

# The Knight's Tale (1)

## Sisterhood and Brotherhood in the *Knight's Tale*

Christine Chism (chism@ucla.edu)

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### Introduction

The *Knight's Tale* is both a fitting and a deeply unsettling way to open the *Canterbury Tales*. It is fitting because it is told by the pilgrim with the highest rank and, thus, aristocratically ratifies the tale-telling fellowship under Harry Bailey that the pilgrims swear at the end of the *General Prologue*. At the *Tale's* beginning, Chaucer highlights the social gap between the Knight's gentle status and the rest of the pilgrimage. By joining in this rowdy tale-telling pilgrimage, the Knight is essentially slumming, and his rusty and stained armor, which he does not pause to clean up, performs a kind of class-crossing drag (GP 75-78). In another instance of down dressing, the Knight takes on his tale by imagining himself as a plowman with weak oxen and a large field to plow (KnT 885-91). The Knight wears fellowship creakily, with good natured but measurable condescension, like the behavioral equivalent of his deliberately shoddy armor.

The Knight's awkwardly humble adoption of the persona of plowman, however, prefaces a tale that makes no such social concessions. It is unabashedly chivalric, complicated, barely in control of its own narrative energies, bristling with rhetorical devices such as *ekphrasis* (graphic detailed descriptions of a work of art, like the descriptions of the three temples in Book III) and *occupatio* (a rhetorical refusal to recount something while actually alluding to it at length—one of the Knight's more exasperating runaway habits). It is closer to an out-of-control stallion than a weak team of oxen. The contrast between the Knight's meek, submissive, comradely persona and his grim and demanding tale makes the Knight's bid for fellowship also a bid for dominance. The Knight intends to win this contest and he brings out his narrative big guns to prove it. This, paradoxically, actually helps to ratify the worthiness of the story-telling pilgrimage itself. If a member of the gentle class is eager to devote such effort to the contest that enlivens the road to Canterbury, then it really must be a contest worth competing in, which is probably why Harry Bailey (and Chaucer) select the Knight to inaugurate the contest in the first place. Imagine how different the *Tales* would be if the Cook were to start things off! In sum, the Knight's participation in the contest, his massive narrative offering, and his theatrical deference to Harry Bailey's authority is the first act of brotherly fellowship that we see in his *Tale*. It is also the only one that will survive it.

## Tools

The *Knight's Tale* is unsettling, because, although it is offered in fellowship, it explores fellowship's impossibility. It creates a world where brotherhood and sisterhood cannot hold when desires come into conflict. Brotherhood and sisterhood are crucial social bonds not because they endure or triumph, but because they fail while refusing to die. In effect, they break and mutate while continuing to exert pressure. They shift between resistance and accommodation of new regimes while reshaping those regimes in turn.

Why were brotherhood, sisterhood, and fellowship important for Chaucer and his readers? Sworn brotherhood was idealized as the noblest form of friendship in the Middle Ages, and it was a common theme in clerical and popular writings. This was partly because of its ambiguities, which provoked writers continually to adapt and transform the idea of friendship. This form of ennobling love was inspired by the classical writings of Aristotle (d. 322 BCE), Marcus Tullius Cicero (d. 43 BCE), and many others. The ideal of sworn brotherhood was exclusive. It underscored the value of loving fidelity among the most apparently valued social agents, aristocratic men. Its practice was believed to ennoble them further as they sacrificed their own interests for the sake of those they loved, a form of noblesse oblige that circulated its benefits back to the nobles themselves.

This idea of ennobling friendship was adapted and spiritualized in monastic writings that praised the love between cloistered monks mutually sworn to the love of Christ and to each other as brethren. Aelred of Rievaulx is the strongest proponent of spiritual brotherhood. His treatise *De spirituali amicitia*, "On Spiritual Friendship," (1164-67 CE) shows how love of one's spiritual brothers intensifies love of Christ. However, it also illuminates spiritual brotherhood's essential contradictions. How should a monk balance friendship with his brethren at large with that of particularly dear brothers, and at what point does loving one's cloistered brother distract from the primary friendship with Christ? The idea of spiritual friendship influenced popular genres such as romance. Some romances, such as the many versions of *Amys et Amile*, combine aristocratic and monastic forms of writing about sworn brotherhood into a form of secular hagiography. Proven friends who suffer willingly for the love of their friend become virtual saints, though again not without contradictions. The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*, for instance, questions whether sworn brotherhood is worth the sacrifices it demands, sacrifices which sometimes include wives and children.

