

ALIENATING INTIMACY:
MALE FRIENDSHIP AND AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP
IN THE ANTEBELLUM IMAGINATION

by
Michiaki Ogura

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in English

at
The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
December 2024

ABSTRACT

ALIENATING INTIMACY: MALE FRIENDSHIP AND AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP IN THE ANTEBELLUM IMAGINATION

by
Michiaki Ogura

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2024
Under the Supervision of Professors Jane Gallop and Kristie Hamilton

This dissertation examines representations of male friendship in antebellum American literature, moving beyond idealized portrayals of unity to explore the dynamics of estrangement, disconnection, and failure. While male friendship has often been celebrated as a cornerstone of democratic ideals, this study introduces the concept of “alienating intimacy.” This paradoxical form of attachment emphasizes emotional distance and difference, challenging conventional notions of intimacy and communion. Through the works of Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman, I argue that these authors use male friendship to interrogate the tensions between intimacy and alienation, extending these dynamics to the author-reader relationship.

The first chapter examines Thoreau’s *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, connecting his failed contemporary relationships to a yearning for an ideal future reader. By situating his vision of friendship within a broader temporal framework, the chapter demonstrates how Thoreau anticipates a distant, sympathetic readership. The second chapter explores Hawthorne’s ambivalence toward intimacy in *The Scarlet Letter* and his prefaces, where he resists reader transparency. This resistance mirrors the failed relationships between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, with Hawthorne challenging traditional ideals of sympathy by portraying friendship as inherently isolating and hostile. The third chapter investigates betrayal and

estrangement in Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" and *The Confidence-Man*. The failures of these relationships reflect Melville's anxieties about his readers, presenting friendship as both disconnected and paradoxically intimate. The final chapter analyzes Whitman's poetics of impersonal intimacy in *Leaves of Grass*. Through themes of contagion, decomposition, and sympathy, Whitman reimagines intimacy as a radical, boundary-transcending force.

By presenting various aspects of "alienating intimacy," this dissertation reconsiders the dynamics of male friendship and the author-reader relationship, emphasizing negativity and disconnection as central to their representation. This framework deepens contemporary theories of intimacy and offers fresh perspectives on nineteenth-century American literature.

© Copyright by Michiaki Ogura, 2024
All Rights Reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	1
Idealized Friendship in Nineteenth-Century American Literature	5
Author-Reader Friendship	11
Overview of Chapter Structure	14
Chapter I: Dreaming the Remotest Future: Hermeneutic Friends in Thoreau's <i>A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers</i>	19
The Private and Public(ation)	19
Another Kind of Love	23
Privacy, Morality, Silence	28
Intimate Reading	37
Hermeneutic Friends	43
Chapter II: Becoming Obscure: The Dynamics of Failed Friendship in Hawthorne's <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	47
Against Identification	53
Potentiality of Failed Friendship	60
Beyond the Grave	67
Chapter III: Betraying Friendship: Melville's Anxious Relationship with Readers	73
Failure of Friendship?	73
Bad Timing	79
The Lawyer's Betrayal	84
Performing Betrayal	92
The Limits of Fiction	97
Chapter IV: Infectious Intimacy: Whitman's Democratic Bonds with Strangers	105
Manly Health	109
Air and Democracy	114
Infection and Sympathy	119
Decomposition and Recomposition	127
Coda	135
Bibliography	139

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of this dissertation has spanned a considerable amount of time, and there were moments when I nearly abandoned it, justifying my decision by the demands of other commitments. However, I have now reached its completion, and I am profoundly grateful to those who made this possible.

First and foremost, I owe my deepest thanks to my advisor, Jane Gallop, whose unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have formed the foundation of this project. From the very beginning of my graduate studies at UWM, her mentorship has been invaluable—her sharp insights, thoughtful feedback, and patient guidance have shaped my work in countless ways. This dissertation would not have been possible without her belief in my abilities. I am also deeply appreciative of Richard Grusin, Kristie Hamilton, and Richard Brau, who generously served on my dissertation committee. Their thoughtful critiques, constructive suggestions, and invaluable insights have enriched this project immeasurably.

I must extend my gratitude to the many professors and graduate students at UWM who have supported me throughout this process. My friends, both in Japan and the U.S., have been a constant source of encouragement. Their loyalty and friendship have been essential to my progress, and I am especially thankful to Michael Larson, who has shared many moments of camaraderie with me, often over a much-needed drink. Now teaching in Tokyo, Japan, he remains a close friend, and I look forward to continuing our friendship in the years ahead.

I also want to express my heartfelt thanks to Tomoyuki Zettsu, whose steady encouragement during my time in the graduate program in Japan helped me navigate various challenges. His support, along with the mentorship of Kazuhiko Goto and Keiko Nitta, laid the

foundation for my graduate studies and helped prepare me for the rigors of academic work in the U.S.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful to my parents. Their unconditional support—both emotional and financial—has been crucial to my academic journey. I also owe a great deal to my grandparents and aunts, whose generosity helped fund my studies abroad. I deeply regret that I was unable to attend my grandparents’ funerals during the prelim exam period—this loss still weighs heavily on my heart.

This dissertation is especially dedicated to my late father, a scholar of Japanese literature and my lifelong mentor. His constant inquiry into my progress, even in his final days, reflected his steadfast belief in my potential. At his hospital bedside, unable to speak or breathe on his own, he nodded in quiet approval as I promised to finish this dissertation no matter what. Though it took a year to fulfill that promise, I am proud to finally do so.

INTRODUCTION

One should not talk about one's friends; otherwise one will
talk away the feeling of friendship.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*

Herman Melville's historical novel, *Israel Potter; His Fifty Years of Exile* (1855), presents themes of friendship and alienation among men, using the life of its protagonist to highlight the harsh realities of disillusionment and isolation. Israel Potter, a soldier of the American Revolutionary War, faces a stark fate: despite his valor and sacrifices, he is largely forgotten by the nation he fought to establish. His dream of returning home as a celebrated hero is shattered as he endures decades of exile and hardship in London, serving as a symbol of the broader neglect faced by veterans whose contributions go unrecognized. A particularly poignant moment in the novel occurs when Israel, disguised as an English soldier to evade capture, encounters a group of over forty American prisoners held on a cliff. Despite his intense longing to reconnect with his fellow countrymen, Israel feels a "painful necessity" to conceal his identity, unable to reveal "the fact of a friend being nigh" (*IP* 151). This barrier of estrangement is momentarily lifted when one of the prisoners, Sergeant Singles, recognizes Israel, rekindling a fleeting but profound sense of shared identity and camaraderie in the midst of his prolonged exile. This encounter encapsulates the novel's exploration of the fragile bonds of friendship against the backdrop of displacement and alienation, illustrating the enduring human desire for

connection even in the face of overwhelming isolation.

Instantly a rush of emotions filled him. Not as when Damon found Pythias. But far stranger, because very different. For not only had this Singles been an alien to Israel (so far as actual intercourse went), but impelled to it by instinct, Israel had all but detested him, as a successful, and perhaps insidious rival. Nor was it altogether unlikely that Singles had reciprocated the feeling. But now, as if the Atlantic rolled, not between two continents, but two worlds—this, and the next—these alien souls, oblivious to hate, melted down into one. (151)

In this moment, Israel finds himself both friend and foe to Sergeant Singles, the American soldier he encounters. Disguised as a British soldier, Israel is caught in a paradoxical position at the prisoner-of-war camp, entangled with his own countrymen, who are now effectively his “enemies.” Both Israel and Singles are vulnerable, each representing a threat to the other, yet also bound by shared experience and precarious circumstances. As Israel becomes aware of their mutual fragility, he experiences a disorienting sensation that eludes straightforward description. Melville evokes an oceanic metaphor to convey this profound, ineffable connection: the “alien souls” of these men seem to blend in a transsubjective “sea,” as if the vast Atlantic rolled between “two worlds—this and the next.” This strange merging recalls, though remains distinct from, the “sudden flame of friendship” (58) that binds Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale* (1851), illuminating the deep, often ambivalent bonds that emerge in unexpected encounters.

Geoffrey Sanborn remarks on the relationship between Israel and Sergeant Singles, describing it as “an unusual way of representing the experience of love” (246). Sanborn suggests that, in much of Melville’s work, love is portrayed not as an enduring essence but as a fleeting,

accidental influx of emotion—an unpredictable and temporary feeling that appears almost otherworldly. The “rush of emotions” Israel feels in this moment is unconventional and resists full articulation, as something always escapes representation. He is overwhelmed by an intense affect of intimacy, sensing a deep, unspoken connection with the imprisoned American soldier, even though their encounter is fleeting and separation inevitable. While they cannot be called friends in a traditional sense, their sudden proximity creates an unexpected form of intimacy, arising from their shared sense of exile and displacement.

This bond contrasts sharply with the classical ideal of friendship exemplified by Damon and Pythias, whose legendary relationship is often cited as the epitome of perfect friendship. According to Iamblichus, this legend celebrates the willingness of one friend to sacrifice his life for the other, embodying a tradition of mutual “substitution” (Schweitzer 41-42). Their friendship is marked by complete interchangeability and a readiness to stand in for one another, even unto death. In contrast, Melville’s depiction of the bond between Israel and Singles does not fit this idealized model. Instead, the narrator grapples with representing a “far stranger” form of connection. In a moment of peril, Israel, disguised and evading capture, must deny knowing Singles, while Singles, recognizing the danger Israel faces, quickly pretends to have made a mistake about his identity (152). Despite their shared nationality, they cannot openly acknowledge their connection; Israel must conceal his identity as a patriot, while Singles remains an imprisoned American soldier. This nuanced interaction highlights the complexities of their bond, shaped more by the necessity of concealment and survival than by open expressions of friendship.

In the presence of the sentries, Israel converts his genuine astonishment into feigned surprise and declares to Singles: “[H]e (Singles) must labor under some unaccountable delusion;

for he (Potter) was no Yankee rebel, thank Heaven, but a true man to his king” (152). The use of the same pronoun “he” for both characters, with each name bracketed, subtly hints at their interchangeability while also preserving their individuality. These two characters experience a form of friendship when genuine friendship becomes impossible. Interestingly, Israel seems to solidify their bond by making his friend an absolute alien. This is a friendship paradoxically grounded in the refusal to relate. Although they seem to share a precarious situation, their lives are endangered in different ways by it. For Israel, any attempt to relate to Singles on this basis would be fatal. Both Israel and Singles are inhibited from openly expressing their need for help, yet the intensity of their friendship creates a powerful emotional amalgam—one that includes surprise, joy, contempt, and even shame. Melville places the characters in a specific time and space where mutual self-revelation is not only unnecessary for intimacy but also destructive to it.

What makes this episode particularly distinctive is Melville’s portrayal of characters who recuperate their alienated affection through even *further alienation*. This dynamic serves as a disruption of classical conceptions of friendship, where bonds are traditionally depicted as harmonious and enduring. Instead, Melville emphasizes the performance of alienation, suggesting that while such fleeting intimacies cannot be sustained, they are also never entirely lost. This paradoxical form of connection is not exclusive to Melville; it also characterizes antebellum American literature, where intimacy frequently manifests in paradoxical forms, marked by estrangement and transient connections rather than enduring companionship. In this dissertation, I explore the emotional and affective dimensions of male bonding, focusing on the nuanced interplay between intimacy and alienation rather than the political implications of these relationships. Through close textual analysis, I examine friendships that are characterized by intense, often conflicting, emotional attachments. The nature of intimacy, as portrayed in these

works, is inherently complex and resists easy representation; while typically seen as a mutual emotional exchange, it can also involve elements of estrangement, betrayal, and even violence, especially as relationships begin to unravel. By analyzing these intricate affective dynamics, I aim to elucidate the tensions underlying male friendships in the classic works of Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman, shedding light on the ways in which intimacy and alienation coexist and shape these literary representations of male bonds.

Idealized Friendship in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

Philosophers have pondered the nature of friendship since ancient times. In works like Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Cicero's *On Friendship*, and Michel de Montaigne's *Of Friendship*, the ideal friendship is depicted as one grounded in equality and reciprocity between friends. As Ivy Schweitzer's overview of friendship discourse in Western philosophy underscores, friendship presupposes equality among friends, which is shaped by social, gender, and racial norms. As Aristotle famously asserts that "a friend is another self," the ancient Western tradition of friendship celebrates the concept of the friend as a "second self" and suggests that, through friendship, multiple individuals can become one (27-42).

Schweitzer's *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (2006) explores the political dimensions of friendship during the early national and antebellum periods, as well as beyond. She argues that the "American democratic project can be understood as the necessary and ongoing work of 'perfecting friendship'" (4). She emphasizes that the concept of friendship, with its emphasis on equality and likeness, held particular significance in early America. In a context defined by conquest and encounter, racial difference directly impacted the concept of friendship, challenging traditional paradigms based on class and

gender. Utility and necessity forged previously unimaginable alliances, reshaping the meanings of “likeness” and “liking” and leading to new forms of friendship that were pivotal in the North American colonies. These friendships became a testing ground for the ideals of liberty and democracy, rooted in emerging notions of natural rights and universal equality (16). Schweitzer explicitly states, “Friendship has a special resonance in the United States as a figure of our most cherished ideal of democratic equality and an emblem of our most egregious failures” (26).

Drawing from the Western tradition of friendship, many antebellum American writers explored the theme of friendship in their own distinctive ways. In his essay “Friendship” (1841), Ralph Waldo Emerson reflects transcendentalism’s emphasis on the interconnectedness of nature, the self, and others. He encourages readers to value the closeness of friendship, believing it deepens their understanding of both themselves and others. However, Emerson also laments that people often fail to appreciate these benefits, noting that strangers should be treated with more kindness than friends. He observes that the unfamiliarity of strangers allows for idealized perceptions, but as familiarity grows, the bond often weakens (*CW* 2: 113-14). While Emerson acknowledges the significance of friendship, he views it as an imperfect, earthly reflection of the spiritual communion that awaits in the afterlife.

Whitman’s poetry is renowned for its celebration of intimate male friendship. He repeatedly draws a parallel between democracy and “the lifelong love of comrades,” sustained by a homosocial bond he calls “adhesiveness.” Whitman defines this bond as “manly love” and the fellowship of “comrades,” emphasizing a deep and enduring connection that, for him, forms the foundation of democratic ideals. In his poetry, the love between men is depicted as having the power to erase social differences, positioning it as the foundation of American democracy. By promoting “the institution of the dear love of comrades” (*LG* 368), Whitman envisions male

friendship as a means of dissolving cultural and social distinctions, thereby advancing social equality.

This image of ideal friendship circulates within a discourse that frames friendship as a voluntary, spontaneous human relationship characterized by qualities such as intimacy, trust, equality, and reciprocity—an ideal that has been extensively studied in previous scholarship. This type of friendship—a frequent and passionate expression of affection and longing—was not uncommon among prominent figures in American literature. The most famous and classic argument is Leslie Fiedler’s account of cross-racial bonding in the American canon. In *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), Fiedler depicts male friendship as a sacred marriage between one white man and one man of color, exemplified by relationships like Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook in James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Leatherstocking Tales*, Huckleberry Finn and Jim in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), and Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby-Dick*. For Fiedler, the male friendship plot represents an American national archetype: “[T]he most deeply underlying image of ourselves” that figuratively and affectively reconciles the history of American racial conflict (182).

In *The Idea of Fraternity in America* (1973), Wilson Carey McWilliams explores the symbolism of fraternal relationships as a form of masculine solidarity grounded in egalitarian ideals. Building on this concept of male bonds, Robert K. Martin, in *Hero, Captain, and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the Sea Novels of Herman Melville* (1979), argues that Melville portrays male bonding as a representation of “an inherently democratic union of equals,” which serves as the basis for envisioning “a new organization” (11). Through this lens, Martin sees Melville’s depiction of male friendships as a microcosm of broader democratic aspirations, reflecting the potential for forming new, egalitarian social

structures. Caleb Crain, in *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (2001), demonstrates that “romantic friendship” was “a metaphor and model for citizenly love,” closely tied to a republican ethos of egalitarian attachment that helped shape the major literature of the period. Crain approaches romantic friendship between men as “egalitarian,” suggesting it could unite men without restricting their liberty (4-5). Expanding on this idea, Richard Godbeer’s *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love Between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (2009) meticulously documents how American forefathers not only advocated for male friendship and affection in their speeches and writings but also how contemporary newspapers promoted these ideals in affectionate terms (155-92).

In *Manly Love: Romantic Friendship in American Fiction* (2009), Axel Nissen examines the political dynamics of friendship during the formative years of American democracy, identifying two seemingly opposing conceptions: the “republican” view, which emphasizes communal, selfless bonds, and the “liberal” perspective, informed by Adam Smith’s idea of fellow feeling. Meanwhile, Dana Nelson, in *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (1998), investigates how the intertwined identities of whiteness and maleness became essential to a larger, shared civic identity or “national unity” (1-4). This imagined fraternity was rooted in shared interests among white men, aligning with the broader goals of the nation itself. Similarly, Peter Coviello, in *Intimacy in America: Dreams of Affiliation in Antebellum Literature* (2005), argues that the intimate, affective bonds among white men formed the foundation of America’s emerging national identity. Coviello suggests that this idealized intimacy represented a desire for more immediate and “authentic” connections amid the alienation of a rapidly changing society (1-12).

These scholars collectively underscore the pivotal role of male friendship in shaping the

social and political landscape of early America, highlighting its significance as both a personal bond and a national ideal. Their studies suggest that antebellum writers often envisioned male friendship as an idealized relationship, reflecting the core principles of American democracy. This scholarship generally posits that sameness or equality is a fundamental prerequisite for friendship, enabling a connection between the self and the other that mirrors the democratic ethos of the nation. Consequently, friendship in this context is frequently conceptualized in romantic or idealized terms, serving as a manifestation of eroticized homosocial affiliation.

Critics have predominantly focused on the political ramifications of this idealized form of male friendship, delineating various types and exploring their cultural implications in antebellum American literature. Scholars have employed terms such as “sacred marriage” (Fiedler), “fraternity” (McWilliams), “democratic union” (Martin), “romantic friendship” (Crain), “manly love” (Nissen), and “intimacy” (Coviello) to describe these diverse expressions of male bonding. These conceptual frameworks illustrate how male characters in literature not only demonstrate their personal commitment to one another but also contribute to the broader vision of national integrity and coherence. By idealizing male friendship as a microcosm of democratic values, these studies reveal how intimate, homosocial bonds were seen as a cornerstone of the American democratic project.

However, fewer studies have examined intimate male friendships characterized by impossibility, disconnection, and loss, which are not necessarily idealized. Moments of misunderstanding, irritation, and obligation are also integral to deep relationships between individuals. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of male friendship is essential—one that acknowledges the negative elements of estrangement, betrayal, and even violence that may accompany the decline of such relationships.

Friendship is a vital cultural practice and institution with a complex history, yet it remains a notoriously slippery conceptual category. As Nietzsche notes, discussing friendship and friends is fraught with difficulty, and when one tries to articulate it, its essence often slips away and becomes elusive. Nevertheless, I aim to address this challenge by examining the theme of friendship in antebellum literature. The modes of attachment implied by friendship are diverse and difficult to disentangle from one another, encompassing sympathy, intimacy, fraternity, and even broader ideas like national belonging. In this context, queer studies' recent focus on friendship has made a significant contribution. While same-sex friendship has often been an idealized form of intimacy in queer theory, critics such as Heather Love (*Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* [2007]), Christopher Castiglia (*Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States* [2008]), and Peter Coviello (*Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* [2013]) have expanded our understanding of friendship by examining how projecting homoerotic feelings onto "pre-closet" intimacies can oversimplify their affective complexity. They argue that friendship represents a relatively uncharted and fluid space of relations, where idealistic discourses may be disrupted by disturbing and unexpected currents of passion, affect, and desire. This includes potentially negative affects and desires that challenge traditional categorizations.

Building on the recent emphasis on negative affects in queer studies, I aim to explore new dimensions of male friendship by examining the works of four American Renaissance writers: Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. I argue that acknowledging the inherent negativity within friendships is essential for understanding the distinctive forms of intimacy represented in antebellum literature. To capture this complexity, I introduce the concept of

“alienating intimacy,” a term that describes a paradoxical closeness that preserves emotional distance by foregrounding differences, dissimilarities, and alterity between individuals.¹ Rather than depicting friendship as a straightforward narrative of success or failure, alienating intimacy complicates traditional understandings of connection. It highlights how an effort to form a bond can simultaneously underscore the otherness of each individual, ultimately making the already estranged friend appear even more alien. The relationship between Israel Potter and Sergeant Singles serves as a compelling example of this dynamic, illustrating how the desire for connection can coexist with deep-seated estrangement. This form of intimacy, rather than erasing the boundaries between friends, emphasizes the dissonance that persists even within close relationships, challenging the conventional ideal of seamless unity in friendship.

Author-Reader Friendship

Previous scholarship has primarily concentrated on the political dimensions of friendship in American literature. This dissertation, however, shifts the emphasis from political concerns to an exploration of how depictions of friendship and intimacy within these texts reflect the dynamics of the author-reader relationship. In other words, the dialectic between intimacy and alienation operates not only at the level of character but also within the relationship between the writers and their readers. My study demonstrates how these writers simultaneously facilitate and limit the reader’s access to their textual worlds. In doing so, this project examines not only

¹ In my use of the term “intimacy,” I align with Lauren Berlant’s assertion that intimacy exists in a space between the public and private realms, rather than being a wholly personal, private experience (1-2). The word “intimacy” derives from the Latin *intimāre*, meaning “to make known,” and *intimus*, meaning “inmost” (*OED*). Therefore, intimacy is often associated with a degree of self-disclosure. It is cultivated and strengthened through acts of self-disclosure, where one friend reveals inner thoughts and feelings, offering insights into their private self.

the narratives of intimacy but also the forms of intimacy evoked through both verbal expression and formal narrative structures.

In this dissertation, I contend that many of the texts under examination suggest an ideal reader through the figure of an intimate friend, thereby situating friendship as central to the author-reader relationship and shaping the reading experience itself. In *Bodies and Books: Reading and the Fantasy of Communion in Nineteenth-Century America* (2012), Gillian Silverman investigates how reading can engender profound bonds between readers and authors, portraying it as an act fundamentally rooted in intimacy and communion. Silverman's analysis of sentimental fiction by female authors reveals how conventions of intimacy foster a seamless connection between reader and writer, idealizing this bond as one of shared emotional resonance and mutual identification

While sentimental fiction often constructs this relationship as an unproblematic communion, the male writers I examine—Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman—complicate this ideal. Female authors of sentimental fiction generally construct intimacy as an experience of affirmation, emphasizing understanding, connection, and shared feeling. These writers dissolve the boundaries between reader and text, welcoming readers into the narrative world as confidants. In contrast, the male writers I discuss approach the author-reader relationship with ambivalence, frequently marked by estrangement and resistance rather than straightforward emotional connection. Their narratives present an intimacy that is fraught with moments of disconnection and misunderstanding, challenging the notion of literary communion.

This complexity in the author-reader relationship is what I term “alienating intimacy,” a form of closeness that paradoxically preserves emotional distances, highlighting difference and otherness rather than subsuming them. “Alienating intimacy” describes an intimacy that resists

full understanding, instead embracing misunderstandings, irritations, and unfulfilled longings as intrinsic aspects of friendship. This model emphasizes not shared sameness but an engagement with difference, where friendship involves recognizing the other's inaccessibility rather than dissolving boundaries.

Emerson's essay, "Friendship," exemplifies this view by portraying a friend as a letter recipient—an image that aligns friendship with interpretive acts akin to reading (*CW* 2: 113). For Emerson, genuine friendship necessitates the deciphering of unspoken signs and meanings, a continuous process of reinterpretation. He further complicates friendship as an ideal by likening friends to books: "I do then with my friends as I do with my books. I would have them where I can find them, but I seldom use them" (126). Here, both books and friendships are depicted as sites of active engagement, yet they suggest a model of friendship that is non-reciprocal and potentially unfulfilled: "It has seemed to me lately more possible than I knew, to carry a friendship greatly, on one side, without due correspondence on the other" (127). For Emerson, friendship entails an acceptance of miscommunication and missed connections, resisting any inclination to perceive the other as familiar or easily understood.

The male writers of the American Renaissance, then, offer an alternative to the conventions of sentimental fiction. Their works propose a model of friendship that resists merging or mirroring and instead negotiates boundaries, respects individuality, and acknowledges otherness. This dynamic suggests a vision of friendship that aligns with the complex realities of human relationships, embracing both the intimacy and alienation that characterize connections between people. Through this lens, the author-reader relationship becomes a nuanced, at times disquieting, encounter that reflects the paradoxes inherent in the pursuit of intimacy, challenging the reader to engage with both proximity and distance in their

bond with the text.

Intimate friendship, as embedded within the framework of textual encounters, is always haunted by the possibility of failed communication. The concept of “intimate knowing” functions as a narrative form in these texts, appealing to a sense of intimacy with their readers. To explore the negativity inherent in friendship, I will focus on the significance of failed communication within its structure. This will involve examining the tension between the authors’ fundamental desire to connect with others and the notion of radical alterity. In this context, friendship must be considered alongside issues of authorship and audience, with particular attention to friendship as a form of necessary misreading. I argue that antebellum fiction navigates a terrain divided between the desire to express the self and the need for reprieve from self-expression. The stylistic choices in point of view, along with omissions and insinuations in narration, serve a dual purpose: they both invite and alienate the reader. This dynamic mirrors the intimacy between the novel’s central male characters, reflecting it in the relationship between the text and the reader.

Overview of Chapter Structure

Each chapter of my dissertation will focus on key texts that express a yearning for an imagined reader. However, these longings for an idealized reader-friend are often intertwined with ambivalence, aggression, and despair. I argue that these negative emotions are crucial to understanding the texts and that, at times, the texts themselves may even reject certain readers. My goal is to explore how the texts and authors use the figure of the friend to articulate a reader-writer relationship that does not necessarily achieve ideal communion.

In Chapter One, “Dreaming the Remotest Future: Hermeneutic Friends in Thoreau’s *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*,” I examine the theme of friendship in Henry David

Thoreau's first work (1849) through the lens of the author-reader relationship. It begins with the hypothesis that Thoreau's unspoken homoerotic desires may be deeply embedded within his discourse on friendship. To investigate these unarticulated desires, I analyze the verses of the ancient Greek poet Anacreon, which Thoreau translated and incorporated into his work. The Anacreon poems included at the end of the "Tuesday" chapter all explore the theme of unrequited or impossible love, serving as a symbolic reflection of Thoreau's unconscious mind. This theme is intricately connected to the exploration of friendship in the following "Wednesday" chapter, where the complexities of intimate bonds continue to unfold. For Thoreau, who idealizes the concept of transcendental friendship, real-life friendships often manifest as disappointments and frustrations, standing in stark contrast to his ideals. While these negative emotions are typically viewed as the result of Thoreau's excessive idealization of friendship, I argue that these very emotions are inversions of a peculiar expectation that transcends time, and that this dynamic is central to his discourse on friendship. Indeed, the most intimate friendships depicted in the text are consistently portrayed through textual encounters, such as the narrator's relationship with classical literature. Building on this discussion, this chapter highlights that Thoreau's discourse on friendship extends beyond interpersonal relationships to encompass the relationships between the author and the reader, and ultimately, between the text and the reader. By engaging with Christopher Nealon's concept of the "hermeneutic friend"—the notion that a text by a twentieth-century gay or lesbian author might be received by a specific reader in a distant future—I reveal that Thoreau's *A Week* also dreams of "another time." Although it was impossible to realize in the historical present in which it was written, the work longs for the arrival of a future reader who will become a friend. In conclusion, Thoreau's present-day disappointment is tied to his yearning for an unknown other/friend in the future, ultimately

envisioning a distant future community of readers.

Chapter Two, “Becoming Obscure: The Dynamics of Failed Friendship in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*,” discusses Nathaniel Hawthorne’s major romance (1850). First, I will examine the prefaces in which Hawthorne both invites and repels readers’ emotional attachments to his authorial persona. He twists the link between “open-heartedness” and “truth-telling” that was generally considered a virtue of friendship. Nearly all of his prefaces conclude with exultant claims of impenetrable privacy and inaccessibility that seem to resist any reader’s real insight into the author himself. Expectations for intimate exchange, coupled with his escalating publicity, compelled Hawthorne to relate to audiences in new and uncomfortable ways. I will then examine the ways in which Hawthorne controls how readers access the characters’ interiority. *The Scarlet Letter* challenges the conventional idealization of friendship by presenting a more complex and unsettling view. While sympathy in friendship typically leads to identification with another, for Hawthorne, this kind of identification is not always portrayed positively. The novel vividly illustrates how such identification can be disturbing, as seen in the uneasy and hateful relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. In Hawthorne’s work, friendship is never idealized, nor does the text offer any vision of positive communion; instead, it is depicted as doomed to failure or even as an impossibility. This chapter explores the failed intimacy between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, arguing that for Hawthorne, intimacy is shaped by isolation and enduring barriers between individuals, mirroring his own sense of obscurity as a writer in relation to both his contemporaries and imagined future readers.

Chapter Three, “Betraying Friendship: Melville’s Anxious Relationship with Readers,” discusses Herman Melville’s later fiction such as “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853) and *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade* (1857). This chapter explores the intricate connections

between writing, reading, and friendship in Melville's works, with a focus on complicating his anxious relationship with his readers. By examining moments of estrangement between friends in Melville's stories, this chapter sheds light on his preoccupation with a sympathetic readership. Rather than highlighting successful friendships, the discussion centers on the failures of relational bonds. In "Bartleby, the Scrivener," published shortly after *Pierre; or the Ambiguities* (1852), the relationship between the lawyer and the scrivener lacks any semblance of mutuality, equality, or the hope of communion. While the story presents an enigmatic portrait of the scrivener, *The Confidence-Man* extends this ambiguity by turning Bartleby into a "narratological principle." *The Confidence-Man*, often perceived as cynical, dark, and unreadable, is viewed as the culmination of Melville's pessimism. By focusing on these "failed" relationships as analogies for the author's troubled relationship with his readers, I first delve into the lawyer's untimely interactions with Bartleby, highlighting how Melville reveals the structure of their failed friendship through the lawyer's betrayal. It then examines the peculiar logic of friendships in *The Confidence-Man*, where the title character, a "genial misanthrope," cruelly exposes the unbridgeable gap between friends. While Melville's repeated dramatization of betrayal and failed friendships underscores his deep pessimism, I argue that this perpetual pessimism paradoxically opens up new possibilities for deeper intimacy between author and reader at the end of his career as a writer of long fiction.

