ABSTRACTS FOR THE AMITY IN EARLY MODERN LITERATURE AND CULTURE SYMPOSIUM

PANEL 1: IDEALS OF FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD COUNSEL

Amity, Elegy and the Limits of Friendship in the Works of Lady Mary Chudleigh
Bronwen Price (University of Portsmouth)
The discourse of ideal classical amity had a major impact on women’s writing of the late seventeenth century. Profoundly masculine though this discourse was, it provided a potent resonance for women writers and was reformulated to serve feminised ends. Lady Mary Chudleigh was a central figure in generating a feminised amity. The philosophy underscoring her writing seems to invoke an internal process, but this initiates a more outward-looking amity, premised on textual exchange and activity. The speaker presents her work as companionship to her readers, offering counsel by providing exemplary models of virtuous femininity and establishing an alternative model of community to orthodox society. Her text is an embodiment of amicability.
However, a sense of vulnerability underscores the ideal principles Chudleigh’s work inscribes. This is especially apparent in two of her most striking poems, her elegies on her mother and daughter. Significantly, it is the introduction of the physical and worldly into friendship’s domain in the most tangible terms of corporeal loss and, in particular, the wrenching of maternal bonds, that place friendship under pressure to the point of crisis. These poems map out an ideal of friendship central to an emerging discourse of feminine amity, but also signal its limits within its very formation.

Sovereign Fathers and Sovereign Friends in Hamlet and Michel de Montaigne's “Of Friendship”
Theodore Kaouk (University of Maryland)
Serving as an alternative to the compulsory bonds of kinship and kingdom, friendship in the early modern period represented an arena of choice. In particular, the Humanist vision of ideal friendship with its image of one soul in two bodies corresponded to a desire for absolute identification between partners that could serve as a shield against the sullying interactions of commercial and political action. In an early modern world of actually existing class hierarchies, it is not difficult to imagine how such an idealization would have encouraged the resurrection of a stoic form of individual sovereignty, however paradoxically dependent it was upon mutual support. If there is something of an enthymeme shared by the logics that I am calling “sovereign fathers” and “sovereign friends,” it can be located in their mutual refusal to yield to a world of plurality, vulnerability, and inevitable dependence, in their collaboration as a Scylla and Charybdis of sovereignty between which the early modern (masculine) subject oscillates. By reading Hamlet alongside Michel de Montaigne's essay “On Friendship,” this exploratory essay will examine two different early modern articulations of the movement away from sovereign fathers and toward sovereign friends.
‘Receyuing of frendshipe’: The Contribution of Seneca’s De beneficiis to an Understanding of Early Modern Amicable Relations
Wendy Trevor (University of Birmingham)
Consideration of amicable relations between men in early modern drama since Lauren’s Mills’ 1937 work has tended to subordinate classical thinking to post-Foucauldian sexuality, with a significant focus on male homoerotics. When treated, Aristotle and Cicero continue to serve as the main classical referential sources, with humanist translations of these philosophers invoked as paradigmatic, especially when read in relation to early modern drama. This paper suggests the usefulness of reading early modern translations of Seneca’s De beneficiis as significant sources for ideas about male friendship, and notes the ways that an understanding of the work can help to open up meanings of dramatic representations of amity.

Friendship and Good Counsel: the Discourses of Friendship and Parrhesia in Francis Bacon’s The Essayes or Counsels, Morall and Civill
Stella Achilleos (University of Cyprus)
This paper aims to explore Francis Bacon’s treatment of the discourses of friendship and admonition in The Essayes or Counsels, Morall and Civill (concentrating on ‘Of Friendship’, ‘Of Counsell’ and ‘Of Followers and Friends’). Drawing an inseparable link between friendship and good counsel, Bacon ascribes to true friendship the quality defined in ancient Greece as parrhesia (free speech), an element that serves to distinguish a true friend from a flatterer. Quite intriguingly, the essays may be read within the context of Bacon’s own attempts to establish himself as counselor to various patrons. Adding to the challenging work of Laurie Shannon and David Colclough, this paper aims to look at the influence of classical philosophy on these essays, as well as to explore the broader political and ideological implications of Bacon’s discussion as he turns his attention from private friendship to the relationship between king and counselor.