Chaucer tests this social ideal of noble friendship by playing it off on parallel stages of gender and genre: the epic brotherhood of the Thebans and the epic sisterhood of the Amazons. Then he subjects both of those to a triumphant hetero-erotic chivalric-romance centered in Theseus's Athens. The Amazons feminize the idea of sworn brotherhood and make it the basis of a political matriarchy. They are a nation of warrior women who exist without any men in their society at all, replacing the bonds of marriage and family with those between warrior sisters and their queen. Theban society is similarly driven by brotherhood. They have just emerged from a tragic dynastic struggle between two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices. Their backstory is the legendary matter of the Seven Against Thebes, recounted in Statius's *Thebaid* (80-90 CE); it is a story of men allying with men, against other men, and achieving terrifying prowess and slaughter. When Theseus conquers the Amazons, he disrupts their sisterly social organization by marrying their

queen, Hippolyta, and adopting her sister, Emelye, as a member of his household, effectively replacing sisterly organization with a form of autocratic patriarchy. When he conquers the Thebans, he puts an end to a downward spiral of fraternal slaughter, abuse, and vengeance, and imprisons the only surviving nobles, the sworn brothers who will become the chivalric heroes of the narrative. Yet after this seeming victory, Chaucer does not allow the imperatives of brotherhood and sisterhood to vanish. Theseus is left on the one hand with Palamon and Arcite, imprisoned perpetually, and the enormity of their misery demands redress. Meanwhile in his household, a gorgeous unattached Amazon begins roaming his gardens. It is not surprising that there are hearts moved and blood shed when these imprisoned former brothers and sisters collide.

In that process, Theseus himself learns accommodation. At the beginning of the poem, Theseus responds to resistance by imprisoning and domesticating his former opponents, but Palamon and Arcite and even Hippolyta and Emelye are ultimately uncontainable. In the middle of the poem, when Theseus discovers the brothers fighting in his forest—one a jailbreak and the other an exile—and determines to kill them, all the women of the court, including the former Amazons, join together in piteous intercession to save the Thebans, and Theseus is unable to resist the power of women joining together in solidarity to weep at his feet. By the end of the poem, Theseus is conflagrating a funerary forest to exalt the lost brother, Arcite, now a national hero whose death is so traumatic that the narrative itself halts until years have passed. The ending of the *Tale* shows a Theseus at once frustrated by his lack of control and determined to make things work out for his best interests, making a virtue of necessity and patching together the best ending he can under the circumstances. However, as he marries off the survivors and arranges the final absorption of Thebes into Athens, he reveals the naked self-interest that underwrites his lofty philosophy of resignation and aristocratic patronage. The untrammelled sisterhood of the Amazons and the fierce brotherhood of the Thebans have been domesticated, but in the process, the autocratic head of state and household has slipped the leash of his benevolence and shown his own opportunistic subjection to circumstance.

## **Text**

### **Sisterhoods of Sorrow**

In writing this narrative, Chaucer profoundly changes his main source, Giovanni Boccaccio's 1340 epic poem the *Teseida*. Book One of the *Teseida* describes Amazon society and recounts Theseus's conquest of the Amazons. Boccaccio's Amazons are violent, gaining independence by murdering their fathers and sons, but incredibly strong in their mutual solidarity. They put up a formidable military resistance to Theseus and his invading army until he gives up direct attack and undermines the walls of their fortress, thus, gaining their surrender through cunning rather than force. While satirizing the supposed unnaturalness of Amazon matriarchy, Boccaccio nonetheless highlights the mutual love and respect that binds together the Amazons with their queen, Hippolyta, and all other women. Hippolyta welcomes every woman as friend and citizen: "if women chanced to arrive from any place at all, she ordered them to be received with all kindness and allowed to join them if they so pleased, so that the places of those who had died might be taken by those who came from other regions" (Boccaccio 21). Boccaccio's Amazons differ from the demimondaine Amazons of classical legendry, who reproduce by capturing men

as temporary lovers and keep female children while they expell the sons and the fathers from their lands. Rather, Boccaccio's Amazons are all virgins dedicated to hunting, warfare, and the goddess of the woods, Diana. Sisterhood is, thus, the Amazons' primary method of reproduction, and its power as a social bond is perceptible, even after their surrender and domestication into Athenian society. When Hippolyta sees the Argive widows in their sorrow, she asks to join Theseus in the fight to avenge them so long as it pleases her husband. Predictably, it does not, but Hippolyta is on the record; in Boccaccio, even domesticated Amazons still wish to fight for sisterhood.

