Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700

Edited by

DANIEL T. LOCHMAN
Texas State University – San Marcos, USA

MARITERE LÓPEZ
California State University at Fresno, USA

LORNA HUTSON
University of St Andrews, UK

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Notes on Contributors

Penelope Anderson is an assistant professor of English at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is publishing an essay on women’s friendships (forthcoming) in *Literature Compass* and is completing a book about Civil War women writers’ appropriations of the classical discourse of friendship as a means to address the problem of conflicting political obligations.

Sheila T. Cavanagh is a professor of English at Emory University. She specializes in pedagogy and early modern literature. She has authored books on Edmund Spenser and Lady Mary Wroth, and she is now editor of the *Spenser Review* and Director of the Emory Women Writers Project, a website devoted to early modern women’s literature that is supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities.


Donald Gilbert-Santamaria is an associate professor at the University of Washington. He is author of *Writers on the Market: Consuming Literature in Early Seventeenth-Century Spain* (2005), which examines the influence of the marketplace on the poetics of the novel and public theatre in early modern Spain. His articles appear in *Hispanic Review, Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, Modern Language Quarterly*, and *Hispanofila*. He is completing a manuscript that examines early modern friendship in Spain in relation to the emerging distinctions between public and private life.
Thomas Heilke is a professor of Political Science and Director of Global and International Studies at the University of Kansas. He has written on a variety of topics in political philosophy, including civic friendship, political theology, the political thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, Eric Voegelin, John Howard Yoder, and Thucydides, and Anabaptist political thought. He has authored or co-authored four books and edited or co-edited six others. His articles appear in *American Political Science Review*, *Political Theory*, *Polity*, *The Review of Politics*, and *Modern Theology*. He is working on conceptions of civic friendship in the Protestant Reformation, a comparison of the political thought of John Howard Yoder and Reinhold Niebuhr, and a book on Anabaptist political thought.

Lorna Hutson is Berry Professor of Literature at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. She is the author of *Thomas Nashe in Context* (1989), *The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendship and Fiction of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (1994), and of *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (2007). She has edited or co-edited five works, and she has recently completed essays on Ben Jonson’s drama and the poetry of Katherine Philips.

Allison Johnson is at the University of Miami, where she is completing a dissertation on representations of friendship in the works of Isabella Whitney, Aemilia Lanyer, Elizabeth Cary, and Katherine Philips.

Daniel T. Lochman is a professor of English at Texas State University–San Marcos. He has published articles on pedagogy and Tudor culture and literature, including John Colet and other Tudor humanists, Elizabethan romances, Shakespeare, and the works of Milton. His work appears in *the Journal of the History of Ideas, Renaissance and Reformation*, *the Sixteenth Century Journal*, and *Milton Studies*. He is completing an edition and translation of Colet’s comments on Dionysius’s *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and a study of empathy and passion in literary, rhetorical, theological, and medical contexts.

Maritere López is an associate professor of History at California State University, Fresno. Her work has focused on the lives and letters of sixteenth-century courtesans as they evince the appeal and limits of definitional categories available to early modern women, particularly at the intersection of patronage and friendship. She is presently working on several essays on representations of love and sex in Italian Enlightenment conduct manuals.

Christopher Marlow is a senior lecturer in English at the University of Lincoln. He is particularly interested in representations of gender, friendship, and community in early modern drama. His work appears in *Shakespeare Studies*, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *Peer English*. He is currently completing a book entitled *Masculinity in English University Drama 1537–1642*. 
Wendy Olmsted is a professor in the New Collegiate Division, the Humanities Division, and affiliated with the Department of Classics (PAMW) at the University of Chicago. She is the author of *The Imperfect Friend: Rhetoric and Emotion in Sidney, Milton and Their Contexts* (2008) and *Rhetoric: An Historical Introduction* (2006). She has co-edited two volumes, *Rhetorical Invention and Religious Inquiry* and *A Companion to Rhetoric*. She has published articles in *Modern Philology*, *Exemplaria*, *Spenser Studies*, and *New Literary History*. Her interests center on ancient and Renaissance literature, rhetoric, and social history; and her current project concerns ancient and Renaissance representations of “the other” or “the stranger” as understood in relation to hospitality and civil conversation.

Marc D. Schachter is the author of *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship: From Classical Antiquity to Early Modern France* (2008). Other recent publications include articles on La Boétie, Montaigne, Tasso, and, with Martin Eisner, Apuleius and Boccaccio. In the 2009–10 academic year, he was the Francesco De Dombrowski Fellow at Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. For the 2010–11 academic year, he is an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski is an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin, and an affiliate of the University’s Program in Comparative Literature. She is the author of *Old Masters, New Subjects: Early Modern and Poststructuralist Theories of Will* (1995) and *Globalization and Group Identity in the Renaissance* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press) as well as essays on Francis Petrarch, Veronica Franco, Thomas More, William Shakespeare, Fernão Mendes Pinto, Galileo Galilei, and others. She is currently working on a performance-oriented edition of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (forthcoming 2011). Her current interests include the global sixteenth century, comparative colonialisms, early modern science, technology and culture, feminist and gender studies, and psychoanalytic and cognitive approaches to literary studies.
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Preface

Our frontispiece, which reproduces the painting by Raphael conventionally titled *Self-Portrait with a Friend* (c. 1518–19), fits the essays gathered here in that the figures, both the young man pointing out of the frame of the painting and the standing man behind him, disrupt conventional symmetries of friendship at the same time that they draw upon them. The soft fluidity of the seated man’s glance back to the standing figure and the tender relaxation of the latter’s left hand upon the other’s shoulder bespeak the friendship of two men. Yet the visual presentation shows friends who are not the same. Although their garments are similar in type and color, their posture, facial expression, and animation differ markedly.