Walt Whitman's explicit focus on "manly attachments" imbues his poetry with a pervasive homoerotic undertone. For Whitman, sex is inherently public, as he views social bonds as fundamentally rooted in erotic connections. In the final chapter, "Infectious Intimacy: Whitman's Democratic Bonds with Strangers," I examine the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1860). This chapter explores how the cholera epidemics influenced Whitman's concept of

all-encompassing intimacy, particularly within the author-reader dynamic. The analysis unfolds in several stages: First, I situate Whitman's writings on health within the medical discourse of his time, focusing on contemporary beliefs about "air" and "miasma" as medium of disease. Next, I explore the significance of air in Whitman's thought, emphasizing its link to his democratic ideals. Then, through an analysis of selected poems, I demonstrate how contagion and sympathy underpin Whitman's poetics of impersonal intimacy. Finally, I consider how Whitman employs themes of death and decomposition to forge a profound connection and sense of merging with his readers.

By examining male friendship in the antebellum era through both historical and theoretical lenses, my dissertation aims to uncover a more nuanced dialectic of author-reader relations and male friendship. This approach challenges conventional views of textual encounters. Although the concept of male friendship as "alienating intimacy" is not yet well-explored in existing scholarship, this study reconsiders the dynamics of intimacy and alienation within the framework of friendship. It addresses the gap in scholarship that often idealizes friendship and the bond between author and reader. By focusing on the negative aspects of friendship, this dissertation seeks to balance the idealized perspectives prevalent in current research. Thus, it will contribute to a deeper understanding of male friendship in the nineteenth century, as well as to contemporary theories of negative affects and author-reader relationships.

CHAPTER I

Dreaming the Remotest Future:

Hermeneutic Friends in Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*

The Private and Public(ation)

In 1849, Henry David Thoreau published his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, at his own expense and had to guarantee the costs if the book did not sell. As it turned out, the book fared badly, selling approximately only 200 copies in four years. In his journal, on October 28, 1853, Thoreau wrote:

For a year or 2 past—my *publisher*, falsely so called, has been writing from time to time to ask what disposition should be made of the copies of ‘A Week on the Concord & Merrimack Rivers’ still on hand, and at last suggesting that he had use for the room they occupied in his cellar. ... My works are piled up on one side of my chamber half as high as my head—my *opera omnia*.

This is authorship—these are the work of my brain. ...

Nevertheless, in spite of this result—sitting beside the inert mass of my works—I take up my pen tonight to record what thought or experience I may have had with as much satisfaction as ever. Indeed. I believe that this result is more inspiring & better for me than if a thousand had bought my wares. It affects my privacy less & leaves me freer. (*J*,7: 122-23; italics original)

Although *A Week* was a commercial failure, Thoreau did not lose faith in the work. In later years, he either sold or distributed the remaining copies to friends, continuing to revise the text until

shortly before his death in 1862 (*A Week* 434). While the lack of contemporary readership likely caused him considerable disappointment—leading him to ironically refer to his publisher as “falsely so called”—Thoreau also found a peculiar “satisfaction” in the book’s poor sales. This satisfaction derived, in part, from the preservation of his “privacy,” which remained less compromised by the commodification of his work, and, in part, from a sense of liberation from the pressures of consumer society. Notably, in this journal entry, Thoreau expresses an ambivalent desire for both privacy and publicity, ultimately positioning privacy as a form of inviolable sanctuary from the “thousand” anonymous readers.

Perry Miller illustrates how Thoreau’s *Journal* evolved in the early 1850s into “a deliberately constructed work of art” (4). Following the commercial failure of *A Week*, Miller suggests, Thoreau redirected his efforts toward creating a private work, embodied in his *Journal*. Building on Miller’s argument, Sharon Cameron asserts that Thoreau “hoped for our eventual discovery and assessment of this work [his *Journal*] qua work” (16). Although the *Journal* was published posthumously and is typically regarded as a private document, Cameron argues that it blurs the boundary between the private and public spheres (16). She subsequently develops a thesis that reinterprets the *Journal* beyond its conventional designation as a private endeavor. However, Thoreau’s emphasis on the importance of privacy was not merely a reaction to the failure of *A Week*, as Miller and Cameron contend, but rather a defining characteristic that persisted throughout his career as a writer.

Thoreau harbored some apprehension about externalizing his private self in a published text, particularly one intended for mass readership. This concern invites critical questions: To whom was Thoreau directing his book, and why did he feel compelled to safeguard his privacy? Millette Shamir examines the tension in antebellum writings between “the desire to

express the self and the desire to find reprieve from self-expression” (8), contending that Thoreau’s aesthetic of self-disclosure nonetheless retains a protective veil of privacy (223). However, Shamir does not address the underlying reasons for Thoreau’s insistence on maintaining this veil when publishing his works.

Over the last few decades, scholars have increasingly focused on the complexities of Thoreau’s private life, particularly in relation to love and sexuality.² Critics have analyzed Thoreau’s private journals to uncover his repressed desires, highlighting the contrast between these personal reflections and his public persona. Walter Harding, for example, acknowledges the ambiguity of Thoreau’s sexuality, suggesting that his “intense love of nature may have resulted from the sublimation of ... homoeroticism” (23). Michael Warner, in his examination of *Walden* (1854), argues that Thoreau’s writing revolves around “conspicuously unsatisfied desires” (“Walden’s” 157), noting that Thoreau “frequently gave vent in the journal to a sense of frustration” at the inarticulateness of his desire (“Thoreau’s” 63). Perry Miller, Sharon Cameron, and more recently, Peter Coviello, in their analyses of Thoreau’s *Journals*, highlight the distinction between the public persona of *Walden* and the private self that is revealed in the *Journals*. However, these ostensibly distinct personas may not be so clearly separated in Thoreau’s first book, *A Week*, where the voices are entangled with one another. While critics have explored Thoreau’s unfulfilled desires in *Walden* and the *Journals*, few have considered how his complex longings for friendship shaped his relationship with his readership in *A Week*. This chapter addresses this gap by exploring how Thoreau’s defense of privacy and his themes of same-sex intimacy are interconnected, particularly how these aspects shape his engagement with

² David Bergman included some of Thoreau’s journal entries in his anthology, *Gay American Autobiography: Writings from Whitman to Sedaris* (2009).

his readers.

Focusing on his vision of friendship, I intend to explore how Thoreau develops an alternative trajectory of intimacy: One that allows longing for friends, while avoiding the dangers of self-exposure. In Thoreau's time, the distinction between friendship and love was far less clearly defined than it is today. This ambiguity is evident in Thoreau's writings, where he often blurs the lines between these two forms of attachment. While the ambiguous nature of love and friendship was not unusual in the nineteenth century, it seems that Thoreau intentionally merged these concepts, or perhaps deliberately conflated them, finding it impossible to separate them. Thoreau's difficulty in distinguishing between love and friendship is particularly evident in his correspondence with his close friend H. G. O. Blake. In his essay "Chastity & Sensuality," originally a letter to Blake, Thoreau offers a nuanced perspective on these subjects, writing, "Let us love by refusing, not accepting, one another," because "[there] is a danger that we may stain and pollute one another" (*Early Essays* 275, 276). This statement reflects Thoreau's ambivalence toward intimacy, suggesting that while love and friendship are desirable, they also carry the risk of moral or emotional corruption. Thoreau's writings reveal a tension between his desire for deep, meaningful connections and his fear of those connections becoming tainted or overly intimate. This tension is especially pronounced in his attempts to navigate the boundaries between friendship and love, particularly in the context of same-sex relationships. His struggle to define these relationships highlights broader anxieties of his time, when the lines between friendship, love, and desire were often blurred.

In this light, Thoreau's exploration of love and friendship can be seen as an attempt to reconcile his inner conflicts, especially those related to his sexuality. His emphasis on privacy was not merely a response to external failures but also a strategy for managing these internal

struggles. In what follows, I will further examine how Thoreau's conflation of love and friendship, along with his insistence on privacy, reflects his deeper, unresolved conflicts surrounding intimacy and sexuality. I first look at Thoreau's concerns with same-sex intimacy by reading a Greek lyric poet Anacreon's odes that Thoreau translated. I then investigate the ways in which Thoreau's friendship presupposes a kind of inviolable privacy, which gradually became associated with morality; for Thoreau, private individuality and its opaque interiority open up, at once, for the proliferation of and vulnerability to others' interpretations. Indeed, his essay on friendship, as John Carlos Rowe points out, serves to organize Thoreau's concerns with literary and interpersonal communication (93). Finally, I turn to Thoreau's theory of friendship as intimately connected to the relationship between the author and reader. Although it is entirely out of an individual author's control, Thoreau's theory of friendship promises the eventual arrival of ideal readers and, therefore, the possibility of intimate friends in the remotest future.

Another Kind of Love

Thoreau often approaches love and friendship with suspicion. To understand his perspective on intimacy, it is insightful to examine the end of the "Tuesday" chapter in *A Week*, where Thoreau includes his translations of Anacreon's odes. His engagement with Anacreon's poetry offers important context for understanding his theory of friendship. Thoreau employs maritime imagery to frame his encounter with Anacreon, describing it as a "pleasant harbor" he has long yearned for after a "weary voyage." He envisions reading "the journal" of "some other sailor, whose bark had sloughed, perchance, more famous and classic seas" (225). This seafaring metaphor sets up his depiction of friendship in the "Wednesday" chapter, where he compares it to "some fair floating isle of palms eluding the mariner in Pacific seas" (262). Here, the "isle"

symbolizes an ideal that is elusive and perhaps never fully attained, yet remains a site of potential discovery. Thoreau's metaphor highlights the ontological solitude of the individual, presenting friendship as an elusive, idealized goal rather than a straightforward revelation of personal intimacy.³ This imagery also resonates with the opening epigraph of *A Week*: "I am bound, I am bound, for a distant shore, / By a lonely isle, by a far Azore, / There it is, there it is, the treasure I seek, / On the barren sands of a desolate creek." The epigraph underscores Thoreau's quest for a profound connection, depicted as a distant, almost mythical destination. The sought treasure is not merely the exposure of private selves but a deeper, more elusive encounter with the ideal. Thus, Thoreau's philosophy of friendship consistently frames the potential for connection as an act of exploration and discovery rather than a simple reciprocal exchange of intimacy. His approach reflects a belief that the most meaningful friendships transcend immediate exposure, striving toward an ideal that is continuously sought but never fully realized.⁴

³ Naomi Morgenstern argues that Thoreau's conception of friendship can be better understood through the metaphor of "the vehicle of the visit" (249). This perspective is valuable, yet it is crucial to emphasize that Thoreau envisions these friendships as involving discovery rather than mere exposure of the private self. The imagery of "a lonely isle" and "barren sands of a desolate creek" in his writings implies that the sought-after treasure, or ideal friendship, may be elusive or even unattainable.

⁴ A similar theme emerges in Thoreau's poem "The Atlantides," which also appears in the same chapter. Here, intimacy and companionship are spatially represented, with friendship likened to a lost continent. In the poem, Thoreau initially focuses on his own isolated island, using phrases such as "No mariner has found our beach," "our fabled shore," "our beach," and "our main." These lines highlight a sense of solitude and uncharted territory. In the second stanza, Thoreau shifts his focus to the reader, addressing "ye desolate isles," "Ye rumored but untrodden shore," and "you distant soil" (262-63). This apostrophic shift underscores a dynamic interplay of discovery and secrecy, as Thoreau engages with distant, almost mythical lands. The dialogue between these distant islands reflects Thoreau's view of friendship as a complex interaction of yearning and distance. The profound separation between Thoreau and the friend, as well as between Thoreau and the reader, is poignantly captured in the lines: "The smothered streams of love / island us ever" (262). Thoreau's longing for the stranger or friend is mirrored by his own

Thoreau translated Anacreon's poetry for the Transcendentalist magazine *The Dial* in 1843 and later included eleven of these poems in *A Week*. While Lawrence Buell suggests that these "love poems" by Anacreon set the stage for Thoreau's subsequent discussion of friendship in the "Wednesday" chapter (*Literary Transcendentalism* 224-25), he does not delve into the deeper meanings of the poems. In fact, there has been limited analysis of the recurring themes in these selected verses. Richard Bridgman is one of the few critics to address the significance of these poems, noting that Thoreau did not choose odes in which Anacreon expresses joy, fulfillment, or gaiety. Instead, Thoreau selected poems that convey the toil and enslavement inherent in love (54). All the quoted odes address unfulfilled, painful love or the inherent impossibility of love.

Analyzing Anacreon's poems within this framework is essential, as they shed light on Thoreau's complex attitudes toward intimacy and his broader concerns about the nature of friendship and love. These translations provide a window into Thoreau's personal struggles with the themes of desire and affection, revealing his preoccupation with the painful aspects of love. Through these poems, we gain deeper insight into how Thoreau's engagement with same-sex intimacy and his views on privacy and disclosure intertwine with his literary work and philosophy.

Thoreau admired the ancient Greek poet for his "bodiless" nature, which enabled him to "converse" with Anacreon "without reserve or personality" (225-26). He found the poems particularly compelling, describing them as "some of the best" and "strangely modern" (227,

positioning as the object of longing. The island thus becomes a perpetual symbol of desire, representing an idealized yet unreachable connection. This metaphor reinforces Thoreau's broader theme of friendship as an ongoing quest for discovery, marked by a sense of distance and secrecy rather than mere personal revelation.

226). While his contemporaries often characterized Anacreon as “the erotic, bisexual hedonist” (Bridgman 53), Thoreau highlighted his “ethereal and evanescent” qualities, deliberately overlooking the poet’s more anti-Puritanical elements (226). Thoreau asserted that the poems are “not gross, as has been presumed, but always elevated above the sensual” (227). Yet, despite his effort to distance the poems from sensuality—or perhaps because of his attempt to purify it—a striking connection emerges between these works and Thoreau’s own reflections on love.

To understand Thoreau’s conception of friendship and love, I turn to several of Anacreon’s odes. The first poem, titled “On His Lyre,” begins with the lament that, although the poet attempts to sing of heroes, “my lyre / Sings only loves” (227). This initial poem establishes the thematic foundation for the subsequent odes, focusing on the complexities of love. Among the eleven poems Thoreau translated, three feature Bathyllus, a celebrated male pantomime from Alexandria with whom Anacreon was in love. In “To A Swallow,” the poet expresses frustration with the swallow, threatening to clip “loquacious swallow[’s feathers]” or “pluck out / [its] tongue from within” because the swallow has “plundered Bathyllus / From [his] beautiful dreams” (230). The poet laments the loss of his lover and the permanent expulsion from his intimate space of attachment—his “beautiful dreams.” This condemnation of the swallow’s loquaciousness, and the threat to silence it, reflects a motif that resonates with Thoreau’s own ideas about the significance of silence in friendship. This theme of silence and its implications for intimacy will be explored later in this chapter within the context of Thoreau’s philosophical views.

In one of Anacreon’s verses, “On Lovers,” the poet describes lovers as being immediately recognizable because they bear a “certain slight / Brand on their hearts” (230). The term “brand” carries negative connotations, suggesting a mark of disgrace associated with their

intimacy. This negative view of love is further emphasized in two other poems that feature Cupid, the god of Love. In “Cupid Wounded,” Cupid complains about being stung by a bee, which he refers to as “A little serpent.” His mother, Venus, responds with a pointed question: “If the sting / Of a bee afflicts you, / How, think you, are they afflicted, / Love, whom you smite?” (227, 231). Thoreau’s choice of the word “smite” in his translation implies that love is not only a source of pain but is also actively inflicted, reinforcing the idea that love is intertwined with suffering. When Cupid laments, “I am killed, and I die” (231), the association of love with death not only highlights the profound agony of love but also reflects the unfulfilled and unrequited nature of his own feelings. Thus, Thoreau’s focus on the suffering inherent in love reveals a paradox: the experience of pain is depicted as intensely pleasurable. Furthermore, the depiction of love as a form of smiting reinforces the theme of its impossibility. In “On Love,” when “A water-snake stung [the poet],” “Love [Cupid was] fanning [his] brows / With his soft wings, said, / Surely, *thou art not able to love*” (231; emphasis added). This passage underscores Anacreon’s belief that despite the intensity of passion, the true capacity to love remains elusive and unattainable.

Taken together, Thoreau’s translations of Anacreon’s odes are particularly significant because they embody his ambivalence toward the theme of love, as articulated by the Greek poet, who is depicted as both bodiless and sensual. Thoreau prominently features the love between Anacreon and Bathyllus in his selected poems, yet these very selections ultimately deny the possibility of male-male intimacy. The odes Thoreau chose to translate present affliction as a fundamental aspect of love, suggesting that the willful suffering associated with the impossible intimacy should be *fostered* as the best proof of love.

This paradoxical logic of love is perhaps best illustrated in Thoreau’s well-known

poem “Sympathy,” originally published in *The Dial* in 1840 and later included in *A Week*. The poem, an imagined elegy for the eleven-year-old Edmund Sewall, reflects Thoreau’s complex feelings: “Yet now am forced to know, though hard it is, / I might have loved him had I loved him less.... / Sorrow is dearer in such case to me / Than all the joys other occasion yields.” (260-61). The poem then shifts into an elegy, suggesting that the boy is dead: the boy is “irrevocably gone,” having rung his “Knell of departure,” and the poet “[m]ake[s] haste and celebrate[s] [his] tragedy” by composing this “elegy” (213). While Shamir interprets this poem as a “lament over the impossibility of male-male intimacy” (218), I would argue that Thoreau is not simply lament the loss. Instead, the boy becomes Thoreau’s intimate friend precisely because his departure leaves Thoreau utterly alone; it is this very estrangement that creates the space for future intimacy. As Maki Sadahiro suggests, the loss of a friend is “a necessary, indispensable and constitutive element of [Thoreau’s theory of] friendship” (150). In this light, the poem does not just mourn the boy’s absence but also celebrates the potential for a deeper, more enduring connection that arises from the experience of loss. Consequently, the essay on friendship in the “Wednesday” chapter of *A Week* can be interpreted as a reflection of Thoreau’s internal struggle with another kind of love, the complexities of love and attachment, suggesting that his thoughts on friendship were intricately tied to his ambivalence toward intimacy.

Privacy, Morality, Silence

Thoreau’s vision of intimacy invariably entails estrangement and suffering. In the final part of the “Wednesday” chapter, he recounts a night spent by the river during one of his trips, where he dreams of “an event which had occurred long before”—a disagreement with a friend that continued to cause him pain (296). Yet, in the dream, this subtle feeling of guilt and

affliction is “unspeakably soothed and rejoiced” (296). Thoreau goes on to describe “the real character” in the dream, suggesting that the dream offered him a deeper understanding or reconciliation of the emotional turmoil that had plagued him.

Dreams are the touchstones of our characters. We are scarcely less afflicted when we remember some unworthiness in our conduct in a dream, than if it had been actual, and the intensity of our grief, which is our atonement, measures the degree by which this is separated from an actual unworthiness.... In dreams we see ourselves naked and acting out our real characters, even more clearly than we see others awake. But an unwavering and commanding virtue would compel even its most fantastic and faintest dreams to respect its ever-wakeful authority; as we are accustomed to say carelessly, we should never have *dreamed* of such a thing. Our truest life is when we are in dreams awake. (297; italics original)

We never learn the specific nature of the disagreement that Thoreau had with his friend, which continued to cause him pain, but he alludes to feelings of “unworthiness” or shame in his actual life. This aligns with the theme we have seen earlier, where Thoreau’s delicious torments paradoxically form the foundation of love. For Thoreau, “the intensity of our grief” becomes “our atonement.” He suggests that we might be more true to ourselves in dreams, yet even the “most fantastic and faintest dreams” are ultimately forced to yield to an “ever-wakeful authority.” This passage exposes the disparity between Thoreau’s private, vulnerable self and the public persona he is compelled to maintain. The dream represents a space where his “naked,” “real character” can emerge, but even in this realm, it remains subject to the constraints of societal expectations. The gap between his private and public self underscores the complexity of Thoreau’s struggle with intimacy, where his most authentic emotions are both revealed and

repressed.

In a similar vein, Thoreau reflects on the yearning for the true self in a journal entry where he writes, “The nearest approach to discovering what we are is in dreams” (*J*,1: 304-05). This suggests that Thoreau felt a certain estrangement from his own self in the context of everyday life—what he refers to as “what we are” or “our truest life.” His sense of alienation is also evident in his reflections on his own body: “I must confess there is nothing so strange to me as my own body” (*J*,1: 365). While this entry captures Thoreau’s amazement at his physical sensations, it also hints at a deeper awareness of the unconscious bodily forces that exist beyond the self.

As Bruce Burgett explains, in the period before the late-nineteenth-century sexologists’ categorizations, “there was a greater flexibility in the thinking of the erotic, less focused on object choice, and better able to articulate desires that expand and expose the limits of what now registers as the sexual” (71). This was an era before the concept of “sexuality” had fully developed, along with the body and its sensations “as sites of political and social contestation, mobilization, and regulation” (Burgett 71). The mid-nineteenth century was a transitional moment, where the rigid classifications of hetero- and homosexuality had not yet solidified, although “the initial movements of coordination and solidification, could already be *felt*” for people (Coviello, *Tomorrow’s* 4; italics original). Thoreau’s account of an “ever-wakeful authority” in his writing reveals an underlying anxiety about his own conduct, even in the realm of dreams. This anxiety likely stems from suspicions about what might be perceived as “unnatural” desires, highlighting his struggle with the emerging norms and expectations surrounding intimacy and sexuality in his time.

This pervasive sense of a disciplining power can also be understood in the context of

the evolving relationship between privacy and morality during the nineteenth century.

Christopher Castiglia and Stacey Margolis observe that, toward the end of the century, privacy increasingly became associated with morality, shifting from being a public practice to a quality intrinsic to the private self.⁵ Privacy, in this view, came to embody “the moods, behaviors, and embodiments that oriented individuals to the moral and sexual order of modern, secular society” (Murison 699).

Thoreau’s exploration of privacy reflects this era’s growing belief in the moral significance of the private self. In his theory of friendship, privacy is closely linked with silence, which he regards as something that must be deeply concealed, inaccessible to others. Rather than seeing silence as an inner sanctuary of self-truth or morality, Thoreau proposes silence as a universal refuge, one that resists the pressures to reveal or expose the private self.

Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel to all dull discourses and all foolish acts, a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as after disappointment; that background which the painter may not daub, be he master or bungler, and which, however awkward a figure we may have made in the foreground, remains ever our inviolable asylum, where no indignity can assail, no personality disturb us. (392)

The terms “refuge” and “asylum” in this passage suggest that Thoreau envisions silence as a private, interior space that shields the self from external judgment and public scrutiny. For Thoreau, silence forms a protective boundary around the innermost self, creating a space where the individual is immune to the indignities and disturbances of the outside world. This

⁵ The consensus in scholarship on privacy in the nineteenth century is that it is a “public effect” (Margolis 3).

conception of silence is intrinsically linked to his idea of privacy, something to remain hidden and inviolate, a fundamental right to preserve one's personal identity.

Thoreau's emphasis on protecting the innermost self extends even to his relationships with friends. In the "Wednesday" chapter, he imagines being addressed by a "true and not despairing Friend" who declares:⁶

"I never asked thy leave to let me love thee,—I have a right. I love thee not as something private and personal, which is *your own*, but as something universal and worthy of love, *which I have found*." (269; italics original)

In this passage, Thoreau underscores that true friendship transcends the personal and private, focusing instead on a universal quality within the friend that is "worthy of love." The friend's love is not directed toward the individual as a private entity but rather toward these universal qualities. Thoreau's choice of the word "found" is especially significant, suggesting that these qualities are not granted by the friend but discovered independently, as though they exist as part of a natural order of value that is accessible yet hidden. The act of "finding" underscores a notion of friendship as an exploration of the friend's universal attributes, not an invasion of their private self. This distinction reinforces Thoreau's belief that the most intimate aspects of the self should remain protected and undisclosed, even within close relationships. The friend claims a "right" to love, but this right pertains only to the universal qualities uncovered through friendship, not to the private, concealed self, which remains veiled and inviolable. In this way, Thoreau presents an ideal of friendship rooted in respect for the boundary between the universal and the personal, suggesting that genuine connection does not require total exposure of the self but rather a

⁶ As Emerson writes in his essay, "To my friend I write a letter and from him I receive a letter" (*CW* 2: 124). Similarly, for Thoreau, friendship can be seen as analogous to an exchange of letters.

recognition of what is worthy in each other without intruding upon what is ultimately private.

Thoreau's conception of friendship is unconventional. He suggests that the friend loves what is "universal" within the other, something not tied to the private and personal. Typically, friendship is deepened through the sharing of one's private self, including inner thoughts and feelings. However, Thoreau's vision of friendship is marked by a paradoxical intimacy that privileges impersonal factors. He asserts, "Between us, if necessary, let there be no acquaintance" (270). This statement encapsulates the ethical demand that one must not intrude upon the other's private space. The paradox in the Friend's expression reveals a deep respect for the inviolability of the other's privacy, while still holding out hope for the future possibility of "true friendship" across time. On the surface, Thoreau's emphasis on the universal may suggest his advocacy for a transcendental communion, yet it also reflects his strong desire to secure a private realm that must never be violated. This recognition of the limits of understanding the other mirrors Thoreau's expectations from his own friendships. By insisting on this privacy, Thoreau preserves the alterity of both the friend and himself, making privacy even *more* private. This approach to friendship is intimately connected with Thoreau's understanding of the private self, which he closely associates with the concept of silence. For Thoreau, silence is not just the absence of speech but a profound space of refuge where the self can remain untouched and unexamined by others. In this way, Thoreau's notion of friendship is deeply intertwined with his commitment to maintaining a private, silent inner world that resists intrusion and preserves the essential otherness of each individual.

In contrast to the confessional mode that positions the private space as a site of regulation and moral consciousness, Thoreau's perspective is notably distinct. He asserts: "We often forbear to confess our feelings, not from pride, but for fear that we could not continue to

love the one who required us to give such proof of our affection” (278-79). This remark challenges the conventional link between open-heartedness and truth-telling, which is typically considered a virtue in friendships. Thoreau’s hesitation to disclose his feelings is not rooted in pride but in a deeper fear of emotional coercion and the potential disruption it might cause in the relationship. At the heart of Thoreau’s apprehension lies an awareness of how friendship is shaped by prevailing ideological and affective norms. His negative emotions, such as dissatisfaction and irritation, reveal the intricate entanglements between the individual subject and the communal context, rather than merely personal sensations.

For Thoreau, actual personal friendship and intimacy often led to profound dissatisfaction, isolation, and suffering. In his writings, he even advocates for the preservation of hate within personal relationships, stating, “we have not so good a right to hate any as our Friend” and “Let such pure hate still underprop / Our love” (282, 287). This seemingly paradoxical stance becomes more understandable when we consider that, for Thoreau, the prospect of intimacy in contemporary society appeared utterly hopeless. In this context, negative emotions like hate function as a protective mechanism, allowing Thoreau to shield himself from further emotional pain. By embracing and expressing these feelings, he establishes a buffer against the deeper suffering that might arise from failed intimacy. Hate, in Thoreau’s framework, operates less as a destructive force and more as a boundary that preserves autonomy and protects against disillusionment. By acknowledging hate as an integral part of love, he redefines friendship as a relationship that accommodates, rather than suppresses, the full range of human emotions. This view suggests that for Thoreau, true intimacy does not require complete harmony or unbroken affection; instead, it involves an honest engagement with ambivalence and the inherent limitations of human connection.

This perspective helps us understand why Thoreau, who is highly sensitive to the dynamics of publicity, often experienced frustration when his silence was misunderstood. Scholars have long regarded Thoreau's transcendental friendship as "blithely naïve and impossibly ideal" (Steel 136) and actually as inoperable on earth (Buell, "Transcendental" 17), giving emphasis to "the painful disparity between the real men he tried to befriend and the ideal they offered him instead" (Porte 103). For this scholarly criterion, the transcendental view of ideal friendship always already carries with it the risk of failure, going hand in hand with perpetual disappointment. However, such a view does not account for the *potential* of negative feelings such as disappointment, anxiety, irritation, and even loss at the core of Thoreau's friendship. These negative feelings, I contend, are constitutive—not a failed consequence—of Thoreau's philosophy of friendship. In other words, the most troubling aspects of transcendental friendship become the very foundation of the relation.

The centrality of negative feelings in Thoreau's writings on friendship cannot be overstated. He expresses a pervasive sense of unfulfillment and disappointment when he remarks: "What avails it that another loves you, if he does not understand you? Such love is a curse. What sort of companionship are they who are presuming always that their silence is more expressive than yours?" (278). This passage emphasizes Thoreau's intense anger and frustration, likely stemming from failures in the reciprocal understanding of silence. His critique reflects a discontent with how privacy and silence are handled within friendships, and his negative emotions underscore the profound impact that misunderstandings and intrusions can have on personal relationships. Thoreau's essay on friendship is thus imbued with a deep sense of dissatisfaction, particularly regarding violations of privacy. His reflections reveal a complex interplay between personal emotions and the societal expectations placed upon intimate

relationships. In Thoreau's view, the failure to respect and understand the nuances of silence and privacy within friendships can lead to significant emotional turmoil, highlighting the critical role of these elements in maintaining genuine and meaningful connections.

