying her own burdens, taking care of her husband, “a helpless mother . . . and two little brothers” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 417). Despite the fact that they both stand in a gray area, this condition does not negate their friendship, nor does it prevent its revival; it seems to have been imposed on them by the complications of modernity. Presumably, that is why they do not blame each other for the ten-year suspension period their friendship has experienced.

Evidently, Christine is not Nora’s sole friend; Dr. Rank also falls into that category. Ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Augustine expounded that “by nature friendships could not exist between persons of the opposite sex” (Rader, 1983, p. 5). However, modern people are more ready to acknowledge such a friendship, which Rosemary Rader (1983) describes as “a newly acquired and newly legitimated space” (p. 12). While some modern people acknowledge that deviation due to sexual attraction building within the relationship could happen in some cases, others view this deviation as a type of friendship peculiar to the friendship bond between the opposite sexes. The friendship between Nora and Dr. Rank, illustrates this modern perception of friendship. The circumstances that bring Nora and Dr. Rank together are remarkably different from the ones that unite Nora and Christine. Nora identifies Dr. Rank to Christine as “our best friend” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 400), declaring him to be held in equal esteem by both her husband and herself.

During a period of severe illness, the physician/patient relationship between Torvald and Dr. Rank developed into a friendship tie which further evolved into a triangular relationship including Nora, who played a vital role in the recovery of her husband. Although Torvald’s good health is now restored, Dr. Rank continues his regular visits to the Helmer house. During one such visit, he completes his business with Torvald in the latter’s study, and finds no shame in saying to Torvald “No, no, my dear chap, don’t see me out. I’ll go and have a word with your wife” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 403). Torvald, as a modern husband, accepts the notion that Dr. Rank is also Nora’s friend, even though “friendship between the sexes . . . always risked being read as a mask for heterosexual desire” (Roulston, 1998, p. 215). Thus, he returns to his office to resume his paperwork while his friend keeps company with his wife in another room.

Similar to Christine, Dr. Rank is a friend to whom Nora can entrust her secrets. They sit and talk for hours, while away the time as the perpetually busy Torvald works. Being a female, Nora knows that “talking is the manner through which intimacy is created and maintained” (Geoffrey, 2008, p. 20). Dr. Rank and Nora have the time to discuss all types of subjects, including very personal issues:

Mrs. Linde: When you introduced me to him yesterday, he said he’d often heard my name mentioned here. But later, I noticed your husband had no idea who I was. So how could Dr. Rank-?

Nora: Yes, that’s quite right, Christine. You see, Torvald’s so hopelessly in love with me that he wants to have me all to himself – those were his very words. When we were first married, he got quite jealous if I as much as mentioned any of my old friends back home. So naturally, I stopped talking about them. But I often chat with Dr. Rank about that kind of thing. He enjoys it, you see. (Ibsen, 1879, p.409)

Ironically, Torvald doesn’t want to hear about any of Nora’s female friends, but he is perfectly happy to leave her in the company of another man on a daily basis. So confident is Nora of Dr. Rank and Christine’s loyalty to her that she reveals her desire to rebel against Torvald’s control over her, telling them, “I’ve the most extraordinary longing to say: “Bloody hell!” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 404). Such an outburst would no doubt be seen by her husband as an outrage and diminish her in Torvald’s eyes, but Nora feels safe to give voice to it in front of her two friends. Although Torvald forbids her to eat macaroons, ostensibly to save her teeth from decay, she does so before her two friends, knowing that she can trust them to keep her secret. Dr. Rank’s high regard for Nora as a trusted friend is evident when he

communicates to her his deepest secret, that his illness is getting dramatically worse and that he might die within a month. They are, to borrow Bernstein's phrase (2016), "emotionally available" (p.1) to one another. Mutual personal 'love' is the basis of their friendship - at this point, love in its broader sense. According to Toner and Tallon (2001), the "most fundamental among the essentials of personal friendship is mutual personal love" (p. 226). Nora apparently is closer to Dr. Rank, and he to her, than either of them to Torvald.

