

**TEACHING AND LEARNING “THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART”:  
RHETORICAL EDUCATION FOR ROMANTIC ENGAGEMENT**

by

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This dissertation challenges the scholarly consensus that Western rhetorical education prepares citizen subjects exclusively for civic engagement. I enrich rhetorical history by offering another account of rhetorical education—rhetorical education for romantic engagement—which I define as the teaching and learning of language practices for composing and participating in romantic relations. The touchstone for my investigation of this pedagogy is nineteenth-century romantic letter writing, or what *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832) calls “the language of the heart.” Theoretically informed by rhetorical genre theory, queer theory, and theories of everyday rhetoric, I examine how the language of the heart was taught, learned, and used by diverse everyday people. I situate my archival research at three sites: popular nineteenth-century manuals that taught the romantic letter genre (1807-1897), romantic letters between African-American women Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus (1859-1868), and a diary, commonplace book, and poetry album about romantic epistolary address by Yale student Albert Dodd (1836-1838). I argue that, whereas the romantic letter is often presumed to be an unstudied and natural expression of heartfelt love, the genre was rhetorically taught, learned, and crafted. While my study of romantic letter writing rethinks the dominant concept of rhetorical education for civic engagement, I nonetheless show how even rhetorical education for romantic

engagement is of civic import: it shapes citizens as romantic subjects through predictably heteronormative instruction in genre conventions and, simultaneously, opens up possibilities for queer rhetorical practices that transgress cultural norms and generic boundaries. Ultimately, my dissertation demonstrates how rhetorical education has played an unrealized yet significant role in inventing both romantic and civic life.

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## PREFACE

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## 1.0 QUEERING EVERYDAY RHETORICAL EDUCATION & PRACTICE

[I]t is not an exaggeration to characterize the history of rhetoric as a twenty-four-hundred-year reflection on citizen education.

–Arthur Walzer, “Teaching ‘Political Wisdom’” (2005)

Had letters been known at the beginning of the world, epistolary writing would have been as old as love and friendship; for, as soon as they began to flourish, the verbal messenger was dropped, the language of the heart was committed to characters that faithfully preserved it, secrecy [sic] was maintained, and social intercourse rendered more free and pleasant.

–*The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832)

Arthur Walzer is not alone in suggesting a close and longstanding relationship between Western rhetoric and citizen education (113). Handed down from classical Greek and Roman rhetorical theory, the predominant concept of rhetorical education is that it prepares people for civic engagement, for active participation in the public discourse of political life (Atwill; Denman; Glenn; Hauser; Poulakis and Depew). This interest in rhetoric’s relationship to civic engagement persists across histories focused on rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century United States. On the one hand, within histories of

nineteenth-century college instruction, the period is often characterized by a move away from the classical model of rhetorical education, by a shift from public, political oratory to private, individualistic modes of writing (Brereton; Connors, *Composition*; Halloran; Kitzhaber). On the other hand, more recent histories consider instruction at a wider range of pedagogical sites, showing instead that, over the course of the nineteenth century, increasingly diverse groups of people did teach and learn rhetoric in order to bring about social and political change (Bacon and McClish; Enoch; Gold; Kates; Logan).<sup>1</sup> These differing accounts of nineteenth-century rhetorical education productively point to its complexity, to an ongoing need to reexamine both what may constitute a site of rhetorical education and what its pedagogical purposes may be. Still, as much as historiographic practices have been reexamined in order to consider new pedagogical sites, civic engagement remains *the* framing term for investigations of rhetorical education.

An unfortunate effect of this long-term coupling of rhetorical education and civic engagement has been a methodological marginalization of questions about other potential pedagogical purposes. In S. Michael Halloran's history of nineteenth-century rhetorical education, he is forthright about what gets methodologically marginalized within classical rhetoric's emphasis on the public and political problems of civic life. Halloran explains, "the tradition of classical rhetoric gives primary emphasis to communication on public problems, problems that arise from our life in political communities"; as such, "The many other sorts of problems that might be addressed through an art of communication," including "problems of...personal relationships...are in the tradition of classical rhetoric subordinate" (94). In contrasting the public problems of political life with the personal problems of intimate life, Halloran reinforces divisions between personal and political,

private and public.<sup>2</sup> While long challenged by feminist and queer theorists, these divisions continue to direct histories of nineteenth-century rhetorical education. Such histories subordinate or occlude questions about how people learn “an art of communication” for addressing “problems” of personal and intimate relationships (Halloran 94). Among the questions subordinated are those about how people learn to address the rhetorical problems of romantic relationships.

## **1.1 KEY CONCEPTS & CHAPTER OUTLINE**

So that historians of rhetorical education might take up rather than marginalize questions about the rhetoric of romantic relations, my dissertation advances a new concept of rhetorical education. I reconceptualize rhetorical education as serving a broader range of pedagogical purposes including not only civic engagement, but also what I term “romantic engagement.” The touchstone for my investigation of this pedagogy is romantic letter writing—or what the nineteenth-century manual *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* calls “the language of the heart” (iii).<sup>3</sup> In this section, I outline my dissertation project and two of its key concepts: rhetorical education for romantic engagement, and the so-called language of the heart.

### **1.1.1 Rhetorical Education for Romantic Engagement**

I define rhetorical education for romantic engagement as *the teaching and learning of language practices for composing and participating in romantic relations*. Within this

definition, I use the term “composing” in a dual sense: people learn how to compose with language in order to participate in romantic relations, and this rhetorical practice simultaneously composes the romantic relations themselves. In this sense, instruction and practice are rhetorically constitutive of romantic relations and even subjects.

Of course, in another fashion, the shaping of subjects through pedagogy is already a primary concern animating histories of rhetorical education for civic engagement. As Walzer explains in his contribution to *Octalog III*, “Historically rhetoric is a *complete* art for shaping students” (124, my emphasis). Rhetorical education is a process of “acculturation,” in that instruction in language arts for participation in civic life shapes “historically appropriate” citizen subjects (124). Taking Walzer’s remarks further, toward a more complete understanding of the complete art, my dissertation asks how rhetorical education for romantic engagement acculturates. How does instruction in language arts for participation in romantic relations shape historically appropriate, or normative, romantic subjects?

While exploring how rhetorical education for romantic engagement shapes normative subjects, my dissertation also asks how it enables nonnormative rhetorical practices and romantic relations. In Walzer’s terms, the “inevitable” acculturation occurring through any rhetorical education simultaneously “limits” and “liberates” (132). In my study, rhetorical education for romantic engagement is understood as potentially limiting insofar as it is heteronormative, and potentially liberating insofar as it is subject to queer practices. I define my use of the terms “heteronormative” and “queer” further when introducing how queer theory frames my selection and analysis of primary materials. But what is most significant here, as I offer my concept of rhetorical education for romantic



engagement, is this dynamic tension between that which is culturally normative and that which is queer, as in nonnormative. Thus I also ask, how might instruction in language arts for participation in romantic relations be repurposed within the rhetorical practices of writers composing queer romantic relations?

I explore both of these questions through archival research on how the language of the heart was taught, learned, and used by diverse everyday people in the nineteenth-century U.S. This research proceeds through three substantive cases studies. My first case study in Chapter 2, “‘The porch to marriage’: Complete Letter-Writers’ Instruction in Model Letters & Relations, 1807-1897,” examines popular manuals that taught the romantic letter genre. Complete letter-writer manuals instructed that composing romantic letters was simply a matter of writing “from the heart,” but paradoxically offered extensive modeling of the generic conventions constraining such composition. On the one hand, I argue that, in modeling genre conventions for epistolary address, letter pacing, and rhetorical purpose, these manuals taught a heteronormatively gendered conception of writer and reader relations characterized by the exercise of restraint and directed toward a marriage *telos*. On the other hand, I show how this same manual instruction taught invention strategies for copying and adapting model letters in ways that rendered the romantic letter genre susceptible to gender-crossing address, unrestrained outbreaks, and queer repurposing.

My next two chapters turn to the queer rhetorical practices of learners whose romantic relations were not in keeping with the cultural norms and genre conventions taught by letter-writing manuals. Chapter 3, “‘What a pleasure it would be...to address you *My Husband*’: Addie Brown & Rebecca Primus’ Rhetorical Practices, 1859-1868,” focuses on the same-sex, cross-class romantic correspondence of African-American women Addie

Brown and Rebecca Primus. I analyze how these women learned but adapted the genre conventions widely taught by manuals in order to compose romantic epistolary exchange nonnormative in its gendering, intensity, and teleology. I also consider how Brown, in crafting romantic letters to Primus, used invention strategies of copying and adapting similar to those taught by manuals. Rather than drawing on the model letters in manuals, however, Brown crossed generic lines in order to adapt the language of the heart she found in poetry and the novel for her own queer purposes.

In Chapter 4, “‘Somehow or other, queer in the extreme’: Albert Dodd’s Civic Education & Multi-Genre Romantic Practices, 1836-1838,” I study the commonplace book, diary, and poetry album about romantic letter writing by college student Albert Dodd. An upper class white man, Dodd had access to a classically informed rhetorical education at Washington and Yale Colleges. Dodd’s rhetorical training was classically oriented to civic engagement, and classically broad in its coverage of both rhetorical and literary genres. I argue Dodd repurposed this civic education to romantic ends. He drew on his training across of range of spoken and written genres in order to develop rhetorical practices for participating in romantic relations with women and men. Dodd’s practices were multi-genre, in that he crafted forms of epistolary address across a network of other genres related to the romantic letter. Through these practices, he queerly transgressed generic lines between the commonplace book and diary; diary writing and romantic letter writing; and romantic epistolary address in letters and poetry. These practices were, in Dodd’s own words, “somehow or other, queer in the extreme.”

Finally, in my concluding Chapter 5, I draw out the implications of the above case studies. I consider their significance for scholarly inquiry in three areas: for re-thinking

concepts of rhetorical education in studies of both historical and present-day instruction, for re-reading romantic letters within interdisciplinary histories of sexuality and romantic life, and for re-visiting archival methodologies productive for developing future queer histories of rhetorical education and practice.