The figures’ differing positions and heights skew the line of sight between them and amplify the sense of asymmetry. One may follow the visual angle from the seated man’s extended hand back to the standing companion, this line not quite parallel to the diagonal one extending from the painting’s upper left corner through the subjects’ eyes to the fluid cornea and sclera of the seated figure. The latter, together with the extended hand, is also a focus on a vertical axis that implies a third dimension extending from the background up to or adjacent to the position of the viewer. Unlike most early modern double portraits, wherein both subjects face the viewer, here only the standing image of Raphael does so, with the seated figure mediating between him and the unseen object of attention in the foreground. Although the subjects’ gestures convey an intimacy, benevolence, and affection associated with friendship, the lack of visual symmetry heightens the difference between them and, literally, points to a surrounding context, thereby offering an implicit alternative to the closed loop of mutual regard that typified Greco-Roman ideas of true friendship.

The asymmetry of Raphael’s double portrait contrasts with others, such as Pontormo’s well-known *Portrait of Two Friends* (c. 1522), and extends even to the identities of the subjects in that the standing figure has long been confidently identified as Raphael whereas the identity of his more animated companion, like the painting’s occasion and patron, remains uncertain. Scholars cite the work for its unprecedented boldness and active presentation in that it replaces the nearly still-life presentation of most portraits in the period with animated gesture, interaction, and sensual intimacy emphasized by the contrasts of stark black and white garments. Joanna Woods-Marsden places the painting alongside Raphael’s innovative “proto-baroque” paintings, such as his *Transfiguration*, due to its “complexity, movement, and extreme contrasts” (130–31).¹ Like the subjects of the essays in this volume, then,

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¹ For other interpretations of this painting, often titled *Raphael and His Fencing Master* until the last couple decades, see Prisco 164, Jones and Penny 171, Oberhuber 202–3, and Fischel 119.
Raphael’s painting challenged preconceptions of friendship, both proclaiming the mutuality of friendship and revising its traditional representation and expression.

This volume grows out of lively discussions of early modern refigurations of friendship that followed an interdisciplinary panel at the Atlanta Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in 2005. The panelists, three of whom contribute substantially expanded essays to this volume, discovered then the intersecting lines of their interdisciplinary applications of conventions about friendship, and this discovery energized conversation and encouraged new investigations. Like Raphael’s painting, the early modern friendships examined for the panel at once retained the vocabulary of friendship and disrupted its conventions, the resulting tension both illuminating the distance between early modern ideals and lived experience and ultimately raising questions about the ways we understand ourselves in relation to others. This book, then, has grown from that initial conversation, and the editors hope that it may prompt others to join our discussion, one ongoing for more than a millennium.

Many have helped to bring this project to completion, and we wish to thank all who have done so. We are particularly grateful for the encouragement and support of leaders at our respective institutions, including Ann Marie Ellis, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and Michael Hennessy, Chair of the English department, both of Texas State University, San Marcos; Luz Gonzalez, Dean of Social Sciences, and Michelle DenBeste, Chair of the History department, both of California State University, Fresno.

Thanks to those who have offered advice at panels and informal conversations, including especially Clifford Ronan and William Johnson—both participants on the original 2005 panel—as well as many who have encouraged friendship studies, including Mary Beth Rose and Mariko Suzuki. Thanks also to Erika Gaffney, an anonymous external reader, and staff at Ashgate Publishing for their helpful, knowledgeable advice, as well as to Márta Fodor at Art Resources.

A book on friendship must acknowledge those who have been both good friends and helpful consultants. Thanks, therefore, to the wise and friendly Edgar Laird, who provided learned references to medieval views on friendship, to Susan Morrison for her willingness to share knowledge of theory and medieval friendship practices, and to friends and colleagues, including Catherine Campbell, Lori Clune, Charles T. Lipp, Paul and Robin Cohen, Nancy Grayson, Melissa Jordine, Marilynn Olson, Arnold Preussner, Teya Rosenberg, and Steve and Nancy Wilson. Thanks also to seminar students at Texas State University who helped identify types of early modern friendship and Melissa M. Morris of California State University at Fresno, who helped develop the index. Finally, special thanks to all contributors to this volume, who have offered valuable advice and generous assistance at key moments throughout the process leading to publication.

Daniel T. Lochman, Maritere López, and Lorna Hutson
To Alice, Michael, Matthew, and Nicholas
&
To José C. López-Alberty and María M. Rodríguez
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Introduction
The Emergence of Discourses: Early Modern Friendship

Daniel T. Lochman and Maritere López

This volume offers a series of interdisciplinary reinvestigations of the varied ways in which early modern Europeans imagined, discussed, and enacted friendship. Although early moderns inherited a rich tradition of friendship, shaped by the ancients and restyled by medieval Christians, the period between 1500 and 1700 saw a flurry of works in which contemporaries flouted many commonplaces while fully embracing others. Philosophical treatises, literary works, and accounts of lived friendships reveal a preoccupation with and yearning for the inherited ideals and the wish to manipulate and/or actualize the reciprocity presupposed in classical and medieval models. As contemporaries often acknowledged, the rub was to attain such reciprocity in the context of a highly stratified, changing world in which equality, sameness, and the closeness they could engender—the sine qua non of traditional friendship—were as a rule merely illusory. By focusing upon artifacts such as letters, treatises, fictions, poetry, and drama, the essays in this collection bring to the fore tensions between ancient and early modern friendship discourses, while acknowledging the dominant position of traditional ideals and their ongoing cognitive and affective influences.