As such, Thoreau consistently underscores the critical role of silence or reticence in the dynamics of friendship. He contends that silence serves as a guardian of our deepest intimacies:

It may be that your silence was the finest thing of the two. There are some things which a man never speaks of, which are much finer kept silent about. To the highest communications we only lend a silent ear. Our finest relations are not simply kept silent about, but buried under a positive depth of silence, never to be revealed. (278)

Traditionally, Thoreau's advocacy for silence has been interpreted as a call for an idealized form of communication that transcends conventional language. However, Thoreau's emphasis here shifts away from the notion of silence as a medium for achieving elevated or loftier communication. Instead, he highlights silence as a repository for certain aspects of our relationships that are best left concealed. The "positive depth of silence" he refers to is not merely an absence of words but a deliberate and profound concealment, wherein certain matters are kept hidden and never exposed. The silence is therefore unspeakable, concealed, and unreadable; although it may sound paradoxical, it should be understood *as* silence.

Thoreau suggests that the true essence of certain relationships is preserved beneath a veil of silence, and this silence is crucial for safeguarding the integrity of those relationships. Following this, Thoreau further reflects: "It may be that we are not even yet acquainted. In human intercourse the tragedy begins, not when there is misunderstanding about words, but when silence is not understood" (278). This observation raises a crucial question: Who, then, is capable of understanding Thoreau's silence? The answer may lie in the recognition that the depth

of silence Thoreau advocates is so profound that it transcends ordinary comprehension. For Thoreau, true understanding may be inherently elusive, as it demands not only an appreciation of the unsaid but also an acceptance of the mystery that silence embodies. Thoreau's insistence on silence underscores the difficulty of fully grasping the complexities of intimate relationships, highlighting a tension between the desire for connection and the necessity of safeguarding certain aspects of our inner selves. Silence thus becomes not merely an absence of speech but a deliberate boundary, a means of preserving an essential part of the self that resists easy access or interpretation. Through this lens, Thoreau's silence is less about secrecy than about protecting the profound and often unreachable core of individual experience, a space only those with an exceptional sensitivity to the unspoken can approach.

Intimate Reading

While Thoreau needs to keep his privacy intact, he nonetheless has a strong desire to share the private self with a particular kind of friend. Thoreau comments, "Silence is the ambrosial night in the intercourse of Friends" (272). Given that "intercourse" means both linguistic and physical communications, the "ambrosial night" subtly implies a dark secret space that is filled with men's pleasure and guilt, which does not exclude the possibility of (homo)eroticism. Indeed, Thoreau uses the same phrase in his essay "Reform and Reformers": "Silence is the ambrosial night in the intercourse of *men* in which their sincerity is recruited and takes deeper root" (*Reform Papers* 190; emphasis added). Here the term "men," instead of the gender-neutral "Friends," evinces the male homo-social and -erotic intimacy in his theory of friendship. Thus, silence here is not purely a secluded space with regard to morality but also a fleeting moment of sharing nocturnal pleasures, suggesting another possible way of forging an

interdependent relationship.

Therefore, Thoreau's seemingly impersonal friendship embraces, perhaps counter-intuitively, a sensual constituent. It is interesting to note, however, that this intimacy is almost exclusively associated with the textual encounter in *A Week*. Remarking at one point that the "language of Friendship is not words but meanings" (273), Thoreau, in a sense, seeks its recognition within the reader. The meanings can be understood as the reader's interpretation, "an intelligence above language" (273). The written words then come to be imaginatively read in silence, which also gives the silence voices in this intersubjective relationship. Accordingly, the language of friendship is in its essence close to speech, which should be heard in pursuit of the truth. Thoreau at once recognizes and requires the presence of an audience: "It takes two to speak the truth,—one to speak, and another to hear" (267).

Toward the end of his book, Thoreau once again turns to classical works, this time praising the contributions of Homer and Chaucer. He reflects on how "true verses come toward us indistinctly, as the very breath of all friendliness" (374). Thoreau's description here is notable not only for its recognition of the authors behind these texts but also for its emphasis on the corporeality of the verses. He evokes the image of verses as having a tangible, almost physical presence—like the breath of a friend. This metaphor underscores how Thoreau experiences these works not merely as abstract texts but as embodiments of a personal, intimate connection. This imagery recalls a chapter in *Walden* titled "Reading," where Thoreau adopts a comparable rhetoric to convey the depth of his reading experience. In this chapter, Thoreau describes reading as a form of intimate communion with the text, characterized by a sensory engagement akin to oral experiences. He emphasizes that the act of reading is not a detached intellectual exercise but a deeply personal interaction with the written word, where the text becomes a living, breathing

presence that engages with the reader on a profound level.

A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips;—not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself. The symbol of an ancient man’s thought becomes a modern man’s speech. (*Walden* 102)

In both cases, Thoreau’s language reflects his belief in the physicality of literary engagement and the sense of closeness it fosters between the reader and the text. Books—written words—are quite distinct from other forms of art and near to life itself, as they are “breathed from all human lips.”⁷

In exploring the relationship between past and present, Thoreau reframes the concept of temporal distance, characterizing it as a “distance of relation” rather than a mere “distance of time” (156-57). He engages with classical texts through a physical and sensory experience, emphasizing how reading the classics becomes an embodied encounter. Thoreau’s depiction of music as a means of bridging centuries exemplifies this approach:

What are ears? what is Time? that this particular series of sounds called a strain of music, an invisible and fairy troop which never brushed the dew from any mead, can be wafted down through the centuries from Homer to me, and he have been conversant with that same aerial and mysterious charm which now so tingles my ears? What a fine

⁷ Reading for Thoreau is possibly a locus of intimacy; for example, Henry Abelove reads *Walden*’s famous scene as an implied moment of queer intimacy, in which Thoreau prompts Therein to read aloud from the *Iliad* and he translates for him “Achilles’s reproof” to his most intimate comrade, Patroclus (36).

communication from age to age, of the fairest and noblest thoughts, the aspirations of ancient men, even such as were never communicated by speech, is music! ... A strain of music reminds me of a passage of the Vedas, and I associate with it the idea of infinite remoteness, as well as of beauty and serenity, for to the senses that is farthest from us which addresses the greatest depth within us. It teaches us again and again to trust the remotest and finest as the divinest instinct, and makes a dream our only real experience. We feel a sad cheer when we hear it, perchance because we that hear are not one with that which is heard. (174-75)

Given his “ecstasy over musical sounds,” as Warner points out, music or sound to Thoreau is intimately connected with eroticism and sexuality (“Thoreau’s,” 67).⁸ Crucially, however, Thoreau here prefers to explore the surface pleasures of the body (lips and ears) over the internal workings of desire. The strain of music, Thoreau stresses, teaches us “again and again to trust the remotest and finest as the divinest instinct, and makes a dream our only real experience.” Again, Thoreau invokes the possible actualization of a dream, thus strangely revealing its sensual component by his association of the “instinct” with the repetitive superlatives (“remotest,” “finest,” and “divinest”). However, the pleasure experienced by encountering the classics is haunted by sadness (“We feel a sad cheer”), underscoring the distant voices. The foregrounding of the physicality of sound serves to suspend the chronological time. In doing so, he highlights

⁸ Thoreau connects the vibrant body with music in an entry of October 26, 1851: “And then again the instant that I awoke methought I was a musical instrument—from which I heard a strain die out—a bugle—or a clarionet—or a flute—my body was the organ and channel of melody as a flute is of the music that is breathed through it. My flesh sounded & vibrated still to the strain—& my nerves were the chords of the lyre. ... I heard that last strain of flourish as I woke played on my body as the instrument. Such I knew had been & might be again—and my regret arose from the consciousness how little like a musical instrument my body was now” (*J*,4: 155).

how music—through its sensory impact on the lips and ears—can create a unique temporal experience that diverges from the linear progression of modern time.

Given that readers in the antebellum era tended to equate an author's personal character with the character of his works (Hochman 14), Thoreau seems to share the convention that an author's character is implied in his or her book. Beginning in mid-nineteenth century, the idea of friendship structured the author-reader relationship at the heart of the reading experience. Different from the republican ideology of reading in which the relation to books was taken as "impersonal" (Warner, *The Letters* xiii), reading books became increasingly perceived as "recreating an author's words in written form" and imagining that author as "*talking* to the reader" (W. Gilmore 40). That means the readers imagine themselves receiving a direct communication to the author. Gillian Silverman asserts that the act of reading in the nineteenth century created profound and intimate bonds between readers and authors, highlighting a way of thinking about reading that foregrounds intimacy and communion. Her study demonstrates that the metaphor of companionship—the book as friend—characterized the preeminent trope of nineteenth-century reading practices and "the ability of reading to produce experiences of mental and bodily contact was typical of nineteenth-century American life" (2).

In *A Week*, Thoreau also writes, "Give me a sentence which no intelligence can understand. There must be a kind of life and palpitation to it, and under its words a kind of blood must circulate forever.... [The] voice of man can be heard so little way, and we are not now within ear-shot of any contemporary" (151). Here, Thoreau emphasizes the corporeality of words, suggesting that they possess a living essence that connects individuals across time and space. For Thoreau, the written word allows for profound connections that transcend the immediate and the contemporary, facilitating a form of intimacy that avoids the emotional

homogenization of contemporaneousness. Accordingly, a reader's distance in time and space from classical authors is not a pitfall but an asset, allowing readers to engage with texts on a deeper, more personal level.⁹

Thoreau further explores this idea by addressing the nature of the author's true work. He argues that the essence of a poem is not merely found in its physical form—whether on paper, stone, or canvas—but in how it has been internalized and expressed in the life of the poet:

The true poem is not that which the public read. There is always a poem not printed on paper, coincident with the production of this, stereotyped in the poet's life. It is what he has become through his work. Not how is the idea expressed in stone, or on canvass or paper, is the question, but how far it has obtained form and expression in the life of the artist. His true work will not stand in any prince's gallery.

My life has been the poem I would have writ,

But I could not both live and utter it. (343)

Thoreau suggests that the true poem is the embodiment of the poet's life and essence, which is often inaccessible to the public eye. Again, as in his journal entry where Thoreau felt satisfaction with the returned copies of his book ("the inert mass"), he rejects mass consumption of his true poem here. The public's consumption of the poem does not capture the full reality of the poet's internal experience or the life lived through the poetry. Thoreau rejects the notion of mass

⁹ As with the battlefield bones in the "Monday" chapter, Thoreau incorporates decaying verses to describe poetic history as the "necessarily partial survival of weathered monuments that," rather than making the past present, "remind us of the uncanny proximity of the primitive and the contemporary" (367, 370). Thoreau's reading is not separated from such temporal experience. Wai Chee Dimock argues that Thoreau engages with "deep time" that is different from modern temporality. As Dimock points out, Thoreau especially finds in the *Bhagavad Gita* "an unexpected reader, a dedicated reader, but a skeptical one" (14). "Deep time" then winks at "reproductive readers"—reproductive in the sense of rewriting the text, updating it, giving it a new context of action (Dimock 16).

consumption and instead invites readers into a more intimate relationship with his work. He hopes that readers will engage with the underlying melody of his poetry, recognizing the life and personal essence embedded in it. At the same time, Thoreau invites readers into an intimate relationship with him through his book and hopes we will become such intimate readers, who will hear the melody of his poetry. His claims about the nature of true poetry and the intimacy of the written word suggest a dynamic interaction between the author and the reader, where privacy and personal engagement are interwoven. Therefore, Thoreau's insistence on privacy is not a withdrawal into isolation but rather a gesture toward an intersubjective relationship, a subtle and intricate dialogue that takes place within the silent spaces of his work. Here, privacy becomes a medium through which Thoreau and his readers can engage in a profound exchange, one that transcends the boundaries of conventional communication.

Hermeneutic Friends

As Daniel Peck claims, *A Week* is Thoreau's "most insistently and explicitly temporal work" (9); it is obvious that the trip down the river is inseparable from the currents of time. If friendship is a relation, then the relationship has a temporal as well as a spatial delineation. Thus, the journey itself serves as the trope for friendship. Throughout the voyage, Thoreau concentrates on the past as well as the future. Meredith McGill contends that *A Week* incorporates ancient verse to "inscribe a disjunctive relation to the past, not to overcome temporal and spatial dislocation" (367). As I have demonstrated, the distant relations of Thoreau's friendship theory are reproduced in the distance between his text and his readers. Indeed, a literary text becomes a kind of human relation, and reading itself offers a strong connection between the author and the reader. Thoreau treasures poetry because it can create intimacies that are at once private and

public; poetry opens up the future possibility of indirect, not necessarily reciprocal, communication with others.

In his book *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall* (2001), Christopher Nealon describes the ways in which twentieth-century gay and lesbian authors attempt to find a place in history by imagining alternative forms of queer community. For Nealon, queer texts are particularly unfinished projects; in their inarticulate hopes and desires, these texts gesture toward intimate alliances across time. “Foundling texts” anticipate future readers, and, in so doing, they are possibly realized with the emergence of a particular kind of reader. Nealon writes:

Because [foundling texts] do not properly belong either to the inert, terminal narratives of inversion or to the triumphant, progressive narrative of archiving ethnic coherence, they suggest another time, a time of expectation, in which their key stylistic gestures, choice of genre, and ideological frames all point to an inaccessible future, in which the inarticulate desires that mobilize them will find some “hermeneutic friend” beyond the historical horizon of their unintelligibility to themselves. (23)

In this vein, Thoreau’s *A Week* inhabits a “time of expectation,” as he awaits ideal friends who will fully understand his text. True, Thoreau presents intimate reading with metaphors of corporeal correspondence and dreams to encounter an ideal friend. But his dreaming of encounters with future friends is penetrated by negative emotions like irritation, anxiety, and despair. To put it another way, his attachment to the future demonstrates that Thoreau imagines an ideal encounter with a friend somewhere other than his historical present. Thoreau’s address to the future friend is therefore not necessarily optimistic.

Investigating the author's journals, Coviello argues that Thoreau was not just a man disappointed in others but was possessed with "what we might also think of as a kind of genius for disappointment." And his disappointment is rather "a particular kind of yearning" (*Tomorrow's* 32). Thus, it is this particular kind of love/friendship—the dynamics of disappointments and longings—that seriously matters for Thoreau, both as a citizen and a writer. As we have seen, Thoreau's friendship/love invariably entails disappointment and separation. He refuses a certain kind of access to the other, and yet this gesture of denial serves to both separate and unite. For Thoreau, who painfully recognizes the impossibility of friendship/love, the Friend is always already on the remotest horizon. This embeds a mark of promise in his theory of friendship—friends surely will appear at some point in future.

As recorded in his essays and lectures, Thoreau resisted not only the laws and society but also, and more importantly, social feelings—proper institutionalized emotions that are presumed as the foundations of human desire for social relationships, such as friendship and love.¹⁰ Thoreau critiqued institutionalized marriage: Indeed, he was a lifelong bachelor. The same thing can be said with his critique of socialized friendship, which "required us to give such proof of our affection" (279). Because of this, he laments, "What is commonly honored with the name of Friendship is no very profound or powerful instinct. Men do not, after all, *love* their Friends greatly" (265; italics original). Thoreau's disappointment is derived from the unbridgeable gap between the ideal and the real, but the ideal is related to another kind of love, or a different form of intimacy, than that which he meant by Friendship. However tragic this ideal friend that Thoreau hopes to encounter may be, his disappointment transforms into an

¹⁰ As argued by several critics such as Castiglia, Coviello (*Intimacy*), and Schweitzer, friendship as a disciplinary mode operated in a more institutionalized way to shape American culture and politics from the early- to mid-nineteenth century.

anticipation of future friends: “[Friendship] requires immaculate and godlike qualities full-grown, and exists at all only by condescension and anticipation of the remotest future” (276).

In an entry in his journal on May 21, 1851, Thoreau wrote: “The revelations of nature are infinitely glorious & cheering—hinting to us of a remotest future—of possibilities untold—but startlingly near to us some day we find a fellow man” (*J*,3: 229). Where Ralph Waldo Emerson describes ideal friends as “dreams and fables” (*CW* 2: 125), for Thoreau, they are more tragically hopeful. It is tragic because of the promissory forms of friendship—he only imagines the presence of friends somewhere other than where he is—and yet, it is hopeful precisely because these friends should arrive without exception. As Thoreau imagines, Friends “cherish each other’s hope. They are kind to each other’s dreams” (270). Thus, we can see how he might cherish the copies of his once published book, which were returned to his private chamber, where they might await their future readers.

CHAPTER II

Becoming Obscure:

The Dynamics of Failed Friendship in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

In his 1851 preface to the reissued second edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, Nathaniel Hawthorne concludes that his stories “have opened the way to most agreeable associations, and to the formation of imperishable friendships” (9:7). In this preface, Hawthorne first recounts his earlier career when, from a more obscure and secluded position, “[h]e was merely writing to his known or unknown friends” (9:5), but at this point in the preface, he begins to acknowledge his own work as a public production, claiming that his stories “are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart, (had it been so, they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently valuable,) but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world” (9:6). While Hawthorne stresses that the essence of his work does not reflect the private mind and heart of “a secluded man,” his prior contention about the value of seclusion complicates his ambiguous relationship with readers. Within his parenthetical statement, he implies that his work would be “more deeply and permanently valuable” if it had *not* been written for “the world,” that is, his contemporary audience.¹¹

¹¹ This is closely associated with one scene of Herman Melville's novel, *Pierre; or the Ambiguities* (1852). In there, the titular character embarks on a profound journey of writing an original book. As the narrator delves into Pierre's inner world, it becomes apparent that his life revolves around the creation of two distinct books—one destined for publication, while the other is inscribed within the intimate recesses of his soul (304-05). The first book, a tangible manifestation of Pierre's literary endeavors, symbolizes societal conventions and the external facade he presents to the world. It reflects the expectations imposed by society and his attempt to conform to its norms. However, the second book, etched upon Pierre's own soul, represents his

The relative success of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and the corresponding expectations from contemporary readers for intimate literary engagement compelled Hawthorne to reach a broader audience in ways that were unfamiliar and often uncomfortable for him. For Hawthorne, intimacy no longer relied on personal familiarity but emerged through a forced recognition of the unknown other. While he envisions an ideal reader, he is acutely aware that his works are addressed to strangers—an unknown audience of potential friends or enemies. In this context, he exposes himself to the possibility of being read and interpreted by others, much like a text open to scrutiny. As I will explore in more detail later, many of his prefaces emphasize his impenetrable privacy and inaccessibility, resisting any genuine insight readers might gain into the author. In this way, Hawthorne's views align with those of Henry David Thoreau, particularly in the belief that privacy must remain intact. Like Thoreau's ambivalent desire for both publication and privacy, as examined in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Hawthorne preserves his privacy and interiority as an inviolable sanctuary from a mass audience.

Thoreau champions privacy as an inviolable sanctuary, a space where the self can retreat and cultivate an inner life free from external intrusion. Thoreau's emphasis on the sanctity of this private realm reflects his vision of ideal friendship and human connection, where intimacy and silence are carefully mediated and guarded. In contrast, Hawthorne, perhaps the most enigmatic author of interiority, approaches the theme of privacy from a different angle. He probes the tension between the desire for solitude and the inevitable pull toward human interaction. While

authentic self, containing the unfiltered emotions, desires, and truths that he dares not reveal to the external world. This inner manuscript serves as a reservoir of Pierre's deepest convictions, fears, and aspirations, constituting a narrative far more profound and sincere than the one found in the public sphere. Melville skillfully weaves these dual narratives to explore the dichotomy between societal expectations and individual authenticity, inviting readers to contemplate the intricacies of identity, self-expression, and the conflict between societal conformity and inner truth.

Thoreau's privacy serves as a sanctuary, Hawthorne's privacy is more ambiguous—a space of both refuge and isolation, where the boundaries between the self and others are constantly negotiated.

In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, Thoreau briefly reflects on the irreconcilable divide between priests and physicians, suggesting that their professions are inherently at odds. He observes that priests and physicians “have no common ground,” and each serve as a kind of satire on the other. Thoreau argues that society's division of spirit and matter prevents these two from working together, leaving humans caught between inadequate treatments of either body or soul (*AW* 256-57). He insists that “It is commonly an attempt to cure the diseases of a man by addressing *his body alone*. There is need of a physician who shall minister to *both soul and body at once*, that is, to man” (257; emphasis added). Placed in his “Wednesday” chapter, in which Thoreau makes an extended digression in his philosophy of friendship, his reflection on the antagonism between priests and physicians is quite suggestive in that it shows his ideal friendship that embraces both spirituality and corporeality. Thoreau sets the stage for his subsequent discussion of transcendental friendship by pairing the roles of priest and physician. While he takes an ironic view of physicians who focus solely on the body, neglecting spiritual concerns, Thoreau emphasizes the need to care for “both soul and body at once.”

The motif of opposition between the priest and the physician is interestingly echoed in *The Scarlet Letter*, particularly in the simultaneously intimate and hostile relationship between the priest (Arthur Dimmesdale) and the physician (Roger Chillingworth). We cannot help recalling the scene in which Chillingworth scrutinizes Dimmesdale's inner secrets and receives a “strange sympathy betwixt soul and body” (1:138). Whether or not Hawthorne was actually

inspired by Thoreau's lesser-known passage to create the characters, he certainly knew about Thoreau's book project, *A Week*, and indeed, he had a chance to read the copy before 1850.¹² As scholars have noted, despite his being a neighbor of Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and other transcendentalists in Concord for a period, Hawthorne seemingly detached himself from their literary circle.¹³ But I argue that Hawthorne's interest in *pairing the unpairable*—the minister and the physician—both overlaps with and complicates Thoreau's idealized theory of transcendental friendship. *The Scarlet Letter* challenges the conventional idealization of friendship by presenting a more complex and unsettling view.

Scholarship has increasingly recognized the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth as a metafictional commentary on Hawthorne's intricate interactions with his readers. Gordon Hutner posits that Chillingworth embodies Hawthorne's vengeful impulses, serving as "the relentless if perhaps impotent investigator who scorns the privacy and 'sanctity' of another human heart" in pursuit of his skewed sense of justice—ironically, a role that a physician should instinctively eschew (24). Michael T. Gilmore further develops this idea by suggesting that Hawthorne's profound fear of violation shapes his portrayal of the relationship

¹² Hawthorne's introduction, "The Custom-House," mentions Thoreau as well as Emerson. In July of 1842, he wrote in *American Notebooks* that Thoreau "is a good writer—at least, he has written one good article, a rambling disquisition on Natural History in the last Dial, ... so true, minute, and literal in observation, yet giving the spirit as well as letter of what he sees, even as a lake reflects its wooded banks, showing every leaf, yet giving the wild beauty of the whole scene" (8:355). On February 19, 1849, Hawthorne wrote a letter to Thoreau, "Mr. Alcott delighted my wife and me ... by announcing that you had a book in press. I rejoice at it, and nothing doubt of such success as will be worth having" (*Selected Letters* 133). In March of 1851, however, Hawthorne spent time with Melville at Arrowhead, and he declared he would write a parody of Thoreau's *A Week* (Leyda 407).

¹³ See Reynolds and Martin.

between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth (88).¹⁴ Adding another layer to this analysis, Karen L. Kilcup explores the homoerotic tension between the two men, illustrating how this dynamic mirrors the author-reader relationship.¹⁵ This interplay highlights Hawthorne's ambivalence toward intimacy and self-exposure in his relationship with readers, ultimately revealing his deeper anxieties about the very act of writing.

Hawthorne's anxiety about inquisitive readers is indeed mirrored in the fraught relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. This tension reflects his imagined withdrawal from "the closest friend" described in the preface, "The Custom-House," where he envisions a retreat from the prying eyes of readers, embodied in Chillingworth's relentless scrutiny. While critics have extensively examined the antagonism between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, there has been little exploration of the *potential* within their failed friendship. This chapter argues that Hawthorne deliberately challenges the idealization of friendship, depicting it not as a harmonious communion but as an inherently conflicted and ultimately doomed relationship. Though labeled "friendship," the bond between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth is defined by manipulation, suffering, and the impossibility of genuine connection. Hawthorne intensifies their mutual alienation, yet still frames their relationship as a form of intimacy. This compels us to question what "friendship" truly means when marked by profound conflict and estrangement. Hawthorne's narrative complicates traditional understandings of intimacy, suggesting that it often carries destructive forces that undermine the very essence of

¹⁴ Gilmore provides the compelling account of Hawthorne's characterizations of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth as expressions of his own authorial identity and anxiety. Focusing on Hawthorne's struggles with the marketplace, Gilmore claims that Hester is "the first full-length representation in American literature of the alienated modern artist" (85).

¹⁵ Nina Baym discusses Hawthorne's identification with Hester Prynne, especially in her "creative" role (73). Leland S. Person also supports Baym's claim of Hester as a creative artist.

friendship.

Whereas Thoreau frequently emphasizes the importance of silence or reticence—a kind of intuitive understanding—in the interactions between friends, Hawthorne complicates this notion by problematizing Chillingworth’s “silent sympathy” itself. This raises the question: what kind of relationship does Hawthorne present in this friendship? And how does his idiosyncratic conception of friendship relate to his role as an author and his engagement with readers? A more nuanced understanding of intimacy—one often charged with conflict, struggle, and longing—is necessary to grasp Hawthorne’s complex portrayal of relationships. This perspective will also illuminate his distinctive engagement with his readers. Ultimately, *The Scarlet Letter* challenges us to reconsider traditional ideals of friendship, proposing instead a model shaped by alienation and solitude.

Hawthorne, acutely aware of the complexities involved in addressing readers, simultaneously invites and repels their intimate attachments to the author. Just as a gap exists between the ideal and the actual in friendship, so too is there a divide between the desire for an ideal textual interaction and the recognition of its insurmountable challenges. With this in mind, this chapter examines Hawthorne’s strategies for obscuring his innermost self, focusing specifically on the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. Before delving into the narrative, I first situate Hawthorne’s theory of friendship and his methods of authorial engagement, particularly through his prefaces. Next, I explore the failed friendship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Finally, by examining the themes of isolation and the complexities of human relationships through Dimmesdale’s struggle with guilt and his fraught connection with Chillingworth, this chapter contends that true intimacy for Hawthorne is defined not by closeness but by the persistent barriers between individuals. This perspective reflects his

own sense of obscurity as a writer in relation to both his contemporaries and the idealized future readers he envisions.

Against Identification

Hawthorne uses the friend metaphor on many occasions in the prefaces to his writings. Throughout his career, he continually conjures up the idea of an excluded relationship between author and reader based on intimate friendship. In doing so, Hawthorne undoubtedly joined the conversation of his era on friendship.¹⁶ In the preface to *The Snow Image* (1851), employing the form of a public letter to his friend, Horatio Bridge, Hawthorne likewise claims the necessary veiling of his personality even in his closest relationship: “There can be no question as to the propriety of my inscribing this volume of earlier and later sketches to you, and pausing here, a few moments, to speak of them, as friend speaks to friend; still being cautious, however, that the public and the critics shall overhear nothing which we care about concealing” (11:4). Engaging in a candid and private conversation with his friend Bridge, Hawthorne here constructs an exclusive friendship. At the same time, he criticizes the public and the critics who might “overhear” their confidential exchange. With his tactics of concealment and the revelation of the author’s interiority, Hawthorne’s use of the exclusive first-person plural pronoun (“we”) suggests the two friends’ undisclosed intimacy. Hawthorne’s reflections on privacy and inviolability reveal his awareness of his contemporary readers and critics, demonstrating his ambivalent approach to engaging with—and retreating from—his audience.

Distinguishing “his limited circle of friendly readers” from “the public at large” (11:3),

¹⁶ As a former member of the transcendental community, Hawthorne to some extent shares Emerson and Thoreau’s friendship theory.

the preface to *The Snow Image* clarifies Hawthorne's antipathy toward the reading public and his complicated attachment to a selected group of "friendly" readers. For Hawthorne, the "public" does not as fully understand his literary intentions as well as his more intimate, select friends. Thus, his longing for intimate connection with readers is penetrated by his fear of intrusion by an anonymous group of readers: "the habits thus acquired might pardonably continue, although strangers may have begun to mingle with my audience" (11:3). As Hawthorne emphasizes the limits of self-exposure in his autobiographical preface, there is an implicit hostility toward the "strangers" who may not meet the author's criteria.

Moreover, Hawthorne perceives the presence of the broader audience even as a potential obstacle to his autobiographical accounts. He repeatedly associates the public audience with adversaries, as evident in his assertion: "[W]ith whatever appearance of confidential intimacy, I have been especially careful to make no disclosures respecting myself which the most indifferent observer might not have been acquainted with, and which I was not perfectly willing that my worst enemy should know" (11:3). This connection is striking because even in seemingly intimate settings or moments, Hawthorne maintains a deliberate guardedness, suggesting that the reader might embody his "worst enemy." The passage underscores Hawthorne's meticulous approach to self-disclosure, where he constructs an illusion of intimacy while carefully controlling the extent of his revelations. Despite creating an illusion of intimacy or confiding in the reader, he remains cautious not to reveal anything beyond what a casual observer might discern. This guardedness reflects Hawthorne's reluctance to lay bare his innermost thoughts and secrets, indicating a profound wariness or mistrust towards the reader or the public at large.

As such, Hawthorne recurrently expresses his anxieties about exposing himself too much to the public audience. As the author presents the tension between privacy and publicity that he

experienced, “The Old Manse,” Hawthorne’s introductory sketch to *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), also provides explicit articulations of his ambiguous stance between private and public personas as an author. At the beginning of the sketch, he recounts the former resident as “a man not estranged from human life,” but nonetheless “enveloped, in the midst of it, with a veil woven of intermingled gloom and brightness” (10:4). In a similar way, Hawthorne presents the Manse as a liminal space that simultaneously connects the residents to the society and separates them from it. Thus, the house’s “near retirement and accessible seclusion” (10:4) aptly corresponds to Hawthorne’s own paradoxical desires for public recognition and impenetrable privacy.