Ultimately, my dissertation demonstrates how rhetorical education has played a yet unrealized but culturally significant role in inventing not only civic but also romantic life. I argue rhetorical education for romantic engagement shaped letter writers as romantic subjects in predictably heteronormative ways and, simultaneously, opened up possibilities for queer rhetorical practices that transgressed genre conventions and cultural norms.

### **1.1.2 The Language of the Heart as Romantic Epistolary Rhetoric**

In challenging the predominant concept of rhetorical education, my dissertation also complicates commonplace understandings of the romantic letter. Romantic letters are commonly presumed to be natural and unstudied expressions of heartfelt love. Perhaps because of this presumption, even historians of rhetoric and composition who study letter-writing instruction have yet to explore how it shapes romantic letters, relations, and subjects in the nineteenth-century U.S. Although letter-writing instruction has been widely studied, the teaching and learning of the romantic subgenre has not received deep and sustained attention (Donawerth; Gage; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; Schultz; Spring, “Seemingly”; Trasciatti).<sup>4</sup> In focusing this dissertation on the romantic subgenre, I understand “the language of the heart” not simply as romantic letter writing, but as romantic epistolary rhetoric. That is, whereas romantic letters are often considered to be

unstudied and natural expressions of feeling, I understand these letters as *rhetorically taught and learned* as well as *rhetorically crafted*.

First, my study of rhetorical education for romantic engagement approaches romantic letter writing as rhetorically taught and learned. That romantic letters are more often understood as *unstudied* is evident throughout histories of romantic and intimate life. Many of these histories draw on romantic letters as primary sources, yet downplay or even ignore how instruction through manuals such as *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* may have influenced letter-writing practices. Karen Lystra's history of nineteenth-century romantic love is an especially suggestive instance, because she is one of the few historians who *does* raise the "obvious question" about the "availability of model love letters in letter-writers and etiquette manuals" and thus "the originality and reliability of love letters as scholarly sources" (13). Lystra asks, "How much did native-born middle-class [opposite-sex] correspondents rely upon standardized book copy?" But she answers, "probably very little" (13-4). Certainly there were letter writers who relied "very little" on "the standardized book copy" of model romantic letters in manuals. Still, the widespread publication of popular manuals offering instruction in romantic letter writing indicates it was taught (Bannet; Donawerth; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; Trasciatti). Moreover, even those writers who did not copy their romantic letters from manual models were still, in one way or another, learners. In Brown, Primus, and Dodd's writing, as we shall see, there is no evidence they consulted letter-writing manuals, but they learned the language of the heart through their study of other kinds of texts. In other words, the practice of composing romantic letters was far from unstudied; it was taught and learned through manuals as well as other means.

Second, I understand romantic letters not as natural expressions of heartfelt feeling and affection, but as rhetorically crafted writing. That romantic letters are more commonly treated as *natural expressions* is also evident throughout scholarly histories of intimate life. Of course historians rely fundamentally on letters (and diaries) as evidence of past romantic relations. As Lystra explains, letters “provide as genuine a record as possible of feelings, behaviors, and judgments as they occurred in romantic relations” (4-5). The idea that letters offer “genuine” records may be especially seductive for historians of sexuality who study those relations met with denial or outright hostility within both their contemporary moment and later historiographic and archival practices. As critic Patrick Paul Garlinger maintains, “The association of letter writing with intimate secrets and sexuality has motivated...critics to investigate *authentic* letter correspondence for *evidence* of homoerotic and homosexual relationships” (ix, my emphasis; see also Jones). Such investigation becomes misdirected, however, when Lystra’s “as genuine as possible” becomes, simply, “genuine”—when letters are approached as “authentic...evidence” of romantic feeling, desire, and even sexual identity within a given period—when letters are read as mere transcriptions that reflect transparently feelings and relations from the past.<sup>5</sup> I instead read romantic letters as writing: as written rhetorical practices that, however heartfelt, were crafted.

To assert that romantic letters are rhetorically crafted and do not offer transparent access to authentic feeling is not to suggest they are necessarily crafted in inauthentic ways. In fact, this point is important to make because of how rhetoric itself gets dismissed precisely for its associations with the craft of seduction. This dismissal can be traced to Plato, for whom the differences between dialectic and rhetoric are analogous to those

between a search for true love and a deceptive craft of flattery and seduction. Plato's association between rhetoric and seduction has been accepted, rejected, and celebrated within contemporary scholarship (Ballif; Bates; Kelley).<sup>6</sup> But in the nineteenth century, as Chapter 2 will show, manuals actually defined the language of the heart against the potential for romantic letters to be used toward ends dangerously seductive (Halttunen; Hewitt; Zaczek). While I insist that romantic letters were crafted, then, I am not implying they were deceptively seductive, though they certainly could be. Instead, manuals represented romantic epistolary rhetoric as a crafted practice that, while not necessarily coming naturally, could be learned.

Approaching the language of the heart as romantic epistolary rhetoric, my dissertation alternates between considering how romantic letters were taught and learned through *rhetorical instruction* and crafted through *rhetorical practice* (Buchanan).<sup>7</sup> Chapter 2 focuses on how conventions for the romantic letter genre were taught by manuals and, at the same time, anticipates how this conventional instruction was subject to more subversive practices by letter writers in nonnormative romantic relations. Chapter 3 considers the romantic epistolary practices of two such writers, Brown and Primus, who learned but adapted the widely taught conventions, yet who turned to a range of other more literary texts for models of the language of the heart. Finally, in Chapter 4, I return to rhetorical education, in this case Dodd's formal, college-level training, but I emphasize how he repurposed this training in order to craft still other multi-genre practices for composing romantic epistolary address. Throughout these chapters, romantic letter writing is approached as epistolary rhetoric—as a crafted rhetorical practice that is learned through rhetorical education for romantic engagement.

## 1.2 SELECTION OF PRIMARY MATERIALS

My study of rhetorical instruction and practice is grounded in primary archival research at three sites. For Chapter 2, on manual instruction in romantic letter writing, I conducted archival research in the University of Pittsburgh's Nietz Collection, which holds nineteenth-century schoolbooks and home manuals, including letter-writing manuals. Chapter 3's study of Brown and Primus' romantic epistolary practices is based on archival research at the Connecticut Historical Society. There I consulted Brown's romantic letters to Primus, contained in the Primus Family Papers. Finally, for Chapter 4 on Dodd's education and multi-genre practices, I conducted research in Yale University Library's Manuscripts and Archives. The Albert Dodd Papers held at Yale consist of his commonplace book, diary, and poetry album about romantic letter writing. My study of these primary archival materials is informed by queer theory, theories of everyday rhetoric, and rhetorical genre theory. In a later section, I will articulate how these theories methodologically guide my *analysis* of the materials.

But first, in this section, I describe how my *selection* of the primary materials is framed by queer theory and theories of everyday rhetoric. All archival research projects are of course formulated through the deliberate methodological work of selecting and bringing together archival materials so as to enable specific sorts of study. For a study of rhetorical education for romantic engagement through the teaching and learning of the language of the heart, any materials related to romantic letter-writing instruction and practice could be relevant. But, theoretically framed by queer theory and theories of

everyday rhetoric, the specific focus I elect for my study is on primary materials related to practices and instruction that are queer and everyday.

### **1.2.1 Queer Rhetorical Practices**

My dissertation explores the queer rhetorical practices of Brown, Primus, and Dodd. Only Brown's half of the romantic epistolary exchange with Primus is extant, so the main primary materials I analyze are Brown's letters to Primus. I also examine notations that Primus made on the envelopes to those letters from Brown. In terms of the queer rhetorical practices of Dodd, his romantic letters are unavailable. Yet in his commonplace book turned diary, he wrote about his romantic epistolary exchanges with other young men and women. Moreover, Dodd's commonplace book and diary, along with his poetry album, functioned as a broader network of genres related to the romantic letter. Through this network of writing, Dodd developed what I will go on to characterize as multi-genre practices of romantic epistolary address. The above writing by Dodd, Primus, and Brown has yet to be studied within the field of rhetoric and composition, but cultural histories identify all three writers as composing same-sex romantic letters and relations (Gay; Griffin; Hansen, "No" and *A Very*; Katz; Rotundo, "Romantic" and *American*). That Brown, Primus, and Dodd participated in same-sex relations through letter writing is a primary reason why I select their materials for the case studies in Chapters 3 and 4. Still, there is more to explain in terms of how I understand their rhetorical practices as "queer."

It is especially important to clarify that my archival research does not "recover" Brown, Primus, and Dodd as LGBTQ-identified writers or rhetors; nor do I ascribe any



sexual identities to them as people. Informed by queer theory and historiography, I understand their letters and relations as “queer” not in keeping with contemporary categories of sexual *identity*, such as heterosexual or homosexual, which are generally understood as having emerged after the period under study, but in reference to nonnormative or unconventional *practices* (Butler; Chauncey; Foucault; Halperin, *How*; Hansen, “No”; Katz; Rotundo, “Romantic”). So in Chapter 3’s analysis of Brown’s romantic epistolary exchange with Primus, I do not characterize Brown and Primus as queer women. Rather, I characterize their rhetorical practices as queer insofar as those practices subvert the cultural norms and genre conventions taught by nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals. In teaching genre conventions for romantic epistolary address, for instance, these manuals embedded a culturally normative conception of romantic relations as between a man and a woman. By exchanging romantic letters with each other, as two women, Brown and Primus obviously defied the genre conventions taught, but their queer rhetorical practices do not make them queer-identified. As in this example, what I mainly define as queer throughout the dissertation are *relational and rhetorical practices that were nonnormative within the context of nineteenth-century letter-writing manual instruction in cultural norms and genre conventions*.

Moving forward with this definition of queer practices, I also want to clarify that I do not use “queer” as an interchangeable term for “same-sex.” Of course what makes Brown and Primus’ practices queer in the above example has to do with their composing of same-sex romantic epistolary exchange. But their practices were nonnormative in still other ways not limited to writers in same-sex relations. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 2, manuals not only taught norms and conventions for opposite-sex epistolary address, but

also instructed that normative letters proceeded slowly and cautiously from courtship to proposal to marriage. Obviously any letter writers, regardless of sex or gender, could participate in the queer rhetorical practice of composing nonnormative letters that were rushed, or that did not pursue a marriage *telos*. Indeed, also in Chapter 2, I highlight exactly these kinds of queer openings in manuals—that is, the ways manual instruction offered at least some resources for writers seeking to subvert the widely taught genre conventions in order to compose nonnormative romantic relations, whether same-sex or not. In other words, all queer practices are not same-sex practices, even though this study focuses primarily on the rhetorical practices of writers who participated in same-sex relations.

