
Friendship's Shadows is a hard read. It promises much, delivers much, and, on occasion, makes claims that its logic will not bear. Smart, thoughtful, and filled with myriad insights into how complex and contradictory allegiances can be promoted and sabotaged at one and the same moment, it takes up one of the most tumultuous periods in England's history. Challenging us to consider how, through the discourse of amicitia, early moderns attempted “to reconcile conflicting obligations — to spouse, family, ruler, country, God — amidst the changing political circumstances of the English Civil Wars, Commonwealth, Protectorate, and Restoration” (3), Friendship's Shadows suggests that friends’ loyalties, “far from being mutually reinforcing — pull subjects in so many directions that hundreds of texts about conflicting allegiances, casuistry, and the grounds of political obligation try to explain and resolve them” (2).

Offering up a prehistory to philosopher Sibyl Schwarzenbach’s claim that “the problematic of a civic friendship between citizens is the forgotten problem of modern democratic theory” (17), Anderson argues that the social vulnerability for which early modern women’s textual interventions compensate, the threat of betrayal within any construction of friendship, is its founding condition, not only the problem of its failure but also and more
significantly the matter of its success. The claim is particularly prescient in its ability to make sense of, and create possibility through, divided loyalties to explain and vindicate the seemingly haphazard logic of myriad perspectives.

*Friendship’s Shadows* reflects Anderson’s prodigious scholarship, her unstinting efforts to follow each and every lead. Continually hearkening back to classical antecedents in making her case and understanding precisely how those allusions get deployed in seventeenth-century England, this author is broadly and deeply familiar not simply with the figures that she is writing about and the traditions from which they borrow but also and more impressively with the way those conversations get taken up across the period regardless of gender or political predisposition.

After initially situating ideas of friendship in terms of its classical derivations and contemporary mindsets (Introduction), *Friendship’s Shadows* begins with the question of conflicting loyalties, turning first to four men, Marchamont Nedham, Abraham Cowley, Edmund Waller, and Andrew Marvell, who embody the vicissitudes of political change (chapter 1). It turns next to Katherine Philips (chapter 2) and Lucy Hutchinson (chapter 3), both of whom use friendship’s rubric to model mixed obligations. The second half of the book traces the historical formation of friendship as a gendered operation, as it moves “from male and public to female and private” (3) and its propensity for conflict becomes more and more unsettling. Chapters 4 and 5, also focusing on Philips and Hutchinson, respectively, interrogate how both women’s reputations depend in the long run on friendship’s narratives of betrayal. Finally, chapter 6 takes up two radically different female approaches to friendship’s tensions: Margaret Cavendish and Mary Astell illustrate “the political separatism that [is to] become . . . the lasting story of female friendship” (3).

While each chapter depends to some degree on an author-based narrative to guide us, *Friendship’s Shadows* also moves us thematically through its materials. First, it looks broadly at each of the writers as they engage the problem of friendship, then it turns to the changing trajectory that friendship inhabits across the period. To establish her analytical grounding, Anderson sets out three related contexts: “a reassessment of the classical friendship tradition and its Renaissance manifestations; a discussion
of women’s political subjectivity that shows why they could exploit this tradition; and a consideration of alternative political models in relation to friendship” (4). Juggling thematic and historically ranging circumstances makes for heady reading. We cover a lot of ground and move through discussions that depend on precise and meticulous distinctions.

Reading Hutchinson and Cavendish as well as Philips and Astell through friendship’s lens usefully realigns their visionary goals; the result is not a particular political predisposition or an understanding of a woman’s place in patriarchy but rather a way of understanding human relations. This study makes sense, for instance, of Hutchinson’s outward focused, yet gender cautious worldview, and why, contrarily, Cavendish looks inward, argues for separatist understandings, and anticipates in that isolation a utopian coherence.

Hutchinson offers a particularly good test case of this book’s strengths and its weaknesses, Anderson provides one of the more persuasive explanations as to why this writer’s republican sensibilities cohere so tidily with the conservatism of her gender politics. Often brushed aside or explained idiosyncratically, Hutchinson’s mixed allegiances instead speak to a range of pressures. Acknowledging on one level how the masculine construction of the modern autonomous political self forces married women like Hutchinson to experience identity as a byproduct of their husbands’ republican rights, Anderson further pressures that site, insisting that it too neatly subordinates gender to politics.

Noting the ambivalent response that readers have had to the written recantation that secures husband John’s life after the Restoration, Anderson elucidates, “Rather than debating whether Lucy or John Hutchinson wrote the letter, the more interesting questions seem to be why most readers believe that Lucy Hutchinson did not, and why even if she did, her reputation as a republican would not suffer in the same way as her husband’s. The answers to these questions lie in the conjunction of coverture, friendship, and betrayal” (199). Hutchinson’s politics are her own, Anderson avers, and identical to those of her bosom friend John. He is neither solely her companionate husband nor her access to political identity. Rather, he is her epicurean double. Their friend-based intimacy resonates the way it does
because it bumps up against multiple markers of social difference, from the fact of coverture to the responsibility of public service.

Suggesting that it is serendipitous that we accept certain behaviors and forget others, Anderson clarifies how it happens that we perceive Hutchinson as a wife loyal to a husband and a woman true to her principles. Willingly sacrificing herself for the friend who embodies her shared principles, Hutchinson is able to redeem herself at one and the same time that she recants; she is able to render coherent the seeming incoherence of her choice.

While Anderson's reading successfully recuperates the situational and perceptive ambivalence of Hutchinson's actions, it takes us a good long while to get there, and we have to work hard for those insights. My criticisms of this book, such as they are, speak largely to this required labor. Anderson sometimes ascribes too much to the categories that she develops, a burden they and we don't always bear successfully. We are not entirely convinced that friendship can shape every aspect of political, domestic, and social understanding. At times too precious and hasty in their readiness to explain and render causal, Anderson's discoveries sometimes feel forced. Her detours into supporting examples can on occasion hold too much sway, taking us away from the key line of argument, when they should instead keep us on the main path. So too, the surfeit of attributes that accrue to friendship intermittently leave Anderson's prose muddled and unclear. Despite those criticisms, this is an accomplished book. When and if readers are willing to slow down and to think carefully through this work, its benefits are many. That the path isn't always easy or without frustration does not lessen or undermine the very real knowledge to be gained by making the effort.

Indeed, Friendship's Shadow's greatest strength, the thing that sets it apart from the many other smart books on early modern friendship (beside its focus on women), is its attention to friendship's ruptures rather than to its successes — ruptures that destabilize the easy and the clear. Exploring the concept of friendship primarily in terms of its idealization, as reciprocal and unchanging, leaves its effects static and underdeveloped. The very real success of this book is its attention to friendship as a dynamic, productive, and invariably unstable relationship that achieves its ends as much through
its failures and reconstitutions as it does through its attempts at constancy. The English Civil War was marked more than anything else by the way that it divided and tore apart social relationships. This book attends to those breaches, practically speaking, but it resituates the problem of social rupture through friendship’s capacity for change and transformation rather than destruction, its focus on process rather than on permanence.

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