Each of the thirteen studies in this collection investigates from a different perspective the nature of and the difficulties posed by the divergence between the theory and praxis of friendship, as well as the varied ways in which contemporaries attempted to resolve it. By examining various discursive, gestural, and literary representations, the contributors reveal both constructed ideals and concessions to the everyday, and demonstrate how particular early modern writers reshaped friendship to fit their own experiences, as a bond on which to build a variety of interpersonal relationships, including familial coteries, confessional communities, and even citizenries. Our essays reveal that contemporaries altered friendship in surprising ways, expanding it to include not only impassioned relationships between “others” traditionally not defined as friends, but also any number of relationships with specific political, economic, or social ends. In aggregate, the essays clarify the breaking points of conventional friendship discourses and outline the patterns of emerging ones. Moreover, they lay the groundwork for a taxonomy of the transformations of friendship discourse in Western Europe and its overlap
with emergent views of the relationship of the self to individuals, classes, social institutions, and the state.

The collection is distinguished, first, by its broad range of disciplines. Including essays by scholars of British, French, and Spanish literature, as well as historians, a religionist, and a political scientist, this volume reflects the very complexity and multifaceted nature of early modern friendship. Individually, the essays each offer a case study analyzing specific contexts, events, and/or lived friendships. Each chapter thus elucidates in microcosmic fashion a facet of friendship as understood and enacted in the period. Moreover, each expands our understanding of the particular author, topic, or aspect of friendship discussed. Together, the essays do more: using methods specific to their respective discipline and in conversation with the methods and sources of the other contributors, the authors present innovative theoretical and methodological approaches with which to consider anew the nature of interpersonal relations in the early modern period.

Our aims are multiple. First, we endeavor to identify and examine the various types of friendship associations and networks that emerged in early modern Europe across social and/or national boundaries. Next, by uncovering the theories that framed conventional discourses of friendship and the ways in which early moderns received, understood, and reacted to such constructions, we hope to situate emergent relationships within a unique early modern ideological and psychological framework. Finally, we aim both to suggest new directions for theoretical and methodological advances in the analysis of early modern friendship, particularly, and to contribute to conversations concerning early modern culture and its study more broadly speaking. We are especially interested in expanding the investigation of friendship and culture by proposing questions such as the following: how was friendship configured in relationships shaped by gender, the family, marriage, and utilitarian reward? how did quotidian experience in urban and courtly settings affect traditional discourses of friendship and other interpersonal relationships? how were ideas of friendship expressed in social groups such as religious communities, coteries, courts and other political groups? how did interpersonal relationships writ large receive literary, intellectual, and/or performative expression? and how did understandings of friendship relate to emerging views of the body and its functions as well as to ideas about the self and others?

This introduction outlines the varied discourses that provoke these and other questions. It intends to provide a common point of departure both by reviewing the ancient and medieval traditions early moderns received and by examining recent theoretical and methodological approaches that emerged with the flourishing of scholarship on early modern friendship in the early 1990s. Necessarily, the overview is selective; nevertheless, we hope that it will offer an overarching frame within which to situate the specific discourses employed by the writers and communities this collection examines. This overview is followed by a preview of the groups of essays and their organization according to early moderns’ adaptations or renovations of received friendship discourses.
The Language of Friendship: Ancient and Medieval Contexts for Early Modern Discourse

In *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (1994), Reginald Hyatte offers a learned historical and philosophical overview of friendship in Europe, from the pre-Socratics through the fifteenth century. Hyatte outlines the historical development of friendship in Greco-Roman philosophy and literature, medieval and early Renaissance religious writings, chivalric narratives, and collections of stories. He begins with early Greek writings, such as those ascribed to Heraclitus and Empedocles, who introduced the view that friendship originated as the principle of attraction, creating order from chaos by drawing like elements to like or, in the case of Euripides, attracting opposites—views that influenced poetry in praise of rivers, such as Ausonius’s *Mosella* and early modern river poems by Edmund Spenser and Samuel Daniel (Hyatte 9, Pangle 18–19). Likewise, the Pythagoreans were said to have advanced an ideal of communal friendship and to have disregarded the boundaries of gender and class in friendship that Aristotle and later writers established in the context of the political and social order of the *polis* or republican or imperial Rome. Interestingly, the communal ideal reappeared among Christian communities under the Empire as well as later monastic communities and post-Reformation writers who espoused mutuality in marriage (Hyatte 8–9, Thom 92–102).

The ancient traditions of friendship that gained most influence, however, were a pastiche of commonplaces and rules of friendship taken originally from the ethical and moral philosophy of the Greeks and Romans. The works best known to medieval and early Renaissance writers were Plato’s *Lysis*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*, Aristotle’s two works on ethics (the *Eudemian* and *Nichomachean*), and Cicero’s *De amicitia* and *De officiis*. These latter two offered later readers a series of assertions and responses broadly in agreement with Platonic and Aristotelian ideas, yet with many specific nuances and areas of disagreement as well as important shifts in emphasis.

In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies the best form of friendship as virtuous and ethical; it is most excellent when the intellect exercises its natural authority to constrain desires and passions, virtuously moderating discordant impulses but not excluding passion altogether (Pangle 148–50). In ordering the soul, virtuous friendship contributes to the formation of a coherent, unified “self” whose stable existence may be traced in time (Hyatte 17, Stern-Gillet 25–8). Perfect friendships are enduring and self-sustaining, unlike lesser ones that have as their goals utilitarian ambitions or transient pleasures and that are apt to veer away from virtuous, rationally determined moderation and toward excess and the appetites associated with vice. Among all people, Aristotle explains, the exemplary form of friendship tempers disorderly excess, quarrelsomeness, and flattery.