This distinction between “same-sex” and “queer” opens my project up to another secondary definition of queer practices that operates in Chapter 4’s analysis of Dodd’s writing. As far as the first definition of queer above goes, Dodd’s epistolary practices were queer insofar as he defied the cultural norms and genre conventions taught by nineteenth-century manuals. For instance, Dodd’s diary writing about his romantic epistolary exchanges suggests he queerly defied conventions by exchanging romantic letters with other young men, as well as by writing romantic letters to both men and women that did not pursue marriage. Yet there is a second way Dodd’s practices were unconventional, nonnormative, or queer. Dodd’s rhetorical practices were queer in that he transgressed not only normative boundaries of gender and sexuality, but also conventional boundaries of genre. As I show in Chapter 4, Dodd crossed generic boundaries between the commonplace book and diary, between the diary and diary writing about romantic epistolary address, and between romantic address in letters, poetry, and epistle verse. These multi-genre epistolary practices—of and relating to the epistolary, yet across a network of multiple

other genres—were what Dodd himself termed “odd” and “queer,” even where he addressed women rather than men (April 1836). Thus my second definition of queer refers to *rhetorical practices that were unconventional in their transgressions of generic boundaries in order to pursue nonnormative romantic relations.*

In this second definition of queer, the phrase “in order to pursue nonnormative romantic relations” is key. While my definition of queer is expansive, this dissertation does not go so far as to argue that any unconventional writing or rhetorical practice is queer. Instead, this is a study intentionally focused on primary materials written by people who participated in nonnormative romantic relations, which included but were not limited to same-sex relations. Even where Dodd developed queerly multi-genre practices for romantically addressing women, for instance, he did so in order pursue multiple relations with both women and men, none directed toward the normative *telos* of marriage. Indeed, what Dodd, Brown, and Primus have in common across their different kinds of queer rhetorical practices is they all composed within cultural contexts and rhetorical situations that rendered their romantic relations nonnormative and thus called for unconventional uses of the genres available.

### **1.2.2 Everyday Sites of Instruction and Practices**

The primary archival materials I analyze are not only queer but also everyday. I use the term “everyday” to mark what is common or quotidian—what is, at times, deemed popular or mass; even basic or mundane. In the tradition of Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*, I understand the everyday as charged, exciting, and bursting with unrealized

significance (Ackerman; Dickinson; Modesti; Nystrand and Duffy; Sloop). As such, I elect to examine everyday rhetorical practices and sites of instruction and, rather than dismissing or denigrating them in any number of possible ways, I focus on their significance. I underscore the cultural importance of everyday sites of rhetorical instruction, and the creativity and ingenuity of everyday people in learning and using the rhetorical practices taught (or not) by that instruction.

In selecting primary materials to analyze related to everyday instruction, I devote Chapter 2's analysis to popular letter-writing manuals, rather than college-level textbooks. In the nineteenth-century U.S., letter writing was taught by colleges and universities and included in textbooks, with this instruction deemed basic by some historians (Brereton; Kitzhaber). More everyday, though, was instruction through popular manuals. Widely available and designed for home use, letter-writing manuals amount to what scholar Anne Ruggles Gere would call an "extracurriculum" of rhetorical instruction (79).<sup>8</sup> As historian Jessica Enoch argues, the inclusion of extracurricular sites is vital to histories of rhetorical education, because it not only renders notions of the rhetorical tradition more rich and dynamic, but also turns attention to learners not granted full access to colleges and universities (5-6). My focus on everyday manuals does turn attention to such learners. Nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals were everyday in that, relative to college and university textbooks, their circulation reached broader and more diverse audiences of adult learners, including people without access to much schooling or formal training in rhetoric (Bannet; Donawerth; Johnson, *Gender*; Trasciatti). I analyze these everyday letter-writing manuals as primary materials because, given their popularity, they were sites of

instruction that played a significant role in the cultural shaping of everyday romantic letters, relations, and subjects.

In turning next to primary materials related to specific learners and letter writers, Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Brown, Primus, and Dodd as people who share the status of everyday, but are otherwise diverse by gender, class, race, profession, and educational background. My understanding of Brown, Primus, and Dodd as everyday writers follows Ronald Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray's scholarship in *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience Among Antebellum New Englanders*: the people we study have not been celebrated as notable intellectuals, published writers, public speakers, or political figures (xx).

My analysis of the Brown-Primus correspondence focuses on the everyday practices and learning of African-American women. As African-American studies scholar Farah Griffin asserts, Brown and Primus were "ordinary" black women (4). Historical sociologist Karen Hansen concurs, characterizing Brown and Primus as "ordinary women," and their letters as writing about their "everyday" lives ("No" 179). These women were diverse by class, with Brown working primarily as a domestic and Primus as a teacher. Because Brown's romantic letters are those saved, Chapter 3 considers at greatest length the rhetorical practices of a learner who, while voraciously pursuing self-education, had little if any access to formal schooling; a person who, while actively showing interest in political life, was denied the basic citizen right of voting.

In contrast, Chapter 4's analysis of Dodd's commonplace book, diary, and poetry album focuses on the everyday writing of an upper class white man. Dodd did this writing while formally studying rhetoric at Washington College and then Yale. He went on to

practice law and, prior to his early death, was nominated as a political candidate for the State Legislature. Clearly Dodd's rhetorical practice and education are marked by highly consequential forms of cultural and political privilege. Yet Dodd's writing, much like that of Brown and Primus, did amount to everyday rhetorical practice. Indeed, just as the first historian to publish on the Primus Family Papers was dismissive of Brown's writing (White, "Addie" 57-8), the first historian to publish on the Albert Dodd Papers denigrated his writing as an "artless record" (Gay 207). So while Dodd's education was privileged, his writing, like Brown's, was more everyday than artful. Yet I am interested in these writers because of the everyday forms of creativity and ingenuity their rhetorical practices show, particularly in queering genre conventions and cultural norms.

In focusing on primary materials that are both queer and everyday, this dissertation brings together queer scholarship and studies of everyday life in novel ways. Queer scholarship certainly shows interest in everyday life, often where least expected. In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, for instance, José Muñoz explores the possibility that even "utopia exists in the quotidian" (9). Yet in histories of queer practices from the early- and mid-nineteenth century, close textual analysis of the writing within same-sex romantic letters usually centers not on everyday people, but on literary and political figures—usually middle or upper class and almost always white—such as Emily Dickinson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Abraham Lincoln, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman (Comment, "Dickinson's"; Hart; Jones; Hewitt; Morris, "My Old"; Norton). Alternately, studies of everyday writing pay scant attention to queer practices. For example, in Zboray and Zboray's large-scale study of everyday letters and diaries by "931 informants," both the Primus Family Papers and the Albert Dodd Papers are referenced (*Everyday* xxi, 54, 183,

316). In none of these references, though, are their same-sex letter writing practices acknowledged. There is a need, then, for historical studies of everyday life that attend to same-sex romantic relations—and, at the same time, for histories of romance and sexuality that attend to the writing of diverse everyday people. I initiate such work through my *selection* of primary materials related to the queer rhetorical practices and learning of diverse everyday people.

### 1.3 ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY MATERIALS

My *analysis* of primary archival materials is also methodologically framed by queer theory and theories of everyday rhetoric, along with rhetorical genre theory. Following historian of rhetoric Charles Morris, I am especially interested in methodologically queering normative binary distinctions. In “Archival Queer,” Morris addresses the need for queer methodological approaches within historical scholarship on rhetoric. He urges, “that archival queers must...utilize the tools of rhetorical criticism and theory to enhance navigation of archives” (147).<sup>9</sup> Methodological queering thus consists not merely of selecting particular archival materials. It consists also of approaching those materials and navigating archives in particular ways. The sort of archival navigation Morris emphasizes is that of “*queer movement*: traversal of time and space, mobilization and circulation of meanings that trouble sexual normalcy and its distinctions” (147-8, emphasis in original). Answering Morris’ call, my analysis of archival materials is marked by queer movement

that draws on theories of everyday rhetoric and rhetorical genre theory in order to traverse a range of normative distinctions.

### **1.3.1 Queer Traversals of Heteronormative/Queer**

While my selection of primary materials highlights queer rhetorical practices, I analyze those materials in ways that resist simplistic—and themselves potentially normative—distinctions between what is “queer” and “heteronormative.” Like Morris, I use the term “heteronormativity” following Michael Warner’s coinage, and later definition with Lauren Berlant, to refer to processes and practices of rendering heterosexual romantic relations normal (Berlant and Warner 548, n. 2; ctd. in Morris, “Introduction” 16, n. 17; see also Rawson). This normalization of heterosexuality presumes it is coherent as *a* sexuality and treats it as *the* privileged sexuality; it is characterized primarily by the commonsense understanding, however implicit, that this so-called heterosexuality is natural, that it is just plain right. Yet heteronormativity is not synonymous with heterosexuality, and practices understood as heterosexual may be nonnormative.<sup>10</sup> Warner and Berlant’s formulation makes clear that heteronormativity is always provisional, marked by unevenness and contradiction.

Unfortunately, however, Warner and Berlant’s formulations have at times been taken up, even misapplied, to create a-historical (and a-rhetorical) binaries: with little attentiveness to the particularities of context, too-easy distinctions are made between that deemed heteronormative and that deemed queer. Similarly, in my dissertation, it would be too easy to frame letter-writing manuals as entirely heteronormative, and the rhetorical



practices of Dodd, Brown, and Primus as entirely queer. But I instead analyze these practices and instruction in *methodologically* queer ways by troubling distinctions between heteronormativity and queerness. To do so, I follow Morris' urging to "utilize the tools of rhetorical...theory"—in two ways.