Actually, Dr. Rank's friendship with Torvald is hard to evaluate because Ibsen expands little on their relationship. Interestingly, Ibsen pays more attention to that between Nora and Dr. Rank, in contrast to earlier writers who only saw the friendships between males as worth acknowledging. The topics which the two men discuss and the depth of familiarity between them remain unknown to us. Although Geoffrey (2008) tells us that "men do not show as much physical affection . . . to each other as do women" (p. 8), yet one would expect that close male friends hold enough trust in each other to share their deep secrets. Both Dr. Rank and Torvald use the expression "my dear friend" when they address each other in the presence of others, but they do not seem to confide in each other on a very personal level.

Helmer. What? Do you know something? Has he told you anything?

Nora. Yes. When these cards come, it means he's said goodbye to us. He wants to shut himself up in the house and die. (Ibsen, 1879, P. 421)

It should not be construed from this that they are not good friends, but it may imply that the trust between them is not strong enough to bear such a secret. If this is the case, can we say that they both stand in the gray area in the sense that their friendship is simply a pleasant way to pass time without either seeking to benefit by airing his fears and joys? In his study of men's friendship in modern time, Geoffrey (2008) states that "men have friendships of many flavors" (p.18). He adds that male friends "can watch the Super Bowl together every year yet not know how many children the other guy has" (p.18). Simply put, it is the new perception of friendship in modern time; you don't have to "share something of yourself emotionally" (p.2) as Bernstein (2016) suggests, in order to have friends. Aristotle would dismiss this type of friendship as 'utility' friendship which is, by his definition, defective friendship. But in modern time, people, particularly men, can claim to be friends when their sole bond is sharing activities together. Geoffrey (2008) says that some "men have friends with whom they can do their favorite activities but with whom they would never discuss anything personal" (p.21). Thereby, the friendship of Torvald and Dr. Rank represents one of the various 'flavors' of modern friendship. From this perspective, friendship does not entail sharing personal issues and showing solidarity, but is defined as having common interests.

Returning to Nora and Dr. Rank, it is clear that he wishes to take their friendship beyond the platonic level which would take him, morally, into the gray area. Nora, along with her husband, admits Dr. Rank into her private life as a friend of the family, but he obviously harbors, to use Rousseau's phrase, "something more" (qtd. in Roulston, 1998, p. 217). Nora, seemingly feeling secure in this friendship, is oblivious to the consequences of her familiarity. During his visit, she presumes to "Pop . . . a macaroon into his mouth" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 403), "seize his arm" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 412), "put both her hands on his shoulders" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 412), and "flick him on the ear with the stockings" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 412). But such acts, assumingly done innocently, are interpreted differently in his mind; he finally admits to desiring her sexually as well. His attraction to her is evident as he says to her "When I sit here like this being so intimate with you, I cannot think - I cannot imagine what would have become of me if I had never entered this house" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 42). Here Dr. Rank tries to convey to Nora that he holds her dearer than just a friend. Whether sincerely or not, she, however, reminds him that his relationship is with the family as a whole, emphasizing the 'friendship' bond that ties him to the family when she says to him "you mustn't die and leave Torvald and me" (Ibsen, 1879, P. 412), "you are not leaving us" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413) and "I think you enjoy being with us" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413). But Dr. Rank is determined not to be deterred by these hints. On one occasion, she asks him "To give [her] proof of [his] friendship" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413). Noticing that Dr. Rank has instantly replaced the term 'friendship' in his mind with that of 'love', she immediately seeks to redirect his thoughts by telling him that she means to ask him "a very great service", asserting that he is her "best and truest friend" (Ibsen, 1879, p.413). It is ambiguous whether Nora uses the pronoun "us" instead of "me" to remove doubts in his mind that she could view him as a lover or merely to protect herself from the consequences of accepting such a revelation. His bold declaration that he "loved [her] as deeply as anyone else has" is an attempt on his part to impose his love on her and draw her to join him in the gray area.