Given its subtitle, “The Author Makes his Reader Acquainted with his Abode,” the house takes on a central role. As host, Hawthorne attends to the reader as his “guest in the old Manse, and entitled to all courtesy in the way of sight-showing” (10:6). The Manse—representing both privacy, intimacy, and familiarity—serves to entice the guest/reader into the resident’s inner space. In this sense, the house’s interior mirrors the interiority of the author himself. However, by the end of “The Old Manse,” Hawthorne continues to hold the guest/reader at a distance, never fully granting access to his inner world. Instead, he subverts the very structure of the preface, which typically presents the author as host and the reader as guest being led through a tour of the author’s home. He writes:

Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being, and have we groped together into all its chambers, and examined their treasures or their rubbish? Not so. ... So far as I am a man of really individual attributes, I veil my face; nor am I, nor have ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people, who serve up their own hearts delicately fried, with brain-sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public. (10:33)

Here, Hawthorne rejects the overindulgent hospitality of authors who offer themselves up for public consumption. He conveys his anxiety about readers' expectations of intimacy through grotesque corporeal imagery—"fried hearts" and "brain-sauce." This vivid, unsettling language reflects his reluctance to expose his innermost self to the public eye. Similarly, the guest/reader's "groping" into "all its chambers" and their "treasures" foreshadows Chillingworth's invasive "grope" into Dimmesdale's heart in *The Scarlet Letter*, positioning the reader's desire for intimacy as invasive and unwelcome. As a reluctant host, Hawthorne withholds access to his "inner passages," choosing instead to keep his face veiled. By maintaining this barrier, he critiques the literary convention that positions the author as a transparent, accessible figure. Rather than offering his "heart" as a delicacy, he insists on the value of privacy and the necessity of boundaries within the author-reader relationship. In this way, Hawthorne reframes hospitality, not as complete openness, but as a controlled engagement that resists complete self-exposure.

In the final paragraph, Hawthorne seemingly invites his guest into his personal study: "There, after seating him in an antique elbow chair, an heirloom of the house, I take forth a roll of manuscript, and intreat his attention to the following tales:—an act of personal inhospitality, however, which I never was guilty of, nor ever will be, even to my worst enemy" (10:35). Despite this gesture, his hospitality—or what he terms "personal inhospitality"—remains ambiguous. Hawthorne stirs the reader's desire for an intimate connection, only to leave it unfulfilled. The veiled Hawthorne thus becomes a seductive figure, transforming himself into an object of desire, even though the veil may ultimately conceal nothing. In this way, the veil itself becomes the secret that seduces us.

Herman Melville, himself seduced by Hawthorne, keenly discerns his guardedness and the strategic nature of his engagement with contemporary readers. In his 1850 essay "Hawthorne

and His Mosses,” Melville extols Hawthorne’s literary genius while highlighting his own discernment as a reader. Barbara Hochman notes that nineteenth-century book reviewers often viewed works of fiction as direct expressions of an author’s personality, addressing reviews as though the reviewer, author, and reader formed a homogenous community—or as if the reviewer personally knew the author, which was often the case (12). This “habit of thinking about books as embodiments of authors” contributed to a broader discourse that represented “books as people” (Hochman 11). Melville’s review of Hawthorne reinforces this conflation of author and text. He emphasizes his ability to infer the author’s personality through his stories, elaborating on Hawthorne’s character based on his writing: “[Hawthorne’s] face was full of sturdy vigor, with some finer and keener attribute beneath; though harsh at first, it was tempered with the glow of a large, warm heart, which had force enough to heat his powerful intellect through and through” (*PT* 250). Although Melville wrote this review after his initial encounter with Hawthorne, he constructs it as if he had never met the author. Despite their acquaintance, Melville, adopting the fictive persona of “a Virginian Spending July in Vermont,” claims, “I never saw the man [Hawthorne]; and in the chances of a quiet plantation life, remote from his haunts, perhaps never shall” (249). He even invites those who know Hawthorne personally to verify the accuracy of his reading: “I submit it ... to those best acquainted with the man personally, whether the following is not Nathaniel Hawthorne” (249). Melville acknowledges Hawthorne’s veiled nature, presenting a dynamic that is at once close yet distant, complicating the notion of intimacy with the author by insisting on the impossibility of truly knowing him directly.

While “The Old Manse” sets the stage for Hawthorne’s complex relationship with his readers—inviting them into his personal space while keeping them at a distance—the preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, “The Custom-House,” deepens this exploration. “The Custom-House” is

often viewed as a continuation of the themes introduced in “The Old Manse,” especially Hawthorne’s preoccupation with autobiographical privacy and intimacy. In both texts, Hawthorne plays with the role of the author as host, creating an aura of intimacy only to obscure his true self behind layers of narrative veiling. “The Custom-House” serves as a sequel to “The Old Manse” by intensifying Hawthorne’s tension between disclosure and concealment, presenting his personal space and history while ultimately withholding the most private aspects of his identity. The connection between these two works underscores Hawthorne’s ongoing effort to balance the allure of intimacy with the protection of his inner life. Although the sketch is written by “an autobiographical impulse” (1:3), Hawthorne meticulously guards his privacy, resisting any intrusive readerly gaze. Instead, he again imagines alternative forms of nonintrusive friendship that readers might offer:

[A]s thoughts are frozen and utterance benumbed, unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience, it may be pardonable to imagine that a friend, a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend, is listening to our talk; and then, a native reserve being thawed by this genial consciousness, we may prate of the circumstances that lie around us, and even of ourself, but still keep the inmost Me behind its veil. To this extent, and within these limits, an author, methinks, may be autobiographical, without violating either the reader’s rights or his own. (1:4)

Much like Thoreau, who advocates for the preservation of one’s inviolable personality and the deep concealment of privacy through silence, or Melville’s titular character in “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1852), whose opaque interiority will be analyzed in the following chapter, Hawthorne positions himself as a speaker seeking “some true relation with” his audience while intentionally keeping “the inmost Me behind its veil.” As Clark Davis nicely notes, Hawthorne’s

use of “veiling” reflects his desire “to vanish from his own attempt to present himself” (3). His concept of “a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend” reinforces his simultaneous allure and distance from the reader. Hawthorne implies that even the closeness of friendship harbors the potential for intrusive violence, highlighting the delicate balance between intimacy and privacy in his autobiographical writings.

In creating an autobiographical narrator closely identified with himself, Hawthorne addresses “the few who will understand him,” while renouncing the approach of “[s]ome authors” who “indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be addressed, only and exclusively, to the one heart and mind of *perfect sympathy*” (1:3; emphasis added). While Hawthorne, as a notoriously private person, yearns for the “kind and apprehensive” friend-reader, he sees such intimate revelation and disclosure of one’s privacy as indecorous. Hawthorne’s exploration of the concept of “perfect sympathy” reveals a nuanced understanding of human relationships and the complexities of empathy. David Leverenz aptly argues that “the very first paragraph of ‘The Custom-House’ both solicits and denies the possibility of ‘perfect sympathy’ between writer and reader by associating knowledge of ‘the inmost Me’ with veils and violation” (“Mrs. Hawthorne’s Headache” 562). As Hawthorne delves into this idea, he comes to the realization that “perfect sympathy,” which entails being *completely identified* with another person, possesses invasive qualities that can ultimately prove undesirable. Therefore, he may suggest that the perfect sympathy is unattainable and perhaps even harmful. Human nature is inherently complex, and individuals possess unique experiences, emotions, and desires that cannot be fully understood or shared by another. The pursuit of perfect sympathy may thus be a futile endeavor, leading only to disappointment and disillusionment.

This idea aligns with Kuisma Korhonen’s argument in *Textual Friendship: The Essay as*

Impossible Encounter from Plato and Montaigne to Levinas and Derrida (2014). Korhonen challenges the traditional understanding of friendship as a familiar and self-evident bond, proposing instead that our encounters through texts are characterized by a fundamental undecidability. He posits that “textual friendship” is not about reconnecting with the familiar but rather about venturing into the unfamiliar, the uncertain, and the unknown—toward an encounter with “the Other in its irreducible otherness” (17). In this framework, friendship through text becomes an exploration of the unfamiliar, emphasizing the inherent complexity and uncertainty in forming connections with others, particularly through the written word.

For Hawthorne, friendship embodies both profound attachment and inevitable renunciation, dramatizing the unknowability of the other. He rejects the notion of complete identification, instead recognizing the inherent limitations in understanding another’s elusive inner life. In his prefaces, the figure of a friend symbolizes not only textual intimacy but also Hawthorne’s ambivalence toward the textual other—his readers. While he seeks a connection with readers through his writing, he is acutely aware that achieving an idealized form of friendship in these encounters is nearly impossible. This yearning for profound textual intimacy is intertwined with an anxiety rooted in the awareness that readers, as the textual “other” or even potential “enemy,” lie beyond his control. Hawthorne’s complex relationship with his readership reflects a conception of friendship that aspires to deep textual connection but is inevitably accompanied by the fear of exposing the interior life of the author.

Potentiality of Failed Friendship

This exploration of friendship and intimacy in Hawthorne’s work extends to the dynamics between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. In this narrative, their

relationship is framed within the language of friendship and intimacy, despite the dark undercurrents that complicate this bond. Chillingworth is described as a man of great medical skill who has settled in the town for several years. He is regarded as both the physician and “friend” of the young minister, Dimmesdale, whose health has been declining due to his demanding pastoral duties and his burden of guilt (1:109). The two men are repetitively referred to as “friends,” with their connection characterized by “intimacy.” As the story goes on, Chillingworth’s “care” as a physician for Dimmesdale brings the two men into “a kind of intimacy” that “grew up between these two cultivated minds, which had as wide a field as the whole sphere of human thought and study, to meet upon” (1:125). Through their apparent friendship, the physician “dug into the poor clergyman’s heart” (1:129). Intimate friendship here is fortified through acts of forced self-disclosure, which is not reciprocal, wherein only Dimmesdale reveals to Chillingworth his inner thoughts and feelings.

This seemingly benign friendship is fraught with tension and manipulation. Chillingworth, under the guise of friendship, exploits his position as Dimmesdale’s confidant, subtly probing the minister’s conscience and intensifying his inner torment. Though described as a companionship, their relationship is characterized by Chillingworth’s calculated intrusion into Dimmesdale’s spiritual and emotional life, making this “friendship” a sinister form of control rather than mutual support. Hawthorne portrays Chillingworth as a satanic figure because of his “intuition”—a special skill that allows him to consult both soul and body, thereby violating the priest’s sacred domain. At one point, the narrator cautiously remarks that a man burdened with a secret should avoid intimacy with his physician, especially one with “intuition” and the ability to draw out a patient’s inner thoughts without explicit conversation. Such a physician, through his silence and subtle understanding, will eventually lead the patient to reveal all his hidden

mysteries. Hawthorne then notes that Chillingworth possesses most of these traits (1:124-25).¹⁷

Hawthorne, in turn, obsessively links the violation of one's sacred interiority with acts of reading, interpretation, and the exposure of inner "truth." Chillingworth thus assumes the role of an intrusive reader, one who unearths and exposes Dimmesdale's hidden self. In the prison-house interview, Chillingworth vows to his estranged wife, Hester Prynne, that he will hunt down her partner in adultery:

I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy.

There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!

(1:75; emphasis added)

Chillingworth's desire to possess Dimmesdale reflects a profound need to unravel the minister's hidden interiority. This desire parallels the way an avid reader seeks "truth in books"—meticulously poring over pages in search of hidden meanings and revelations. Moreover, Chillingworth physically identifies with the minister, as he himself "shudders" in response to Dimmesdale's experiences. Hawthorne employs various tropes of "reading" to characterize Chillingworth's approach to understanding Dimmesdale's inner turmoil. The physician, akin to a devoted and perceptive reader, is depicted as someone seeking to decipher the secrets embedded within Dimmesdale's character. His desire to pursue the minister echoes an insatiable hunger for the truth, much like a reader eagerly delving into a text to uncover its underlying messages.

As the story goes on, the physician further goes "deep into his patient's bosom, *delving* among his principles, *prying* into his recollections, and *probing* every thing with a cautious

¹⁷ Hawthorne's narrator is said to be not identical to the author himself, but hereafter I refer to the narrator as Hawthorne.

touch, like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern” (1:124; emphasis added). By the end of the narrative, however, Chillingworth’s vigorous possession of Dimmesdale turns out to be a demonized enterprise. The apparent affection of Chillingworth is his disguised desire, while he privately scrutinizes Dimmesdale’s mind and body. Chillingworth’s “prying” and probing” of Dimmesdale’s “bosom” ultimately expose the minister’s secret sin, when he “thrust[s] aside the vestment that, hitherto, had always covered it even from the professional eye” (1:138). This reaction underscores the power of Chillingworth’s total identification, his ability to discern hidden truths not only through verbal exchanges but also through an almost intuitive understanding of the physical and emotional cues of those around him.

Like the figure of the reader who intrudes upon the inner space Hawthorne guards in his prefaces, Chillingworth’s capacity for identification—his ability to empathize and connect on a visceral level—is portrayed as a powerful instrument in his quest to expose hidden truths. This intrusive empathy mirrors the anxiety Hawthorne expresses about readers who seek to penetrate the layers of privacy he deliberately constructs. Through Chillingworth, Hawthorne dramatizes the dangers of such invasive intimacy, where the act of uncovering secrets becomes a violation of the self rather than a path to genuine understanding. This deep understanding of human nature, reminiscent of a perceptive reader deciphering the nuances of a complex narrative, allows Chillingworth to penetrate the facades and explore the inner workings of his target. Through the use of the “reading” metaphor, Hawthorne paints a vivid picture of Chillingworth as a character who embodies the traits of an astute and sympathetic reader. His relentless pursuit of truth and his acute identification create an aura of apprehension among those he interacts with, as they fear he might unveil their hidden secrets with the same precision and depth with which a perceptive reader deciphers the layers of a compelling text. In this way, Hawthorne’s romance repetitively

foregrounds Chillingworth's one-sided effort at empathic reading, a fully immersive act of interpretation that, in his preface, is depicted as a grotesque violation.

Sympathy in friendship often leads to identification with another, but for Hawthorne, this form of identification is not always seen in a positive light. *The Scarlet Letter* reveals how unsettling such identification can be, particularly through its portrayal of the unease and animosity at the core of the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Rather than idealizing friendship, Hawthorne's narrative exposes its inherent tensions and limitations. In this text, friendship is not a source of positive communion; instead, it is marked by failure and, at times, appears entirely impossible. In this respect, it is significant to consider the "Conclusion" chapter, in which Hawthorne takes up again the relationship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, suggesting the possibility of transforming hate into love:

It is a curious subject of observation and inquiry, whether hatred and love be not the same thing at bottom. Each, in its utmost development, supposes a high degree of intimacy and heart-knowledge; each renders one individual dependent for the food of his affections and spiritual life upon another; each leaves the passionate lover, or the no less passionate hater, forlorn and desolate by the withdrawal of his object.

Philosophically considered, therefore, the two passions seem essentially the same.... In the spiritual world, the old physician and the minister—mutual victims as they have been—*may, unawares*, have found their earthly stock of hatred and antipathy transmuted into *golden love*. (1:260-61; emphasis added)

Hawthorne suggests that hatred stemming from the failed friendship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale could paradoxically evolve into a peculiar form of "golden love." Earlier in the narrative, he implies a similar potential for transformation when observing that the

townspeople's animosity toward Hester and her sin gradually diminishes: "Hatred, by a gradual and quiet process, will even be transformed to love" (1:160). In these passages, Hawthorne underscores the intense emotional investment inherent in both love and hatred, proposing that hatred may, in fact, signify a profound attachment akin to the most intimate forms of love.

The relationship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale has been analyzed in various ways by scholars, with several suggesting homoerotic undertones in their interactions. These interpretations often highlight the intense emotional and psychological bond between the two characters, focusing on the complex dynamics of power, control, and obsession. Chillingworth, consumed by his desire for revenge, fixates on Dimmesdale with a scrutiny that transcends typical vengeance, creating a realm of emotional and psychological intimacy that suggests a homoerotic subtext.¹⁸ Based on the queer reading of their relationship, Lauren Berlant interprets this "golden love" as a homosocial utopia, a space where "love will reign, transfiguring men into their ideal, disembodied, 'spiritual' relations" (120). However, rather than promising a perfect union in a "spiritual world," Hawthorne emphasizes the challenges, impossibilities, and perhaps even the undesirability of sustaining such intimate male friendships, even on a transcendent level. It is significant that the ambiguity in Hawthorne's use of the phrase "may, unawares" indicates the uncertain nature of the transformation from hatred to love—it might occur, or it might not. This open-endedness reflects the complex interplay of emotions and the inherent

¹⁸ Writing about the relationship between sexual desire and knowledge in her biography of Hawthorne, Brenda Wineapple points out, "With tragic or pathetic consequences, these repressed men transform sexual curiosity into a desire for knowledge" (65). According to David Leverenz, Chillingworth's "intrusive, sadistic rape first awakens protracted throbs of pain, then culminates in the 'moment of his ecstasy,' when his discovery of what lies on the sleeping minister's chest sends Dimmesdale into a 'shudder' and Chillingworth into a 'ghastly rapture' of riotous gestures" (272). Monika Elbert describes the Chillingworth-Dimmesdale relationship as "romantic" and "sexual," arguing that "these men are more than roommates; their relationship is a parody of the marriage which either should have achieved with Hester" (246).

challenges in navigating such profound connections.

Chillingworth's unfulfilled quest for "golden love" contributes to a deeper understanding of their failed friendship, particularly regarding the potentialities embedded within their relationship. This suggests that, should Chillingworth attain what he seeks, it could transform his intense hatred into an equally passionate form of love. However, this transformation remains perpetually uncertain within the novel. In essence, the notion of "golden love" between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth exists in a state of ambiguity rather than certainty. Therefore, Hawthorne avoids presenting a definitive happy conclusion, instead subtly hinting at the (im)possibility of an intimate utopian communion.

The enmity that Dimmesdale and Chillingworth harbor toward each other perpetually haunts their friendship. Despite their mutual hatred and antipathy, their deep engagement with one another—especially when uncomfortable truths are disclosed—can create a bond that is nearly inseparable. Notably, Hawthorne accentuates their alienated affections, rendering them increasingly strange to one another, often in violent ways. By depicting a form of failed friendship among those who have endured absolute alienation, he resists any facile notion of communion, opting instead to preserve the friend's impenetrable Otherness.

This ambiguity enhances our understanding of the complexities within their relationship. Hawthorne posits those moments of uncertainty or opacity in the text—where transformations falter and interpretations remain elusive—offer opportunities to explore the potentialities of their failed friendship. Rather than presenting a definitive transformation, these moments invite readers to engage with the evolving and ambiguous nature of their connection, highlighting that intimacy can encompass turmoil and unease, which are intrinsic to the essence of friendship. Thus, Hawthorne encourages speculation about the transformative possibilities that

linger within the uncharted territory of their unique bond. By critiquing the idealized notion of friendship, he deliberately refrains from allowing this concept of future possibilities to fully develop. Instead, he illustrates how intimate relationships—whether characterized by love or hate—struggle with transformative potential. Their intimacy does not seamlessly extend toward a distant temporal or spatial horizon; rather, it suggests that any potential for intimacy is fraught with difficulties arising from the disjunctive nature of temporal rupture, discontinuity, and disconnection.

Beyond the Grave

Throughout *The Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale, burdened by his sin and concealed guilt, becomes deeply suspicious of those around him, deliberately isolating himself from love and friendship. In doing so, he distances himself from the solace that a friend might offer—a compassionate listener and empathetic companion—while failing to recognize the genuine threat posed by Chillingworth. The novel ultimately suggests that human beings are intrinsically isolated, emphasizing the essential unknowability of each individual.

The relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth exemplifies this dynamic: their so-called “friendship” is built on concealment and inaccessibility, with Chillingworth striving to bridge the gap by uncovering Dimmesdale’s inner truth while Dimmesdale resists this encroachment. This relationship indicates that, for Hawthorne, friendship is not predicated on mutual understanding or transparency, but rather on the tension created by the refusal of complete identification. In this sense, Hawthorne’s intimacy is constructed not through communion, but through distance—an acknowledgment that true connection may never be fully realized and that the gap between individuals is integral to the relationship itself. He invites

readers to consider the possibility that intimacy and friendship do not negate separation but are defined by it. The veils that Dimmesdale uses to protect his inner self do not preclude intimacy; instead, they create the conditions for a more complex, reticent form of connection, where what is withheld is as significant as what is revealed.

In this way, Hawthorne illustrates the profound loneliness of each character, highlighting the subtle dynamics of distance and withdrawal in their intimate connections rather than presenting idealized relationships. His emphasis shifts away from direct attachments, focusing instead on how these relationships are shaped by the complexities of isolation. He implies that the alienated figure itself can become a form of connection through shared experiences of shame, despair, and loneliness, revealing the painful commonality of isolation. Hawthorne's representation of intimacy is characterized not by the dissolution of barriers between individuals but by their persistent separation. The story demonstrates that Hawthorne's conception of intimate relationships is shaped by the alienation between individuals—whether emotional, psychological, or moral.

Thus, Hawthorne's conception of friendship and intimacy reflects a broader theme of remoteness—one that, rather than being an obstacle, shapes the terms of encounter and relation. This dynamic allows him to explore the limits of human connection, suggesting that alienation, distance, and inaccessibility, may not be a denial of relation but a form of it. This nuanced interplay between connection and distance further echoes Hawthorne's reflections in "The Custom-House," where he contemplates the nature of his relationship with his readers. Toward the end of the preface, he seems to address the ideal friend in the future reader: "The sketch which I am now bringing to a close, if too autobiographical for a modest person to publish in his lifetime, will readily be excused in a gentleman who writes from *beyond the grave*" (1:43-44;

emphasis added). Here, he articulates a desire to transcend the limitations of his immediate audience, passing his work to future generations from a place “beyond the grave.” This proleptic vision invites speculation about the emergence of readers who might better appreciate his complexities. By envisioning a future dialogue with readers, Hawthorne underscores the enduring nature of his work and highlights the potential for deeper literary connections that transcend time and circumstance, thereby evading the scrutiny of his contemporary audience.

Through this prefiguration, Hawthorne subtly introduces the potential emergence of future readers by envisioning his own death in advance. Wary of his contemporary mass readership, he deliberately postpones the ideal textual encounter to a distant future. In this imagined space, Hawthorne positions himself as a deceased author, distanced from the immediate expectations of his contemporaries.

It may be, however,—O, transporting and triumphant thought!—that the great-grandchildren of the present race may sometimes think kindly of the scribbler of bygone days, when the antiquary of days to come, among the sites memorable in the town’s history, shall point out the locality of The Town Pump! (1:45)

Although Hawthorne may have hoped *The Scarlet Letter* would establish him as a prominent writer, his reference to the “antiquary of days to come” playfully gestures toward readers of a distant future. The mention of “great-grandchildren” further emphasizes this expanding temporal distance, suggesting a reader whose connection to Hawthorne is mediated through time rather than immediate recognition. By positioning himself as “the scribbler of bygone days,” he consciously detaches from his own era, envisioning himself as a figure partially obscured by time. In this sense, Hawthorne’s preface is shaped by a cross-historical desire, subtly imagining an encounter with a different kind of reader in the future.

This paradoxical act of forming a connection across time while avoiding direct intimacy is embodied by Hawthorne himself. The drama of the unknowability of the other is further complicated by Hawthorne's unique position as *reader* within *The Scarlet Letter*. In his preface, he frames himself as the "editor" of the original narrative. He asserts his role not as the author but as a reader of the discovered story, which is "authorized and authenticated by the document of [the fictive character] Mr. Surveyor Pue" (1:32). The narrative of *The Scarlet Letter* thus begins with Hawthorne's serendipitous discovery of "a small package" among the abandoned archives in the Custom House (1:29). He emphasizes that he found the story rather than invented it. While the connection to the past is often depicted as an unbridgeable gap, it nonetheless carries an affective weight that transcends any possibility of complete communion. This connection embodies a unique, relational resonance that avoids both full sympathetic identification and intimate attachment. For Hawthorne, then, the ideal relationship with texts resonates on a level that is both embodied and detached, creating a distinctive relational dynamic that emphasizes the limits of understanding while allowing for a meaningful, if distant, connection.

However, Hawthorne also recognizes that his ideal reader relationship will never be seamless, primarily due to the disjointed nature of temporal distance. His imaginative construction of a reader as "the not closest friend" allows him to set spatial boundaries in his preface; his act of veiling "the inmost Me" creates an inviolate private space within a published autobiographical preface. This reticence and reserve that characterize his aesthetics not only turn away from his contemporary critics but even distance him from future readers. Hawthorne's withdrawal has left readers unsettled, as he constructs intimacy that eschews personal exposure, suggesting that true connection derives not from familiarity but from a recognition of the other's

alterity.

Toward the end of his career, Hawthorne became increasingly disillusioned with his celebrity status. As Richard Brodhead notes, “As Hawthorne acceded to the role of canonical author he himself began to find his work a bore. His dominant passions in the years of his greatest fame were apathy, lassitude, and ennui” (*The School* 79). In the preface to his last published romance, *The Marble Faun* (1860), Hawthorne seems almost to yearn for obscurity, remarking on the difficulty of finding an ideal reader:

Unquestionably, this Gentle, Kind, Benevolent, Indulgent, and most Beloved and Honoured Reader, did once exist for me, and (in spite of the infinite chances against a letter’s reaching its destination, without a definite address) duly received the scrolls which I flung upon whatever wind was blowing, in the faith they would find him out. But is he extant now? In these many years, since he last heard from me, may he not have deemed his earthly task accomplished, and have withdrawn to the Paradise of Gentle Readers, wherever it may be...? If I find him at all, it will probably be under some mossy grave-stone, inscribed with a half-obliterated name, which I shall never recognize. (4:10)

In this passage, Hawthorne addresses an idealized reader whom he describes as “Gentle, Kind, Benevolent, Indulgent, and most Beloved and Honoured”—a list so elaborate that it sounds ironic. He reflects on this hypothetical reader, hinting that such a figure might have once existed, but he appears skeptical of their reality in the present. Hawthorne imagines that if he were to find this reader again, it might only be through the accidental discovery of a moss-covered gravestone with a barely legible name. The passage encapsulates Hawthorne’s introspective and melancholic tone, suggesting the ideal reader may never have existed in reality. His lingering sense of

isolation foregrounds a profound loneliness that permeates his literary journey, reinforcing the notion that his connection with readers is more of a melancholic ideal than an attainable reality. This reflection on the elusive reader reveals a conception of friendship and readership that underscores the solitude at the core of Hawthorne's work, with an acknowledgment of the enduring distance he maintains from those who engage with his words.

CHAPTER III

Betraying Friendship: Melville's Anxious Relationship with Readers

Failure of Friendship?

In his review essay of Nathaniel Hawthorne's stories, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850), Herman Melville envisions the literary friendship of authors "all over the world" who stand "hand in hand" (*PT* 247-49). While extolling Hawthorne's genius, Melville simultaneously announces his own ambition to write a great novel. Hawthorne would soon reciprocate this gesture. In November 1851, Melville received a letter from the elder writer, offering praise for his latest work, *Moby-Dick*. Melville, having found at least one deeply sympathetic reader in Hawthorne, responded with fervor to the letter.

So your joy-giving and exultation-breeding letter is not my reward for my ditcher's work with that book, but is the good goddess's bonus over and above what was stipulated for—for not one man in five cycles, who is wise, will expect appreciative recognition from his fellows, or any one of them. Appreciation! Recognition! (*Correspondence* 212)

Melville was deeply gratified, famously expressing in the same letter an "infinite fraternity of feeling" (212). This type of author-reader connection is a recurring theme in Melville's correspondence, where he often invokes the figure of an intimate friend to articulate this bond.

In the mid-nineteenth century, literary exchanges increasingly became an arena for fostering communication, friendship, and even love. In her examination of reading practices during this period, Gillian Silverman demonstrates how reading could forge profound and intimate bonds

between readers and authors. The relationship between Melville and Hawthorne, at least at this moment, exemplifies such ideal communion on both literary and social levels. Within this cultural context—where the ideal author-reader relationship was grounded in the concept of friendship—Melville sought desperately to cultivate an intimate connection with his audience. Scholars have noted that this desire for communion is vividly expressed in Melville’s letters to Hawthorne and Richard Henry Dana, Jr., where he invokes the figure of intimate friendship (*Correspondence* 212, 160).

A close examination of Melville’s life and writings reveals that friendship was a particularly significant theme for the author. Melville was deeply interested in the nature of intimate male friendships, which appear in his works in various, often seemingly incidental, forms. However, after the disappointing sales and critical reception of *Moby-Dick* and his subsequent novel *Pierre*, Melville grew increasingly antagonistic toward his readers, ultimately “to the point where he virtually turned his back on his audience” (Machor 139). This sense of alienation from his readership is reflected in his later works, which often emphasize themes of estrangement between friends. From the growing antagonism between Pierre and his cousin Glen in *Pierre*, to the title character’s withdrawal in “Jimmy Rose” (1855), the failure of mutual understanding in “Benito Cereno” (1855), and the eventual alienation of the protagonist in *Israel Potter* (1855), Melville’s fictions repeatedly depict the enactment (or reenactment) of estrangement between friends. Since friendship, for Melville, was not only a personal relationship but also a model for the ideal author-reader connection, his representations of friendship can be understood as a commentary on the dynamics of interpretation and communication, making them central to his hermeneutic concerns.