First, I traverse distinctions between heteronormative and queer through a second use of de Certeau's theory of everyday rhetoric. Here I turn more specifically to his notions of "strategy," "tactic," and "a rhetoric of walking." For de Certeau, a strategy is exercised from a position or established place of relative power, whereas a tactic "belongs to the other" who "cannot count" on such a position or place (xix). In an overly reductive application of de Certeau's terms, then, what is heteronormative would be strategic, and what is queer would be tactical. In this sense, his theory of everyday rhetoric could be misused much like queer theory, creating yet another unhelpfully simplistic binary. Yet de Certeau's emphasis, particularly as he (like Morris) underscores movement, is on "a rhetoric of walking." A rhetoric of walking emerges through the relations *between* strategies and tactics. While strategies operate from secure positions or places, tactics do so through the uses, practices, and movements—rhetorics of walking—in, around, and through those same places (99). As such, strategies are subject to tactics, and tactics are practiced in relation to strategies.

My dissertation does not carry forward "strategy" and "tactic" as key terms, but my methodological approach is theoretically informed by de Certeau, in that I traverse distinctions between heteronormative strategy and queer tactic by emphasizing the relays between them within everyday rhetorical practices and instruction. While Chapter 2 examines the predominantly heteronormative strategy of manuals, I also consider

slippages in strategy that may have enabled queer or nonnormative tactical uses of manuals in practice. In Chapters 3 and 4, where I highlight the queer tactical practices of Brown, Primus, and Dodd, I also trace the connections between those practices and the culturally normative strategies and pedagogies that necessarily informed them.

Second, I trouble easy distinctions by drawing on rhetorical genre theory to further articulate the relationship between what is heteronormative and queer. On the one hand, rhetorical genre theory is helpful for clarifying precisely how instruction in a genre such as the romantic letter is heteronormative. Following rhetorical genre theory in the tradition of Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles Bazerman, Amy Devitt, and especially Carolyn Miller, I conceive of genre as rhetorical and social action that emerges through repeated response to rhetorical situations that recur within broader cultural and historical contexts. This action becomes “typified” through repetition, so that genres are “interpretable by means of conventions,” and generic purpose is “conventionalized social purpose” rather than “private or idiosyncratic” (C. Miller 151, 158, 161-2). As such, rhetorical education in a genre teaches “not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends,” but “more importantly, what ends we may have” (165); it teaches “not just forms,” but “forms of life, ways of being” (Bazerman 19). As I show in Chapter 2, it is through such rhetorical instruction that letter-writing manuals taught not only the romantic letter genre, but heteronormative “ends” and even “ways of being.”

On the other hand, even as genres are normative, they are also “changeable, flexible, and plastic” (Bakhtin 80). Learners are not entirely constrained by genre conventions, as they “may...combine different genres or may ‘violate’ the norms of an existing genre, thereby confirming that genre’s existence and potentially challenging it” (Devitt 579-80). In

keeping with this understanding of generic flexibility, Chapter 2's analysis of manual pedagogy also identifies the subtle ways its instruction in genre conventions was susceptible to queer violation, challenge, and adaptation. Then, in Chapters 3 and 4, I explore how Brown, Primus, and Dodd learned, used, and queered generic conventions and cultural norms through their rhetorical practices. Rhetorical genre theory thus enables a complex view of how romantic letters, relations, and subjects are shaped through both instruction and practices of romantic engagement. Informed by rhetorical genre theory as well as theories of everyday rhetoric, I methodologically queer simplistic divisions—between normative genre conventions and genre flexibility, between strategy and tactic, and even between what is heteronormative and queer.

### **1.3.2 Queer Traversals of Romantic/Civic**

I also draw on queer theory and methodology to analyze my primary archival materials by traversing normative distinctions between what is “romantic” and “civic.” In the opening pages of this dissertation, I distinguish between civic and romantic forms of engagement, following Halloran's representative distinction—again, between “public problems, problems that arise from our life in political communities,” and “other sorts of problems that might be addressed through an art of communication,” including “problems of...personal relationships” (94). I engage this distinction intentionally, to put pressure on what gets “subordinated” by the emphasis on civic engagement across histories of rhetorical education. But it would be a mistake to presume civic and romantic forms of engagement are wholly separate. Instead, even as my dissertation underscores rhetorical

education and practices for romantic engagement, I analyze my primary materials in ways that highlight the interconnections between these romantic forms of instruction and practice and more civic forms. To trouble divisions between the romantic and civic, I need to also queerly traverse those broader distinctions Halloran points to: between “public” and “personal,” with what gets deemed public understood as “political” and what gets deemed personal not.

Queer (and feminist) theorists show how these normative distinctions—civic/romantic, public/private, political/personal, as well as nationality/sexuality—are profoundly flawed, both conceptually and politically.<sup>11</sup> As Berlant and Warner proclaim, “there is nothing more public than privacy” (547).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the concept of privacy is itself public with respect to sexuality, and the rendering of sexuality as private is a political move with widespread implications for civic life at community and even national levels. Crucial to heteronormativity in the U.S., for instance, is how the presumptive distinction between private and public is used to simultaneously obscure the relevance of sexuality to the nation and, at the same time, afford basic rights and responsibilities of citizenship based on accordance with romantic and sexual norms (e.g., the public performance of legally sanctioned, monogamous and, in many states, heteronormative marriage).<sup>13</sup> With this sexualization of the nation cloaked as private, in other words, questions of sexuality are deemed irrelevant to citizenship, to a national public, and to matters political, and yet so-called private romantic relations are mediated by public norms, by political decisions, and by laws.<sup>14</sup>

Equally problematic is the presumption that there is nothing more public, civic, and political than what is deemed “national.” Across the collection *Nationalisms & Sexualities*,

scholars challenge not only the treatment of “nation and sexuality as discrete and autonomous constructs,” but also the assumptions that “it is the nation rather than other forms of imagined collectivity” that should carry the most “immense political freight,” and that “factors [deemed national] constitute the normative criteria by which a question or issue is deemed ‘political’” (Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger 2, 8; Radhakrishnan 78). Finally, as rhetorical scholar Dana Cloud argues in her study of national figure Eleanor Roosevelt’s romantic correspondence with Lorena Hickok, it is also problematic for queer studies to “valorize” practices deemed “private” without simultaneously attending to their “relevance” for what gets deemed “public” and “political” (26). As this range of queer theory and scholarship advances, even studies focused on questions of romantic and sexual life—on what is often deemed private or personal—need to attend to the civic, public, and political dimensions of those questions.

Methodologically informed by the queer scholarship above, my dissertation focuses on questions about rhetorical education and practices of romantic engagement; but even as I move forward with this focus, I nonetheless explore the civic implications of such instruction and practice. In each chapter’s analysis, I identify aspects of the primary materials that are marked as civic through overt designations associated with public, political, and/or national life. Yet, where such designations are not explicit, I still point to what is civic, political, or public, as in relevant to the power dynamics of collective (national or not) life.

In Chapter 2, I am concerned first and foremost with how letter-writing manuals taught romantic engagement through the romantic letter genre. Manuals treated the romantic letter genre as apart from civic life, and most of my analysis focuses on what

manuals taught regarding the distinctiveness of writing the language of the heart. Still, it is important to keep in mind that, insofar as these manuals were popular and widely circulating books, the teaching and learning of the language of the heart was a public concern within the nineteenth-century U.S. This everyday public education through manuals, by embedding a heteronormative conception of romantic relations within instruction in the genre conventions for the romantic letter, shaped not just romantic letters, but romantic relations and even subjects. It shaped citizen subjects as romantic subjects by teaching norms for those letters and relations deemed appropriate within the culture at large, and this instruction was both public and of relevance to civic life. Working from this understanding of civic implications, I turn in the final section of Chapter 2 to the particular ways manuals marked their instruction as “American,” as distinctive of the U.S. as a nation.<sup>15</sup> Here I analyze how manuals reinforced their instruction in heteronormative romantic letters and relations by linking these forms of romantic union to ideals for national union. In keeping with nineteenth-century postal reformers, manuals idealized normative romantic and national unity as simultaneously pursued through letter-writing instruction and practice.

As in Chapter 2, Chapter 3’s analysis focuses at greatest length on Brown and Primus’ romantic engagement, but still I consider the civic implications of their romantic letters, especially in the final section of the chapter. In the case of Brown and Primus, it is important to remember they were not granted full rights of citizenship in basic ways: as African Americans and as women, they were legally barred from voting; as women, they were denied many other rights unless secured through marriage to men. Yet as romantic letter writers, these women actively learned, engaged with, and adapted the cultural norms

and generic conventions manuals taught. Indeed, where I analyze how Brown and Primus challenged generic conventions, I consider how they repurposed the romantic letter genre to explicitly political ends. Alongside her more characteristically romantic writing, Brown wrote to Primus about civic participation in public debates, lectures, and publications explicitly about post-Civil War racial politics. Moreover, in the final section of the chapter focused on civic implications, I consider how Brown and Primus wrote letters that, rather than pursuing the forms of romantic and national union idealized by manuals, generated sociopolitical critique. Brown and Primus critiqued heteronormative marriage and the post office as national institutions that offered neither national nor romantic union to them as African-American women in a same-sex relationship.

Finally, in Chapter 4, my analysis begins rather than ends with an emphasis on civic engagement. In contrast with Primus and especially Brown, Dodd's rhetorical education and practices were politically privileged. By virtue of his position as an upper class white male, he had full access to rights of citizenship, as well as those forms of public speaking and political participation imagined by a classically modeled rhetorical education. Early in my analysis, I characterize Dodd's classical rhetorical training, considering how it prepared him for civic engagement through an expected career in law and politics. Chapter 4 then turns to Dodd's romantic engagement, to how he simultaneously repurposed what he learned as a college student in order to develop multi-genre rhetorical practices for composing romantic epistolary address and participating in romantic relations.