KEYNOTE LECTURE:

The Marriage of True Minds
Lorna Hutson (University of St Andrews)
‘Amity in Early Modern Literature and Culture’ brings scholars together on the premise that friendship’s representations in the early modern period have been distorted by the privileging of sexuality as a primary point of reference. Somewhat contrarily, my paper will argue that in the early modern period, the cultural capital of ethical friendship discourse (the discourse of amicitia) was used, precisely, to redeem sexuality and eroticism from the morally abject position it occupied in Catholic theology. I will focus on Erasmus’s 1518 Encomium Matrimonii (‘Praise of Marriage’), which was perceived as such a threatening attack on celibacy, that its French translator was executed for heresy in 1529. I will show how in it Erasmus uses Ciceronian amicitia to redefine the purpose of marriage as not solely sexual and procreative, but as a relation of ethical friendship. In so doing, Erasmus initiated the tradition of ‘companionable marriage’ that we now take for granted. Uncovering this history should help us question the purportedly historical chronology alleged by judges who have recently denied the right of same-sex unions to be called marriages on the grounds that friendship is a relatively recent addition to the primarily procreative purpose of marriage.
‘Both are alike; and both alike we like’: Sovereignty and Amity in Shakespeare’s *King John*

Páraic Finnerty (University of Portsmouth)

*King John* is probably Shakespeare’s least popular play: it is rarely staged and is probably, his least read play. It has also received less critical attention than any of his other plays, the general consensus being that *King John* lacks unity, has no central theme and is flawed in terms of plot, structure, characterisation and style. This paper offers a new way of interpreting this play by examining its representation of sovereignty within the context of early modern discourses of amity. In *King John*, as in most of Shakespeare’s plays, amity primarily refers to political accord or harmony within a country or between countries. In *King John*, more so than in his other plays, Shakespeare evokes the rhetoric of idealised male friendship and sworn brotherhood to conceptualise political amity. In this play, personal and political amity are visually represented by two sovereigns hand in hand, which is particularly provocative considering the associations between amity and sovereignty at this time.

Distortions of the friendship code in Early Modern Drama

Tom MacFaul (University of Oxford)

Late Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama makes extraordinarily creative use of the ideal of friendship, which catalyses some bizarre plot developments. This paper will explore friendship in a range of minor plays, such as Munday’s *Fair Em*, the anonymous *Captain Thomas Stukeley* and *The Fair Maid of Bristow*, the first part of Middleton and Dekker’s *The Honest Whore*, and Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Coxcomb*. In these plays distortions of the friendship code extend the range of possible action whilst showing that the code itself is rather unnatural—often putting it in opposition to filial duty, which can come to seem equally unnatural.

Amity in Sidney’s *Arcadia*

Lynsey Blandford (University of Kent)

Amity is evoked in Sidney’s *Arcadia* through the male friendship of Pyrocles and Musidorus. Companionship with a man nurtures male reason, intellect, martial skills and ambition, while a woman threatens man with effeminacy. Sidney exposes conflict within the early modern man by the example of Pyrocles who cannot resist his decline into effeminacy and even Musidorus who rejects his title for a woman. Masculinity is inverted for heterosexual desire, and yet they remain loyal friends. The paper will explore the literary portrayal of male friendship as an intense affection which endures even when threatened by the sexual attractions of women.

A Friend in Need: A Look at the Roles of Friendship in the Poetry of Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.