Although an intellectual activity, “perfect” friendship and slightly diminished forms (the latter allowing for the improbability of attaining an absolute state) have an affective dimension in that, according to Hyatte, they embody the “mutual
goodwill and feeling of love or esteem that unite people.” Hyatte cites Diogenes Laertius as recounting that Pythagoras and Plato had asserted before Aristotle that true friends hold goods in common due to philia—a Greek word for friendly love or affectionateness that is distinct from eros (8–9). Eros signified “love,” “desire,” or “passion” as an intense, irresistible attraction capable of transgressing reason’s control; it stands apart from philia, which conveys “solidarity” and “friendship,” because it evokes conflicted pleasure and pain of the sort Anne Carson discovers in Sappho’s word glukupikron (3–9). David Konstan distinguishes both eros and philia from storge—an affection more often signifying familial love, especially the mutual love of parents and children—and agape, the strong personal affection that Paul employed to describe the godly love expressed by the Trinity, Christ, and Christians. Konstan usefully comments that eros conveys a “transitivity” evident in derived forms such as erastes (“lover,” a masculine agent noun) and eromene (“beloved,” a feminine passive participle). The agency implicit in eros is alien to philia, which is intransitive and a “single, reciprocal term” that refers to all parties (12–13, 35). One can “do” the erotic or “receive” it, but one can only “have” philia, friendship.

Although Aristotelian friendship is often presented as being almost exclusively abstract, The Rhetoric reminds us that in some circumstances at least there is a link between friendship (philein) and emotion. In applying rhetoric to political ends, Aristotle defines a friend as one who wishes to do good to another for his sake and who inclines to achieving that good as much as possible: “those who think they feel thus towards each other think themselves friends” (Nic. Eth. trans. Rackham 2, 4, 1381a; added emphasis). Within families and in civil society, Aristotle often refers to relationships with words that convey emotionality such as cordiality and concord, but his language tends more to the intellectual than the affective when he considers the “ethically excellent,” “perfect,” or “true” friendship (teleia philia), which is an activity of nobility or aretê. The latter’s most important traits—important also for later traditions of friendship—include the following:

- Perfect friendship exists between men who are the same or very similar in virtue, one drawn to the other by the principle of like-to-like. Linked to rationality and stability, masculinity is essential to Aristotelian virtue, the latter defined as the “settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us” (Hyatte 17; cf. Nic. Eth., 2, 6, 1107a).
- Friendship overlaps with but is distinct from other virtuous behaviors such as cordiality, generosity, self-love, piety, beneficence, and magnanimity; it is averse to everything opposed to these, including excessive devotion to utility, pleasure, or fame. Friends act virtuously when they wish one another so much good that each helps the other maintain and improve in goodness. Perfect friends do what is good for the friend’s sake and harbor no self-interest (Pangle 43–56; Nic. Eth. 8, 3, 1156b).
- In contrast to Socrates’ identification of friendship in Plato’s Lysis as rooted
in the deficiency of a good, self-sufficient man, Aristotle’s exemplary friendship is a positive state ideally enacted by noble, virtuous, and self-sufficient men; those lacking this perfection may sustain a mutual, progressive improvement as they grow in self-awareness and virtuous self-sufficiency and as they receive pleasure from reciprocal acts performed with respect and affection (Pangle 20–36; Stern-Gillet 132).

- Exemplary friends share love, as the word philia indicates, but in Aristotle and generally in ancient Greek this love is distinct from eros and appetitive forms of love (Stern-Gillet 64–75). Rather than being loved or desiring an other, a friend values goodness above all, expresses philia through a reciprocating, virtuous cycle of beneficent actions, and achieves through them great happiness, which is giving pleasure to one like oneself. A true friend is the same as or nearly the same as the self, and his growth should mirror one’s own improving virtue (Nic. Eth. 9, 8, 1168a–1168b; 9, 9, 1170b).

- Pleasure (which attracts the young) and utility/advantage (which attracts the mature and experienced) cannot be adequate motives for exemplary friendship (Nic. Eth. 9, 11–12, 1171b–1172a). However, the virtuous acts required of perfect or exemplary friends necessarily yield mutual pleasure and advantage as effects.

- Due to participants’ need to perform beneficent acts, friendships thrive if they involve frequent contact, a shared locale, men with agreeable natures, and ideally just two individuals (Nic. Eth. 9, 10, 1170b–1171a).

- One must test the character and progress of a friend over a long time to determine whether he may be exemplary in stability and equality. A friend who cannot or does not progress, who acts without regard to virtue, or who alters in the performance of virtuous acts, must be cut off. Nevertheless, those who part are to treat one another cordially to honor their former relationship (Pangle 123–41; Nic. Eth. 9, 3, 1165b).

- For Aristotle, intellectual contemplation (theoria) is the chief means to human happiness (Hyatte 20–21; Nic. Eth. 10, 7–8, 1177a–1178a) and transcends the moral virtues. As a consequence, philia, though the highest of the moral or practical virtues, achieves a lesser pleasure that is related to the well-being of the city-state and its citizens rather than the most complete happiness: contemplative serenity. However, as Hyatte notes, beholding one’s virtue in the other is one way, if a diminished one, to contemplate universals and achieve profound happiness (21; Pangle 197–200).