As my analysis moves from letter-writing manuals, to the Brown-Primus correspondence, to Dodd's multi-genre forms of epistolary address, I thus blur the very distinctions with which my dissertation begins. While I focus on rhetorical education and

practices of romantic engagement, I identify the civic implications of this romantic letter-writing instruction and practice. And, even where I focus on rhetorical training in civic engagement, I consider how such training could be repurposed to romantic epistolary ends. Methodologically speaking, my analysis queers distinctions between political and personal, public and private, national and sexual, by exploring the relays between what is deemed civic and romantic.

#### **1.4 CULTURAL & HISTORICAL CONTEXTS**

It is important to situate my primary archival materials within their immediate cultural and historical contexts. My analysis of letter-writing manuals in Chapter 2 focuses primarily on those books printed in the U.S. between the 1830s and 1870s, although I examine manuals spanning the nineteenth century (1807-1897). My analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Brown-Primus correspondence (1859-1868) and Albert Dodd's writing (1836-1838) locate this study across the mid-nineteenth century, in a baggy sense that includes the period before, during, and after the Civil War (and is elsewhere termed "Victorian America"). The mid-century period on which I focus is particularly rich for a study of rhetorical education for romantic engagement through romantic letter-writing instruction and practice. In addition to obviously being a time of profound national change, this period is marked by important shifts in three arenas of educational, cultural, and romantic life: rhetorical education and letter-writing instruction in higher education, extracurricular letter-writing instruction and practices, and same-sex romantic relations. Here I introduce what is most



relevant about the shifts in these three arenas in order to set the stage for the later chapters, where I will further contextualize each set of primary materials in light of secondary sources focused on them.

#### **1.4.1 Letter-Writing Instruction during Rhetoric's Period of Decline**

Historians of rhetorical education generally understand the mid- to late-nineteenth century as a period during which rhetoric was on the decline. As we shall see, the specific "rhetoric" on decline was college-level, classically modeled rhetorical education for civic engagement. Still, while my dissertation examines romantic engagement, and two of my three case studies focus on extracurricular teaching and learning, the decline of college-level rhetoric is important because of how letter-writing instruction has been implicated in and associated with that decline.

Halloran describes the changes rhetoric underwent in "Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse." At the onset of the century, college-level rhetorical education was classically oriented to civic engagement: "rhetoric was treated as the most important subject in the curriculum," "it made oral communication primary," and this speaking was "public" in that it both dealt with "overtly political questions" and "had to do with an audience" (99, 102). In these respects, early nineteenth-century rhetorical instruction amounted to training in "the classical art of oral public discourse" (103). But, facilitated by broader shifts in higher education, this form of rhetorical instruction declined, especially during the latter half of the century. With colleges and universities increasingly emphasizing specialization, disciplinarity, and

research, rhetoric was demoted from its central place in the curriculum. Within what rhetorical instruction remained, the emphasis on oral delivery dwindled as the importance of print culture grew; the writing assignments that gradually replaced recitations and exhibitions were more individualized, as in less concerned with overtly political questions and less likely to be addressed to audiences beyond tutors, teachers, and classmates (Brereton; Connors, *Composition*; Halloran; Kitzhaber).

In part, it is this increasing emphasis on written as opposed to oral rhetoric that implicates letter-writing instruction in the decline of classically oriented rhetorical education. Although Chapter 2 examines romantic letter-writing instruction through popular manuals designed for home use, letter writing for business and personal (but not romantic) purposes was also a standard subject of study in college-level rhetorical education.<sup>16</sup> The writing of business and personal letters was covered in rhetorical treatises and, later in the century, composition textbooks (Berlin; Brereton; Carr, Carr, and Schultz; Connors, *Composition*; Gage; Johnson, *Nineteenth*; Kitzhaber).<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, this inclusion of letter writing within rhetorical education is merely a continuation of the classical tradition of epistolary rhetoric, from Cicero to the medieval *ars dictaminis* to Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1793) (Bannet; S. Carr; Murphy; Poster, "The Case" and "Introduction"). On the other hand, letter writing's ubiquity within college-level education is a particularly nineteenth-century function of the rise in writing instruction and decline of classically oriented rhetorical education for civic engagement (Brereton; Connors, *Composition*; Kitzhaber). Albert Kitzhaber's early history of nineteenth-century rhetorical education, for example, characterizes the decline of rhetorical education for civic engagement as marked by "the appearance of specific instructions in [textbooks] for the

writing of such things as letters (both business and personal)” (207-8). Composition historian John Brereton, in describing the late nineteenth-century shift away from publicly delivered speeches to relatively private writing, cites as an example “such mundane subjects as letters,” asserting that the “amount of space that texts, particularly handbooks, devoted to letter writing...indicated the presence of a new type of student” (437-8). Existing histories of rhetoric and composition have thus figured college-level letter-writing instruction as just one feature of a broader shift, a move away from rhetoric understood as public oratory and toward relatively private writing.

As Brereton’s reference to “a new type of student” suggests, letter-writing instruction has been implicated in the decline of rhetoric in relation not only to the increasing emphasis on writing rather than oratory, but also to the increasing enrollments of groups of students who did not previously have access to higher education. Over the course of the century, more people, including women, gained access to institutions of higher education (Brereton; Carr, Carr, and Schultz; Connors, *Composition*; Gold; Kitzhaber; Kates). As higher education was democratized, the types of individualized attention and occasions for public speaking that characterized rhetorical education for civic engagement at elite institutions earlier in the century became practically impossible, because each tutor or professor was responsible for the learning of more students. Moreover, and more problematically, as higher education worked to address what were perceived as the needs of an expanded and more diverse student body, it was thought that many of these students simply would not become, and thus did not require preparation for rhetorical participation as, civic leaders.

Amidst these broader shifts in rhetoric as well as higher education and the culture at large, letter-writing instruction was culturally and politically significant in reaching the “new type of student” for whom college-level education was becoming accessible (Brereton 438). As composition historian John Gage suggests, it is precisely because letter writing was “practiced by the broadest segments of society” that it was “considered an appropriate educational practice as education aimed to reach a broader segment of society” (202). Similarly, Lucille Schultz, in her history of letter-writing instruction in pre-college schools, also claims a relationship between it and civic engagement within a democracy. She writes that letter-writing instruction “contributed, in however a small way, to the beginnings of an enormous breakthrough,” because it “held the promise of inviting students to write about their own lives, about their own experiences, in their own voices—and thus to contribute to the democratization of writing instruction by valuing the diverse lives of all students” (123).<sup>18</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century, in other words, letter-writing instruction played a role in the broader project of democratic education, teaching increasingly diverse groups of people to be rhetorically active through letter writing for business and personal life.

Given the simultaneous democratization of higher education and decline of rhetorical education for civic engagement, the mid-nineteenth century is an ideal period for studying rhetorical education for romantic engagement in its complexity. Yet while I situate my case studies within the cultural and historical context of these broader educational shifts, my study does not merely confirm existing historical narratives of democratization and decline. I do not develop another linear argument consisting of claims about changes over the course of the period, for instance by associating a decline in oratorical instruction

and civic engagement with a rise in letter-writing instruction and romantic engagement. Instead, I examine multiple instances of instruction and practice, including both the letter-writing manuals that reached people without access to higher education, in Chapter 2, and the classically modeled rhetorical education of institutions such as Washington and Yale, in Chapter 4. This approach allows me to flesh out a rich understanding of multiple ways that diverse everyday people learned and practiced romantic epistolary rhetoric, even before the late-century peak of the shift away from more classically oriented rhetorical education for civic engagement.

#### **1.4.2 The Letter and Women's Education during the Postal Age**

As significant changes took place within higher education, there was also a larger cultural shift in letter writing and letter-writing instruction outside of and beyond college settings. The mid-century period on which my dissertation focuses is especially significant as what historian David Henkin terms “the postal age” in his book by the same name. During the postal age, the ability to send and receive letters as well as letter-writing manuals through the mail became more accessible, much like higher education did during the same period. This democratization of the post had important implications for letter writing as well as extracurricular learning by everyday women and men.

The writing and sending of letters—an entire culture of letter writing—flourished during the postal age, before “the era of telecommunications” in which telecommunication networks began to replace postal networks as the dominant means for communication at a distance (Decker; Henkin). Already the national postal service had expanded with the Post

Office Act of 1792. But infrastructure was improved in the 1820s and '30s, and the middle decades of the 1840s, '50s, and '60s were the period in which the post came into "popular" use by "a critical mass of Americans" (Henkin 3, 9; see also John). This democratization of the post was facilitated by the Postal Acts of 1845 and 1851, through which "Congress enacted substantial reductions in the cost of sending a letter, thus bringing an expanding system of post roads and mail carriers within the grasp of millions" (Henkin 2; see also Decker). The practice of not just writing but sending and receiving letters through the mail thus became available to diverse everyday people who previously could not have afforded the cost of postage.

Of course, the democratization of letter-writing practices was also facilitated by the democratization of instruction already discussed. In *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications*, cultural historian William Decker explains the implications of educational shifts for letter-writing practices. Decker writes, "the pervasive if often marginal literacy of the population (itself the reflection of a democratic republic's recognition of the necessity of common schools)...made writing a resource on which a large portion of the population could draw in attempting to preserve communications over distance" (11; see also Zboray and Zboray, *Everyday*). In other words, the accessibility of letter-writing practices depended on widespread access to literacy instruction as much as it did a national postal system. Alongside this mass literacy, the postal age was marked by widespread access to extracurricular rhetorical training through letter-writing instruction. Key forms of such instruction are the popular letter-writing manuals I introduce further in Chapter 2.

The postal age is an important period not only for the letter genre in general, but for women's epistolary rhetoric in particular. Indeed, as a site of extracurricular rhetorical education, letter-writing manuals have been most widely studied by feminist historians of rhetoric. Given women's limited access to college-level rhetorical training, as well as traditional opportunities for public speaking via the pulpit, bar, and assembly, letter-writing instruction through home manuals and the practice of addressing audiences through the letter genre were vital to women's rhetorical learning and practice during the postal age (Donawerth; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; Spring, "Meditation").<sup>19</sup> Nineteenth-century books and periodicals teaching letter writing claimed that it was a woman's "positive duty," "especially feminine," and the "one species of writing which seems to belong appropriately to the lady" (qtd. in Mahoney 411, 415).<sup>20</sup> These claims took on real significance because of the limitations on women's access to rhetorical training and practice.