In contrast to Boccaccio, Chaucer starts his narrative with the breaking of the Amazon sisterhood, the return to Athens of Theseus with Hippolyta and her sister, Emelye. He cuts out any description of the structure of Amazon society and the faithful bonds between women that held it together. Amazonian sisterhood persists in Chaucer's text but emerges only in utmost privacy, in Emelye's prayer to Diana in Book III:

Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I  
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,  
Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.  
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,  
A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,  
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,  
And noght to ben a wyf and be with childe.  
Noght wol I know the compaignye of man.  
Now help me, lady, sith ye may and kan. (KnT 2304-12)

This rare moment where Emelye speaks her heart is crucial because we can see that her previous silence masked resistance. Rather than becoming a tool in Theseus's dynastic machinations, which is her fate as a sister-in-law to Theseus, she wishes to continue to live as an Amazon.

Emelye's moment of private resistance, however, is as doomed as all the other vestiges of sisterly and brotherly loyalty in the *Tale*; she has entered a universe where even Diana's power seems to be sidelined. The rest of the *Knight's Tale* shows how she is forced to negotiate choices that others have made and how her desires shift according to her circumstances. This is both narratively interesting and infuriating to feminist readings that value women's self-determination. Emelye's changing heart may result from the Knight's narratorial disinterest in her independence (he has already cut a great deal of Amazon interest from his narrative) or from the generic pressures of being a beloved woman in a chivalric romance, but I think there is a larger purpose—one that links her straitened agency to that of the other characters in the *Tale*. All the characters in this romance (even Theseus) undergo changes—in heart, aims, and appearance; Arcite become unrecognizable, even to himself. Even the gods, Mars, Venus, and a frantic and powerless Jupiter, find themselves at difficult cross-purposes. When Emelye bends to circumstances, she joins hands with her fellow characters and with the pilgrims in the audience, as a true subject: at once subjected and agential, neither wholly socially determined, nor free, though her lot is more circumscribed than most.

Thus, even as Emelye prays, multiple desires begin to emerge that complicate her simple wish to remain Diana's virginal devotee. Her second prayer is for Palamon and Arcite (2314-21). Emelye expresses concern for the two knights fighting over her and prays for peace to touch their hearts: that they might renew their brotherly love for each other and forget about her. She then proceeds to a third, fallback prayer should her first and second prayers not be answered: that she should marry the knight who loves her the most (2322-25). This layering of first, second, and third desires shows Emelye reimagining herself and her would-be lovers in complex circumstances, hoping fantastically for a *dea ex machina* to turn back the narrative but prepared to accede to a forced marriage as long as she will be loved.

During the tournament in Book III, Emelye's desires appear to shift further, even as her prayers are fulfilled one by one. Perhaps in response to Diana's grisly post-prayer portents, perhaps in excitement at the dramaturgy of seeing hundreds of men dare battle for her sake, Emelye looks with favor upon the victor, Arcite—at first proud during his victory lap and then stricken when he falls. During Arcite's illness, Emelye's second prayer is answered: Arcite is reconciled to Palamon, and the two brothers renew their love and stop fighting over her. Arcite's horrible death is what finally seals her heart to him. Coincidentally or not, this death allows Emelye to gain her first prayer for maidenhood, at least temporarily "by lengthe of certeyn yeres" (2967), while she sequesters herself in mourning for Arcite. Ultimately, all three of Emelye's prayers are answered, just not in the ways she imagined. Amazonian sisterhood in arms has been domesticated but not without engaging Emelye's desires, which themselves change in the process.