In both the Eudemian and Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle links “civic friendship” (politike philia) to self-interest, yet he ambiguously places it between the morally unsound and sound and sometimes identifies it as an important means of achieving social concord. Due to their interests in the advantage of the individual and/or the state, civic friendships do not rise to the level of exemplary friendships, which ought to be free of self-interest (Stern-Gillet 147–54; Eud. Eth. 7, 9–10, 1241b–
1243b; Nic. Eth. 8, 9, 1160a). Just as imperfect individuals aid one another to grow in virtue, a morally sound political community seeks the good of fellow citizens by providing good laws that foster the virtue of justice (Stern-Gillet 154–7).

Cicero’s treatises concerned with friendship, De amicitia (or Laelius) and De officiis, disseminated Aristotelian ideas through his discussion of amicitia, a word that etymologically recalls erotic love (amor) but is distinct from it (Fiore 61; De amicitia trans. Falconer XXVII.100, VIII.26). Hyatte observes that, despite appropriating much from Aristotle, Cicero altered theories of friendship in important ways. Unlike Aristotle, for instance, he emphasized Roman rather than Greek examples of friendship; he altered friendship’s alliance to aretē by linking the potential for happiness achieved through rational judgment to a Roman idea of “virtue,” one which implied action performed for the “preeminence and glory” of the Republic (Donald Earl, qtd by Hyatte 27) and which implied that a principle of “reciprocity of obligation” bound members of the imperial community as “friends” in a politicized sense (Fiore 72–3). In so doing, Cicero replaced exploration of the ethical and political dimensions of friendship—these taken as givens—with a legal and social framework built up from amicitia’s “laws” and “contractual duties” that include fulfilling a friend’s needs without request, appealing to a wavering friend’s honor, and defending a friend’s reputation and honor to the point of sharing disgrace (Hyatte 27).

Cicero models ideal amicitia through the voices of Laelius Sapiens, who seems to speak for him, and Scipio Africanus the Younger, who, recently deceased at the time of composition, was admired as an iconic patrician representing Roman intellectual, military, and political virtue. The dialogue features Ciceronian vocabulary centered on the lifelong “unanimity” or “accord” (consensio) that joins friends in benevolence and love as caritas (Pangle 106). Yet the dialogue shows that vera amicitia is not just a relationship between two men but a condition that involves domestic affection, social concord governed by noble lineage, the reciprocity of physical elements such as air and fire, and cosmic harmony. Against this principle Cicero sets the Roman politicians of the declining Republic, who were often moved by a concern for power and wealth that is antithetical to social concord and civic friendship (De amicitia XVII.64). Good friends should strive for the summum bonum of “perfect mutual benevolence” as the “necessary ingredient” that only incidentally accrues pleasure and advantage (Hyatte 27).

At the same time that Cicero contrasts utilitarian, pragmatic friendships with the principles of cosmic, social, and domestic harmony, he applies those ideals of concord to specific, practical cases. If over time sworn friends grow unequal in virtue, he points out, the superior must bear with the weaker because their commitment, being sworn, is “irrevocable.” If not sworn, however, the friendship must be broken, although the split should occur “slowly and naturally” to preserve a “semblance of amity” and preclude open enmity (Hyatte 31). On the model of Laelius and Scipio, true friendship should survive death and embrace future generations. Shared accommodations, common meals, companionship in battle and travel, agreement in public affairs, and a common thirst for knowledge all
advance the virtue (32). For Cicero, true friendship is not limited to the philosopher or sage but is available to military and political men of good will acting in civil society, like Laelius and Scipio. However, in a pragmatic work, *Commentariolium Petitionis*, Cicero admits that a “calculating use of [civic] friendship” may be useful “as a prop for political ambitions” and allows some value even to utilitarian political friendships since partisan supporters are necessary to advance a good candidate to office (Fiore 69–73).

Cicero’s views inspired reaction and debate. Seneca generally supported Cicero’s ideal of friendship’s universality by emphasizing (contra Plato and Aristotle) that even the perfectly self-sufficient man needs and desires friends, and he observed that the impulse to sociability is natural, however virtuous one may be (*Epistulae morales* IX). In the *Moralia*’s “How To Tell a Flatterer from a Friend” and “On Having Many Friendships,” Plutarch used the common discourse of friendship to affirm the equality, duties, and benefits of friends. Yet Plutarch specifically cautions against false friends and flatterers who employ the language of friendship to conceal utilitarian “patron–client” interests. Edward N. O’Neil observes that the split Plutarch implies between the discourse of ideal friendship and its practice becomes visible in the Roman Empire’s address of client states as amicus and amicitia, language that helped to sustain an illusion of friendly equality that pacified enemies and advanced Rome’s domestic, commercial, and political interests (108–10).

Other traditions of friendship derived from ancient narratives rather than ethical and political discourse. The pairs Theseus and Peirithoüs, Achilles and Patroclus, Damon and Pythias, and Orestes and Pylades became commonplace emblems of friendship in ancient texts, and their inclusion in widely disseminated compilations such as Valerius Maximus’s *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri novem* (c. 31 ce) insured their exemplary status among medieval and early modern writers. Hyatte writes that the “one ethical feature” unifying these disparate narratives was the absolute fidelity of friends willing to die for the sake of the other (34), a loyalty whose “spectacular self-confirmation” produced late medieval spin-offs in Boccaccio’s tale of Titus and Gisippus, Chaucer’s Palemmon and Arcite, the French Ami and Amile, and other pairs of friends in chivalric romance (35). Hyatte notes that Arthurian romance merged conventions from *amor courtois* with those of amicitia, the *Prose Lancelot* (c. 1220) presenting the masculine friendship of Lancelot and Galehout as equal or superior to the “fatal love-sickness” of Lancelot and Guinevere. Friendship offers a positive model of “adoration, self-sacrifice, humility, the confusion of extreme joy and sorrow” that contrasts with the destructive consequences of courtly love (90). In the early modern period, humanist copyists and translators, though often spurning the medieval romance, supplemented compendia like Valerius’s with vernacular translations of works such as Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* that offered new narrative models of friendship.