Melville scholars frequently interpret his later works as a reflection of his growing

withdrawal from society and the literary marketplace, as well as his estrangement from Hawthorne. Robert K. Martin argues that Melville's profound sense of hopelessness during this period stemmed largely from his failed friendship with Hawthorne, a loss that haunted him throughout his life (97). This estrangement, as noted by critics such as Robert Milder and Brenda Wineapple, influenced Melville's works and contributed to his growing antagonism toward his readers, particularly his suspicion of a mass audience. William Charvat contends that "Melville's conflict with his readers ... ended in defeat" due to an "insensitive public" (204, 281), while Michael Kearns more recently suggests that Melville's distrust of the literary marketplace was rooted in his belief that "originality had an intrinsic value, independent of ... demands from a mass market" (83). Though compelling, this view of Melville's alienation as a product of personal or commercial failures may be overly simplistic. Much of the existing scholarship presumes that Melville's estrangement from society and the literary marketplace was the *result* of these perceived "failures." However, what if we reframe these "failures" not as unfortunate consequences, but as deliberate outcomes that Melville *intended* to provoke? Rather than seeing his alienation as a passive response to disappointment, it might be more insightful to consider that Melville actively pursued such estrangement.

Indeed, he appeared fully conscious that his works were destined to "fail." In a letter to his father-in-law, Lemuel Shaw, dated October 6, 1849, Melville expressed this sentiment: "So far as I am individually concerned, & independent of my pocket, it is my earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to 'fail'" (*Correspondence* 139). Melville understood that as long as he pursued originality in his writing, his works would not align with the expectations of his readership. Nonetheless, he seemed to vacillate between belief and disbelief in the possibility of an audience that might fully comprehend his literary vision. This is precisely why he felt a sense of

relief and safety when Hawthorne fully understood *Moby-Dick* (and why he might have been deeply disappointed when they later became estranged).

In “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” Melville both praises Hawthorne’s literary genius and articulates his frustration with contemporary readers’ inability to recognize the originality of existing American authors. Melville highlights his own perceptiveness as a reader while criticizing his peers for their narrow literary expectations. He argues that many Americans, even those who anticipate the rise of a great literary figure, mistakenly believe this genius will appear in the style of a bygone era: “they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth’s day” (*PT* 246). Mentioning the unacknowledged presence of “a great literary genius,” Melville goes on to associate the present literary situation with Christ’s *untimely* advent: “It is of a piece with the Jews, who while their Shiloh was meekly walking in their streets, were still praying for his magnificent coming; looking for him in a chariot, who was already among them on an ass” (246). Comparing the public’s failure to recognize great American writers to the Jews’ failure to acknowledge Christ’s presence, Melville suggests that while they expected a grand arrival, the Messiah had already come “meekly” among them. In the same way, Melville asserts that great literary talent was already present in his time, lamenting that readers overlooked the originality and brilliance of authors like Hawthorne.

In reviewing Hawthorne’s stories, Melville not only establishes himself as a discerning reader but also urges his contemporaries to recognize Hawthorne’s genius *in the present* (whether or not Hawthorne himself truly desired this, as discussed in the previous chapter). He emphasizes this point by declaring, “Give not over to future generations the glad duty of acknowledging [Hawthorne] for what he is. Take that joy to your self, in your own generation” (249). This statement reveals Melville’s desire for readers to claim the privilege of appreciating Hawthorne’s

brilliance now, rather than leaving it to posterity. Moreover, it reflects Melville's simultaneous sense of textual intimacy with Hawthorne and alienation from contemporary readers who failed to grasp such literary merit. In this way, Melville's essay imagines a kind of literary friendship while also calling for a shift in the cultural mindset of his time. He critiques the "immaturity" of the American readership, which was, in his view, *unprepared* for the advent of truly original literature. However, this does not mean that Melville abandoned or was entirely antagonistic toward a mass audience; instead, he sought to cultivate a deeper appreciation of literary innovation among his contemporaries.

Keeping in mind this intricate connection between writing, reading, and friendship, this chapter aims to deepen our understanding of Melville's anxious relationship with his readers by examining two key texts from the later stages of his career as a fiction writer: "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853) and *The Confidence-Man* (1857). These works are crucial for a nuanced discussion of Melville's evolving sense of estrangement, as they vividly illustrate his preoccupation with failed interpersonal connections and his growing alienation from his audience. In "Bartleby, the Scrivener," Melville presents a narrative devoid of traditional markers of friendship between the lawyer and Bartleby. As Naomi Morgenstern notes, the story lacks "mutuality, equality, reciprocity, or even the faint hope of communion" (252). This absence is significant because it reflects Melville's increasing disconnection from both society and the literary marketplace. The lawyer's interactions with Bartleby underscore a profound failure to establish meaningful connection, highlighting the dissonance between the lawyer's intentions and Bartleby's responses. This story, published immediately after *Pierre*, demonstrates Melville's shift from the idealization of friendship to a depiction of its profound failures, mirroring his own growing disillusionment with his readers. Similarly, in *The Confidence-Man*, the titular character's "genial

misanthrope” further amplifies Melville’s themes of estrangement and alienation. Sianne Ngai’s observation that *The Confidence-Man* turns Bartleby into a “narratological principle,” making the novel “more Bartlebyan than ‘Bartleby’ itself” (50), underscores how Melville’s exploration of friendship and betrayal evolves into a more complex and pervasive critique of human connection. The novel’s enigmatic and cynical tone encapsulates the culmination of Melville’s pessimism, as it reflects his broader anxieties about the nature of interpersonal relationships and the limitations of literary intimacy.

Discussing these two texts together is, therefore, essential for understanding the trajectory of Melville’s thoughts on friendship and readership. “Bartleby, the Scrivener” provides a concrete example of failed interpersonal connection, while *The Confidence-Man* extends and complicates these themes, revealing Melville’s deeper skepticism about genuine intimacy. By focusing on these works, this chapter will explore how Melville’s depiction of estranged relationships mirrors his own discontent with the literary establishment and his struggle to reconcile his ambitions for a profound author-reader connection with the realities of his reception. This examination will offer insights into Melville’s pervasive sense of alienation and his complex engagement with the concept of literary friendship. Focusing on the “failed” relationship as an analogy for the author’s distressed relationship with his readers, I first delve into the lawyer’s untimely relations with Bartleby and demonstrate the ways in which Melville reveals the structure of their failed friendship through his description of the lawyer’s betrayal. I then examine the strange logic of friendships as represented in *The Confidence-Man*, where the title character’s “genial misanthrope” cruelly uncovers the unbridgeable gap between friends. Admittedly, Melville’s repeated dramatization of betrayal and of the failure of friendship exemplifies his deep pessimism. Despite this, I will not overemphasize the negativity of his despair; instead, I argue that at the end of his career as a

writer of long fiction, Melville embraced a perpetual pessimism that would paradoxically open up the potentiality for greater author-reader intimacy.

Bad Timing

In “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” the lawyer/narrator initially endeavors to present himself as a “friendly” figure towards his employee, persistently appealing to Bartleby “as a friend” (PT 25, 26, 30). This overture towards friendship is notably emphasized towards the narrative’s conclusion. During a visit to Bartleby at the prison, a grub-man inquires about the nature of their relationship, asking, “Is that your friend?” to which the lawyer responds affirmatively, “Yes” (43). This moment underscores the lawyer’s persistent effort to define their relationship within the idealized framework of friendship. The lawyer’s apparent concern for Bartleby is further illustrated by his reflections on Bartleby’s profound isolation: “What miserable friendlessness and loneliness are here revealed! His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible!” (27). This sentiment highlights the lawyer’s recognition of Bartleby’s acute alienation from social connections. However, despite the lawyer’s repeated allusions to friendship and his professed concern, the narrative increasingly reveals the inherent impossibility of the friendship he envisions.

Friendship is typically nurtured through mutual acts of self-disclosure, where individuals share their innermost feelings, thoughts, and experiences with one another. However, in “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” this fundamental aspect of friendship is starkly undermined. When the lawyer endeavors to learn more about his enigmatic employee’s past, Bartleby consistently responds with his famous line, “I would prefer not to”:

“Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?” “I would prefer not to.”

“Will you tell me *any thing* about yourself?” “I would prefer not to.” “But what

reasonable objection can you have to speak to me? I feel friendly towards you.” ... “What is your answer, Bartleby?” said I, after waiting a considerable time for a reply, during which his countenance remained immovable, only there was the faintest conceivable tremor of the white attenuated mouth.

“At present I prefer to give no answer,” he said, and retired into his hermitage. (30; emphasis added)

In this exchange, the lawyer’s attempts at fostering friendship are met with an impenetrable barrier. Despite his efforts to engage Bartleby and offer friendship, the scrivener’s evasive responses and retreat into silence highlight the profound disconnection between them. The lawyer’s failure to elicit any personal information from Bartleby not only underscores the difficulty of establishing a genuine connection but also reflects the broader theme of the unreachable other. The narrative reveals that the lawyer’s perspective is limited by his inability to see beyond his own conceptualization of friendship. As a result, the ideal of communion through friendship is eclipsed by the persistent anxiety and frustration the lawyer experiences in his attempts to connect with Bartleby. In this way, the figure of friendship in the story symbolizes not an idealized union, but rather the poignant tension and existential uncertainty inherent in the lawyer’s relationship with Bartleby.

This anxiety arises not only from the uncontrollability inherent in their encounters but also from the temporal delay in Bartleby’s responses. The lawyer is compelled to wait “a considerable time for a reply,” which intensifies his sense of uncertainty and frustration. Bartleby’s use of “At present” suggests that he might offer an answer at some indefinite point in the future, though the exact timing remains unknown. This indefinite postponement creates a perpetual state of suspense for the lawyer, as he is left in limbo, uncertain whether or when Bartleby might eventually disclose

any personal information. The open-endedness of Bartleby's responses thrusts the potential for revelation into the realm of contingency and uncertainty. Giorgio Agamben, reflecting on Bartleby's line "I would prefer not to," interprets it as a formula that "keeps possibility suspended between occurrence and nonoccurrence, between the capacity to be and the capacity not to be" (267). This perspective highlights how Bartleby's response maintains a state of potentiality, forever suspended between the possibility of occurrence and nonoccurrence, never fully actualized. In Melville's story, this suspended state of radical indeterminacy permeates the narrative, reflecting the deep-rooted uncertainty in the lawyer's relationship with Bartleby. While Agamben sees potentiality in Bartleby's formula, it is crucial to recognize the lawyer's role in this suspended and indeterminate relationship. The lawyer's own anxiety is intertwined with the suspended nature of Bartleby's responses, revealing a profound tension between expectation and reality, and emphasizing the existential themes of uncertainty and alienation in their interaction.

Indeed, temporal concerns pervade the narrative, and the story frequently draws attention to various aspects of time. The lawyer initially describes the peculiar rhythms of his employees' dispositions: Turkey, for example, is described with a face that exhibits "a fine florid hue" in the morning but deteriorates after "twelve o'clock, meridian—his dinner hour," continuing to fluctuate "till 6 o'clock, P.M. or thereabouts." Turkey's face, the lawyer notes, achieves its "meridian with the sun" and "sets with it, to rise, culminate, and decline the following day, with the like regularity and undiminished glory" (15). While Turkey is efficient in the morning, he becomes irritable in the afternoon, whereas Nippers displays "irritability and consequent nervousness" primarily in the morning but is "comparatively mild" later in the day. As the lawyer observes, Turkey and Nippers' outbursts are confined to specific times, allowing him to manage these eccentricities separately (18). Despite his inherent generosity, the lawyer is nonetheless troubled by the irregular rhythms of

his employees' behavior.

Similarly, the lawyer's frustration with Bartleby is deeply tied to the pace of his work. Bartleby's increasing disengagement disrupts the lawyer's timekeeping, and his annoyance grows as Bartleby's performance declines. The lawyer is compelled to rush Bartleby in an attempt to compensate for the disruption caused by the scrivener's lack of productivity. This repeated focus on temporal irregularities highlights how the story's structure reflects the themes of time and its influence on interpersonal dynamics. The lawyer's struggle to maintain order and efficiency in the face of Bartleby's enigmatic behavior reveals the impact of temporal concerns on their relationship, further exacerbating the sense of alienation and frustration. Therefore, he is compelled to desperately urge the scrivener to complete his tasks.

I *abruptly* called to Bartleby. In my *haste* and natural expectancy of *instant* compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand sideways, and somewhat nervously extended with the copy, so that *immediately* upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business *without the least delay*. (20; emphasis added)

Bartleby's refusal to meet the lawyer's expectations and his delayed responses provoke the lawyer's frustration: "Bartleby! *Quick, I am waiting*." However, the only response he receives is "a *slow* scrape of his chair legs on the unscraped floor, and soon he appeared standing at the entrance of his hermitage" (21; emphasis added). Yoshiaki Furui insightfully observes that "Bartleby is unhooked from the present temporality that regulates the rhythms of Wall Street" (86). While Furui emphasizes this temporal disjunction as Bartleby's rejection of the market time prevalent in antebellum America, it is equally important to consider how these scenes highlight the temporal disruption experienced by the lawyer himself. Forced to wait for Bartleby's responses, the lawyer

becomes entangled in the fractured temporal dynamics created by Bartleby's presence.

Melville's narrator highlights the profound opacity of Bartleby, whose presence remains incomprehensible and radically elusive. This opacity exacerbates the temporal disruption central to the story. Instead of bridging the temporal gap between them, Melville further stretches it, embedding an interminable delay into their interactions.¹⁹ The culmination of this temporal concern is evident in the concluding section of the story. Bartleby's repeated use of "at present" underscores the ambiguity surrounding the (im)possibility of future understanding or resolution. This notion of temporal indeterminacy is further illuminated by the Dead Letter episode, which showcases a different kind of temporal disjunction—one marked by bad timing. Upon learning that Bartleby had previously worked at the dead letter office in Washington, D.C., the lawyer reflects on the poignancy of the undelivered letters:

Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring:—the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity:—he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers anymore; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death. (46)

These letters, addressed to individuals who are no longer alive, embody a failure to align with the intended temporality. They poignantly underscore the inability to reach their recipients, highlighting the gap between intention and actualization. In this way, Melville underscores the theme of missed connections and the tragedy of temporal misalignment, further emphasizing the estrangement between characters and the inherent challenges in achieving true understanding or

¹⁹ For "delay" as the primary temporal mode of *Clarel* (1876), see Paul Hurh. He contends that "rather than preserve potential in becoming, delay emphasizes rather an estrangement, a state of being out-of-sync with the time in which becoming unfolds" (Hurh 91).

communion.

For readers, the Dead Letter episode is often interpreted as a reflection of Bartleby himself, symbolizing his own mysterious and unfulfilled nature. However, this symbolism extends beyond Bartleby to the lawyer as well, who connects the episode to his scrivener. Dead letters, which are retained in the hope of eventual delivery, evoke a sense of suspended time between their dispatch and their intended reception. This temporal gap mirrors the lawyer's strained and uncertain relationship with Bartleby. The dead letters serve as a metaphor for the lawyer's own delayed and potentially unfulfilled connection with Bartleby. Just as the letters languish in the dead letter office, waiting to be delivered, the potential for a meaningful relationship between the lawyer and Bartleby remains suspended in a state of unresolved possibility. This uncertainty is crucial, as it reflects the inherent difficulties and the anticipatory nature of their interactions. The possibility of a genuine friendship might emerge at any moment, but its realization remains elusive. The lawyer, much like the recipients of the dead letters, is left in a state of readiness, perpetually awaiting a resolution that may never come.

The Lawyer's Betrayal

As many critics have observed, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is deeply concerned with the problematics of interpretation and the difficulties inherent in communication. Since the early stages of Melville scholarship, the story has often been read as a parable of the failed artist, with Bartleby serving as a figure for Melville's own struggles and sense of isolation.²⁰ Leo Marx

²⁰ Newton Arvin reads the story as "a parable of the frustrated relations between the man of letters and the man of affairs, between the artist's world and the world of practice" (242). For "Melville's nervous instability and his deep unhappiness" during this era, see also Richard Chase (*Herman Melville* 142-43).

famously claims that the story's allegory expresses Melville's "deep hopelessness" as a writer of literary fiction, suggesting that Bartleby symbolizes the author's alienation from his audience (603). This interpretation aligns with a broader view of Melville's increasing distance from readers following the critical and commercial failures of *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*. Similarly, Michael T. Gilmore argues that the story reflects Melville's disillusionment with the possibility of forging a meaningful personal connection with his readers. He notes that Melville uses the alienation of the working class, as represented by Bartleby, as a metaphor for his own estrangement from the public (145). In this reading, the story illustrates the impossibility of a reciprocal relationship between author and audience, as the lawyer's repeated attempts to connect with Bartleby are met with silence or rejection—just as Melville's works failed to resonate with contemporary readers. Elizabeth Hewitt expands on this idea by arguing that Melville confronts the paradox of communication itself in "Bartleby." She suggests that the story exposes the tension between the desire for understanding and the inevitability of miscommunication, noting that "Melville recognizes that he cannot both *presume* communication between himself and a reader and, at the same time, maintain the possibility of miscommunication" (105). This inherent ambiguity in author-reader relations is mirrored in the lawyer's attempts to interpret Bartleby's cryptic behavior, which remain fruitless and ultimately lead to further isolation. Taken together, these interpretations highlight how Melville's story engages with the fraught dynamics of communication and the alienation that results from the failure to bridge the gap between self and other—whether between employer and employee, or author and reader. The story becomes an extended meditation on the impossibility of true understanding, resonating with Melville's own anxieties about his literary career and his troubled relationship with his audience.

Sharing this interpreting stance, I argue that Melville's story reveals that while Bartleby is undoubtedly enigmatic and alien, his inaccessibility derives not entirely from himself. It is, in part, a result of the lawyer's *refusal* to acknowledge the existence of the gap that separates them. Rather than engaging with the complexity of Bartleby's withdrawal, the lawyer repeatedly defers his attempts to grapple with the scrivener's inscrutability. This pattern of postponement is crucial to understanding the lawyer's relationship with Bartleby. Faced with Bartleby's strange behavior and cryptic refusals, the lawyer chooses to delay any serious reflection on the matter, opting to set it aside for a more convenient time. For instance, when Bartleby first begins refusing tasks, the lawyer, rather than confronting the issue directly, decides to "conclude to forget the matter for the present, reserving it for my future leisure" (21). Here, the lawyer's deferral is a way of avoiding the discomfort and confusion that Bartleby's behavior causes him. By relegating the issue to the future, he, at this moment, postpones the need to come to terms with the unsettling nature of Bartleby's rejection of work and communication.

This pattern repeats itself throughout the story. When faced with Bartleby's persistent refusals and the dilemma they present, the lawyer again resolves "to postpone the consideration of this dilemma to my future leisure" (22). The lawyer's reluctance to engage with Bartleby's refusal reflects his inability—or unwillingness—to acknowledge the profound gap that exists between them. By continuously deferring the moment of confrontation, he attempts to shield himself from the anxiety of Bartleby's enigmatic presence. Thus, the lawyer's relationship with Bartleby is marked by a temporal disjunction, in which the lawyer refuses to address the present challenge Bartleby poses and instead shifts the problem into an indefinite future. This deliberate postponement becomes a coping mechanism, allowing the lawyer to avoid acknowledging the fundamental estrangement between them. In this way, Melville demonstrates that the lawyer's

failure to bridge the gap with Bartleby is not merely a consequence of Bartleby's opacity but is also a result of the lawyer's own evasion of the enigma Bartleby represents. Therefore, the lawyer's untimely relations to Bartleby are couched in terms of his own deliberate postponement.

Intriguingly, despite the potential for friendship between the lawyer and Bartleby, Melville's story emphasizes the lawyer's decisive betrayal of the scrivener. J. Hillis Miller rightly asserts that the narrative is "not so much the story of Bartleby as it is the story of the narrator's ethical relation, or failure of ethical relation, to Bartleby" (142). However, what is most significant for Melville is his exposure of *the structure of this failure*, which stems more from the lawyer's betrayal than from Bartleby's impenetrability. The story draws attention to this betrayal in subtle ways. If we consider Bartleby's singular name, it could be interpreted as a slant anagram for "betrayal."²¹ This does not imply that Bartleby himself is the betrayer; rather, Bartleby compels the lawyer—and by extension, the readers—into the role of the betrayer. In this way, Bartleby consistently embodies the mark of "betrayal" for both the lawyer and the readers.

Bartleby, whose opacity frustrates attempts to make sense of him, creates a space in which the lawyer's ethical shortcomings are exposed. In refusing to communicate or conform, Bartleby essentially confronts the lawyer with the limits of his patience, compassion, and willingness to engage with the unfamiliar or incomprehensible. H. Porter Abbott claims that "Bartleby remains unreadable" (129), and this inscrutability highlights the lawyer's moral failure. Unable to grasp Bartleby's motivations or his persistent refusal to participate in expected social exchanges, the lawyer ultimately distances himself from Bartleby, choosing self-preservation over genuine ethical engagement. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides two relevant meanings of the word "betray":

²¹ This is not a perfect anagram, as Bartleby's name contains an extra "b" and lacks an additional "a."

“to give up to, or place in the power of an enemy, by treachery or disloyalty,” and “to reveal or disclose against one’s will or intention the existence, identity, real character of (a person or thing desired to be kept secret)” (“Betray, v.”). This latter definition of betrayal—revealing rather than merely treachery—captures the lawyer’s ultimate failure. Through his betrayal, the lawyer unintentionally reveals his hypocritical nature, exposing his own moral limitations and disbelief in the enigmatic scrivener. Although he presents himself as sympathetic and kind, the lawyer’s actions suggest a deeper unwillingness to truly engage with Bartleby’s mystery, thereby betraying both Bartleby and the ideals of ethical friendship he claims to uphold.

Toward the end of the story, the lawyer, impatient with the scrivener, tries to find his way out of his unbearable relationship with Bartleby:

“Good-bye, Bartleby; I am going—good-bye, and God some way bless you; and take that [money],” slipping something in his hand. But it dropped upon the floor, and then,—
strange to say—I tore myself from him whom I had so longed to be rid of. (39)

This moment highlights not just Bartleby’s refusal to engage in conventional social relations but, more significantly, the lawyer’s preemptive betrayal of Bartleby, occurring before the actual breakdown of their relationship. Bartleby never directly rejects the lawyer, but the lawyer, caught between his desire to be free of Bartleby and his residual hope for connection, severs the relationship. The rhetorical oddity of his phrase “strange to say” signals the lawyer’s awareness of the contradiction within himself—his simultaneous longing to rid himself of the scrivener and his regret at the necessity of doing so. This inner conflict shows the lawyer’s struggle with the very thing he wishes to escape, revealing his ambivalence about Bartleby and his own moral limitations. By stating “I tore myself from him,” the lawyer conveys not only the physical act of departure but also the emotional pain of separating from someone who has, in a way, become integral to his life.

Bartleby, though passive and resistant, has lodged himself into the lawyer's consciousness to the point where leaving him feels like tearing away part of himself. Bartleby's quiet persistence, combined with his complete opacity, forces the lawyer into an ethical confrontation with himself, constantly oscillating between empathy and rejection.

In addition, the lawyer's melancholic attachment to Bartleby intensifies when he acknowledges that Bartleby was *always present*: "One prime thing was this,—*he was always there*;—first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night. I had a singular confidence in his honesty" (26; emphasis added). Despite his frustrations, the lawyer finds some comfort in Bartleby's constancy, trusting in his "honesty." This phrase is repeated later, as the lawyer again claims to have "an unbounded confidence in [Bartleby's] common honesty" (33). Melville uses this motif of "confidence" to examine the ethical dimensions of trust in relationships, particularly in the strained and incomplete relationship between the lawyer and Bartleby. At its core, the story explores whether the lawyer can sustain his faith in Bartleby and uphold the trust necessary for any form of connection. This trial of confidence anticipates the themes of *The Confidence-Man*, where Melville will more thoroughly investigate the dynamics of trust and betrayal in human relationships. In "Bartleby," Melville tests the lawyer's ability to trust the scrivener despite Bartleby's strangeness and resistance to conventional engagement. Although the lawyer professes confidence in Bartleby's honesty, his ultimate failure to embrace Bartleby's presence reveals the limits of his ethical capacity.

To understand the theme of confidence in Melville's story, Jacques Derrida's reflections on the nature of "confidence" in relation to time provide valuable insights. In his meditation on the Western concept of friendship in *The Politics of Friendship* (1997), Derrida asserts, "There is no friendship without which puts confidence (*pístitis*), and no confidence which does not measure up to

some *chronology*, to the trial of a sensible duration of time.” Here, Derrida links “confidence” to its etymological roots in terms like “fidelity, faith, ‘fidence’ [*fiancé*], credence, the *credit* of this engagement,” emphasizing that confidence “could not possibly be a-chronic” (14). In other words, the reliability of friendship hinges on trust, which must endure the passage of time. Accordingly, as Derrida insists, “no reliable friendship” can exist “without this faith ... without the confirmed steadfastness of this repeated act of faith” (15). Friendship, then, must withstand the “ordeal of time,” but no one ever completely gets through this ordeal (16).²² Derrida’s insight highlights a fundamental tension: the impossibility of sustaining friendship indefinitely lies at the heart of its very definition. This framework allows us to see how Melville’s story places the lawyer’s confidence under trial through the temporal dynamics of his relationship with Bartleby. The narrative exposes the lawyer’s failed attempt to forge a lasting connection with the scrivener, while also laying bare the structural impossibility of that friendship. Yet Melville’s treatment of this failure does more than just underscore a sense of pessimism. The story embraces the negative space of separation, suggesting that within this rupture lies the potential for a different form of relationality. Even in the aftermath of their separation, Bartleby continues to haunt the lawyer, turning their estrangement into a paradoxical form of attachment. Thus, Melville explores the complexity of friendship as it unfolds over time, revealing both the fragility and the enduring influence of unfulfilled relational bonds.

In this way, Melville’s story challenges the lawyer’s confidence in the enduring nature of friendship across time. It exposes the inherent impossibility of his relationship with Bartleby and harshly reveals the dynamics of their failed connection. However, Melville introduces a profound

²² Jack Reynolds considers the temporality of friendship by reading Derrida’s pondering on friendship (666).

sense of indeterminacy into the narrative. Despite the violent rupture between the lawyer and Bartleby, the story does not merely dwell on the negativity of Melville's pessimism. Instead, Melville explores the negative emotions in a manner that opens up the possibility for a different kind of relationality. The scrivener's lingering presence, despite their absolute separation, paradoxically transforms into a form of attachment, suggesting that the enduring impact of their connection remains, even in its absence.

Bartleby is *always* present. Bartleby's perpetual presence forces the lawyer to grapple with his self-reproach over his unconscious betrayal and endure the haunting memories of their fractured relationship. The narrative perspective emphasizes the lawyer's mourning of Bartleby's death, underscoring the passage of time since their initial encounter and subsequent estrangement. The necessity for the lawyer to recount Bartleby's story is intrinsically linked to this process of mourning. At the beginning of the story, the lawyer's description of himself as "a rather elderly man" (13) implies that considerable time has passed, underscoring that, despite Bartleby's physical absence, his presence continues to linger in the lawyer's consciousness. This enduring presence serves as a poignant reminder of their unresolved relationship and the impact of their interaction. In addition, the story emphasizes that Bartleby is not a future arrival but an ever-present figure, emerging suddenly and unexpectedly. The lawyer's eventual betrayal of Bartleby—who might otherwise have responded as a friend—signals a missed opportunity for connection. Therefore, he *missed* the timing of the "advent" of Bartleby.

By weaving betrayal into his narrative, Melville distances himself from idealized notions of sociality, friendship, and intimacy. Rather than presenting friendship as a certainty, Melville's story exposes the contingency and transformative nature of relationships. This potential is not portrayed as a hopeful anticipation for the future but as an open possibility rooted in the lawyer's

continued remembrance of Bartleby. In this way, Melville's story explores how the relationship retains a sense of potentiality, even when it appears irrevocably lost.

Performing Betrayal

The theme of the (in)ability to maintain one's confidence in friendship and the inherent betrayal it entails is also central to Melville's final published novel, *The Confidence-Man*. In this work, the concept of confidence appears as a hopeless delusion, and betrayal is pervasive. One significant contemplation on friendship appears in Chapter 39, entitled "The Hypothetical Friends." In this chapter, the cosmopolitan (named Frank Goodman, the final avatar of the confidence man) invites Egbert to participate in a reenactment of an intercourse that has already been narrated earlier in the book. In the reenacted scene, one friend asks another for a loan; they play "two friends, friends from childhood, bosom-friends; one of whom, for the first time, being in need, for the first time seeks a loan from the other" (CM 201). Frank, assuming the role of a friend in need, requests financial assistance from his hypothetical friend, Charlie Noble, played by Egbert. Initially, Charlie rejects Frank's request, underscoring the transactional nature of their relationship. As the narrative progresses, Charlie's stance becomes even more explicit. He declares, "no man drops pennies into the hat of a friend.... If you turn beggar, then, for the honor of noble friendship, I turn stranger" (223). It has been widely acknowledged that in this transaction of friendship, Melville is interrogating Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Friendship" (1841); scholars have read the hypothetical friends as a satire on Emerson's (and his disciple Henry David Thoreau's) philosophy of transcendental friendship.²³ Yet, this statement reflects the novel's broader critique of the fragility and superficiality of friendship in a world where confidence is

²³ For Melville's sarcastic view on Emerson's theory of friendship, see Carl Van Vechten.

elusive and betrayal is commonplace.

It is crucial to note that the “Hypothetical Friends” episode is grounded in a reenactment of a prior exchange between Frank Goodman and Charlie Noble. In their earlier interaction, the estrangement between the two characters occurred when Frank attempted to secure a loan from Charlie, leading to a breakdown in their relationship. Through this episode and its reenactment, Melville highlights the theatricality inherent in their interactions, drawing attention to the performative nature of friendships.²⁴ The dramatization of trust and betrayal—or rather, the performative enactment of trust and distrust—reveals the underlying artificiality and instability of their relations. The performance extends beyond merely re-staging the previous encounter; it serves to highlight the inherent theatricality of friendship itself. Thus, Melville’s focus on the theatrical aspect of friendship reveals the deep-seated discrepancy between the characters’ idealized perceptions of their relationships and the reality of their interactions. The repetition of these interactions is an attempt to recover or redefine what has been lost, reflecting a desperate hope for a different outcome. However, in the world of *The Confidence-Man*, such hope is ultimately condemned. The novel presents a worldview where any aspiration for a future resolution or improvement in relationships is dismissed, emphasizing the futility and inherent deception in the pursuit of genuine connection.