Dr. Rank betrays the trust his friend Torvald puts in him; even though the latter never knows of that love, Dr. Rank's persistent attempts to make Nora see him as a lover undoubtedly undermines his friendship with Torvald, making him unworthy of the appellation 'friend'. Nora, jokingly, asks him if he is not "ashamed" of himself, and he, unhesitantly replies "Frankly, no" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413). In other words, he does not feel guilty of betraying the friendship he claims for Torvald. We can perhaps account this to his imminent death and a feeling that he has 'nothing to lose', or we can surmise that his friendship with Torvald is simply a means to an end, a way to gain access to Nora. Remarkably, he continues to shower Torvald with warm expressions, such as "my dear chap" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 416), "my dear fellow" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 421), "my dear friend" (Ibsen, 1879, p. 420). He finds no conflict in claiming friendship with Torvald while trying to forward his relationship with his wife. He has no qualms about disclosing his love for Nora and a few minutes later proceeding to join Torvald in his office for friendly banter

In modern times, where modern people see love and marriage as higher goals than friendship, Dr. Rank's behavior could be deemed understandable and, to some, even justifiable. However, taking the traditional view of friendship as

“the highest form of human relationship” (Cunningham, 2013, p. 119), Dr. Rank would surely be seen as a dishonorable person, deserving of our contempt. In his book *Modern Honor*, Cunningham (2013) states that “When people prove themselves dishonorable, they lose our respect . . . and can provoke contempt and even disgust” (p.70). The question of honor is a complex one, as Welsh (2008) maintains, “if by honor is meant a compelling motive to take action, or refrain from certain actions” (p.1). Such a definition of honor, Welsh (2008) adds, existed until “the time of World War I” (p.1). Thus considered, Dr. Rank’s behavior, when applying post-World War I principles, may appear less dastardly. Nora’s reaction supports this notion, for she neither rebukes him nor shows any adverse feelings toward him; on the contrary, she asks him to “naturally” continue to visit them and he, on his part, agrees to do so.

Apparently, Grayling (2013) does not condone this type of friendship, asserting that “the words ‘friend’ and ‘friendship’ have become so stretched and extended as to have lost a great deal of their meaning” (p.3). Nora’s actual feelings towards Dr. Rank remain equivocal. After it has been made clear that he desires more than friendship, she continues to see him privately, receiving him in the guise of a ‘friend’. Rather than meeting his advances with a strong rejection, she simply says “this was really horrid of you” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413), not because she considers his desire for her a horrid thing but because, as she clarifies, “That was quite unnecessary” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413) to be uttered. Upon his demand to know whether she has been aware all the time of his love for her, her reply adds to the vulnerability of her position: “Oh, what do I know, what did I know, what didn’t I know - I really can’t say” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413). She urges him to continue his visits, arguing “You know quite well how Torvald depends on your company.” He, pressing to know her sentiments, only receives a lukewarm “Oh, I always think it’s enormous fun having you here” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413). Nora’s mixed messages have evidently been the basis for his false hopes – “That was what misled me. You’re a riddle to me” (Ibsen, 1879, p. 413).

Nora’s complicated relationship with her husband must be considered as a reason for her wishing to maintain her bond with Dr. Rank. Finding little fulfillment in her marriage, she enjoys being loved by Dr. Rank, and perhaps reciprocates the feeling but would rather not admit it. On the one hand, it holds dangerous consequences, and on the other, their love has no future since Dr. Rank is terminally ill. The circumstances that open the door to Nora and Dr. Rank’s friendship and its development into love, at least on Dr. Rank’s part, are not anything strange to people of the modern era. Rather, this theme is an extremely popular one in twentieth century literature and media. This popularity seems to support the assertion of the ancient writers that such a thing as a platonic friendship between the two sexes cannot exist. However, the counter current still insists that such a bond is possible if it flourishes in a healthy environment between two parties who are emotionally secure in their other relationships.

III. CHEKHOV’S *THE CHERRY ORCHARD*

In Chekhov’s play, the friendship under examination is that between the ambitious rising capitalist Lopahin and Madame Lyuboff Ranevskaya. The former is the son of a serf, while she is a member of a landowning family that is now, however, fallen victim to the new social and economic structure brought about by the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861. Lopahin represents the new economic advent in Russia, as well as the modern generation that looks at life with a new perspective, seeing the value of friendship, and life in general, mainly in monetary worth. The Ranevskayas, on the other hand, are trapped in the old way of life and fail to see beyond the sentimental value of their property, which has been passed down through the generations for centuries. None of them exhibit any business sense, but rather squander money that they don’t have. Their life of privilege thus far has left them ill-equipped to save themselves from the inevitable loss of the family estate. Als (2005) remarks, “As they reach for the past, they ignore the future, which appears in the form of Lopakhin” (p.100).