Similarly, humanists revived ancient Greek romances, narratives combining the authority of late antiquity with the allure of alternatively gendered friendships.
Focusing upon Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica*, Steve Mentz explains that this work appealed to Protestant writers of romance in Elizabethan England because “the redemptive ending emerges neither from the heroes’ swordarms (as it would in chivalric romance) nor from their cleverness (as in a novella), but from Providential (and authorial) control” (43). In conceiving a romance plot as providentially ordered, Greek romances, like those translated in the sixteenth century such as *Clitophon and Leucippe*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, and Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*, not only narrativized conventional same-sex pairs of friends but also mixed-sex friends who sometimes combined conventional *philia* with *eros*, with or without the tacit approval of the gods (Konstan 14–59). Focusing upon Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Ronald F. Hock concludes that the title characters, a husband and wife, exemplify “the highest form of friendship,” even if they represent an “equality of education and experience” that Aristotle would have found “inconceivable” (162). Together with standard motifs of shipwrecks, pirates, and confused identity, complex friendships that cut across gender and class divisions and are sometimes sexualized contributed to the appeal of these writings, together with influential early modern romances such as Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1532).

Other lines of early modern friendship discourse derive from the attempted synthesis of classical ethics with Christian theology and practice. Medieval and early modern religious writers mingled the traditions through scriptural authority, such as New Testament references to the “friend” (*philos* in Greek; *amicus* in the Vulgate), which signifies individuals like Lazarus (Jn 11:11) as members within the Christian community (for example, Acts 19:31, Jn 15:13–15) or the faithful as friends of God (for example, Jas 2:23). Alan C. Mitchell argues that the Gospel of Luke borrows principles such as reciprocity, equality of friends in virtue, and community of goods from Greco-Roman traditions; suppresses others, such as exclusivity in social class and sex; and replaces friendship’s connections to the state and classical deities with emphases upon religious community and the Christian deity (225–62). Hyatte traces the development of a Christian ideal of friendship within the Christian community from Augustine’s *City of God* through monastic communities such as John Cassian’s (c. 365–435) (45, 58–9). Medieval theologians such as Anselm and Aquinas accepted friendship as consistent with the injunction to love one’s neighbor as oneself; but, in doing so, they exposed implicit tensions between the ancient and Christian views, such as the disjunction between the classical emphasis upon self-love in friendship and the Gospels’ injunction to love God above all (*Summa theol.* II, II. Q 23. 1, Pakaluk 171–3). Moreover, in violation of the Greco-Roman emphasis upon mutual unity, identity, and *consenso*, Christians are to love all—enemies as well as friends—with fraternal charity, and they are to achieve the ideal of perfected friendship in heavenly rather than civil society.

Early Christian writers explored the friendship of the individual and God in the expressions *amicus Dei* and *amicitia Dei*, but it was after Robert Grosseteste’s Latin translation of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (c. 1250) and the rise of the universities that the theological discourse of Greco-Roman friendship became extensive, with
emphasis placed upon both the horizontal dimension of friendship—the community of Christians or humanity in general—and the verticality implicit in *amicitia Dei*. Hyatte refers to the horizontal as “a preferential affection that joins two or a few Christian friends through the medium of God’s love” (61). The vertical is most fully articulated in the *Amicitia spiritualis* (1147–67) of Aelred of Rievaulx, a work that justifies the intimate and personal love of a Christian friend as an instance of Christ’s refracted love. This spiritual friendship between Christians may evolve progressively through stages of “selection, probation, admission, and near perfection,” although absolute perfection is reserved for the afterlife (62–6). Aelred’s work and others provided models for a discourse of friendship that could accommodate some elements of personal affection to a Christian point of view.

These and still other friendship traditions extend from the pre-Socratics to the early moderns. They offered early modern writers a rich and varied texture of words, concepts, networks, gestures, and performative acts that could be appropriated, modified, or rejected.

**Recent Innovations and New Discourses of Early Modern Friendship**

Modern scholarship on the friendship traditions dates at least from Laurens J. Mills’s *One Soul in Bodies Twain: Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama* (1937), a work that usefully identifies and gathers literary references to the topic. However, theoretical interest in early modern friendship surged only in the 1990s with the publication of a number of studies that explored from varied approaches and emphases the types of friendship discourse available to early modern writers. Importantly, recent studies have highlighted the constructedness of both the ancient traditions and early modern reactions to them, and they have underlined contemporary readers’ limitations in deciphering both. Together, they provide a series of sometimes overlapping contexts for the essays included in this collection.