Charlie/Egbert’s cynical worldview is starkly illustrated through his tale of China Aster, whose misplaced trust in the optimistic promises of his friend Orchis ultimately leads to his downfall and death (211). After narrating Aster’s story to Frank/the cosmopolitan, Charlie/Egbert

²⁴ Focusing on the novel’s structure of repetition and succession along with its radical democracy, Jennifer Greiman argues that *The Confidence-Man* is “theatrical” in the sense “that every event, act, or scene that takes place is a repetition that is destined to repeat elsewhere” (184). For an important discussion of the theatrical performance of subjectivity in Melville’s novel, see Katsunori Takeuchi (317-26).

reinforces the idea that humans are “subject to all mortal contingencies,” warning: “You have hearkened to my story in vain, if you do not see that, however indulgent and right-minded I may seem to you now, that is no guarantee for the future” (222). This “inhuman philosophy” (223) emphasizes a core belief: “The difference between this man and that man is not so great as the difference between what the same man be today and what he may be in days to come” (222). Charlie/Egbert’s perspective introduces a concept of temporality marked by unpredictability and instability, where time does not offer the promise of progress or fulfillment but instead accentuates the precarious nature of human existence. This notion of temporal flux undermines any assumption that personal growth or positive transformation will naturally unfold over time. Instead, time itself becomes a source of potential disillusionment, revealing the fragility of relying on future outcomes for happiness. In this framework, Charlie/Egbert sees time as a destabilizing force that can shift a person’s circumstances, desires, or identity in unforeseen directions. His view suggests that trusting in the future is futile, as the temporal distance between the present self and the self of “days to come” is fraught with unknowns that can render today’s certainties obsolete.

The cosmopolitan reacts with astonishment and dismay, exclaiming: “Now you have turned everything upside down again, with an inconsistency that amazes and shocks me” (222). This response reveals his discomfort with Charlie/Egbert’s cold logic of friendship. However, the cosmopolitan’s outwardly genial reaction conceals a deeper misanthropy, mirroring Egbert’s cynicism. Melville suggests that beneath the cosmopolitan’s philanthropic exterior lies a fundamentally pessimistic view of human relationships, complicating the narrative’s portrayal of friendship and trust in *The Confidence-Man*. This layered depiction of the cosmopolitan adds depth to Melville’s critique, exposing the fragility and ambivalence inherent in social bonds

within a world where trust and sincerity are persistently undermined.

In this context, the story of Charlemont is particularly noteworthy as it not only highlights the novel's peculiar conception of friendship but also sets the tone for the narrative itself. Unlike other episodes in *The Confidence-Man*—such as the tales of Goneril, the Soldier of Fortune, Moredock, and China Aster—the story of Charlemont is narrated by the cosmopolitan himself. Although this episode has received less critical attention, it offers crucial insights because the cosmopolitan does not seek any financial gain from Charlie, differentiating it from the other stories.²⁵ This story details the somewhat peculiar life of Charlemont, a young merchant who, until his twenty-ninth year, was “admired by everybody, and loved, as only mankind can love, by not a few” (184). However, a dramatic change occurs in his demeanor: “Like one whose hair turns gray in a night, so in a day Charlemont turned from affable to morose. His acquaintances were passed without greeting; while, as for his confidential friends, them he pointedly, unscrupulously, and with a kind of fierceness, cut dead” (184). This sudden and enigmatic transformation is attributed to Charlemont's bankruptcy and subsequent departure from town, an event his friends were unaware of until much later. Years later, having acquired a new fortune in Europe, Charlemont returns, now dedicated to cultivating “genial friendships” (185). Yet, the story concludes with the observation that “some taint of Charlemont's old malady [still] survived” (186). This episode underscores not only the novel's exploration of the shifting and often unreliable nature of friendships but also reflects the thematic concerns of trust and betrayal that permeate Melville's narrative.

Strangely enough, when one of Charlemont's old friends inquires about his sudden

²⁵ Concerning the philanthropy and misanthropy of Charlemont and his Timon-like character, John Wenke notices that the name “Charlemont” constitutes “a cryptogrammic marriage of the words ‘Charlie’ and ‘Timon,’ with the notable exclusive of the tell-tale ‘I’” (270).

withdrawal from social life, Charlemont provides a cryptic explanation:

If ever, in days to come, you shall see ruin at hand, and, thinking you understand mankind, shall tremble for your friendships, and tremble for your pride; and, partly through love for the one and fear for the other, shall resolve to be *beforehand* with the world, and save it from a sin by *prospectively* taking that sin to yourself, then will you do as one I now dream of once did, and like him will you suffer. (185–86; emphasis added)

Central to understanding Charlemont's enigmatic behavior is his concept of "beforehandedness," or what the cosmopolitan later refers to as his "forereaching motive" (187). Charlemont preemptively enacts estrangement from his friends, an act that he believes will protect *them* from the guilt of betraying him and safeguard himself from future betrayal. By initiating the estrangement *before* it actually occurs, Charlemont aims to shield both his friends and himself from the potential pain and disappointment of future betrayals. This episode is striking because Charlemont's recuperated friendships betray/expose a fundamental alienation between individuals that is typically obscured by conventional notions of friendship. Charlemont's preemptive betrayal exposes the inherent gap between friends that common friendship often conceals. His strategy of estranging himself from his friends is not merely a defensive mechanism but a way to navigate and mitigate the devastating effects of anticipated betrayal. To put this in another way, the estranged friendship and its ostensible recovery highlights the absolute gap between friends that was *already* there. Perhaps, it is the only way for Charlemont to defend himself against his friends' devastating betrayal. His preemptive betrayal, as an expression of suffering, serves as a way to brace himself for future disappointments and mitigate their potentially devastating impact.

For Melville, common friendship only masks the unbridgeable gap between friends. Thus,

Charlemont estranges himself from his friends *in order to* cover up their already alienated affection, which ultimately protects him from total devastation. For Charlemont, sustaining enmity and presenting the truth *as* truth becomes, perhaps counterintuitively, a different form of the attachments offered by friendship. This act of intentional estrangement, while seemingly a rejection of friendship, paradoxically becomes a form of attachment in its own right. Charlemont thus emerges as a distinctive character type: the “genial misanthrope.” The cosmopolitan describes the genial misanthrope as one who “hide[s] a misanthropic heart” beneath an “affable air” (176). The genial misanthrope embodies the paradox of maintaining a veneer of friendliness while internally grappling with a profound skepticism about human nature. Through Charlemont, Melville explores the complexities of human relationships and the often concealed realities behind outward appearances of social connection.

The Limits of Fiction

The characterization of the genial misanthrope is precisely the manner in which Melville’s narrator is embodied throughout the novel. By the time Melville wrote *The Confidence-Man*, his growing skepticism about his contemporary audience became evident. He increasingly recognized the author’s struggle with unintelligibility and the challenge of connecting with readers. In a sympathetic review of the novel published in the *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* (July 1857), the contributor draws a parallel between the titular character and Melville himself: “[The confidence man] like Mr. Melville in his earlier works, asks confidence of everybody under different masks of mendicancy, and is, on the whole, pretty successful” (Higgins and Parker 505). However, for Melville, the issue extended beyond mere reader confidence in the author; it encompassed *his own* confidence in the audience. Melville’s frustrations and disillusionments with

his readers, as well as his despair, reflect a deepening antagonism toward them.

This skepticism, first hinted at in “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” becomes more pronounced in *The Confidence-Man*. Matt Seybold argues that the novel “attacks audience members indiscriminately” (77), suggesting that Melville’s critique targets a wide range of readers. Whereas “Bartleby, the Scrivener” maintains a faint hope for possible readerly engagement, *The Confidence-Man* amplifies the author’s distrust to an extreme degree. Yet, Melville’s anguish and frustration do not signify resignation; rather, they reveal that he still envisioned a broader audience, even for *The Confidence-Man*.

The (im)possible friendship between the lawyer and Bartleby serves as a metafictional reflection of Melville’s own anxieties about his interactions with readers. Similarly, in *The Confidence-Man*, Melville subtly suggests that the title character—embodying various personas—represents an authorial figure. Elizabeth Renker explores Melville’s “epistemological problem with the condition of writing,” noting that *The Confidence-Man* “presents a fundamental reconception of the author’s relation to his text and, in turn, to his readers,” where the author “turns the mask on a bewildered reader and delights in its obscuring power” (115, 116).

Throughout the novel, the confidence man engages in numerous exchanges, seeking to secure his interlocutors’ trust for various purposes—whether purchasing goods, investing in ventures, donating to charities, or sharing stories. Unlike Bartleby, who resists “turning private contents into a tradable story” (Shamir 11), the confidence man’s actions are explicitly linked to economic transactions. These exchanges reveal a direct correlation between authorship and conning, as the confidence man’s schemes demonstrate how personal narratives can be manipulated to gain power, currency, or influence. This connection underscores the theme of deception and the transactional nature of friendships in Melville’s work, illustrating his critical

exploration of how trust and confidence are intertwined with social and economic exchanges.

In this context, the theme of confidence becomes deeply entangled with textual friendship, as both are bound up in the exchange of stories. Many of the “stories” passed between characters are subject to constant interpretation and reinterpretation, which reflects a theory of readerly reception embedded within the novel. By exposing the reader’s misplaced trust in the authenticity of characters—often rooted in expectations of consistency, coherence, and transparency—the narrator of *The Confidence-Man* shifts focus to a conception of identity shaped by temporal dynamics. As Seybold insightfully notes, “[w]hen inconsistency arises, it is not necessarily a failure of fidelity to reality, but rather a conflict between an author’s fiction and a reader’s imagination” (85). Melville’s narrator suggests that literary “failures” may be as much the fault of the reader as the author, especially when readers’ expectations clash with the novel’s narrative strategy.

This dynamic explains why Melville incorporates metafictional digressions, particularly in Chapters 14, 33, and 44, where he directly addresses and subverts the implied reader’s demand for realism. In these chapters, Melville preemptively critiques the assumptions underpinning readers’ expectations, especially the desire for consistent, predictable characters over time. Anticipating critiques of his characters’ perceived inconsistency or unreality, Melville argues that conventions of realism are themselves fictions. He writes: “In this way of thinking, the people in a fiction, like the people in a play, must dress as nobody exactly dresses, talk as nobody exactly talks, act as nobody exactly acts.... [I]t should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie” (183). By challenging the reader’s conventional expectations, Melville suggests that literature operates within its own set of rules, distinct from the rigid expectations of realism. This approach encourages readers to confront how their interpretations are shaped by ingrained beliefs and conventions,

inviting them to recognize the fictional nature of both literature and the realism they demand. For Melville, reading is an active, participatory process in which trust and interpretation are intertwined, and understanding becomes contingent upon the reader's willingness to engage with the text as a crafted, imaginative construct rather than as a reflection of reality. This metafictional commentary ultimately reshapes the reader's role, positioning them not as passive recipients of "truth" but as collaborators in constructing meaning within the text's fictional framework.

In the final theoretical chapter of *The Confidence-Man*, Melville grapples with the concept of originality, critiquing how it is both perceived and valued. In Chapter 44, the narrator addresses the rarity of truly "original" characters in fiction, challenging the superficial application of the term "originality" as seen in the barber's friends, who mistakenly label a character as such without genuine insight. The narrator argues that the phrase "Quite an Original" is used inappropriately by the barber's acquaintances, revealing a deeper issue with how originality is recognized. Melville contends that originality "cannot be born in the author's imagination" alone (239). For him, true originality cannot be simply conceived in the author's mind but is validated through the reader's recognition and understanding. The barber's friends fail to grasp what Melville sees as the cosmopolitan's originality, highlighting the broader issue that originality is not only a product of the author's creation but is also shaped by the reader's engagement and interpretative insight. The recognition of originality, then, depends significantly on the reader's capacity to comprehend and appreciate it.

In "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Melville critiques the conventionality of contemporary literature, expressing frustration with a readership unprepared for truly original works. He envisions his fiction as a medium for affective communication, longing for a sympathetic and discerning audience capable of appreciating his innovative vision. In *The Confidence-Man*,

Melville extends this critique, challenging the false premises, expectations, and hypocrisies of his readers. He demands the highest level of engagement from his audience, pushing the boundaries of what is considered readable and questioning the very limits of literary communication. The text's tendency to betray not only its audience but also the fundamental principles of communication suggests an insurmountable barrier between author and reader. If the text appears to betray the very basis of communication itself, it becomes nearly impossible for any reader to align with the author's perspective. As a result, Melville's final novel exposes the inherent limitations of fiction and the novel form itself, revealing the profound difficulties in achieving genuine understanding and connection within literary discourse.²⁶

Throughout *The Confidence-Man*, the recurring motif of confidence—both as a social virtue and a personal risk—reflects the complexities and inherent contradictions of friendship. Melville presents friendship not as a static relationship but as a dynamic interplay, marked by the potential for both connection and betrayal. The novel's various episodes, from Charlemont's preemptive estrangement to the cosmopolitan's ambiguous interactions, reveal the instability of human identity and one's connection to others. Charlemont's deliberate withdrawal from social engagement, aimed at avoiding potential betrayal, underscores a deep skepticism about the sincerity and durability of human bonds. His actions, although seemingly defensive, critique friendship as a construct often cloaked in illusions of permanence and trust. Similarly, the cosmopolitan's manipulative dealings with others show how the pursuit of confidence can be driven by deeper misanthropic tendencies. The novel's refusal to provide definitive answers or

²⁶ Pondering Melville's will to attack the forms of a novel in *The Confidence-Man*, Hideyo Sengoku claims that Melville seems dissatisfied with the narrative forms of prose. It is as if Melville was afflicted with the very formlessness of prose, thus driving him to write poetry (42-43).

resolutions mirrors Melville's own anxieties about the limitations of human understanding and the authenticity of interpersonal connections.

In this context, Melville's conception of friendship becomes paradoxical. As discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, Melville envisions a form of intimacy reliant on separation, a connection defined by the unbridgeable distance between friends. His idea of transforming the friend into an alien represents a rejection of easy communion. By emphasizing the friend's fundamental alterity, Melville resists any notion of friendship that would smooth over the essential differences between individuals. His philosophy of friendship suggests that genuine connection requires acknowledging the radical unknowability of the other and embracing the disconnection that often exists between people. For Melville, friendship is never a stable bond rooted in shared experiences or mutual understanding; rather, it is a series of contingent, fleeting encounters that always preserve a core of alienation.

Thus, Melville's fiction repeatedly stages refusals of relation as a means of exploring the alienation embedded within intimate connections. Whether in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," where the titular character refuses engagement with his employer, or in *The Confidence-Man*, where characters continually deceive and estrange one another, Melville presents friendship as inherently unstable and often antagonistic. His work reflects an ongoing preoccupation with preserving the impenetrability of the friend, their status as an Other, thus protecting them from the kind of false familiarity that would render the relationship inauthentic. In this way, Melville redefines friendship as an encounter with difference, rather than sameness—an ongoing tension, rather than a stable bond. By doing so, he critiques the common expectation of friendship as a promise of stability and suggests that its true value may lie in its capacity to expose the disquieting distance between individuals.

With *The Confidence-Man*, Melville concluded his professional career as a fiction writer. In 1857, during a visit to Liverpool, Hawthorne, then serving as Franklin Pierce's consul, met Melville, who was traveling to and from the Holy Land. Hawthorne's notebook reveals Melville's state of mind during this period:

Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated": but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief. ... He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. (Branch 314)

Melville's declaration that he had "pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated," following the publication of *The Confidence-Man*, underscores his profound disquiet with both belief and disbelief. This statement not only reflects his theological uncertainty but also reveals his discomfort with the reception of his work. Melville's final novel, with its critique of the limitations of fiction and its own inscrutable nature, parallels his struggle to find solace amidst the uncertainties of both his literary and existential concerns.

The Confidence-Man concludes by leaving the future open-ended: "Something further may follow of this Masquerade" (251). As Jennifer Greiman observes, Melville envisions the final scene as one that extends indefinitely, suggesting that the narrative's repetitions and uncertainties persist "far beyond the temporality of the text, or even the 'present' of its reading" (184). This perspective aligns with Melville's thematic concerns, emphasizing not a definitive closure but an ongoing deferral that resists limiting the potential for contingency. In this sense, Melville's refusal to commit to either belief or disbelief reflects a deeper existential impasse. At

this late stage in his career, the future—once a potential promise of fulfillment—has become a source of heightened anxiety. By avoiding a conclusive resolution, Melville opens up the possibility for contingency to dominate, mirroring Charlemont's preemptive estrangement from his friends. This strategy can be understood as a form of self-preservation against the potential disappointment of any final, intolerable outcome. Despite his evident despair and isolation, however, Melville's engagement with indefiniteness suggests a nuanced hope. His refusal to settle on fixed outcomes over open potentialities allows for a continual reimagining of his relationship with readers and his approach to literary form. In this continual deferral, Melville preserves a space for possibility, even as he grapples with the limitations and uncertainties that shape his literary journey. This persistent postponement reflects his commitment to an open-ended interpretation, suggesting that meaning and connection remain unresolved, inviting readers to dwell in the text's ambiguities rather than seeking certainty.

CHAPTER IV

Infectious Intimacy:

Whitman's Democratic Bonds with Strangers

Walt Whitman's poetry frequently celebrates male same-sex intimacy, most notably in the "Calamus" cluster added to the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1860). Beyond Herman Melville's fiction, Whitman's work fully explores the politically subversive potential of male friendship. In his vision, friendships between men transcend the contemporary racial, cultural, and national boundaries. Throughout his poems, Whitman "celebrate[s] the need of comrades" (LG 342), and his explicit references to "comrades" and "manly attachments" lend a homoerotic undertone to his poetic language. Aspiring to establish "the institution of the dear love of comrades" (368), Whitman frames male friendship as a means to dissolve cultural and social barriers, thereby advancing social equality. For many, Whitman's portrayal of intimate bonds between men transcends social divisions, providing a foundational model for American democracy based on unity and mutual regard.

In "Walt Whitman," ²⁷ the poet states, "I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you" (47), establishing a form of self-representation that invites intimacy yet hinges on a private exchange between poet and reader. Helen Vendler aptly describes this intimacy, noting that "intimate talk between friends or lovers is one of the seductive appeals of the envisioned mutuality" (39). In her reading, Whitman addresses an imagined, unseen listener of the future. I

²⁷ The title was changed to "Walt Whitman" from the 1860 to the 1871 editions (hereafter it became "Song of Myself.")

would argue further that these future readers, unknown and often strangers, become the very figures with whom Whitman achieves this profound intimacy.

What is particularly interesting in the third edition is the speaker's newfound intimacy with "strangers," who had not been mentioned at all in previous editions. Whitman's ideal America is founded on the intimate bonds with unknown others. For instance, in "Poem of the Road" (later retitled "Song of the Open Road"), there is an emphasis on the intimate connections between strangers, united by what he calls "adhesiveness."

Here is adhesiveness—it is not previously fashioned—it is apropos;

Do you know what it is, as you pass, to be loved by strangers?

...

What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?

...

The efflux of the Soul is happiness—here is happiness,

I think it pervades the air, waiting at all times,

Now it flows into us—we are rightly charged. (320-21)

In this passage, the poet celebrates a sense of "happiness" intertwined with the open air or atmosphere, which is erotically charged, as he sings of forming intimate connections with passing strangers. Jason Frank describes this phenomenon as "the love that can exist between strangers as strangers, a love and attachment that does not try to convert the stranger into an intimate, but retains a distance" (175). Frank interprets this act of cruising among strangers as a form of "promiscuous citizenship," where "promiscuous" refers not only to an "erotic attachment to non-intimates" but also to an "undiscriminating" and "mixed" mode of social interaction (158). While Whitman's intimate ties with strangers may be rooted in his homoerotic cruising

experiences, this also highlights how intimacy can emerge between individuals who remain fundamentally unknown to each other.

Whitman's fascination with strangers is evident in "Chants Democratic," also added in the third edition, where he asks, "If you meet a stranger in the streets, and love him or her, do I not often meet strangers in the streets, and love them?" (144). Similarly, in "Calamus 22," he writes, "Passing stranger! you do not know how lovingly I look upon you, / You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking" (366). In a poem titled "To You," which was subsequently deleted, he states, "Stranger! if you, passing, meet me, and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to me? / And why should I not speak to you?" (403). Through intimate bonds with anonymous others rather than close friends or lovers, Whitman reveals a singular form of personal affection. In this way, he envisions intimate, impersonal attachment with passing strangers as foundational to the ideal of democratic America.

Previous scholarship has extensively identified themes of friendship, homoerotic intimacy, and Whitman's democratic embrace of all people.²⁸ Among these discussions, Peter Coviello explores Whitman's idea of nationalism, contending that, for the poet, nationality "consists neither in legal compulsion nor geographical happenstance, but in the specifically affective attachments that somehow tie together people who have never seen one another, who live in different climates and come from different cultures and harbor wildly different needs and aspirations. To be properly American is thus, as Whitman conceives it, to feel oneself related, in a quite intimate way, to a world of people not proximate or even known to oneself" (*Intimacy* 129).

²⁸ See Robert K. Martin, "Whitman's Song of Myself: Homosexual Dream and Vision"; Joseph Cady; Michael Lynch; M. Jimmie Killingsworth; Terry Mulcaire.

Building on this critical foundation, this chapter makes a distinct intervention by situating Whitman's theory of impersonal intimacy within the historical context of the cholera epidemics that marked his era. Rather than simply extending Whitman's themes of universal connection, I argue that the poet's encounters with cholera-era anxieties surrounding health, contagion, and sympathy critically shaped his unique approach to fostering affective bonds with unknown strangers. By framing Whitman's vision of intimacy amid pervasive fears of disease and death, this chapter demonstrates how his poetics of intimacy resonate with and respond to his readers' experiences of vulnerability and interconnectedness during a time of widespread contagion.

A significant influence during the period when Whitman began his work as a reporter, essayist, and poet was the series of cholera epidemics that ravaged the antebellum United States. Whitman started working for a printer in Brooklyn in 1832, the same year a cholera outbreak occurred. The epidemic killed many people in Brooklyn and led Whitman to move back to the countryside near West Hills. However, he soon returned and continued his work as a compositor for the weekly *Long Island Star* (Meltzer 25). During the second cholera outbreak that spread through New York in 1849, Whitman showed concern for the people of Brooklyn and reported on the epidemic (Rubin 291). He later contributed an article to the *Advertiser* (June 28, 1851), calling for water purification. Having experienced the cholera outbreaks of 1832, 1849, and 1854, Whitman witnessed firsthand the vulnerability of human society to infectious diseases and saw many people succumb to the epidemics.

Nevertheless, in *Leaves of Grass*, there are not many poems that directly address the theme of the cholera epidemics. In the poem titled "Burial" (retitled as "To Think of Time"), the speaker affirms the existence of all the rejected persons such as the "interminable hordes of the

ignorant and wicked,” the “barbarians of Africa and Asia,” the “common people of Europe,” and the “lowest prostitute.” He also mentions in the poem the “infected in the immigrant hospital” (446). According to Harold Aspiz, Whitman here refers to “the Emigrant Refuge Hospital on Ward’s Island, the largest hospital facility in the United States at the time, where thousands of slum dwellers, victims of the cholera epidemic of 1854, were treated and where many of them perished, together with a number of physicians and attendants” (*Body Beautiful* 56). Whitman’s subtle inclusion of cholera patients, often viewed as poor or immigrant, underscores his commitment to democratic ideals by embracing society’s most marginalized members.

Given this context, it is plausible to consider that Whitman, having lived through three cholera epidemics, employs the threat of infection as a basis for cultivating empathic intimacy with strangers. This chapter explores the hypothesis that the cholera epidemics significantly shaped Whitman’s concept of all-encompassing intimacy, especially in the context of author-reader relationships. First, I situate Whitman’s writings on health within contemporary medical discourse on “air” and “miasma,” which were believed to be vectors for disease transmission. Next, I examine the centrality of air in Whitman’s thinking to demonstrate its connection to his vision of democracy. I then analyze how themes of contagion and sympathy function as foundational elements in Whitman’s poetics of impersonal intimacy by closely examining a selection of his poems. Finally, I illustrate how Whitman uses motifs of death and decomposition as deliberate strategies to forge a connection with future readers.

Manly Health

From September to December 1858, Whitman contributed to the health discourse of the antebellum period by serializing a health column titled “Manly Health and Training” under the

pseudonym Mose Velsor in the *New York Atlas*. Discovered by Zachary Turpin in 2016, this column features Whitman discussing various topics, including diet, exercise, reproduction, longevity, bathing, boxing, gymnastics, baseball, alcohol, and prostitution, while intertwining individual health with the development of a *healthy* America. At the beginning of the column, Whitman emphasizes the allure of the term “manly health” by stating, “Manly health! Is there not a kind of charm—a fascinating magic in the words?” (*Manly Health* 21). Throughout the column, Whitman idealizes a beautiful and robust male body, equating a healthy body with masculinity, strength, and a flawless physique, and presenting it as the ideal national character of America. His argument, like the contemporary healthcare discourse, conveys the idea that each person’s health was both a public concern and a civic duty.

In his column celebrating a healthy democratic nation, Whitman frequently idealizes the robust male body as a symbol of national strength. Despite his democratic ideals, this emphasis on physical vigor reveals an exclusionary vision of health and masculinity, one that privileges strength and virility. Moreover, this focus on the ideal male body mirrors early eugenic notions that regarded certain male physiques as inherently superior, implicitly marginalizing those who did not fit this ideal. However, considering Whitman’s biographical facts, a more nuanced view emerges. His youngest brother, Eddie, had congenital epilepsy and paralysis in his limbs and required lifelong care due to his intellectual disability.²⁹ His brother Jesse, who had intense emotions, was institutionalized in a mental hospital in 1864 and died six years later. Another brother, Andrew, died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-six. Whitman himself suffered from the aftereffects of a sunstroke in 1858, leading to a brain hemorrhage. He also had a strong interest in

²⁹ In *Leaves of Grass*, there is a passage that refers to “the most smeared and slobbering idiot they had at the asylum.” Since this “idiot” is described as “my brother” (280), it is likely that the poet is recalling his brother, Eddy.

medicine, human anatomy, and physiology, frequently visiting hospitals, particularly in the 1840s, to closely observe the bodies of patients and the dying (Aspiz 24, 38). Though Whitman stressed the importance of robustness and health in his column, he was surrounded not by “perfectly healthy” or “normal” bodies but confronted with his own health issues and the care needs of his family.

When considering these issues, it is important to note Whitman’s repeated emphasis on “fresh air” and “pure air” in the column. He even recommends training the voice, throat, and lung functions and frequently advocates the necessity of “open air.” For example, recognizing the “great antiseptic” in the word “out-doors” and arguing that it is the “true medicine of humanity,” Whitman, much like Henry David Thoreau, concludes that “virtue” exists in “open air,” and therefore, “we should all breathe this health-bestowing fluid [pure air]” (*Manly Health* 109-10). Particularly interesting is the section titled “Training the Voice,” where he recommends reciting poetry. Whitman advises that to prevent illness, it is effective to train the throat by “loudly reciting and declaiming in the open air” and suggests choosing a favorite passage of poetry for this purpose (107).

Before exploring the significance of “air” for Whitman, I first examine the contemporary medical discourse on air and infectious diseases. In his *Walt Whitman and the Body Beautiful* (1980), Harold Aspiz mentions Edward H. Dixon’s miasma theory, which Whitman quoted in an article he contributed to the *Brooklyn Daily Times*. According to this theory, “miasma” referred to the toxic gases produced by the decomposition of plants and animals, believed to affect the human body through the lungs and consequently cause diseases such as typhus and yellow fever (qtd: Aspiz 63). It is evident that Whitman was familiar with the public health issues of his time in New York, particularly the problems related to air and the

miasma theory. His poem, later titled “This Compost,”³⁰ reflects the anxieties and fears associated with the contaminated soil and air produced during the decomposition of corpses, based on the miasma theory. Maria Farland, discussing this poem in relation to the overcrowded cemeteries in urban areas at the time, refers to Whitman’s 1846 article “The Dirt Heaps.” In this article, Whitman notes that “The action of the sun generates all kinds of miasma in the air—and disease and fevers follow” (*Journalism* 314).

In fact, concerns about noxious air were keenly felt by contemporary people, especially in urban areas such as New York City and Boston. Boston politician Lemuel Shattuck, a pioneer of urban public health, addressed this in his *Report of a General Plan for the Promotion of Public and Personal Health* (1850), where he idealizes “perfect personal health” and views any bodily imperfection as a threat to communal well-being. For Shattuck, disease encompasses any dysfunction in the body’s organs or functions, which he notes varies widely within communities—from slight deviations to the brink of death (10). He also emphasizes that fresh air is essential, claiming that “[l]ife and health depend upon it” and that “neither could exist without it” (143). Furthermore, he stresses the need for fresh air because “Man himself cannot breathe the same air twice with impunity” (145).

The issue of stagnant air in enclosed domestic spaces is problematized in John Griscom’s *The Uses and Abuses of Air: Showing its Influence in Sustaining Life, and Producing Disease; with Remarks on the Ventilation of Houses* (1848). Griscom, a chemistry educator, underscores the importance of pure air, much like food, and particularly warns against “foul air” within domestic spaces. He also assumes that diseases can be transmitted through the medium of

³⁰ The poem was originally titled as “Poem of Wonder at The Resurrection of The Wheat,” and was included in the section 4 of “Walt Whitman.”

air. He suggests that air can carry disease, noting that “contagious viri[sic] of small-pox, measles, scarlet fever” are transmitted through “the intermedium of the atmosphere,” where they are inhaled and absorbed into the body’s circulation. The risk of infection, he explains, increases “in proportion to the amount of the virus contained in the air inhaled” (92).