Rader (1983) states that “friendship is an indicator of equality” (p. 24). Indeed, equality is at the heart of friendship. It is difficult to build a balanced friendship based on trust when one party considers itself either superior or inferior to the other. However, equality is lacking in the friendship noted here, as is benevolence. Lopahin obviously holds Madame Ranevskaya in esteem since he has purposely traveled to greet her on her arrival from Paris. In the same speech, he says he can bear her brother Gayeff’s brutal characterization of him: “Your brother says I’m a boor, a peasant, money grubber, but that’s all the same to me” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199), while professing his affection for her: “you did so much for me once that I’ve forgotten all that and love you like my own kin – more than my kin” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). This is after Lopahin has related an anecdote of how Lyuboff had been kind to him in his youth at a time when he had received physical abuse from his own father. Perhaps time and distance have helped him to romanticize their past relationship, which was probably, in reality, not as close as he now portrays it. He is painfully aware that he is not on the same social footing with Lyuboff, but he expresses his deep desire to have her friendship: “All I wish is you’d trust me as you used to, and your wonderful, touching eyes would look at me as they did” (Chekhov, 1903, p.199). This is ironic since he is the only one that speaks sense and presents her with a solution to her family’s grave financial difficulties. At this point in the drama, it is unclear if Lopahin harbors selfish personal goals for pressing the Ranevskayas to turn their estate into summer cottages, or if his advice is genuine. I believe that he does desire to help the family, in particular the beautiful Lyuboff, but being continually met with the cold shoulder or plain ridicule, he finally finds it expedient to take his own advice and buy the land as an investment. His love for her is not so overriding that it can conquer his hard feelings, nourished by class divisions, toward the Ranevskayas. The idea that his ancestors were once owned by, and worked in subjugation for their forefathers, is ever-present in the back of his mind. Once

friendship is marred by social inequality or one party takes it to heart, it is no longer possible to profess pure or genuine friendship.

After the orchard is sold, the stage directions indicate that Lopahin is “Embarrassed” and “afraid of showing the joy he feels” as he talks about the auction (Chekhov, 1903, p. 210). If his friendship for the family was pure, and not self-seeking, his love would not have allowed him to buy out their precious property for himself, nor would he have been able to rejoice in doing so, knowing that it would cause great pain to Lyuboff and bring disaster to the entire family. However, when he is directly asked “Who bought it?” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 211), he claims his triumph, bursting out in reply: “I bought it” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 211). He adds, “My God, Lord, the cherry orchard is mine!” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 211). Here, the social distance between Lopahin and the Ranevskayas must have been felt - and indeed felt strongly enough that he finds that he cannot express his emotions without recourse to the painful past:

If only my father and grandfather could rise from their graves and see this whole business, see how their Yermolay, beaten, half-illiterate Yermolay who used to run around barefoot in winter, how that very Yermolay has bought an estate that nothing in the world can beat. I bought the estate where grandfather and father were slaves, where you wouldn't even let me in the kitchen. (Chekhov, 1903, p. 211)

The final part of the speech gives us the real story behind the relationship. Lyuboff may have shown Lopahin some incidental kindness, but there could have been no great friendship if he was not even permitted to enter the kitchen, the lowliest room of the house.

Lopahin plays a peripheral role in the action from the very beginning. He awaits, along with the rest of the household members, the imminent arrival of the mother and her daughter after a long, tiring journey from Paris. As they exchange intimate greetings and terms of endearment with the different members of the family, he remains silent and watchful, merely observing as they reminisce about the old days and swap sweet memories of the house. For the most part, he is detached from the proceedings, probably due to his feeling of inferiority to the family and their close friends. He does, eventually, make so bold as to express his esteem for the lady, before moving quickly on to discussing business matters, in his capacity as agent of the estate.