This is not to suggest, however, that men were not rhetorically trained to write letters during the postal age. In fact, as literary historian and critic Mary Favret argues, it is a "fiction" of nineteenth-century letters that they are feminine (as well as private and romantic) (see also Gilroy and Verhoeven).<sup>21</sup> In the field of rhetoric, Susan Miller also challenges the association between women and letters that is commonplace in scholarship on the nineteenth century. For example, in her history of cultural pedagogy and commonplace writing, Miller studies commonplace books and letters composed by both women and men. Out of twenty commonplace books found to contain letters, almost twice as many were kept by men than by women (202). I highlight this numeric detail not to suggest the men in Miller's research necessarily wrote more letters than the women, but to

caution against dismissing the rhetorical significance of letter-writing practice and instruction to men during the postal age.

The postal age of the mid-nineteenth century was culturally important in that everyday men and women gained increasing access to the post. More men and women could afford to mail letters, and letter-writing manuals, often purchased via the mail, were more widely available as forms of extracurricular rhetorical training. Situated across the postal age, my dissertation thus examines romantic letter-writing instruction and practice at a time when the services of the post became widely available to everyday people in the U.S., particularly in the New England region. Indeed, the primary materials I analyze in Chapters 2 and 3—the popular manuals, and especially the letters written and mailed by Brown, an African-American woman employed as a domestic—would not have existed in the same way prior to the postal age. At the same time, my study does not focus exclusively on women’s access to rhetoric through letter-writing instruction and practice. In Chapter 2, I analyze how both women and men were taught the genre conventions for romantic letters. Chapter 4 considers how one man, Dodd, learned and developed a network of rhetorical practices related to the romantic letter genre. This breadth across my case studies is crucial because, as cultural historian Kate Thomas considers in her study of a parallel postal age across the Atlantic, *Postal Pleasures: Sex, Scandal, and Victorian Letters*, increasing access helped to create postal networks with enabling effects for all different sorts of nonnormative exchanges through letter writing.



### 1.4.3 Same-Sex Romantic Friendship before Sexual Identity Categories

The nineteenth century is also marked by significant shifts in the organization of same-sex romantic relationships, particularly late in the century. Within histories of sexuality, it is generally understood that categories of sexual identity, such as “homosexual,” emerged in the West with the rise of sexological discourse during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chauncey; Foucault; Halperin, *How*; Katz; Rotundo, “Romantic”). This dominant historiographic account of the emergence of sexual identity categories has been complicated in important ways (Sedgwick; Somerville). What remains powerful, however, is the crucial distinction historians make between present-day understandings of sexuality as a category of identity (what a person is), as opposed to earlier practices (what a person did). Again, it is in keeping with this distinction that my study explores queer rhetorical and relational practices rather than homosexual, heterosexual, straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or even queer identities. What I mean to emphasize here is the importance of keeping in mind that the queer practices I examine are from the period just prior to the invention of sexual identity categories.

Yet while mid-century same-sex romantic relations are not suggestive of a particular sexual identity, they have been understood as consisting of historically specific relational practices, mainly those of “romantic friendship.” The characteristics of romantic friendship, as a form of same-sex romantic relationship, have been debated by historians. Early histories of so-called romantic friendship argue that, prior to the late nineteenth century, these relationships were socially acceptable and nonsexual, and this understanding of romantic friendship continues to be cited by historians referencing, but not focusing on,

same-sex romantic relations (Faderman, *Surpassing*; Rotundo, “Romantic”; Seidman; Smith-Rosenberg, “Female”). But, within histories focused on same-sex relations, the earlier understanding of romantic friendship is challenged on a number of accounts. Scholars nuance “the supersessionist claims of these histories”—that one kind of culture existed before, and was then replaced after the rise of, sexology—along with “the resulting generalizations about nineteenth-century sexual culture in the United States” (Diggs 319-20; see also Comment, “When”; Sedgwick; Vicinus; Wood). Complicating the most simplistic accounts, in which the early- and mid-nineteenth century was “a ‘golden age’ of romantic friendship,” these scholars describe instead “a period of contentious struggle,” in which same-sex relations were pathologized, and this pathologization was resisted, even before late in the century (Diggs 321). Scholars also counter the argument that same-sex relations were necessarily asexual (Diggs; Halberstam, “Perverse”).

Of particular interest to my own project, disagreement about whether same-sex romantic friendships were sexual tends to turn on how diaries and especially letters are interpreted (Cloud; Diggs; Faderman, *Surpassing*; Morris, “My Old”; Smith-Rosenberg, “Diaries” and “Female”). For instance, as Marylynne Diggs explains, Lillian Faderman’s early history argues, “it is unlikely that Victorian women expressed their love for each other sexually”; yet Faderman “cites as evidence the dearth of explicit references to sex between women in correspondence or diaries, ignoring the similar lack of such discussions of heterosexual sex” (Diggs 337, n. 2; Faderman, *Surpassing* 18-9, 250-51, 414). Indeed, histories of opposite-sex relations also grapple with questions about how to interpret the romantic affections expressed in nineteenth-century letters, about how to extrapolate information about erotic and sexual behavior from highly sentimental and often cloaked

language (Lystra; Rothman). Nor are such questions irrelevant in histories focused on same-sex relations and romantic letters between men (Katz; Morris, “My Old”; Rotundo, “Romantic”).

These same questions arise about the nature of the romantic relations between Brown and Primus, and between Dodd and other young men (Gay; Griffin; Hansen, “No”; Katz; Rotundo, “Romantic”). While I acknowledge such questions were relevant in later chapters, my goal is not to read Brown, Primus, and Dodd’s writing in search of evidence that proves what sort of romantic, erotic, or sexual relations they did or did not practice. Rather, I focus on what their writing suggests regarding their rhetorical education and rhetorical practices for romantic engagement—what the writing suggests, in other words, about how Brown, Primus, and Dodd learned to use romantic rhetoric to compose their same-sex relations. In doing so, and in understanding their writing within the context of nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals, I nuance historiographic approaches that treat the language of the heart as transparent, that treat romantic letters as unstudied and natural expressions of heartfelt love. I argue instead that romantic letters are best understood as learned and crafted—that nineteenth-century romantic relations, subjects, and life were constituted in part through rhetorical practice and education.

## 2.0 “THE PORCH TO MARRIAGE”: COMPLETE LETTER-WRITERS’ INSTRUCTION IN MODEL LETTERS & RELATIONS, 1807-1897

My investigation of rhetorical education for romantic engagement begins with the obvious sources: overtly pedagogical manuals such as *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832). These manuals consist of models designed to teach the rhetorical practice of letter writing and include chapters focused specifically on the romantic subgenre. I refer to such manuals as the obvious sources because, while they constitute just one strand of a rich culture ripe with opportunities for learning romantic epistolary rhetoric, letter-writing manuals are the most likely sources from which everyday people could learn. I will consider less obvious sources within my analysis of Brown, Primus, and Dodd’s rhetorical practices in Chapters 3 and 4, but I start in Chapter 2 with the instructional manuals that explicitly modeled how to compose and rhetorically participate in romantic relations through letter writing.

I analyze these manuals in order to ask how everyday people were taught romantic engagement: how were they taught language practices for writing romantic letters and, by extension, cultural norms for rhetorically participating in romantic relations? In exploring this question, I begin by further introducing nineteenth-century “complete letter-writer” manuals as sites of rhetorical education for romantic engagement. Then I argue that, while these manuals advised readers to simply write “from the heart,” the manuals extensively

modeled genre conventions constraining such writing. In modeling conventions for the romantic subgenre of the letter, manuals embedded a heteronormative conception of romantic relations. At the same time, however, manual instruction emphasized rhetorical strategies of invention through copying and adaptation, which rendered the same model letters susceptible to more queer uses. Finally, I step back from the specifically romantic instruction in manuals to consider their civic implications. Here I argue that instruction in how to write model letters advanced a broader cultural logic that reinforced heteronormative forms of romantic unity by linking them to national unity.

## 2.1 COMPLETE LETTER-WRITER MANUALS

People in the nineteenth-century U.S. could learn epistolary rhetoric from a wide range of texts in addition to the obvious sources of instruction, letter-writing manuals. People could learn from less explicitly pedagogical texts, such as periodical articles about letter writing;<sup>22</sup> epistolary novels, sentimental literature,<sup>23</sup> and even slave narratives<sup>24</sup> representing epistolary exchange; the published letters of literary and political figures;<sup>25</sup> and, finally, the everyday letters read aloud and shared within familial and social circles. Also available to learners were single chapters about letter writing within instructional manuals of different types: rhetoric and composition textbooks designed for use in schools and colleges, as well as universal instructor manuals and conduct and etiquette guides designed for home use. But the most extensive instruction in specifically *romantic*

epistolary rhetoric was provided through those letter-writing manuals that focused entirely on the rhetorical practice of letter writing.

These letter-writing manuals from the nineteenth-century U.S. continued a long Western rhetorical tradition, which may be traced from Cicero to the medieval *ars dictaminis*, from Erasmus to seventeenth- and especially eighteenth-century British manuals (Bannet; Masten; Murphy; Poster, “The Case” and “Introduction”). Two features of this rhetorical tradition are important to note because they were carried forward within nineteenth-century U.S. manuals, with significant implications for their instruction in romantic epistolary rhetoric. First and foremost, the letter or epistle has been defined consistently across Western rhetoric. Cicero defined the letter as “written conversation” (qtd. in Bannet 44, 277), Erasmus as “a conversation” (qtd. in Masten 378), and Blair as “conversation carried on upon paper” (346). As Eve Bannet shows in her cultural history of letter-writing manuals, Cicero’s definition was rehearsed across late seventeenth- to early nineteenth-century British and U.S. manuals. Second, in keeping with this definition of the epistle, manual instruction has long been marked by what Bannet calls a “paradox”: between the commonplace, even cliché, instruction to compose letters *simply* by writing as though one would speak to the addressed audience, and the existence of manuals offering elaborate recommendations and models teaching *how* to do so—not so simply, after all (53, 276). As I will later consider in depth, this pedagogical paradox of letter-writing manuals and definition of the letter play out in particular ways within nineteenth-century instruction in “the language of the heart.”