Issues of air and health are also mentioned in Catherine Beecher’s household advice manual, *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness* (1855). She addresses the problem of unhealthful air within the home, particularly problematizing the “unhealthful miasmata in the night-air.” She states that the air emitted from the lungs and skin of sleeping individuals is “evil,” akin to that from cemeteries and decaying corpses.

As to unhealthful miasmata in the night-air, nothing can be worse than the exhalations of decaying bodies, as sent forth from the lungs and skin of sleepers. It is precisely the same evil as is found in proximity to grave-yards and decaying carrion. The effluvium from the lungs and skin is precisely the same as that from carrion, only more diluted by the atmosphere. Those who have entered the pent-up sleeping rooms of persons who do not wash their skins or breathe a pure air, very well understand the close resemblance.

(167)

Beecher problematizes the exhalations of so-called filthy individuals in connection with the miasma theory, linking cleanliness with moral issues and equating unclean bodies with disease and corruption. Thus, she conveys that air serves as the medium through which these emissions circulate.

In this way, as contemporary medical discourses surrounding air and illness permeated discussions on the proper management of the body and household, people became increasingly wary of the harmful effects of vitiated air, which could harbor pathogens. This led to an emphasis

on maintaining clean air and managing personal hygiene.³¹ Simultaneously, this discourse fueled anxiety and fear regarding infection, often stigmatizing those infected as threats to the healthy community, placing responsibility on individuals, and labeling them as morally corrupted. In an era predating the establishment of bacteriology, the understanding that contaminated air could transmit infection was intertwined with notions of cleanliness and morality, often leading to issues of social hierarchy and race. Considering these discourses, it is reasonable to suggest that Whitman, in writing a health column, was particularly conscious of the various ways in which air directly influenced both individual and national health.

Air and Democracy

As evident in the miasma theory, the belief that air mediates contagious diseases was shared among writers of the antebellum era. In a letter dated April 3, 1840, addressed to his future wife Sophia, Nathaniel Hawthorne expressed his feelings about going out to breathe fresh air outside the walls of the Customs House.

It has been a brisk, breezy day, as thou knowest—an effervescent atmosphere; and I have enjoyed it in all its freshness, breathing air which has not been breathed in advance by the hundred thousand pairs of lungs which have common and indivisible property in the atmosphere of this great city. My breath had never belonged to anybody but me. It came fresh from the wilderness of ocean. (*Letters* 434)

Hawthorne, escaping the stagnant air of the office, humorously writes about going outside to breathe fresh air which has not passed through anyone else's lungs beforehand. His comment that his exhalation is his own and not anybody else's demonstrates his anxiety that air, after passing

³¹ For the contemporary health reform movement, see James C. Whorton.

through “the hundred thousand pairs of lungs,” becomes tainted. As we saw in the former section, given the prevalent understanding that air could transmit disease, Hawthorne’s letter paradoxically illustrates the fact that air, unavoidably mediated by countless strangers’ breaths, inherently carries the potential danger of being a “common and indivisible property.”

In *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael emphasizes the benefits of going to sea as a common sailor, noting that it provides “the wholesome exercise and pure air of the fore-castle deck.” He remarks that the wind from the fore-castle is fresher than that from the stern, asserting that “the Commodore on the quarter-deck gets his atmosphere at second hand from the sailors on the fore-castle” (6-7). While the ship’s officers might assume they are breathing the purest air, Ishmael’s observation suggests otherwise. This implies a reversal of the ship’s hierarchy, where ordinary seamen enjoy the benefit of breathing cleaner air than their superiors, aligning with Ishmael’s democratic ideals. However, his playful remarks also emphasize the universal nature of air as a common property, highlighting the impossibility of its exclusive ownership.

In contrast to the passages by Hawthorne and Melville, Whitman’s acknowledgment of air as a common property circulating around the globe is particularly striking. In his “Walt Whitman” (sections 16 and 17 in “Song of Myself”), the speaker’s self encompasses a diverse range of various identities, from age, occupation, class, culture, region, race, and creed. Embracing whole regions of the United States from east to west and north to south, the speaker continues to celebrate this diversity through his verse.

I resist anything better than my own diversity,
And breathe the air, and leave plenty after me,
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.
...

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe.

This is the breath for America, because it is my breath,
This is for laws, songs, behavior,

This is the tasteless water of Souls—this is the true sustenance. (*LG* 45)

Whitman's expansive self, which encompasses all, directly corresponds to his vision of America. What is intriguing here is the passage where the speaker directs attention to the "common air that bathes the globe," stating that he "breathe[s] the air, and leave[s] plenty after me." Although the stanza beginning with "This is the breath for America, because it is my breath" was removed in subsequent editions, the passage underscores how Whitman recognizes air as a common property enveloping the globe. This perspective is vividly contrasted with the passages from Hawthorne and Melville. By asserting that the air covering the globe belongs both to oneself and to America, Whitman emphasizes that it can never be a personal possession.

In the same section, Whitman's speaker emphasizes the air as a medium for conveying his voice.³²

The atmosphere is not a perfume—it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever—I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood, and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me. ...
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air

³² This section is included in the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself," section 2.

through my lungs, ...

The sound of the belched words of my voice, words loosed to the eddies of the wind, ...

(23-24)

For the speaker who “feel[s] of health” (24), this air—devoid of taste and smell—permeates the world, flowing through people and things, often unnoticed in everyday awareness. Its unmediated, direct nature is thus emphasized. The “undisguised and naked” speaker longs for direct “contact” with the air, centering his consciousness on the flow of air through his lungs, bloodstream, and heartbeat. The speaker’s “sound of the belched words,” released into “the eddies of the wind,” melds into the atmosphere, illustrating a continuous connection between his body’s inner workings and the external air. This imagery highlights pure air as a medium for poetic expression. His words become part of the atmosphere, carried by the wind to distant listeners, embodying the poet’s desire to connect intimately with a vast, unseen audience. Releasing words into the wind disseminates the poet’s voice to anyone willing to listen. The wind carries not just his words but also his very breath, suggesting a profound interpenetration between the self and the external world.

Drawing inspiration from the air, Whitman further resonates with diverse voices within himself. The speaker embodies “the sign of democracy” by channeling through his body the voices of oppressed and marginalized.³³

Through me the afflatus surging and surging—through me the current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval—I give the sign of democracy,

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same

³³ Included in section 24 of “Song of Myself.”

terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of slaves,
Voices of prostitutes, and of deformed persons,
Voices of the diseased and despairing, and of thieves and dwarfs, ... (54)

In this passage, the poet channels the voices of those marginalized or excluded from the category of “normal” people—such as slaves, prostitutes, the deformed, the sick, the despairing, thieves, and dwarfs—through his own body. The first-person speaker is not a singular, monolithic voice but resonates with a polyphony of varied experiences and perspectives. The repetition of “Through me” underscores the speaker’s role as a conduit for diverse voices, highlighting his commitment to articulating the experiences of those who have been silenced or marginalized.

Whitman’s use of air as a metaphor for poetic expression emphasizes its fluid and uncontainable nature. Just as air “bathes the globe,” crossing boundaries and permeating all spaces, the poet’s voice extends beyond the confines of his own body, reaching a wider audience. For Whitman, air serves as the medium through which the voices of those who deviate from societal norms are amplified, reinforcing his democratic ideals and commitment to inclusivity. The atmosphere, portrayed as a shared and democratic medium, symbolizes the interconnectedness of all people. Whitman’s longing for direct contact with the air mirrors his desire for an unmediated connection with his readers. The act of breathing becomes a metaphor for a deeper, collective communion, where the poet’s voice mingles with the breath of every individual, dissolving the boundaries between self and other. This dynamic exchange between the internal and external, the individual and the collective, lies at the heart of Whitman’s vision of a truly democratic society.

Infection and Sympathy

At its core, Whitman's vision of democracy embraces everyone, including society's most marginalized individuals—such as the sick, prostitutes, and even the dead—reflecting an all-encompassing inclusivity that transcends societal boundaries. This radical embrace is captured in the speaker's acknowledgment of the presence of each stranger who passes by him, highlighting the inherent worth of every individual:

Each who passes is considered—Each who stops is considered—Not a single one can
it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,
Nor the little child that peeped in at the door, and then drew back, and was never seen
again,
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it with bitterness worse than
gall,
Nor him in the poor-house, tubercled by rum and the bad disorder,
Nor the numberless slaughtered and wrecked—nor the brutish koboo called the ordure
of humanity,
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in,
Nor anything in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the earth,
Nor anything in the myriads of spheres—nor one of the myriads of myriads that inhabit
them,

Nor the present—nor the least wisp that is known. (92)

The repetition of “considered” emphasizes the speaker’s deliberate act of recognition. No one is overlooked or dismissed; each life, regardless of its societal status or visibility, receives full attention. The list encompasses a wide spectrum of human experiences, from infants and the elderly to the sick and socially marginalized. By mentioning figures like “the young man who died and was buried,” “the old man who has lived without purpose,” and those suffering in poorhouses, Whitman extends his democratic embrace beyond the living to include the dead and forgotten—individuals typically relegated to the margins of society’s awareness. Whitman’s inclusivity reaches even the most abject forms of existence, as reflected in his reference to the “brutish koboo called the ordure of humanity.” The vivid image of “sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in” evokes a raw, primal state of being, suggesting that his vision of democracy transcends human concerns alone, encompassing all forms of life and matter. By mentioning “anything in the earth” and “the oldest graves,” Whitman connects the living with the dead, underscoring a continuity that dissolves temporal and physical boundaries. This radical inclusivity extends to the “myriads of spheres” in the universe, implying a cosmic scale to his democratic vision, where every entity, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, is woven into the larger web of existence. For the speaker, this celebration of inclusivity naturally encompasses an embrace of death. Unlike conventional narratives that separate the living from the dead, Whitman’s speaker recognizes a shared commonality across this divide. He asserts that even those buried in graves are “considered” within his expansive, democratic consciousness. Death is not seen as an endpoint but as a seamless part of life’s ongoing cycle, integrated into the fabric of existence. This comprehensive vision underscores Whitman’s commitment to a democracy that acknowledges every aspect of life, creating a vision that transcends the

boundaries of time and mortality.

The speaker's radical inclusivity is deeply rooted in his physicality, particularly in his declaration of "perfect health" (8). The collection begins by celebrating the speaker's robust body, underscoring the interconnectedness between the self, the soil, and the air. In the cluster of poems titled "Walt Whitman," he again proclaims his state of "health," suggesting that his vitality is a prerequisite for his poetic vision of universal embrace. Here, Whitman is not merely describing physical wellness; rather, he emphasizes a state of openness and receptivity essential for embodying the multitude of voices and experiences he aims to channel. By declaring the speaker's body as "perfect health," Whitman conveys a resilience necessary to serve as a conduit for diverse experiences. This health symbolizes his capacity to absorb, integrate, and express the breadth of human (and even non-human) lives, allowing the voices of others to pass through him freely. The mutual permeation of "you" and "I" at the atomic level reflects this dissolution of barriers between individuals, suggesting an intimate, almost molecular blending of selves (23).

This healthy speaker seeks to echo the voices of those deviating from norms, assuming the role of a medium, as evident from the following poem.

To be in any form—what is that?

(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,)

If nothing lay more developed, the quahaug in its callous shell were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,

I have instant conductors all over me, whether I pass or stop,

They seize every object, and lead it harmlessly through me. (61)

The phrase "To be in any form" implies a state of uniform or formlessness, suggesting that the

concept of form itself becomes meaningless. Whitman's portrayal of the "I" without a "callous shell" reveals a self with "instant conductors," enabling everything to pass through it "harmlessly." However, as Akira Yamauchi observes, the term "harmlessly" paradoxically indicates Whitman's awareness of the inherent danger in this openness (134). The act of incorporating others into oneself, or allowing them to pass through, is fraught with potential risks to the self's integrity, making this process far less effortless than the speaker claims. Despite this, the speaker's lack of a protective shell also introduces an element of erotic pleasure in his vulnerability. By opening himself up to the influx of unknown strangers, he experiences a form of intimate contact that is both unsettling and sensually gratifying. The absence of a barrier heightens his sensitivity to the external world, making the act of being temporarily inhabited by others an intense, almost erotic experience. This dynamic highlights the tension in Whitman's vision of radical openness: while it exposes the self to potential harm, it also allows for profound, transformative encounters with the unknown strangers.

The speaker who often masochistically identifies with the suffering of others, embraces their pain as his own. For the poet, "Agonies are one of my changes of garments, / I do not ask the wounded person how he feels—I myself become the wounded person, / My hurt turns livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe" (74-75). In this sense, the following stanza is noteworthy for depicting the theme of identification with a cholera patient.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp, but I also lie at the last gasp,

My face is ash-colored—my sinews gnarl—away from me people retreat. (81)

Here, the speaker takes on the suffering of the patient, lying gasping for air. The monosyllabic phrase "at the last gasp" suggests his literal struggle for breath. As the speaker transforms into a cholera patient himself, he appears pale and contorted, causing others to fear infection and avoid

him. In this short stanza, the patient originally fighting the disease transforms into a carrier who poses a threat of infection to healthy individuals. This poem portrays the speaker's active immersion in the source of infection, resulting in his own illness. This act illuminates the poet's perspective on disease, which stands in stark contrast to the prevailing attitudes that differentiate between the sick and the healthy through measures such as quarantine and treatment. This shift marks a transition from regarding quarantine as the primary method of treatment to accepting the presence of carriers and embracing the risks that come with it.

Whitman's recognition of the potential for building empathetic bonds through shared suffering, set against the backdrop of the threat of infection, is also evident in his 1845 short story "Revenge and Retribution" (later retitled "One Wicked Impulse!"). In this story, a young man named Philip Marsh impulsively kills his guardian after being unable to bear the weight of his wrongdoing.³⁴ During the cholera epidemic in New York, he becomes a "messenger of health," caring for numerous patients in a display of self-sacrifice driven by guilt. Although the story would later undergo revision, the original version published in *The Democratic Review* concludes with Marsh contracting the disease he had been tending to, and ultimately dying. However, before his death, he leaves his inheritance to the children of the guardian he killed—those who had lost their father due to his actions ("One Wicked Impulse!" 316–17).

Just as Whitman's short story finds love and empathy amid the threats of infection and death, a poem about a cholera patient in *Leaves of Grass* similarly captures a moment in which the speaker achieves intimate identification by personally embracing fear and anxiety. Despite—or perhaps precisely because of—the threat of infection that drives most healthy individuals

³⁴ It is also interesting that his surname, "Marsh," evokes the miasma theory, as it is associated with the image of a "swamp" from which miasma was believed to arise.

away, Whitman suggests that the relationship between “one cholera patient” and “I” can become intensely personal, offering the possibility of forming an ultimate bond of intimacy.

Since Harold Aspiz pointed out Whitman’s creation of a mythical self-image as a “healer-hero” (*Body Beautiful* 7), previous studies have emphasized the poet’s therapeutic role as a “compassionate healer” (Sholnick 249) and “an agent of cure” (Libow 25). While it is undeniable that Whitman himself actively played the role of a heroic healer, it is also true that for him, the intersection of infection and empathy develops an intimate bond of suffering. Therefore, the passage of “a cholera patient” portrays the speaker embracing the role of an infectious source, blurring the lines between the sick and the healthy. By embodying infection and empathy simultaneously, the speaker depicts a moment of infectious intimacy. The understanding that diseases spread through the air underscores an inseparable connection between individuals, regardless of their social status or position. The threat of infectious diseases, which indiscriminately affects everyone equally, highlights the stark commonality exposed among individuals, who are inherently meshed with others. Whitman thus paves the way for the potentially dangerous yet transformative deepening of affective bonds between individuals.

In his work *Representative Men* (1850), Ralph Waldo Emerson, discusses the concept of “Great Men” and describes the ideas of his era as infectious: “[T]he ideas of the time are in the air, and *infect* all who breathe it We learn of our contemporaries what they know, without effort, and almost through the pores of the skin. We catch it by sympathy” (15; emphasis added). Drawing on the miasma theory, Emerson suggests that this world is filled with air, through which thoughts of the age are transmitted almost unconsciously, resonating through sympathy. His rhetoric foregrounds how ideas carried through the air permeate people almost unconsciously, akin to infection. Emerson thus goes on to argue that one great individual can influence the rest,

noting that “There needs but one wise man in a company, and all are wise,—so rapid is the *contagion*” (15; emphasis added).

Whitman, echoing Emerson’s metaphorical use of contagion, presents himself as a “wise man” spreading his idealized vision of a democratic America founded on affective friendship and love between strangers. In his health column, Whitman emphasizes the influence of those with a “large personality,” describing the “atmosphere of influence that effuses out of [them] whenever [they] move.” He notes that such individuals can hardly be present in a crowd or a room full of people without their influence being felt (*Manly Health* 81). While Whitman’s understanding of “personality” closely aligns with Emerson’s concept of the “infection” of the “wise,” a significant distinction arises: Whitman prioritizes the “body” as the source of this influence, rather than the “ideas” emphasized in Emerson’s essay.

He posits that infection and sympathy coexist, reinforcing his belief in the interconnectedness of individual bodies.

There shall from me be a new friendship—It shall be called after my name,

It shall circulate through The States, indifferent of place, ...

Affection shall solve every one of the problems of freedom,

Those who love each other shall be invincible,

They shall finally make America completely victorious, in my name. (349)

Throughout *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman seeks to establish “a new friendship” in his name, with an affective bond that permeates America. In this dissemination process, Whitman again invokes the image of air in “Calamus 14”: “the air of ripe summer” bears “myriads of seeds” and “waft[s] to drop where they may” (360). Through “the open air,” he envisions “love” and “friendship, for you” being “[w]afted in all directions” (360). If the belief that diseases spread through the air

signifies an inseparable connection between people, then Whitman sees the air not only as a medium for transmitting diseases but also as a channel for communicating and spreading his love and friendship to readers.

Indeed, Whitman imagines the tactile presence of readers who are “now reading this” book. He catalogues image of various readers:

May-be one is now reading this who knows some wrong-doing of my past life,
Or may-be a stranger is reading this who has secretly loved me,
Or may-be one who meets all my grand assumptions and egotisms with derision,
Or may-be one who is puzzled at me. ...
Or as if I do not secretly love strangers! (361-62)

Stranger-readers remain unfamiliar to the poet, never transforming into familiar and close friends. Reflecting on a “passing stranger” when the speaker “sit[s] alone, or wake[s] at night alone,” he says, “I am to wait—I do not doubt I am to meet you again, / I am to see to it that I do not lose you” (366-67). In the context of infectious diseases discussed in this section, relationships with unknown others inherently carry the risk of disease transmission, much like air—an “indispensable common”—serves as a medium for both connection and contagion. Whitman, who fosters intimate bonds with anonymous strangers as a foundation for utopian human connection, can be seen as developing a philosophy shaped by the experience of epidemics spreading through networks of unknown individuals. For Whitman, remaining strangers is not a barrier to be overcome but the very foundation of emotional connection. This kind of intimacy becomes the cornerstone of his vision—interconnectedness with anonymous others creates opportunities for genuine emotional bonds that allow people to connect on a fundamental human level despite their differences. This perspective challenges the conventional

notion that true intimacy requires familiarity. Instead, Whitman suggests that the unknown and unfamiliar can be powerful forces in fostering meaningful relationships. In this way, the intimacy shared with strangers mirrors the bond between the poet and his readers. Here, the act of connection is not rooted in familiarity but is made possible through the radical openness of both poet and reader, who acknowledge the inherent distance and differences between them.

Decomposition and Recomposition

Whitman closely ties his poetry to his own physical self, transforming his body into text. In “Calamus 3,” he intertwines his identity with his poetry, suggesting an intrinsic link between the poet, the reader, and the text itself. The speaker’s invitation, “Whoever you are holding me now in hand” (344), implies that any reader, by engaging with the poem, can form a intimate connection with the poet. This invitation equates the physical act of holding the text with the intimate gesture of holding hands, thereby dissolving the boundary between reader and poet. The text thus becomes a medium for forming intimate relationships that suggests physical proximity, enabled through the reader’s interaction with the poem.

The speaker rejects the confinement of “roofed rooms” or “libraries,” where poetry is traditionally contained within established structures. By stating, “For in any roofed room of a house I emerge not—nor in company, / And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,” Whitman dismisses institutional or private boundaries that restrict the life of poetry. Instead, he emphasizes the necessity of “the open air,” a space symbolizing the unrestricted potential of both the poet and his poetry to engage with the world (345). This imagery reflects Whitman’s democratic ideal of poetry as accessible to all, free from the constraints of intellectual elitism or physical spaces. The poet’s desire for his words to exist openly, unmediated by social

hierarchies, aligns with his vision of a society where intimacy and connection are possible across all divisions, even with strangers.

Whitman's exploration of death and transformation further enriches this vision of boundless intimacy. His imagery of corporeal decomposition and the merging of the dead with the living offers a powerful representation of continuity through death, symbolized by grass growing from the bodies of the deceased. The speaker gently refers to this as "curling grass," indicating an intimate relationship with death and its aftermath: "It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men, / It may be if I had known them I would have loved them..." (29). Here, life and death are interconnected in a cycle of regeneration, as grass sprouts from decaying bodies, giving rise to new life. The phrase "the beautiful uncut hair of graves" (29) captures this imagery, where the dead become fertile ground for growth. For Whitman, grass symbolizes the unending passage of time, where death is not a finality but a transformation into a different state of being, perpetuating the continuity of life through nature's cycle.

The metaphor is further developed in "Calamus 2," where the speaker imagines grass growing from his own breast—a symbolic act of self-revelation and vulnerability. The lines, "Scented herbage of my breast, / Leaves from you I yield, I write, to be perused best afterwards, / Tomb-leaves, body-leaves, growing up above me, above death" (342), illustrate the intimate, corporeal nature of the speaker's relationship with death and renewal. The poet's body, as a site of decay, becomes a vessel for new life, rising from the decomposition of what was once a private, concealed self. The image of leaves blooming again each year emphasizes the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth, suggesting that death is not to be feared but embraced as part of a continuous natural process. The speaker even calls death "beautiful," blurring the lines between life and death and proposing that both states share an inherent beauty: "Death is beautiful from

you—(what indeed is beautiful, except Death and Love?)” (342).

Whitman’s exploration of these intertwined states of life, death, and self-revelation culminates in the speaker’s declaration to “unbare this broad breast of mine.” This moment signifies a powerful shift from the concealment of private emotions to their exposure, echoing the emergence of unspoken or hidden feelings from the poet’s depths. By imagining these concealed emotions as grass, Whitman links the private act of self-revelation to a public expression through writing and connection with others. This act of “unbarring” not only contrasts with the earlier imagery of hidden desires but also emphasizes the vulnerability and openness required to connect deeply with the world. Yet, the metaphor of leaves and grass that emerge from this openness hints at the difficulty of fully articulating oneself. The “faint-tinged roots” and “timid leaves” suggest that despite the poet’s desire for understanding, his most profound emotions remain partly veiled, pointing to the complexity of sharing one’s inner life with others.

This motif of hidden emotions expressed through natural imagery mirrors the symbolism of the “unsightly plants” in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. When Chillingworth observes the herbs growing in the graveyard, he interprets them as symbols of the unconfessed sins of the body: “They grew out of his heart, and typify, it may be, some hideous secret that was buried with him, and which he had done better to confess during his lifetime” (1:103). In both Whitman’s and Hawthorne’s works, plants sprouting from the graves of the dead signify secrets, unspoken desires, and repressed emotions that continue to emerge, even after death. For Whitman, however, these emerging leaves serve as an invitation for the poet—and, by extension, the reader—to confront what lies buried, to acknowledge and give voice to what was once concealed. The symbolism of grass growing from a decomposing body thus functions as a complex metaphor for renewal and the exposure of the hidden. Here, death and the unknown are

not threats to intimacy but openings to deeper connection and understanding. Just as the grass grows out of the decomposing body, so too do the poet's hidden feelings emerge into the world, offering a vision of intimacy that transcends death and decay.

This idea of transformation and renewal through decomposition resonates with Emerson's reflections on Plato's legacy in *Representative Men*. Emerson emphasizes a natural law that finds positive outcomes in seemingly negative circumstances, observing: "His perception of the generation of contraries, of death out of life, and life out of death,—that law by which in Nature, decomposition is recomposition, and putrefaction and cholera are only signals of a new creation" (46). Emerson's depiction of "putrefaction and cholera" as signs of "a new creation" anticipates a theme central to Whitman's poem "This Compost," where the poet explores the regenerative power of decay.

In "This Compost," Whitman's exploration of decomposition and miasma is both visceral and philosophical, reflecting his preoccupation with the processes of death and renewal. The poem begins with a sense of horror and bewilderment at the Earth's ability to sustain life amid constant decay: "How can you be alive, you growths of spring? / How can you furnish health, you blood of herbs, roots, orchards, grain?" The speaker is struck by the paradox of life emerging from death, questioning how the Earth can remain "alive" while simultaneously harboring "distempered corpses" and "diseased corpses." The vivid imagery of decaying bodies—"carcasses of the drunkards and gluttons," "foul liquid and meat"—evokes the miasma theory, which posited that decomposition produced harmful, disease-spreading vapors (209-10). However, the poem quickly pivots to an awe-filled recognition of the Earth's regenerative powers: "It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions, / It distils such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor" (210). Here, Whitman envisions the Earth as a purifying force that

transforms decay into vitality. The speaker celebrates this ongoing process of regeneration, where even the “sour dead” are converted into nourishing fruits, fertile soil, and healing winds. The paradox of life and death coexisting in this cycle suggests that decay is essential for the creation of new life; thus, death is not an end but an integral part of an ongoing process of renewal and transformation.

This contemplation of death and decomposition extends beyond the environment to the speaker’s own body. Throughout *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman expresses an intimate awareness of his mortality. At one poignant moment, he declares: “O LOVE! / O dying—always dying! / O the burials of me, past and present!” (369). The speaker is not merely reflecting on the inevitable passage of time but is engaging with the visceral reality of his physical decline while acknowledging the fluidity between life and death. In “Walt Whitman,” the speaker contemplates his departure from the physical realm, imagining himself dissolving into the air and the natural world:

I depart as air—I shake my white locks at the run-away sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeathe myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am, or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first, keep encouraged,
Missing me one place, search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you. (104)

This passage functions as a potent metaphor for the poet's transcendence beyond his physical form, signifying an enduring presence that merges with nature and continues to nurture the living. The phrase "under your boot-soles" emphasizes the poet's essence as something rooted in the earth—hidden in the dirt yet constantly present. It suggests that like dirt clinging to shoes, the poet's influence is subtle but enduring, an integral part of the natural world that sticks with the reader even when it goes unnoticed. The speaker acknowledges that his identity may not be immediately recognized, yet he will continue to "filter and fibre your blood"—to nourish and influence readers even after his physical death. This suggests a lasting, symbiotic relationship between the poet and the reader, wherein death becomes a new form of connection. The poem conveys a message of persistence, encouraging the reader to keep searching for meaning even when the poet's presence is no longer readily apparent.

Through recurring imagery of death, transformation, and the intimate bond between the poet and the reader, Whitman's work asserts that death and decay should not be feared but embraced as part of a natural, ever-renewing process. The transformation of the body into air, earth, and spirit emphasizes a profound unity between self, nature, and the reader, reinforcing the cyclical nature of existence and the enduring connection between the poet and those who engage with his work. Whitman's death, like the decomposition of the body, is depicted as a transition into another form, where his essence continues to nourish and sustain the world, forging an eternal bond with his unknown readers.

In "Calamus 45," Whitman addresses future readers, reflecting on the temporality of

the body and the enduring presence of his poetry. He acknowledges the inevitable disappearance of his physical self as time progresses, yet his words serve as a lasting bridge to those who come after him. The lines, “When you read these, I, that was visible, am become invisible; / Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me” (378), capture the paradox of the poet’s physical absence and his continued presence through his text. Whitman imagines his poems as a conduit that allows him to transcend temporal boundaries, engaging with future readers in an encounter that defies the constraints of physical existence. His embrace of a connection with strangers and readers is rooted in this shared longing for intimacy and mutual recognition across the distances of time and space.

However, Whitman’s desire for intimate connection with strangers is also tempered by an inherent distance. While the speaker calls for closeness, he simultaneously acknowledges the inevitable challenges in fully realizing such relationships. Even as the poet invites readers into an intimate relationship through his words, he is aware of the impossibility of fully capturing his essence. This acknowledgment of distance underscores the complex nature of his imagined connection—a connection that is at once deeply personal and poignantly incomplete, marked by both a desire for unity and an acceptance of the limits imposed by time and separation.

But these leaves conning, you con at peril,
For these leaves, and me, you will not understand,
They will elude you at first, and still more afterward—I will certainly elude you,
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me, behold!
Already you see I have escaped from you. (346)

The phrase “these leaves conning, you con at peril” underscores a tension between the poet’s openness and the reader’s difficulty in fully comprehending the text. The leaves—his poems—

remain elusive, reflecting the paradox of Whitman's impersonal intimacy: the deeper the desire for connection, the more one recognizes the inherent differences between individuals. In this way, the act of seeking closeness with the poet through the text becomes a reminder of the persistent distance that remains, creating a relationship that is both profoundly intimate and inherently alienating. This dynamic, oscillating between connection and separation, encapsulates Whitman's complex vision of intimacy—a vision shaped by his encounters with the epidemics and his reflections on the fundamental intertwining of human lives.

CODA

This dissertation has examined male friendship in the antebellum era, presenting a nuanced dialectic of author-reader relations and male intimacy that challenges traditional views of textual encounters. By introducing the concept of “alienating intimacy,” this study shifts the focus from idealized connections to the inherent tensions, misunderstandings, and unfulfilled longings that shape both personal and textual relationships. This approach addresses gaps in existing scholarship that often romanticizes friendship, illuminating the complexities of intimacy and alienation that characterize these bonds.