When Gayeff reminds his sister Lyuboff that fifty one years have already passed since they, as children, slept in the nursery where they now stand, Lopahin abruptly interjects: “Yes, time passes” (Chekhov, 1903, p.198). Lopahin seems to belong to the group that Geoffrey (2008) describes as “males [who] use talking to accomplish things” (p. 20), rather than as a means for passing the time or simply for social decorum. His comment is clearly not a positive addition to the prevailing endearing familial atmosphere, nor is it favorably received for Gayeff simply asks “What?” in an incredulous manner. Lopahin is not welcome in the gathering and perhaps it is only Lyuboff's frosty acceptance of his presence that prevents him from being actively ordered to leave. The warmth of tone felt as the other characters speak to each other is absent when they address Lopahin. Lyuboff is unable to sit still, effectively ignoring his warm comments to her, preferring instead to pay attention to her bookcase and table. His sociable comment: “I wanted to look at you – talk -” (Chekhov, 1903, p.199) quickly turns to business, for he is there as the manager of the estate, and as such he offers a solution to the family's financial problems. Knowing that the house and the orchard are about to be put up for auction to cover unpaid debts, he is in a hurry to “talk” about the issue. Conveying the notion that he has more important engagements to attend, he repeatedly refers to the time, claiming that “There's no time for talking” (Chekhov, 1903, p.199). As an aspiring capitalist, time is money, and he has no predisposition to waste time dreaming about the past and old sentiments. He has business matters to attend to which are apparently much more important to him than what he views as profitless chit-chat. He plays the role of ‘friend’ quite brutally when he announces that the estate will be put up for auction. He takes no account of Lyuboff's feelings when faced with losing her beloved orchard. However, this is the type of friend that she really needs at this point, in contrast to the loved ones around her who gloss over the hard truth and often talk nonsense to avoid facing reality.

Lopahin, through his presence among them, is privy to the family's thoughts and feelings. Although he knows the extent of their emotional attachment to the whole estate, he lends it no importance as he presents his solution which entails demolishing the house and cutting down the cherry trees in order to turn the land “into building lots” to be “leased for summer cottages” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). The result, according to him, is “at the very lowest twenty-five thousand roubles per year income” (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). His perception of friendship carries a different meaning from that of the Ranevskayas, who represent the old order of things. To his businesslike mind, he is acting as a loyal friend to the family when he suggests this solution even though it revolves around materialistic factors and fails to address the family's deep-rooted attachment to the estate. The absence of what Rader (1983) calls “mutuality of goals” (p.17) creates this discrepancy in views between Lopahin and the Ranevskayas.

The Ranevskayas find this unexpected solution, offered by somebody who they obviously deem inferior but nevertheless gives himself the status of friend, rather insulting and never seriously consider it as a possible outcome. “Framing an account of trust” between friends, as Hardin (2002) remarks, “as encapsulated interest may provoke an unfortunate misunderstanding” (p. 23). They hold a traditional perception of friendship, where friends must share the same values and goals. Gayeff gives a brief response - “what rot?” (Chekhov, 1903, p.199) - which reveals how he despises both the solution and its courier. To his mind, Lopahin is not really a friend, but rather an opportunistic hanger-on. For Lopahin, people do not have to “share in the perfect communion of a single spirit [or] in everything in common” (Rader, 1983, p. 24) to be labeled as friends; friendship can still exist between people with different goals and principles.

The harshness of Gayeff's response correlates to the Ranevskayas' perception of friendship and virtually reflects the shock they experience upon hearing the proposal. Lyuboff, although in agreement with her brother, abides by the old rules of her class and observes social decorum in her comment: "I don't quite understand you" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). Lopahin takes her response at surface value and reiterates his plan in greater detail. However, his elaboration does not serve to change her view of his proposal. The difference between the two becomes ostensible; she tries to remind him of the orchard's sentimental value in her eyes, while he reminds her of how profitless it is. She sees it as the only "interesting" or "remarkable" thing in the whole "province" but he asserts that it is no more than an "old" orchard which gives a "crop once every two years", a produce that "Nobody buys . . ." (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). Gayeff tries to bolster his sister's argument, saying that the "orchard is mentioned in the encyclopedia" (Chekhov, 1962, p. 199). This may be true, but to Lopahin, that is of no worth because it holds no economic value and cannot save them from ruin. For him, their rejection of his proposal is tantamount to a rejection of his friendship. He is already insecure in this relationship, constantly aware of the social divide that still exists between them, even though some 40 years have passed since the restructuring of society.