### **Breaking Brotherhood**

The brotherhood between Palamon and Arcite is even more fraught with violent change. Chaucer is one of many medieval writers who test the powers of male-male friendship and explore brotherhood's relationship to social justice, and he does so even more fiercely than most. There is not a brotherhood sworn in the whole *Canterbury Tales* that is not almost instantly betrayed. Broken brotherhood oaths litter *the Knight's Tale*, *the Friar's Tale*, *the Shipman's Tale*, and, murderously, *the Pardoner's Tale*. Even *the Nun's Priest's Tale* features a nightmare story of a friend failing to aid his companion, with deadly consequences (NPT 2984-3062). Why does Chaucer seem so hostile to the idea of sworn brotherhood? Several critics impute it to homophobia, which may well be the case, but I would like to suggest a slightly different answer: that broken brotherhoods allow Chaucer to individualize his characters in the midst of tight social bonds and, thus, to intensify questions of desire, agency, and social justice, which are at the heart of the *Canterbury Tales* at large.

Palamon and Arcite begin the *Tale* literally as indistinguishable zombies, plucked from a heap of bodies after Theseus's leveling of their city of Thebes: "two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by, / Bothe in oon armes . . . Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were" (1011-14). This inauspicious entrance shows them at their most similar and their most inert. Throughout the *Tale*, although they are both competing against each other for Emelye, neither character seems able to act effectively without the other being near. At the same time, as their friendship turns first into rivalry and then deadly enmity, they begin to grow different, both from each other and from what they had been. At the beginning of the poem, no one can tell them apart; by the end of the poem,

they are still bound to each other, but have become different characters, praying to different gods for different fates—victory or love.

This double transformation: from mortal (zombie) friend to mortal (deadly) enemy, and from utterly alike to differentiated, speaks back to one of the most influential classical writers on friendship, Cicero. Cicero's end-of-life treatise *Laelius: On Friendship* (44 BCE) idealized friendship between those who were most alike and argued that true friendship endowed noble friends with a kind of immortality. Laelius, the narrator, describes his friend Scipio as intimately compatible with himself: "Both in our public and private lives he and I have shared all the same interests. We lived in the same home; we soldiered together in the field. Our tastes and aims and views were identical—and that is where the essence of a friendship should always lie" (Cicero 184). Later he speaks of friendship as granting a kind of memorial half-life that extends beyond death: "Even when [a friend] is dead, he is alive," he says, "because his friends still cherish him, and remember him, and long for him" (189). Chaucer effectively zombie-fies this description of friendship in the way that Palamon and Arcite enter the *Knight's Tale*, as true friends, utterly alike, soldiering together on the field, and neither fully alive nor dead. The moment they see Emelye, they break their vow of friendship to each other and begin to become different characters, though still bound to each other in rivalry.

Chaucer significantly changes his source, Boccaccio's *Il Teseida*, when he deadens Palamon's and Arcite's friendship and creates this instant rivalry between the two brothers. In Boccaccio's version, while in Theseus's prison, the two brothers cooperate in loving Emilia, sharing their passion, delight, and agony without rivalry. Palamon sees her first but actually shows her to Arcite; Arcite sees the God of love with two arrows in his bow, one for each of them, and they chart together how each in turn is struck by love. They both are uncertain whether she is a woman or a goddess and marvel over it together, rather than taking sides on the issue. And it is brotherly love that gets each in turn out of Theseus's prison. Arcite is freed because a dear sworn brother of Theseus intervenes on his behalf, and Palamon jailbreaks successfully with the help of another faithful friend. When Palamon discovers Arcite sleeping in a grove after his escape, he admires the beauty of his changed face and refuses for the sake of love to disturb his sleep. It is only when both are at large and free to fight for Emelye that violence enters their relationship, and it soon passes. Once Theseus stops their mad fight in the woods, enlists them in his tournament plan, and gives them estates in Athens from which to organize their tournament parties, they take up their loving brotherhood again and live for a year in peace and luxury as bonded noble celebrities within Athenian society.

By contrast, Chaucer's version never allows us to see them behaving as loving brothers to each other. They argue from the moment Palamon first glimpses Emelye, and their differences develop much faster as a result. In sum, Chaucer goes out of his way to capitalize not the friendship and love between the two men, but their rivalry and mutual hatred.

Why does Chaucer make these changes? Why turn brothers into rivals and sisters into mourners? I think there at least three reasons. First, as forms of social alliance and solidarity, brotherhoods/sisterhoods are at once powerful and difficult to control. In medieval England, sworn brotherhoods and other forms of friendship were strategic ways of securing alliances and obtaining support in a society of unprecedented risk and mobility in the wake of the great plague

that struck England in 1348. Such alliances could serve many interests, and it was difficult to legislate against them or regulate them. In twenty-first-century societies, similar corporate old boy networks have not gone away. Problems of nepotism and insider trading illustrate why friendships of this kind might function, especially among the powerful, as insidious monopolies.