Central to this exploration is the tension between connection and separation in the author-reader relationship, particularly within representations of male friendship in nineteenth-century American literature. In each work by Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman, friendship is marked by profound contradictions. The yearning for an idealized reader-friend—one who might fully comprehend, appreciate, and reciprocate the author’s emotional investment—is often undercut by the disillusionment of unmet expectations.

For Thoreau, idealized friendship becomes a dream deferred—an aspiration projected into a distant, imagined future where the reader may finally understand his innermost thoughts. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, Thoreau’s frustrations and unspoken desires, along with ultimately unrealized friendships, underscore friendship as a fragile, imperfect construct that never fully materializes in the present. The figure of the “hermeneutic friend,” who transcends temporal and spatial constraints, becomes an anchor for Thoreau’s yearnings,

symbolizing the elusive nature of true communion.

Hawthorne's exploration of intimacy often involves a rejection of closeness. In *The Scarlet Letter*, his characters navigate relationships haunted by failure or the impossibility of genuine friendship. Hawthorne's prefaces—both inviting and rebuffing readers—reflect his own ambivalence toward readerly scrutiny, illustrating the limits of what can be shared between author and audience. For Hawthorne, the text serves as a space where the ideal of friendship is continually undermined by the awareness that the interior lives of characters—and, by extension, the author—remain fundamentally unknowable. Yet, while the relationship between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth demonstrates how identification with another can become invasive and corrosive, their failures of friendship paradoxically create a space for the possibility of profound attachment, however flawed or unfulfilled.

Melville, in contrast, presents the failure of friendship not merely as a thematic concern but as an existential condition. In “Bartleby, the Scrivener” and *The Confidence Man*, he stages the collapse of relational bonds, reflecting his own anxieties about his readers' capacity for true understanding. Here, friendship fails not just symbolically but also as an expression of Melville's estrangement from the literary public. The lawyer's betrayal of Bartleby, the misanthropic deception of the Confidence Man, and the pervasive unreadability of Melville's texts all suggest that writing itself is marked by an unbridgeable gap between author and reader. Paradoxically, however, this estrangement opens up new possibilities for intimacy, suggesting that the deepest connections may emerge within the space of failure.

Whitman's poetics of intimacy, shaped by the concepts of air, contagion, and miasma, reflect both the desire for complete absorption and the risk of exposure to other bodies and desires. The cholera epidemics deeply influenced Whitman's vision of expansive intimacy, where

contagion and sympathy become foundational themes in his poetics. As he navigates the tension between connection and separation, Whitman envisions *Leaves of Grass* as an extension of his own embodied self, inviting readers into an intimate relationship that remains marked by distance. Through motifs of death and decomposition, Whitman forges a connection with future readers, using these symbols to highlight the vulnerability and interdependence of human existence. His engagement with the dead, like his relationship with readers, is profoundly personal yet inevitably distant, creating a complex intimacy with strangers that transcends temporal and physical boundaries.

These texts invite readers into relationships of longing and distance, where friendship is both an aspiration and a perpetual failure. Through their complex portrayals of male friendship, these authors expose the instability of the bonds they seek to forge with their readers. The rejection of the reader, alongside the tension between invitation and ambivalence, forms the basis of a literary tradition in which the pursuit of connection is tempered by an awareness of its inherent limitations. The interplay of intimacy and alienation, hope and despair, is not merely a stylistic nuance; it is central to the nature of these texts and the relationships they create with their readers.

By focusing on negative affects—dissatisfaction, isolation, and suffering—this dissertation seeks to complicate the conventional idealization of friendship, offering instead a more nuanced view of how male friendship functions in the works of Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. The yearning for an idealized reader-friend is not just a desire for connection but is deeply intertwined with rejection, frustration, and despair. These negative emotions are not anomalies; they are essential to the author-reader relationship. The texts may at times reject certain readers or leave emotional needs unmet, but in this very absence lies the

potential for deeper intimacy. In the end, these authors craft relationships that, while failing to achieve ideal communion, nonetheless create space for complex, often painful, but profoundly transformative encounters between writer and reader. This exploration of “alienating intimacy” ultimately enriches our understanding of male friendship in the nineteenth century and the enduring complexities of connection across time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, H. Porter. *Real Mysteries: Narrative and the Unknowable*. Ohio State UP, 2013.
- Abelove, Henry. *Deep Gossip*. U of Minnesota P, 2003.
- Agamben, Giorgio. "Bartleby, or On Contingency." *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford UP, 1999, pp. 243–74.
- Alger, William Rounseville. "The Literature of Friendship." *North American Review*, vol. 83, 1856, pp. 104-132.
- Ancell, Henry. *Treatise on Tuberculosis*. London, 1852.
- Arac, Jonathan. *The Emergence of American Literary Narrative, 1820–1860*. Harvard UP, 2005.
- Argersinger, Jana L., and Leland S. Person, editors. *Hawthorne and Melville: Writing a Relationship*. U of Georgia P, 2008.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Roger Crisp, Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Armengol-Carrera, Josep M. "Of Friendship: Revisiting Friendships Between Men in American Literature." *The Journal of Men's Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2009, pp. 193–209.
- Arvin, Newton. *Herman Melville*. Methuen, 1950.
- Aspiz, Harold. *So Long! Walt Whitman's Poetry of Death*. U of Alabama P, 2004.
- . *Walt Whitman and the Body Beautiful*. U of Illinois P, 1980.
- Barnes, Elizabeth. *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*. Columbia UP, 1997.
- Baym, Nina. "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude

- Women Authors." *American Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1981, pp. 123–39.
- . *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America*. Cornell UP, 1984.
- Beecher, Catharine. *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness*. New York, 1855.
- Benemann, William. *Male-Male Intimacy in Early America: Beyond Romantic Friendships*. Haworth Press, 2006.
- Bergman, David. *Gay American Autobiography: Writings from Whitman to Sedaris*. U of Wisconsin P, 2009.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Intimacy*. U of Chicago P, 2000.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan, and Myra Jehlen, editors. *Ideology and Classic American Literature*. Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Harvard UP, 1995.
- Bersani, Leo, and Adam Phillips. *Intimacies*. U of Chicago P, 2008.
- Branch, Watson, et al. "Historical Notes." *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, by Herman Melville, pp. 255–357.
- Bray, Alan. *The Friend*. U of Chicago P, 2003.
- Bridgman, Richard. *Dark Thoreau*. U of Nebraska P, 1982.
- Brod, Harry, editor. *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies*. Allen & Unwin, 1987.
- Brodhead, Richard. *The School of Hawthorne*. Oxford UP, 1986.
- . *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*. The U of Chicago P, 1993.
- Brown, Gillian. *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America*. U of California P, 1990.

- Brown, Kathleen M. *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America*. Yale UP, 2009.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance*. Cornell UP, 1973.
- . *New England Literary Culture: From Revolution through Renaissance*. Cambridge UP, 1986.
- . "Transcendental Friendship: An Oxymoron?" *Emerson & Thoreau: Figures of Friendship*, edited by John T. Lysaker and William Rossi, Indiana UP, 2010, pp. 17–32.
- Burgett, Bruce. "Sex, Panic, Nation." *American Literary History*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2009, pp. 67–86.
- Cady, Joseph. "Not Happy in the Capitol: Homosexuality and the 'Calamus' Poems," *American Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1978, pp. 5–22.
- Cameron, Sharon. *Writing Nature: Henry Thoreau's Journal*. Oxford UP, 1985.
- Carnes, Mark C., and Clyde Griffen, editors. *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*. U of Chicago P, 1990.
- Castiglia, Christopher. *Interior States: Institutional Consciousness and the Inner Life of Democracy in the Antebellum United States*. Duke UP, 2008.
- Cavell, Stanley. *The Senses of Walden: An Expanded Edition*. U Of Chicago P, 1992.
- Ceniza, Sherry. *Walt Whitman and Nineteenth-Century Women Reformers*. U of Alabama P, 2013.
- Chapman, Mary, and Glenn Hendler, editors. *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*. U of California P, 1999.
- Charvat, William. *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800–1870: The Papers of William Charvat*. Edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Ohio State UP, 1968.
- Chase, Richard. *Herman Melville: A Critical Study*. Macmillan, 1949.
- . *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.

- Cicero. *On Friendship*. Translated by Walter Miller, Harvard UP, 1923.
- Colclough, Stephen. *Consuming Texts: Readers and Reading Communities, 1695–1870*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Coviello, Peter. *Intimacy in America: Dreams of Affiliation in Antebellum Literature*. U of Minnesota P, 2005.
- . *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York UP, 2013.
- Craft, Christopher. *Another Kind of Love: Male Homosexual Desire in English Discourse, 1850–1920*. U of California P, 1994.
- Crain, Caleb. *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation*. Yale UP, 2001.
- Davidson, Cathy N. *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*. Oxford UP, 1986.
- , editor. *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*. The Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Davis, Clark. *Hawthorne's Shyness: Ethics, Politics, and the Question of Engagement*. The Johns Hopkins UP, 2005.
- De Jong, Mary Gosselink. "The Making of a 'Gentle Reader': Narrator and Reader in Hawthorne's Romances." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1984, pp. 359–77.
- D'Emilio, John, and Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. Harper & Row, 1988.
- Derrick, Scott S. "'A Curious Subject of Observation and Inquiry': Homoeroticism, the Body, and Authorship in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1995, pp. 308–26.

- Derrida, Jacques. *The Politics of Friendship*. Translated by George Collins, Verso, 2005.
- Dimock, Wai Chee. "Deep Time: American Literature and World History." *American Literary History*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2001, pp. 755–75.
- Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.
- Edelman, Lee. *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*. Routledge, 1994.
- . *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke UP, 2004.
- Elbert, Monika. "Hester on the Scaffold, Dimmesdale in the Closet: Hawthorne's Seven-Year Itch." *Essays in Literature*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1989, pp. 234–55.
- Elbert, Monika, editor. *Nathaniel Hawthorne in Context*. Cambridge UP, 2018.
- Ellison, Julie. *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*. U of Chicago P, 1999.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Friendship." *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 2, Harvard UP, 1979, pp. 111–27.
- . "The Representative Men." *Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, edited by Joel Porte, Library of America, 1983, pp. 611–761.
- Erkkila, Betsy. *The Whitman Revolution: Sex, Poetry, and Politics*. U of Iowa P, 2020.
- Etter, William M. *The Good Body: Normalizing Visions in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture, 1836–1867*. Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. William Morrow and Company, 1981.
- Farland, Maria. "Walt Whitman's New York and the Science of Life and Death." *ELH*, vol. 74, no. 4, 2007, pp. 799–827.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Criterion Books, 1960.
- Foucault, Michel. "Friendship as a Way of Life." *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*,

- Volume One: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. The New Press, 1997, pp. 135-40.
- Frank, Jason. "Promiscuous Citizenship." *A Political Companion to Walt Whitman*, edited by John E. Seery, UP of Kentucky, 2011, pp. 155-84.
- Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke UP, 2010.
- Furui, Yoshiaki. *Modernizing Solitude: The Networked Individual in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. U of Alabama P, 2019.
- . "Transcending Distances: A Poetics of Acknowledgement in Melville's 'Benito Cereno.'" *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2014, pp. 450-70.
- Gallop, Jane. *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time*. Duke UP, 2011.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia UP, 2017.
- Gilmore, Michael T. *American Romanticism and the Marketplace*. U of Chicago P, 1985.
- Godbeer, Richard. *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love Between Men and the Creation of the American Republic*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2009.
- Good, Cassandra. *Founding Friendships: Friendships between Men and Women in the Early American Republic*. Oxford UP, 2015.
- Greenberg, Amy S. *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. Cambridge UP, 2005.
- Greiman, Jennifer. "Theatricality, Strangeness, and the Aesthetics of Plurality in *The Confidence-Man*." *Melville and Aesthetics*, edited by Samuel Otter and Geoffrey Sanborn, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 173–92.
- Greven, David. *Gender Protest and Same-Sex Desire in Antebellum American Literature:*

- Margaret Fuller, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville.*
Routledge, 2016.
- . *Men Beyond Desire: Manhood, Sex, and Violation in American Literature.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Griscom, John H. *The Uses and Abuses of Air: Showing its Influence in Sustaining Life, and Producing Disease.* New York, 1854.
- Grusin, Richard. "Thoreau, Extravagance, and the Economy of Nature." *American Literary History*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1993, pp. 30–50.
- Haines, Christian P. "'When Liberation Coincides with Total Destruction': Biopolitics, Disability, and Utopia in Walt Whitman's Afterlife." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2019, pp. 171–90.
- Halberstam, Jack. "Queer Betrayals." *Queer Futures*, edited by Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis, Routledge, 2013, pp. 177–89.
- Hamilton, Kristie. *America's Sketchbook: The Cultural Life of a Nineteenth-Century Literary Genre.* Ohio UP, 1998.
- . "Hawthorne, Modernity, and the Literary Sketch." *The Cambridge Companion to Nathaniel Hawthorne*, edited by Richard H. Millington, Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 99–120.
- Hansen, Karen V. "'Our Eyes Behold Each Other': Masculinity and Intimate Friendship in Antebellum New England." *Men's Friendships*, edited by Peter M. Nardi, SAGE Publications, 1992, pp. 35–58.
- Harding, Walter. *The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography.* Dover Publications, 1982.
- . "Thoreau's Sexuality." *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1991, pp. 23–46.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The American Notebooks.* Edited by Claude M. Simpson, Centenary

- Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 8, Ohio State UP, 1972.
- . *The Letters, 1813–1843*. Edited by Thomas Woodson et al., *Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 16, Ohio State UP, 1984.
- . *The Letters, 1843–1853*. Edited by Thomas Woodson and L. Neal Smith, *Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 17, Ohio State UP, 1987.
- . *The Marble Faun*. Edited by C. E. Frazer Clark Jr., *The Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 4, Ohio State UP, 1971.
- . *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Edited by William Charvat et al., *The Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 10, Ohio State UP, 1978.
- . *The Scarlet Letter*. Edited by William Charvat et al., *The Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 1, Ohio State UP, 1962.
- . *The Snow-Image and Uncollected Tales*. Edited by Fredson Bowers, *The Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 11, Ohio State UP, 1974.
- . *Tales and Sketches*. Edited by Roy Harvey Pearce et al., *The Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 5, Ohio State UP, 1968.
- . *Twice-Told Tales*. Edited by Fredson Bowers et al., *The Centenary Edition of The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 9, Ohio State UP, 1974.
- Herrero-Puertas, Manuel. "Whitman's Good Life." *Revisiting the Whitmanian Body at 200: Memory, Medicine, Mobility*, edited by Don James McLaughlin and Clare Mullaney, special issue of *Common-place: The Journal of Early American Life*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2019, pp. 161–69.
- Hewitt, Elizabeth. "Scarlet Letters, Dead Letters: Correspondence and the Poetics of Democracy in Melville and Hawthorne." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1999, pp. 295–

—. *Correspondence and American Literature, 1770–1865*. Oxford UP, 2004.

Higgins, Brian, and Hershel Parker, editors. *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*. Cambridge UP, 1995.

Hochman, Barbara. *Getting at the Author: Reimagining Books and Reading in the Age of American Realism*. U of Massachusetts P, 2001.

Hurh, Paul. "Clarel, Doubt, Delay." *Melville's Philosophies*, edited by Branka Arsic and K. L. Evans, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, pp. 79–103.

Hutner, Gordon. *Secrets and Sympathy: Forms of Disclosure in Hawthorne's Novels*. U of Georgia P, 1988.

Imafuku, Ryuta. *Henrī Sorō: Yasei no Gakusya* [*Henry Thoreau: The School of the Wild*]. Misuzu Shobō, 2016.

Iser, Wolfgang. "Interaction between Text and Reader." *The Reader in the Text*, edited by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, Princeton UP, 1980.

James, C. L. R. *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*. UP of New England, 2001.

Jones, Gavin. *Failure and the American Writer: A Literary History*. Cambridge UP, 2014.

Katz, Jonathan Ned. *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976.

—. *Love Stories: Sex between Men before Homosexuality*. U of Chicago P, 2001.

Kearns, Michael. *Writing for the Street, Writing in the Garret: Melville, Dickinson, and Private Publication*. Ohio State UP, 2010.

Kilcup, Karen L. "'Ourself Behind Ourself, Concealed': The Homoerotics of Reading in *The*

- Scarlet Letter.*" *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1996, pp. 1–28.
- Killingsworth, M. Jimmie. *Whitman's Poetry of the Body: Sexuality, Politics, and the Text*. U of North Carolina P, 1989.
- Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Free Press, 1996.
- Korhonen, Kuisma. *Textual Friendship: The Essay as Impossible Encounter from Plato and Montaigne to Levinas and Derrida*. Humanity Books, 2006.
- Kuusisto, Stephen. "Walt Whitman's 'Specimen Days' and the Discovery of the Disability Memoir." *Prose Studies*, vol. 27, nos. 1–2, 2005, pp. 155–62.
- Lawrence, D. H. *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Edited by Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen, Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Leverenz, David. *Manhood and the American Renaissance*. Cornell UP, 1989.
- . "Mrs. Hawthorne's Headache: Reading *The Scarlet Letter*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1983, pp. 552–75.
- Lewis, R. W. B. *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. U of Chicago P, 1955.
- Leyda, Jay. *The Melville Log: A Documentary Life of Herman Melville, 1819–1891*. 2 vols., Guardian Press, 1969.
- Libow, Jess. "Song of My Self-Help: Whitman's Rehabilitative Reading." *Revisiting the Whitmanian Body at 200: Memory, Medicine, Mobility*, edited by Don James McLaughlin and Clare Mullaney, special issue of *Common-place: The Journal of Early American Life*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2019, pp. 24–43.
- Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Harvard UP, 2007.

- Luciano, Dana. *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America*. NYU Press, 2007.
- Lynch, Michael. "Here Is Adhesiveness: From Friendship to Homosexuality," *Victorian Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1985, pp. 67-96.
- Lysaker, John T., and William Rossi, editors. *Emerson and Thoreau: Figures of Friendship*. Indiana UP, 2010.
- Machor, James L. *Reading Fiction in Antebellum America: Informed Response and Reception Histories, 1820–1865*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2011.
- , editor. *Readers in History: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Contexts of Response*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1999.
- Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton UP, 2007.
- Margolis, Stacey. *The Public Life of Privacy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Duke UP, 2005.
- Martin, Robert K. *Hero, Captain, and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the Sea Novels of Herman Melville*. U of North Carolina P, 1986.
- . "Hester Prynne, C'est Moi: Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Anxieties of Gender." *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*, edited by Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden, Routledge, 1990, pp. 122–39.
- . "Knights-Errant and Gothic Seducers: The Representation of Male Friendship in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America." *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, edited by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr., New American Library, 1989, pp. 169–182.

- . "Whitman's Song of Myself: Homosexual Dream and Vision," *Partisan Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1975, pp. 80-96.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Oxford UP, 1964.
- . "Melville's Parable of the Walls." *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 61, no. 4, 1953, pp. 602-27. —.
- Matthiessen, F. O. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. Oxford UP, 1968.
- McGill, Meredith L. *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2003.
- . "Common Places: Poetry, Illocality, and Temporal Dislocation in Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*." *American Literary History*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2007, pp. 357-74.
- . "The Problem of Hawthorne's Popularity." *Reciprocal Influences: Literary Production, Distribution, and Consumption in America*, edited by Steven Fink and Susan S. Williams, The Ohio State UP, 1999.
- McLaughlin, Don James, and Clare Mullaney. *Revisiting the Whitmanian Body at 200: Memory, Medicine, Mobility*, special issue of *Common-place: The Journal of Early American Life*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2019.
- McWilliams, Wilson Carey. *The Idea of Fraternity in America*. U of California P, 1973.
- Melville, Herman. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*. Edited by Harrison Hayford et al., Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1984.
- . *Correspondence*. Edited by Lynn Horth, Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1993.
- . *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile*. Ed. Harrison Hayford et al., Northwestern UP and The

- Newberry Library, 1982.
- . *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. Edited by Harrison Hayford et al., Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1988.
- . *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces: 1839–1860*. Edited by Harrison Hayford et al., Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1987.
- . *Pierre: or The Ambiguities*. Edited by Harrison Hayford et al., Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 2000.
- Meltzer, Milton. *Walt Whitman: A Biography*. Twenty-First Century Books, 2002.
- Michaels, Walter Benn, and Donald E. Pease, editors. *The American Renaissance Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1982-83*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1985.
- Milder, Robert. "'The Ugly Socrates': Melville, Hawthorne, and the Varieties of Homoerotic Experience." *Hawthorne and Melville: Writing a Relationship*, edited by Jana L. Argersinger and Leland S. Person, U of Georgia P, 2008, pp. 71–111.
- Miller, Perry. *Consciousness in Concord: The Text of Thoreau's Hitherto "Lost Journal"*. AMS Press, 1985.
- Montaigne, Michel de. *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Translated by Donald M. Frame, Stanford UP, 1958.
- Moon, Michael. *Disseminating Whitman: Revision and Corporeality in Leaves of Grass*. Harvard UP, 1993.
- Morgenstern, Naomi. "The Remains of Friendship and the Ethics of Misreading: Melville, Emerson, Thoreau." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2011, pp. 241–73.
- Mueller, Monika. *"This Infinite Fraternity of Feeling": Gender, Genre, and Homoerotic Crisis in*

- Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* and Melville's *Pierre*. Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1996.
- Mulcaire, Terry. "Publishing Intimacy in *Leaves of Grass*." *ELH*, vol. 60, no. 2, Summer 1993, pp. 471–501.
- Murison, Justine S. "'Nudity and Other Sensitive States': Counterprivacy in Herman Melville's Fiction." *American Literature*, vol. 89, no. 4, 2017, pp. 697–726.
- Nealon, Christopher. *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall*. Duke UP, 2001.
- Nelson, Dana D. *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men*. Duke UP, 1998.
- Newbury, Michael. *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America*. Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Nitta, Keiko. *Amerika Bungaku no Karutogurafi: Hihyo ni yoru Ninchi Chizu no Kokoromi* [*Cartography of American Literature: An Attempt at Cognitive Mapping through Criticism*]. Kenkyūsha, 2012.
- Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard UP, 2007.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Nissen, Axel. *Manly Love: Romantic Friendship in American Fiction*. U of Chicago P, 2009.
- , editor. *The Romantic Friendship Reader: Love Stories Between Men in Victorian America*. Northeastern UP, 2003.
- OED Online*, Oxford UP.
- Parikh, Crystal. *An Ethics of Betrayal: The Politics of Otherness in Emergent U.S. Literatures and Culture*. Fordham UP, 2009.

- Peck, H. Daniel. *Thoreau's Morning Work: Memory and Perception in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, the Journal, and Walden*. Yale UP, 1990.
- Person, Leland S. "Hester's Revenge: The Power of Silence in *The Scarlet Letter*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1989, pp. 465-83.
- Porte, Joel. *Emerson and Thoreau: Transcendentalists in Conflict*. Wesleyan UP, 1966.
- Railton, Stephen. *Authorship and Audience: Literary Performance in the American Renaissance*. Princeton UP, 1991.
- Rempe, Karah Elizabeth. *Intimacy in Print: Literary Celebrity and Public Interiority in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. 2009. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, PhD dissertation.
- Renker, Elizabeth. "A ____!": Unreadability in *The Confidence-Man*." *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, edited by Robert S. Levine, Cambridge UP, 1998, pp. 114–34.
- Reynolds, David. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.
- Reynolds, Jack. "Derrida, Friendship and the Transcendental Priority of the 'Untimely.'" *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 36, no. 6, 2010, pp. 663–76.
- Richards, Jeffrey. "'Passing the Love of Women': Manly Love and Victorian Society." *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1940*, edited by J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, Manchester UP, 1987, pp. 92–122.
- Roach, Tom. *Friendship as a Way of Life: Foucault, AIDS, and the Politics of Shared Estrangement*. State U of New York P, 2012.
- Rosenberg, Charles. *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866*. U of

- Chicago P, 1962.
- Rossi, William. "'In Dreams Awake': Loss, Transcendental Friendship, and Elegy." *Emerson & Thoreau: Figures of Friendship*, edited by John T. Lysaker and William Rossi, Indiana UP, 2010, pp. 107–26.
- Rotundo, E. Anthony. *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. BasicBooks, 1993.
- Rowe, John Carlos. "'The Being of Language: The Language of Being' in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*." *boundary 2*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1979, pp. 91–116.
- Rubin, Joseph Jay. *The Historic Whitman*. Pennsylvania State UP, 1973.
- Sadahiho, Maki. "Thoreau's Ontology of 'We': Friendship in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*." *Thoreau in the 21st Century Perspectives from Japan*, edited by Masaki Horiuchi, Kinseido, 2017, pp. 145–60.
- Sanborn, Geoffrey. "Whence Come You, Queequeg?" *American Literature*, vol. 77, no. 2, 2005, pp. 228–57.
- Scheckel, Richard. *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity*. Doubleday and Co., 1985.
- Scholnick, Robert J. "'How Dare a Sick Man or an Obedient Man Write Poems?': Whitman and the Dis-ease of the Perfect Body." *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, edited by Sharon L. Snyder et al., Modern Language Association of America, 2002, pp. 248–59.
- Schweitzer, Ivy. *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature*. U of North Carolina P, 2006.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia UP, 1985.
- . *Epistemology of the Closet*. U of California P, 1990.

- Senchyne, Jonathan. *The Intimacy of Paper in Early and Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. U of Massachusetts P, 2020.
- Sengoku, Hideyo. *Shiroi Kujira no Naka e: Meruviru no Sekai [A Sailing into Moby-Dick: Melville's World of Fiction]*. Expanded ed., Sairyusha, 2015.
- Seybold, Matt. "Quite an Original Failure: Melville's Imagined Reader in *The Confidence-Man*." *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2016, pp. 73–92.
- Shamir, Milette. *Inexpressible Privacy: The Interior Life of Antebellum American Literature*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2006.
- Shamir, Milette, and Jennifer Travis, editors. *Boys Don't Cry?: Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S.* Columbia UP, 2002.
- Shattuck, Lemuel. *Report of a General Plan for the Promotion of Public and Personal Health*. Boston, 1850.
- Silverman, Gillian. *Bodies and Books: Reading and the Fantasy of Communion in Nineteenth-Century America*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2012.
- Steele, Jeffrey. "Transcendental Friendship: Emerson, Fuller, and Thoreau." *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by Joel Porte and Sandra Morris, Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 121–39.
- Suchoff, David B. "Friendship and Language in Thoreau's *Week*." *ELH*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1982, pp. 673–88.
- Takeuchi, Katsunori. *Meruviru Bungaku ni okeru "Engi suru Shutai" [The Performing Subject in Herman Melville's Works: Literary Creation as Spiritual/Textual Resurrection]*. Takanashi Shobo, 2020.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Early Essays and Miscellanies*. Princeton UP, 1975.

- . *Journal*. Vol. 1: 1837–1844, Princeton UP, 1981.
- . *Journal*. Vol. 3: 1848–1851, Princeton UP, 1990.
- . *Journal*. Vol. 7: 1853–1854, Princeton UP, 2009.
- . *Reform Papers*. Princeton UP, 1973.
- . *Walden*. Princeton UP, 1971.
- . *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Princeton UP, 1980.
- Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*. Oxford UP, 1985.
- Torres, Brant M. "Gold Rush: Alchemy and the Queer Potentialities of *The Scarlet Letter*." *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2014, pp. 149–174.
- Van Vechten, Carl. "The Great Satire of Transcendentalism." *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, edited by Hershel Parker and Mark Niemeyer, Norton, 2006, pp. 421–22.
- Velásquez, Eduardo, editor. *Love and Friendship: Rethinking Politics and Affection in Modern Times*. Lexington Books, 2003.
- Vendler, Helen. *Invisible Listeners: Lyric Intimacy in Herbert, Whitman, and Ashbery*. Princeton UP, 2005.
- Warner, Michael. *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*. Harvard UP, 1990.
- . "Thoreau's Bottom." *Raritan*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1992, pp. 53–79.
- . "Walden's Erotic Economy." *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text*, edited by Hortense J. Spillers, Routledge, 1991, pp. 157–74.
- Weinauer, Ellen. "Plagiarism and the Proprietary Self: Policing the Boundaries of Authorship in Herman Melville's 'Hawthorne and His Mosses.'" *American Literature*, vol. 69, no. 4, Dec.

- 1997, pp. 697–717.
- Wenke, John. "No 'I' in Charlemont: A Cryptogrammic Name in *The Confidence-Man*." *Essays in Literature*, vol. 9, no. 2, 1982, pp. 269–78.
- Whitman, Walt. *The Complete Poems*. Edited by Francis Murphy, Penguin, 2004.
- . "The Dirt Heap." *The Journalism, 1834–1846*, edited by Herbert Bergman et al., Peter Lang, 1998, p. 314.
- . *Leaves of Grass, 1860: The 150th Anniversary Facsimile Edition*. U of Iowa P, 2009.
- . *Manly Health and Training: To Teach the Science of a Sound and Beautiful Body*. Regan Arts, 2016.
- . "One Wicked Impulse!" *The Early Poems and the Fiction*, edited by Thomas L. Brasher, New York UP, 1963, pp. 309–18.
- Whorton, James C. *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers*. Princeton UP, 1982.
- Wineapple, Brenda. *Hawthorne: A Life*. Alfred Knopf, 2003.
- Yacovone, Donald. "'Surpassing the Love of Women': Victorian Manhood and the Language of Fraternal Love." *A Shared Experience: Men, Women, and the History of Gender*, edited by Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone, New York UP, 1998, pp. 195–221.
- Yamauchi, Akira. "Hoittoman no Dōitsuka ni okeru 'Watashi' to sono Taishō" ["The 'I' and Its Object in Whitman's Identification"]. *Journal of Kansai University of Welfare Sciences*, vol. 9, 2006, pp. 131–41.
- Zettsu, Tomoyuki. *Joijō suru Amerika: Modanizumu Bungaku no Meimetsu* [Lyrical America: The Flicker of Modernist Literature]. Kenkyūsha, 2009.