My analysis of this romantic instruction is based on a study of over 40 letter-writing manuals, which I examined through archival research in the University of Pittsburgh’s

Nietz Collection. One of the largest of its kind, the Nietz Collection consists of about 19,000 textbooks from the early U.S., including nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals as well as etiquette guides with sections on letter writing. While I reference etiquette guides where their instructions are consistent with popular letter-writing manuals, my analysis focuses on the latter.<sup>26</sup> I focus especially on the most popular type of extracurricular letter-writing manual that, in nineteenth-century discourse, was called a “complete letter-writer.” My research suggests that U.S. books with variations of the title *Complete Letter-Writer* have been republished countless times at least since 1790.<sup>27</sup> Like their eighteenth-century English predecessors, “complete letter-writers” in the nineteenth-century U.S. were so called because they included a wide range of model letters, often hundreds of them, and claimed to assist with every situation in which any person might write a letter (Bannet 22). In the words of *Practical Letter Writing* (1897), “*Complete letter-writers* are books giving model letters, so-called, on all subjects” (Loomis 67). Indeed, whether or not a manual’s formal title was *Complete Letter-Writer*, the manual was understood as such if it attempted completeness through the provision of countless model letters.

The contents of so-called complete letter-writers were structured in keeping with their objective to provide models “on all subjects.” Though to varying degrees, most complete letter-writers opened with a relatively brief introduction to principles for rhetoric and composition in general and/or letter writing in particular. But these manuals consisted primarily of model letters. The models were organized into sections, or chapters, by subgenre—such as business, family, friendship, and romantic letters—and then labeled with titles suggestive of variations within each subgenre, in terms of the specific writer/rhetor, reader/audience, and purpose. *The Fashionable American Letter Writer*

exemplifies this characteristic organization of manual contents. The manual begins with a “Preface” emphasizing the importance of letter writing (iii-iv). Its “Introduction,” while including instruction in principles of spelling, grammar, punctuation, handwriting, letter folding, and style, claims that the best way to study letter writing is through “fair examples” and “specimens” that illustrate those principles (xiii-xx). Another chapter, “Directions for Letter-Writing, and Rules for Composition,” actually says nothing of letter writing in particular, but instead offers more general instruction in composing and rhetorical principles, especially in terms of style (xxi-xxxii). Following these short initial chapters, the manual consists mainly of model letters, which are divided into chapters titled “On Business,” “On Relationship,” “On Friendship,” and “On Love, Courtship, and Marriage.” The titles of the multiple models within these chapters are listed above each model as well as in the manual’s table of contents (see Figure 1).

ON LOVE, COURTSHIP, AND MARRIAGE.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 27. From a gentleman to a lady, disclosing his passion,  | 60 |
| 28. The answer,  | 61 |
| 29. From a gentleman to a young lady of a superior fortune,  | 62 |
| 30. The answer,  | 63 |
| 31. From a gentleman of some fortune, who had seen a lady in public, to her mother,  | 64 |
| 32. From a mother to a gentleman, who had asked permission to address her daughter. In answer,   | 65 |
| 33. From a young tradesman to a gentleman desiring permission to visit his daughter,   | 66 |
| 34. From the same to the young lady, by permission of the father,  | 67 |
| 35. From a widow to a young gentleman, rejecting his suit,   | 68 |
| 36. From a young lady to a gentleman that courted her, whom she could not like, but was forced by her parents to receive his visits, and think on none else for her husband, | 69 |
| 37. From a young lady in the country to her father, acquainting him with an offer made to her of marriage,   | 70 |
| 38. An answer to the preceding,  | 71 |
| 39. Another on the same occasion,  | 72 |
| 40. From Mr. Smith to the young lady’s father,   | 73 |

Figure 1. Sample contents from *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832).



Not surprisingly given the contents and organization characteristic of letter-writing manuals, they have functioned as important primary materials for scholars studying everyday rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century U.S. (Bannet; Donawerth; Gage; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; Schultz; Trasciatti). While the mere existence of a broad body of scholarship on letter-writing instruction may point to its cultural and pedagogical significance, I understand letter-writing manuals as ideal primary materials for at least two reasons. First, while distinct from formal college-level training named “rhetoric,” these manuals leave no question that their instruction in letter writing is indeed a form of rhetorical education—by which I mean, education that treats language and meaning as produced, understood, and negotiated in ways inseparable from rhetorical situations involving writer, audience, purpose, and larger social context. Complete letter-writers not only provided model letters, but also filled the majority of their pages with those models, along with titles. So the features of rhetorical situations were marked over and over again, on page after page. In *The Fashionable American Letter Writer*, for instance, pages 39 to 179 are comprised entirely of model letters. Sample titles for these models include “From a Tenant to a Landlord, excusing delay of Payment” (45), “From a Preceptor to his Scholar, during Vacation Time” (174), “From a young Woman, just gone to service in Boston, to her Mother in the country” (110), and “From a Gentleman to a young Lady of a superior fortune” (62). As such, readers could learn to become rhetorically minded as they found represented, for well over a hundred pages, one example after another of models that called attention to the audience being addressed in the salutation, the purpose articulated in the initial lines of the letter, and the writer signing the letter.

Second, and because of the above emphasis on the rhetoricity of letter writing, complete letter-writers also leave no question that their instruction taught social relations as much as it did language use. In the model letter titles above, elements of the larger social context are acknowledged in terms of the social positions of the writer and audience. Titles like these explicitly call attention to the ways that writers, readers, and purposes are socially positioned by age, family, gender, education, class, labor, and region (as well as race, in other instances). Moreover, the organization of the models by subgenre amounts to organization by what rhetorical genre theorist Carolyn Miller would refer to as each subgenre's "recurrent situation" and, within that situation, "typified rhetorical action" and "conventionalized social purpose" (162). In short, complete letter-writers modeled social conventions for who was to write what to whom, with what purposes, and within which situations.

Historians of rhetorical education, as well as cultural historians more broadly, have thus studied how manual instruction teaches model social relations and the cultural norms governing those relations. I will highlight just a few examples, before I turn to my own study. Rhetorical scholar Mary Anne Trasciatti explores how bilingual, bicultural manuals modeled U.S. norms for social and business life to Italian immigrants. Cultural historian Eve Bannet considers how complete letter-writers appealed to letter writers across class lines but inscribed differences between social classes. And, in the most developed line of inquiry, feminist historians debate whether and how the letter genre was gendered (Donawerth; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; S. Miller; Spring, "Meditation"). Rhetorical scholar Nan Johnson argues, for instance, that manuals gendered subgenres of the letter, in that while women and men both were taught to write familiar and romantic letters, women were not taught

to write letters with “agency in arenas of public or professional opinion” (*Gender* 81). Women were not taught to write “Business letters and letters to public officials,” and they were not represented as “writing persuasively to officials, politicians, public figures, magazine or newspapers editors, or even clergymen” (96, 98).

Yet, even as scholars consider a range of questions about how complete letter-writers taught cultural norms for social relations, there has been no focused or extended attention to instruction in the romantic subgenre. While Johnson realizes “the crucial function of the courtship letter,” her emphasis is not on instruction in this subgenre and its gendering of romantic relations (*Gender* 96). Indeed, her most extended attention to romantic letters comes in an endnote, where she acknowledges that manuals typically include instruction in appropriate ways for unmarried women and men to address each other, and points readers to a history of nineteenth-century courtship that treats the love letter (188).<sup>28</sup> Bannet and Trasciatti do briefly consider nineteenth-century manual instruction in romantic letter writing (198+; 85-8), and Susan Miller discusses learning through the practice of romantic letter writing (201-6).<sup>29</sup> But again, there is no in-depth study of how complete letter-writers also scripted model relations through their instruction in the *romantic* letter genre.

## **2.2 MODEL RELATIONS: GENRE CONVENTIONS & HETERONORMATIVITY**

Rhetorical instruction in the romantic letter is ripe for such examination because manuals usually taught the subgenre within separate chapters focused entirely on its conventions.

Similar conventions existed for all subgenres of the letter (e.g., business, family, friendship), but in separating the romantic subgenre from the others, manuals modeled what was distinctive about the conventions for romantic letters. This rhetorical education through modeling amounted to more than instruction in genre conventions; it functioned as instruction in model romantic relations. As suggested by Carolyn Miller's rhetorical genre theory, manuals taught not just genre conventions for achieving one's "own" romantic ends, but what romantic "ends [one] may have" (165). Specifically, manual instruction in genre conventions for epistolary address taught normatively gendered romantic relations, instruction in conventions for the pacing of exchange taught normative restraint, and instruction in conventions for rhetorical purpose taught a normative marriage *telos*. Importantly, however, manual instruction in the romantic letter reflected the broader paradox Bannet identifies: in spite of extensive modeling in conventions distinctive of the romantic subgenre, manuals claimed that writing a romantic letter, like any other, was a matter of speaking on paper and, in the case of the romantic subgenre, speaking "from the heart."

### **2.2.1 Romantic Letters and Writing from the Heart**

The most basic instruction for the romantic subgenre of the letter was to write "from the heart." In keeping with *The Fashionable American Letter Writer's* designation "the language of the heart," complete letter-writer manuals taught learners to write romantic letters that sincerely conveyed their heartfelt feelings. For example, in model romantic letters from Sylvanus Shepard's *The Natural Letter-Writer* (1813), "the language of [the] heart" is

characterized as marked by “sincerity,” particularly in terms of communicating “emotions of the heart” (27-9, 55-7). Another manual, *Frost’s Original Letter-Writer* (1867), spells out the potential pedagogical implications of such characterizations of the language of the heart. In the chapter “Letters of Love,” *Frost’s* asserts, “Love Letters written in sincerity and faith need but little guidance except from the heart of the writer. The true lover will find the words he seeks flow easily from his pen” (Shields 119). If one truly loves, in other words, he needs no rhetorical training, his letters no rhetorical crafting.