As a friend, he believes that it is his duty to speak plainly and guide them to the correct decision. His insistence implies that one should not lie to a friend regarding right course of action simply to protect the feelings of that friend. Should he lie, with the result that the Ranevskayas lose their house and orchard, he could rightfully be accused of being the author of their loss. "Those with whom we deal," Hardin (2002) says, "have not only the incentive of loss of our relationship but also that loss of reputation and the possibility of shunning by others if they cheat us on a deal" (p. 21). By pointing out the appropriate course of action (to the best of his knowledge), Lopahin protects himself from the charge of disloyalty and demonstrates that he is fully prepared to fulfill the role of 'friend'.

Even though the relationship between him and his friends has not been neutralized, the relationship between him and the estate is now presented in terms of neutralization. What puts the friendship of Lopahin and the Ranevskayas under duress is the imminent loss of their estate. He could have changed the tone of the conversation to play upon their emotions and thereby render them more readily acceptable of his solution on how to save the house and the orchard. However, he is a businessman, and as such cannot appear but as a 'practical friend' who prefers sober solutions over convenient but misleading ones. He may have an entirely different and as yet concealed reason for telling what he thinks is the right thing to do with the estate, one which would only be fathomable to his 'closest friends'. From his perspective of friendship, a friend who stands in the face of a dilemma should not give in to emotions and convenience, but should abide by a certain degree of openness. By proposing such an emotionally painful solution, Lopahin is aware of the difficulties; none is more perilous to friendship than the duty of a friend to pinpoint the friend's fault, which places him in the danger of losing his friend's respect, something apparent in Gayeff's reaction, "what rot?" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199), and in Lyuboff's comment "you don't understand at all" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). Gayeff utters that insulting comment even though Lopahin, as a friend, tries to comfort them and to appear optimistic when he says "but don't worry, my dear, just sleep in peace, there is a way out of it" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 199). In his eyes, he is the real friend, concerned with the well-being of his friends and the disaster that will befall them if they do not 'listen' to him and see his plan as he does. Trust is one of the manifestations of friendship and "the central problem in your trustworthiness is your commitment to fulfill another's trust in you" (Hardin, 2002, p. 28). Lopahin shows enough confidence to fulfill what he promises to his friends, but they dismiss out of hand the notion of transforming the condition of their estate.

In his article "Kicking Up Dust", Als (2005) points out that Lopahin belongs to a social class considered by the Ranevskayas as inferior. Als (2005) attributes the Ranevskayas' deafness to Lopahin's advice to this social class barrier: "Because, as Chekhov implies, none of us understand, let alone hear, others, particularly if those others truly are other" (p.100). His assumed role, as a friend who watches over his friends like a watchman observes the inhabitants of a town, is not seen as such by his friends. Their insistence on avoiding the discussion is so outlandish that, striving to change the subject, Pishthick asks if Lyuboff ate "frogs" in Paris and the latter challengingly says that she "ate crocodiles" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 200).

On Lopahin's second attempt to force the family to consider his plans seriously, social prejudice raises its head as the reason not to develop the estate. Lopahin clearly presents the specific question - "Are you willing to lease your land for summer cottages or are you not?" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 203). The Ranevskayas reject his plan for the second time on the grounds of social prejudice, stating that summer cottages and summer residents are "so common" ((Chekhov, 1903, p. 204). This fails to bring about a rapprochement between the friends in terms of finding an appropriate solution for the intricate dilemma; it rather widens the gap, for Lopahin describes his friends as "light minded people . . . odd, unbusiness like people" (Chekhov, 1903, p. 204). As a friend taking friendship in its modern sense, Lopahin tries to perform his role by looking out for his friends' best interests, but undoubtedly this friendship is not his top priority. Ultimately, events prove that it is superseded by his interests of his own.