Liz Evershed (University of Durham)

This paper will discuss some of the personal, political and literary roles of the friend in the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt, concentrating on his epistolary satires in which I will be considering the role of the friend variously as an imagined listening presence; as an interlocutor and as a mirror/foil for the speaker’s own values. It will also consider the ways in Wyatt’s friend and poetic successor, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, developed the role, focusing particularly on the frequent presence of the friend in the love-lyrics of both as bystander, sympathiser and confidante of the lover.
PANEL 3: CROSS-SEX FRIENDSHIPS

**John Evelyn and spiritual partnership with young women**

**Cedric Brown (University of Reading)**

This paper picks out one of the kinds of special friendship in the early modern period hardest for us to understand, older men conducting spiritual mentorship of and devotional partnership with young(er) women. It uses John Evelyn’s several friendships of this kind as its core evidence, adding to the case study by Frances Harris of the Evelyn/Margaret Blagge relationship (by using the further case of Lady Mordaunt, and others) and her and David Stephenson’s further study of the religious/friendship symbol of the pentacle, invented by Robert Moray, who had a similar kind of relationship in his later years. Common influences appear to come from France, both in terms of spiritual practice, societies of Masonic kind, and in relationships as prescribed in romances, but many contemporaries found this intense amitié almost as hard as we do to understand.

**Seraphicks. Elizabeth Gauden (d. 1684) and Simon Patrick (1626-1707) as Early Modern Platonic Friends**

**Cornelia Wilde (Berlin Humboldt-University)**

The paper explores the friendship between Simon Patrick, later bishop of Ely, and Elizabeth Gauden, his London parishioner, as an example of Neo-Platonic, chaste, yet impassioned friendship between the sexes: Based on a combination of Neo-Platonic metaphysics of love, Aristotelian notions of *philia*, and legitimised by the ideal of Christian charity, the friendship’s practical aim is the two ‘soul mates’ mutual intellectual and emotional refinement in order to be united with the divine. The paper analyses the dynamics and poetics of affectionate excess and spiritual union as textualised in the seraphic friends’ correspondence (Cambridge University Library Add. MS 19).

**Good mistress H and dear Sister: siblings and friends in early modern women’s life writing**

**Kate Hodgkin (University of East London)**

Sibling relationships in early modern culture are often used as an idealised model of friendship: the vocabulary of sisterhood or brotherhood articulates ideals of intimacy, trust and communion, drawing the friend into an imaginary (and perhaps preferred) family. But the relationships of brothers and sisters are seldom as uncomplicated as this might suggest. Sibling relationships, real, imagined or adopted, recur in early modern culture as sites of intense and often ambivalent or hostile emotion. This paper considers the representation of brothers, sisters and friends in the autobiographical writings of two early modern women, Dionys Fitzherbert and Elizabeth Isham, looking at the ways in which the categories overlap with and contradict one another, and asking what these narratives may tell us about friendship and siblinghood in early modern England.
Paradise Lost and the impossibility of the companionship ideal
Rosie Paice (University of Portsmouth)
This paper will investigate models of companionship in Paradise Lost, presenting examples that not only call into question current understandings of Milton’s commitment to the ideal of companionate marriage (set forth in The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce and Tetrachordon), but also suggest the fundamental impossibility, even prior to the Fall, of unproblematic companionship. Strikingly, though all key characters in the poem hanker after companionship, realisation of this desire consistently leads to trouble. Adam, for example, may persuade God of the reasonableness of his desire for ‘fellowship’ based on equality and likeness, but scholars have frequently remarked on the inequality and difference between himself and Eve; moreover, the pair quickly slip into language suggestive of mutual idolatry, and of course Adam falls because he cannot brave being separated from Eve. Even God, who claims to be ‘alone / From all eternity’, relieves his solitude, by elevating the Son to his right hand, a preferential move that leads directly to Satan’s rebellion. Thus companionship in Paradise Lost (whether marital or non-marital) can be seen to encompass hierarchies, and lead to over-dependence and the exclusion of others. This situates companionship not as a pure ideal to strive for, but rather as a key contributory factor in both Falls, and indeed as an indication of fallen nature even in the pre-Fall universe.