Another reason for suspecting sworn friendships was ethical. Sworn friends were expected, as Palamon rebukes Arcite, to be faithful to each other until death, even on pain of torture:

ech of us til oother,  
That nevere, for to dyen in the peyne,  
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,  
Neither of us in love to hyndre oother,  
Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,  
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me  
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee—  
This was thyn ooth, and myn also, certeyn. (KnT 1132-39)

The language of fidelity Palamon uses echoes that of marriage. This is a formal vow of absolute mutual endorsement regardless of circumstances and without moral nuance. No matter what each brother is trying to do: in love, war, or violence, he should be able to rely on the support of his sworn brother. The absoluteness of the vow of fidelity is what troubles classical and medieval writers on friendship. Friendship could construct strong alliances in right or wrong, for good or for evil. This lack of ethical anchoring impelled theorists such as Aristotle and Cicero to posit (against experience and logic) that friendship of this sort could only truly obtain between people of the highest virtuous character, who would never consider using the support of their friend to do any wrong. If friendship were to be used for mere mutual profit, or mere mutual pleasure, it was not, at least in theory, true friendship. Naturalizing this form of friendship within the aristocracy attempts to anchor it in a specific ethos of virtuous courtly behavior. Of course, this attempt to keep noble friendship exclusive to the aristocracy failed both historically in late medieval England—where there are records not only of knights but also merchants and clerics pledging friendship—and narratively within Chaucer's *Tales*, where we see not only knights but also summoners, bailiffs, merchants, monks, and bar flies swearing similar compacts and universally breaking them, irrespective of social status. Friendship could be sworn by anyone eager to perform their innate aristocracy or cash in on its status, just as other noble prerogatives such as fine cloths and coats of arms were imitated and adapted across the social spectrum, despite attempts at regulation. In effect, by striking the chord of sworn brotherhood at the beginning of the pilgrimage, the Knight makes it an irresistible subject for imitation and parody for the rest of his fellow travelers.

In actual practice, as Chaucer shows, Palamon and Arcite turn out to be fair-weather friends who break apart as soon as their desires come into conflict. In all the *Canterbury Tales* where brotherhood oaths occur, Chaucer seems to go out of his way to deny the possibility of the truly self-sacrificing, other-centered friendship that Palamon espouses. It seems too rarified to exist in the realistic marketable world he is interested in exploring, where, as the Wife of Bath declares, “Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle” (WBP 414). In that world, a truly selfless, self-sacrificing love is a prodigy: awesome, extraordinary, and a little monstrous, whether actuated by

martyrdom like Cecilia's in the *Second Nun's Tale* or by marriage as martyrdom like Griselda's in the *Clerk's Tale*. Chaucer is fascinated by how people construct themselves within particular social circumstances, not for virtue only but in entanglements of virtue, pleasure, and profit. Chaucer asks not only how do people make a virtue of necessity, as Theseus enjoins, but also how do people like Palamon, Emelye, Alison of Bath, and the Pardoner learn not only to survive but also to take pleasure and profit from their situations?

Yet I think there is a more profound reason that Chaucer is more interested in breaking friendship oaths than in keeping them, and again, it turns on classical and medieval theories of friendship. Cicero and his medieval followers find in idealized friendship a potential for escaping time and change: a triumph for the steadfastness of the virtuous human heart. Medieval texts buttress Cicero's less formalized friendship with a solemn oath of fidelity (often called truth, troth, or *trawthe* in medieval texts) to signify this steadfastness. Swearing this kind of absolute fidelity to another, whether it is in friendship, marriage, or feudal loyalty, is a gamble on the future and a way to ensure persistence through time. Such troths purport to freeze the self, set it against change and contingency, and, thus declare a mastery over both time and the self. When Palamon and Arcite swear to serve each other's interests till death separates them, they are swearing in this one instance to remain the same, hearts and intentions locked in mutual service.

