



Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts

Laurie Shannon

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Renaissance formulations of friendship typically cast the friend as "another self" and idealized a pair of friends as "one soul in two bodies." Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity* puts this stress on the likeness of friends into context and offers a historical account of its place in English culture and politics.

Shannon demonstrates that the likeness of sex and station urged in friendship enabled a civic parity not present in other social forms. Early modern friendship was nothing less than a utopian political discourse. It preceded the advent of liberal thought, and it made its case in the terms of gender, eroticism, counsel, and kingship. To show the power of friendship in early modernity, Shannon ranges widely among translations of classical essays; the works of Elizabeth I, Montaigne, Donne, and Bacon; and popular literature, to focus finally on the plays of Shakespeare. Her study will interest scholars of literature, history, gender, sexuality, and political thought, and anyone interested in a general account of the English Renaissance.

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