Among modern studies, five stand out as most influential to early modern friendship studies. The first, Ullrich Langer’s *Perfect Friendship: Studies in Literature and Moral Philosophy from Bocaccio to Corneille* (1994) is distinctive in emphasizing the study of literary texts as the best means to comprehend the theory and practice of friendship among the Continental early modern writers he examines. This is so, he argues, since the intellectualized constructs of the Greeks and Romans, Christian theology, and early modern courtesy books all limit or disregard the practice of friendship, together with practical ethics and morality. Philosophical and theological treatises that work deductively from universals tend to produce elaborate structures that are removed from experience, whereas, according to Langer, early modern literature in its particularity becomes “more and more the ground for imaginative experimentation, for experimentation with the multiple codes and values of an expanding civilization” (28). This experimental quality differentiates early modern constructs of friendship both from the ancient
tradition and from the medieval tradition of exemplary pairs of friends. Langer suggests that, despite the tendency of early modern treatises to define the utility of literature through a medieval emphasis upon exemplarity—reading about virtuous people inclines one to act virtuously—early modern literature is generally more concerned with the “trying-out of hypotheses, of situations.” The impulse to write and to read depends upon a “pleasure and usefulness” that combine the affective and cognitive and make moral philosophy seem relevant to experience (28–9). Langer focuses on works that situate fictive friends in narratives whose temporality erodes the timelessness and stability of Greco-Roman exemplary friendship, and he emphasizes changes that challenged the ancient models. Medieval philosophy usually spoke of friendship in relation to Christian charity rather than Cicero’s amicitia, and fictional representations such as Rabelais’s Pantagruel and Panurge represented friends as individuated and divided. Langer similarly emphasizes Montaigne’s ways of undermining friendship conventions. At one place, Montaigne writes that he wishes to abandon his essay on friendship, a product of language that inevitably masks the “inexplicability of true friendship.” Elsewhere, Langer observes, Montaigne identifies the “motivation and explanation” of true friendship as a pragmatic “economic interest” alien to Aristotle: the beneficent act of a friend is reduced to interest paid to reciprocate prior actions (174). Langer calls Montaigne’s critique “sublime” in that it reveals the limits of conventional friendship discourse, and he pairs Montaigne’s approach with fictions that represent friends who, though “perfect” in fidelity, do not employ the discourse and gestures of friendship or who are “imperfect” in that they use conventions of friendship to conceal utilitarian ends (175–244). For Langer, literary representations offer a richer sense of friendship than does moral philosophy. Even though they present little or no theory of friendship and often fail to exemplify it, they are more “useful” to the cultural historian due to their narrativized applications (246).

Langer’s book reviews early modern topoi that deviate from—and sometimes contradict—traditional friendship discourses. It builds a theory that authorizes literary representations outside of conventional discourse and that attributes their authority to playful experimentation rather than heavy-handed exemplarity. In this way, Langer shares with writers such as Lorna Hutson and Laurie Shannon an awareness of the constructedness of friendship’s language and gestures, an artificiality that may be examined in historical and biographical narratives, moral treatises, and familiar letters as well as literary texts. Precisely this expanded awareness, together with its varied discourses, provides the motive for the essays that follow this introduction, and collectively they provide for the discernment of types of discourses seen from various perspectives—for example, the disciplinary, concerned with perpetuating received friendship conventions; the generic, dealing with forms of expression of friendship in various media; and the resistant, concerned with confronting conventions more or less openly, displacing them, and replacing them with new or adapted discourses.

Contemporary readings of early modern friendship receive exceptionally strong impetus from Hutson’s The Usurer’s Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of
Women in Sixteenth-Century England, also published in 1994. Hutson examines friendship in relation to early modern constructions of gender, particularly those in drama and literary texts, and she focuses on practices of friendship that follow the cultural transformations that result from printing and humanist education. The book offers a radically different approach to friendship by focusing on quotidian discourse seen from the vantage of cultural anthropology. Hutson pays little attention directly to traditional friendship discourse, but she critiques it through her analysis of pragmatic interests that belie the rhetoric of early modern humanists. She argues that the latter appropriated the discourse of vera amicitia for pragmatic ends that precluded the essentialized, unified identity—the “meeting of minds”—that tradition had ennobled.

Like Langer, Hutson argues that early modern friendship shifted away from the inherited “code,” but she bases her argument on emergent social and economic structures rather than literary texts. She emphasizes that the “faithfulness” of a friend in the medieval, feudal social arrangement received its warrant by the performance of “acts of hospitality and the circulation of gifts through the family and its allies.” Among humanists, however, expressions of friendship often demonstrated the “instrumental and affective relationship” of patronage, and they were validated through “emotionally persuasive communication, or the exchange of persuasive texts” rather than hospitality or gifts (2–3). Humanists’ study of rhetoric and the ability to fashion the appearance of friendship and intimacy through the acts of writing and reading created illusions of “altruistic, non-instrumental friendship” while secretly advancing agendas aimed at personal advancement.

The older, codified friendship had centered on the achievement of “credit”—signifying belief and trust as well as material support—enacted through an exchange of gifts or tokens. This economy presumed a deferred obligation of reciprocation that cemented the friendship and ensured its continuance. Hutson illustrates the newer approach by means of a letter wherein Erasmus, writing to Peter Giles, attacks the idea that “material things” can symbolize friendship and appropriates the topos that excellent friends share thoughts intimately. Correspondingly, the physical separation of those called friends invites literary, not material, gifts—“persuasive” texts that ultimately accrue to the author’s material advantage (4, 5). The humanist fashions illusions of friendship rhetorically for unmet patrons, and its textuality not only serves as a monument of the writer but also as a “productive” and “interest-bearing” gift that promises to make its recipient rhetorically fashionable (5–6).

Hutson calls attention to a troubling aspect of the new approach—its dislocation of the humanist’s persuasive purposes and “interest” from the idea that a “good” friend acts without ulterior motives on behalf of the other. The rhetorical slant of humanist education, aimed at the separation of authorial purpose from the surface discourse, undermined conventional ideas of friendship as well as the older practice of exchanging material gifts.