When, all over the *Canterbury Tales*, these oaths are broken, their swearers effectively surrender to change and contingency. They become different subjects. Emelye changes from a warrior virgin to a sorrowing lover. Palamon and Arcite change from sworn brothers in arms to rivalrous lovers, to deadly enemies, to friends once more, stricken by separation and death. In the process, they align themselves toward different ends or desires, which themselves intensify when silhouetted against the characters' original intentions: the shattered remains of their oaths.<sup>[1]</sup> If a kept troth is a triumph of the individual will over time and the power of a spoken word over reality, then a broken troth accentuates subjectivity, the interplay of individual choices and social determinations that means we are never entirely free nor entirely controlled. It also highlights the mismatch of word and reality, oath and behavior; it signals language's innate fictiveness. As such, broken troth resides at the heart of the meld of story-telling and subjectivity of both the *Tales* and of Chaucer's writing more broadly.

Ultimately, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is profoundly uninterested in forms of immortality. From its springtime opening to the lengthening shadows that mark the pilgrimage's end, Chaucer uses his *Tales* to investigate timeliness—being in time and subject to it. He explores how characters accommodate mutability, contingency, and change in a multitude of ways and through a range of literary genres. The *Knight's Tale* approaches this problem philosophically. It is interested not only in how people experience and deal with change but also how they think about it. Chaucer imbues the *Knight's Tale* with questions raised by a philosophical work he was translating in the early 1380s, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (524-5 CE). Boethius's treatise purports to show how to escape subjection to tragically changing circumstances by cultivating the capacity to reflect upon them from a distance. The consolation that philosophy offers is a longer perspective, fixated not on earthly contingencies but on God as an unchanging, trustworthy frame of reference. Chaucer incorporates Boethian themes throughout the *Knight's Tale* from Arcite's prison meditation on fate to Theseus's culminating First Mover speech, which

tries to compensate for uncontrollable change by foregrounding the continuities ensured by natural generation.

These philosophical reflections operate most needfully in a thoroughly entropic universe where nothing is exempt from change. The Knight goes out of his way to construct such a universe by casting his story in a Pagan rather than Christian setting, by putting not Jupiter but Saturn (pretty much the god of entropy) in control to resolve the plot, by showcasing characters who cannot get what they want. To maintain unbroken fidelity to brother or sister in such a universe would be to undo the foundations of this world, and it would evacuate the philosophical questions the *Tale* is most interested in exploring. In this way, the failures of brotherhood and sisterhood in the *Knight's Tale* are productive. Bond-breaking becomes both social diagnostic and tool for individual analysis. In the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer will test many forms of human relationship—not only brotherhood and sisterhood, but marriage, parenthood and childhood, and fellowship, including the fellowship sworn by the pilgrims themselves.

## **Transformation**

### **Discussion questions and Exercises:**

1. How is friendship idealized in contemporary culture? Is it seen as safe, dangerous, or both? Select a contemporary model for a same-sex friendship that undergoes significant evolutions: for instance, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, Thelma and Louise, Captain America and Iron Man, or the “Sestras” of Orphan Black. How do such intense friendships augment solidarities strong enough to change society? How do they function as safety zones or survival tactics? What are their pleasures and dangers? How do these differ from Palamon and Arcite?
2. Passionate friendship is often sexually ambiguous in ways that simultaneously imbue friendship with power, pleasure and intensity, and highlight anxieties of sexual regulation. Discuss passionate friendship's relationship to queer culture; where is same-sex love enjoyed and where is it regulated? For instance, the Knight narrates Emelye's temple rites with a mixture of polite respect and masculine squeamishness—why?—and what does that show about the Knight as narrator? How do medieval forms of homophobia differ from contemporary forms of homophobia?
3. The gender politics of friendship as a basis for broader social coalitions: We have a lot of words that use the vocabulary of male friendship to organize ideas of the public sphere: brotherhood, fraternity, fellowship, bros, guys. List some words and phrases that rely on an underlying metaphor of male friendship—in what contexts are they used? How do they shape the public sphere? Are there equivalent terms that rely on female friendship? Do they shape the public sphere in analogous ways? Make some up and discuss how those might reshape public politics if they became normalized.

### **Suggestions for Further Reading:**

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**Notes:**

[1] David Schalkwyk analyzes the peculiar temporality of the oath as speech act in "Shakespeare's Speech" given at the conference on *Performances of Power in Premodern England*, Rutgers University, Feb. 27, 2009.



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