The Ranevskayas still adhere to the traditional view of friendship, where all parties are on an even footing and therefore have no necessity to conceal anything. Thus, they naively reveal too much of themselves, which plays to their disadvantage since they are open to a friend who views friendship from a different angle. Lopahin, in contrast, does not reveal much of himself to them, a characteristic of friendship of utility in modern time. We have to keep in mind that "the words 'friend' and 'friendship' have become so stretched and extended" (Grayling, 2013, p. 3) in modern time that

personal benefit takes mastery of the subject. Friendship to Lopahin is important, but not necessarily interest free. It is the modern perception of friendship where “considerations of mutual benefit . . . implicit in the idea of friendship” (Grayling, 2013, p. 3). The representation of modern friendship in the play, Lopahin puts his own interests and wellbeing ahead of reciprocity of affection. Lopahin holds modern time priorities, with his success as a businessman being of greater importance to him than his friendship, which is placed firmly in the gray area. This, on the one hand, preserves his status as a friend in the eyes of the Ranevskayas and, on the other, provides him with influence, talking from the position of an active, positive friend. His attachment and commitment to his friends do not have any bearing on what he is and what he does. While being open with Lopahin is, to the Ranevskayas, an end in itself, it renders them vulnerable and passive in the relationship. Their privileged position in society has always demanded that they deal courteously with others, and thus they see it is a social duty to be open and courteous to Lopahin.

Although he has now become a man of financial means, Lopahin’s awareness that he is socially inferior to his friends makes him wary of the possibility that others may misinterpret his thoughts and actions. He therefore finds it prudent to conceal much of his thinking with regard to the estate for fear that his ends might appear devious; he cannot risk it and expose himself to a two-fold loss. His stance is that it is safer to keep oneself well hidden, even from friends, since to do the opposite is fraught with danger. Despite the fact that Grayling (2013) accepts the notion that friendship could encompass mutual “benefit, help, advantage, and support”, he emphasizes that they should not be “motivations for it” (p. 3). Interestingly, even in the criteria of modern time friendship, Lopahin is too secretive. His secrecy, however, can be justified knowing that his friends adopt the traditional perception of friendship and may not take kindly to his aspirations for personal gain.

Lopahin might appear to those who adhere to the traditional perception of friendship as a devious, heinous, elusive, or even delusive person. However, taking into account the modern time perspective of friendship, Lopahin is apparently none of that. Libby Appel, who directed a production of *The Cherry Orchard*, asserts that Chekov does not mean to create a “villain” in any of his plays. With the momentous changes at the turn of the 20th century, with the enactment of new economic and legal principles in Russia, friendship could theoretically be extended to the point of encompassing almost everyone. Traditional friendship cannot allow anyone into its zone, for one simple reason that it makes no sense to speak of friendship unless the meaning of this term is kept free from personal gains and social feuds. Lyuboff symbolizes past perspectives, including those of friendship. For her, the real friend cannot see his interest away from that of his friend.

IV. CONCLUSION

Traditionally, friendship is viewed as one of the most important social relations. Some see it as superior to familial relations such as brotherhood, believing that it is only in contrast to other familial relations that friendship is comprehensible. As such, the friend, unlike kin, gives only to those whom he owes; he gives only to those whom he feels an affiliation in his heart, even though no explicit contract, agreement, or promise stipulates that he owes anything at all. Furthermore, they maintain that only people who acknowledge a mutual and yet entirely implicit debt to one another are friends, a debt that amounts to inner-self. The depth of this debt is limitless; therefore, the friend can represent his friend as an extension of self. Rader (1983) expresses this notion perfectly when she says “friends share in the perfect communion of a single spirit” (p. 24). Only when the friendship expands beyond the egoistic interests does the assumed friend begin to represent himself as a friend.

The traditional conception of friendship has changed markedly with the evolvement of modernity since friendship stems from and develops out of collective human culture. Talking about how Ibsen and Chekhov represent the spirit of modernity, Als (2017) in his article “Rewind” describes Ibsen as “Widely considered the father of modern realism” (no p.), whereas in “Kicking Up Dust” he (2005) states that “Of all the modernist playwrights . . . Anton Chekhov is generally considered the most modern” (p.100). Ibsen in *A Doll’s House* and Chekhov in *The Cherry Orchard* show how modern time friendship allows personal interests and does not appear as demanding as it was in earlier times. They depict friends who are normal human beings, neither angels nor villains. In other words, they show that the area of friendship in modern time is neither white nor black, but a resulting gray mixture of the two. Equally apparent is that modern time people are aware of this transformation in the meaning of friendship and willingly bend to it. Commending this sensitivity in Chekhov, Als (2016) says, in “Estate Value”, “his ear was particularly attuned to how we let time fly while trying to stave off change” (p.2).

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