Hutson introduces the issue of gender while investigating representations of early modern women as strong and therefore transgressive, a tendency seemingly
contrary to the practice of humanism, which had permitted few choices even for educated women. She explains this phenomenon with reference to her preceding analysis of the emerging “economy” of friendship. Since medieval Europe viewed women as “signs of credit”—“the most precious of gifts” in a culture of gift exchange—they had strengthened bonds between male “friends” within networks such as the family and commerce. The increasing prominence of women in literature, specifically sixteenth-century English fiction and drama, coincides with the increasing instability of medieval gift-exchange. Literary voices of assertive women signal the collapse of the feudal model and the vulnerability of the emerging humanist counterpart to feigned professions of credit. After humanist persuasion displaced the woman as the pre-eminent gift, husbands in literary texts began to seek new ways to assure the credit of friends. As one indirect consequence, the dramatized wife (or potential wife) could assume a strong voice, as evident in Shakespeare’s Beatrice and Rosalind. Alternatively, because women were thought vulnerable to rhetorical persuasion, theatrical representations featured dangerous women like Lady Macbeth, given to alliances with unwarrantable men (13).

Hutson’s inflection of early modern friendship situates it within a network of cultural, economic, and gendered interests outside the traditional fold of ethics, and it introduces important new emphases on the social implications of friends’ ritualized exchanges of gifts, “credit” in its manifold senses, and re-evaluations of the unstated purposes and practical interests of those employing humanist rhetorical strategies in their dealings with others. A similar reorientation occurs in Laurie Shannon’s Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts (2002), a study that begins with emphasis upon the conventional unity of friends—each friend is “another self”—but goes on to examine early modern appropriations and rewritings of this self-identity in a social and cultural network that insists upon difference. Shannon first notes the “doctrinal status” early moderns attributed to the conventions in treatises on friendship: as an extreme example, Walter Dorke’s A Tipe of Friendship reductively listed twenty laws by which to recognize the true friend. Such books presumed a Stoic reliance upon rational self-mastery or “self-rule,” linked the individual’s vera amicitia to political rule centered upon the “sovereign,” and introduced a discourse of political “friendship” that expanded Stoic self-control to domination over others (7).

The traditional model of friendship, emphasizing the participants’ social, psychic, economic, and political equality, leads to an impossible construct that Shannon calls “two sovereigns”—an ideal opposed to all theories of monarchy. As seen above, amicitia is allied to political consensus; for Shannon, Cicero’s “consent” conveys an intimate, interior likeness and agreement between citizen friends that contrasts with the differences in class and station that are central to early modern versions of polity (7). The resulting tension between traditional friendship discourse and early modern governance was reinforced by Renaissance discourses that associated “sovereign” friends with heterosocial/sexual love and with “broader political questions and metaphors of rule” (9). However, the idea that a public sovereign might have a friend seemed impossible since the role of
a “peerless” monarch prohibits consensuality or mutuality. The sovereign cannot move from a “public” and therefore non-intimate relationship to a “private” one without invalidating the idea of autonomous self-sufficiency inherent in sovereignty (11). As regards one’s ability to practice amicitia, Shannon notes, the subject “has more power than the king” (10).

Shannon examines the conflicting interpersonal, political, and gendered vectors of “sovereign” friendship in English treatises and fictional works, with a focus on the drama of Elizabeth Cary, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. As she notes in her introduction, she draws on Jacques Derrida’s Politics of Friendship (1994, English trans. 1997) when examining the reversibility and instability of the early modern “friend” or “enemy”—one word, according to Derrida, always implying the other in both personal and political relationships. In that work, Derrida argues that the logic of traditional friendship discourse as represented in Cicero and Montaigne leads inevitably from private to public: “Reason and virtue could never be private. They cannot enter into conflict with the public. These concepts of virtue and reason are brought to bear in advance on the space of the res publica … All the couples of friends which serve as examples for Cicero and Montaigne are citizen couples” (184). Yet Derrida sees in the language of Montaigne a contrary impulse that drives friendship toward the “apolitical” and the secret—“placing the law of secrecy above the laws of the city” (184). He reminds us of the manifold implications of friendship discourse, including humanity’s wish to preserve the possibility of interacting with an other despite God’s lack of a friend, friendship’s incommensurability in time, and its many implied oppositions: friendship implies absence and its opposite (hostility); perfection implies imperfection; overt masculinity implies oppression of the feminine; cognitive theory implies the performative; and the languages of fraternity, community, and politics all invoke their opposites. In short, binaries make visible the construction of friendship in its Greco-Roman origins even as Derrida himself expresses a reluctance to deny its existence and value to humanity as an expression of love (and hate).

In The Friend (2003), historian Alan Bray writes that in reading Derrida’s book he discovered a search parallel to his own. Derrida raises questions that seek to transcend “the ethical problems raised by friendship in a diverse world” (8)—problems that derive from the traditional discourse itself as well as its reformulation in the Enlightenment, when Immanuel Kant grounded the morality of friendship in an “undifferentiated moral benevolence” (8). Bray describes Kant’s homeostatic morality as alien both to postmodern doubt and to historical representations of the evidence of friendship that are invisible to conventional methods of historiography. Rather than inferring the nature of friendship from material evidence such as legal rolls and census documents, Bray turns to interpretable forms of evidence—the design of tombs, sacramental and social rituals, statements in private correspondence, and vows of sworn brotherhood—as the bases for historical conclusions. From such evidence, he concludes that in the “traditional cultures” of the late medieval and early modern periods “friendship was ultimately inalienable from the particular loyalties in which it was begun,” a conclusion that