Yet the obvious paradox of this instruction is that, if writing romantic letters relied so simply on feelings, and required so “little guidance,” then there would be no need for complete letter-writers like *Frost’s*, which goes on to offer no less than 37 model romantic letters. In spite of *The Natural Letter-Writer’s* title, its similar elaboration of model letters suggests that sincerely communicating from the heart is no simple or “natural” matter. Models of the romantic subgenre were necessary, these same manuals taught, because of the twin threats of deceit and flattery. Indeed, *The Natural Letter-Writer* further defines the language of the heart by contrasting its sincerity with “deceit and flattery.” Because deceit and flattery are “used to betray the innocent,” the manual continues, romantic correspondents should not simply write from the heart, or simply read letters as transparent windows into the writer’s heart. Instead, writers need to learn how to rhetorically craft language in ways that will “prove the sincerity of [the] heart,” so that readers will “have...reason to believe.” Just as importantly, readers need to become rhetorically savvy in order to distinguish between “apparent sincerity” and “ample proof of...sincerity” (Shepard 27-9, 55-7).

Of course, outright deception was the most obvious threat to the sincerity of the language of the heart. In keeping with the tradition of epistolary novels and broader cultural anxieties about deceptive seduction through letters by the “rake” figure, manuals usually represented the risks of dishonesty about love as though men were more likely to deceive women (Halttunen; Hewitt; Zaczek). Still, manuals advised both men and women to avoid dishonesty. *Letter-Writing Simplified* (1844) advises letter writers gendered masculine, “the lover should promise nothing the husband would hesitate to perform...all promises should be carefully made, and always with strict regard to truth” (61). Especially significant is a lengthy series of letters, titled “From a Father to his Daughters,” which was widely reprinted in countless manuals. In this series, the father warns his daughters against both deceiving and being deceived: “I wish you to possess such high principles of honor and generosity as will render you incapable of deceiving, and at the same time to possess that acute discernment which may secure you against being deceived” (*Fashionable* 84).<sup>30</sup>

As much a threat as deceit was its twin flattery. Manuals taught that, because writing from the heart involved communicating feelings of affection, such communication could easily veer into the risky territory of flattery. *Letter-Writing Simplified* advises, “Extravagant flattery should, by all means be avoided” (61). *Frost’s* goes further, claiming, “It is best to *entirely* avoid flattery in such letters” (Shields 119, my emphasis). One risk with flattery, according to *Frost’s*, is it may undermine actual sincerity and proof of true feeling: “The fact that you love the person to whom [the letters] are addressed is a sufficient proof of your appreciation of any merit or beauty he or she may possess, and the praises of lovers are apt to become too warm to appear perfectly sincere” (119). Writers

who do sincerely feel love are taught to avoid flattery because, however sincere flattering romantic letters are, they may not “appear” as such.

In most cases, though, the risk manuals warned learners about was flattery combined with the intention to deceive. Here especially, men were taught not to deceive through flattery, women not to be deceived by flattery. While complete letter-writers consisted primarily of model letters, *The Natural Letter Writer* includes a poem, “To Young Ladies,” which warns women who “are...beset on every side” by “flattering men” to “believe them not, / The rake, the beau, the drunken sot, / Although they are flattering to your face, / They will leave you in disgrace” (70). Similarly, *Letter-Writing Simplified* prefaces its models by instructing women to guard against deception through flattery: “The sincerity of the writer is questioned when his language is exaggerated, and ridicule or disgust is excited toward him in the bosom of a woman of sense” (61). *The Art of Correspondence* (1884) affirms that sensible readers, even if deceived initially, will eventually see through mere flattery: “Hypocritical letters, abounding in overwrought expressions of love, may possibly, for a while, deceive the inexperienced...but the...sensible will penetrate the deceptive film, and expose the treacherous writer to deserved contempt” (Locke 140). Of course, this particular warning was likely intended not for already “sensible” readers, but for writers hoping to get away with deceit through flattery.

In spite of the presumptions about gender underlying such manual instruction, the lessons for both women and men were clear: be wary of deception, and even of flattery, but otherwise write from the heart, sincerely expressing one’s heartfelt feelings. To write from the heart was the most basic advice manuals gave about the romantic subgenre. But writing from the heart did not simply amount to natural or spontaneous expression.

Instead, manuals taught that such expression was governed by at least three generic conventions, all with implications for the cultural shaping of heteronormative romantic relations.

### **2.2.2 Epistolary Address and the Gendering of Romantic Relations**

The first and most elementary of these genre conventions concerns romantic epistolary address. As we might expect, manuals taught conventions for addressing not just romantic but all letters: composers were to begin with a left-aligned salutation line, placed just below the right-aligned date and above the body of the letter, and address the immediate, intended audience, usually using the words “Dear” and/or “My.” Yet as Bannet shows, instruction in terms of epistolary address amounted to a lesson in what forms of exchange were culturally approved based on the rank of writers and readers, and the intimacy of their relations (64-6). In the case of manual chapters focused on romantically intimate letters, instruction in the simple and still familiar conventions for epistolary address gendered writer and reader relations. What I mean by “gendered” is that manuals marked writer and reader positions as masculine or feminine. As manuals gendered specifically romantic relations between writers and readers, the instruction also embedded a heteronormative conception of romantic relations. Simply put, among the thousands of model letters categorized as romantic in complete letter-writers, every model studied is addressed to a reader gendered feminine if the writer is gendered masculine, and is addressed to a reader gendered masculine if the writer is gendered feminine (or is about a relationship between one person gendered feminine and another gendered masculine). In



other words, manuals normalized opposite-sex relations between writers and readers—which are now understood as “heterosexual” relations.

In order to normalize this particular form of relations, manuals of course needed to mark gender as an organizing feature of romantic exchange between writers and readers. Indeed, while some manuals also marked class<sup>31</sup> and even race<sup>32</sup> in the titles to selected model letters, all manuals consistently marked gender as a defining feature of virtually every model letter exchange. In what is perhaps the most striking example, *The American Lady's and Gentleman's Modern Letter Writer* [185- ], the entire manual is organized first and foremost by the gender of model writers. Whereas most manuals followed their introductions with models organized into multiple chapters by subgenre, this one follows its especially brief introduction—just two pages, neither completely filled with text—with only two sections: “The Ladies’ Hand-Book of Letter-Writing” and “The Gentlemen’s Hand-Book of Letter-Writing.” Within the “Ladies” half of the book, the gendering of writers and their addressed readers is marked in titles to model romantic letters, such as “A Lady on Receiving a Letter from a Gentleman, in which He Proposes a Meeting” (28); in the “Gentlemen’s” half, with titles such as “A Gentleman to a Lady, Proposing to Pay His Addresses” (20a). Titles aside, however, the overall organization of the book by gender offered a lesson, however inductive, on the organization of gender within heteronormative romantic relations: there were two genders for writers and readers, lady and gentleman; they were markedly different from each other, to the point of requiring two separate sections; and, like two halves, they together made up a whole.

Most manuals did not go so far as halving their instruction into separate sections for separate genders, but romantic epistolary address was still represented as defined by

gender. Gender was attributed primarily in the titles above model letters, which framed the terms of address through third-person pronouns, as well as gendered nouns. For example, *The Useful Letter Writer* (1844) includes “From a young Gentleman to a Lady with whom he is in love,” “From a Gentleman to a Lady,” and “From a rich young Gentleman, to a beautiful young Lady with no fortune.” Because manuals listed such letter titles in the tables of contents, as well as repeated the titles above each letter, their gendering of romantic epistolary address occupied a prominent position in the framing of models at the level of both the entire manual and any given chapter.

The predominantly heteronormative conception of romantic relations and letters as defined by gender difference carried forward into the model letters themselves. While model titles and manual organization clearly gendered epistolary address, it was in the actual letter models that this address occurred, and it occurred most directly in salutation lines. In chapters focused on romantic letter writing, salutations consisted of not only the familiar “Dear,” but also more gendered terms of address. In *The Pocket Letter Writer* (1836), the gendered terms of address in salutation lines for initial romantic letters and their subsequent replies include the following: “My Dearest Harriet” and “Sir” (65-6); “Madam” and “Sir” (70-1); “Dear Mary” and “Dear James” (81-2); “My Dear Anne” and “Dear George” (90-1); and, finally, “My Dearest Mary” and “My Dearest John” (96-7). Again, these terms for address make gender central to epistolary address and normalize opposite-sex address as characteristic of romantic letters. Manuals thus modeling the genre conventions for epistolary address normalized model romantic relations as heterosexual: gender was marked so as to render opposite-sex relations unremarkable, and so opposite-sex relations were treated as normative, as natural, right, and even inevitable.

### 2.2.3 Letter Pacing and the Exercise of Restraint

A second genre convention taught by complete letter-writer manuals is that for the pacing of romantic letter exchange and, by extension, romantic relationships. Like the conventions for epistolary address, those for dating letters were taught quite simply through modeling across the subgenres of the letter: most models included a date in the upper right corner of the letter.<sup>33</sup> Embedded within the bodies of the letters categorized as romantic, however, were less simple and more interesting lessons about the relationship between the dating and pacing of letters and the temporality of romantic relations. In a nineteenth-century version of what Judith “Jack” Halberstam terms “straight time”—a temporality for when and how one normatively proceeds from one stage of relationship and life development to the next (e.g., dating, marriage, childbirth)<sup>34</sup>—manuals warned against rushed expressions of affection and proposals. Manuals taught instead that “base” passions were kept in check partly through the exercise of studied restraint with respect to timing.

In *The Pocket Letter Writer*, for example, a series of model letters represents a temporal slowing of romantic relations as a virtuous response to, and even a punishment for, baseness. The series begins with a letter titled “From a lady to a gentleman, in answer to a dishonorable proposal,” in which the lady “scorn[s]” the gentleman’s “highly improper letter” and its “baseness,” insisting on her own “virtue” (92-3). Following “The gentleman’s apology,” the lady answers again, this time willing to continue relations in the future, but only after a period of time in which she may study his conduct. She writes,

If...at the expiration of six months, your conduct has been that which I hope and expect...you may then return, and claim both my heart and my hand. But

any efforts on your part to shorten this period will be unavailing, my resolution being not to see you till the period I now mention, which, permit me to add, is a very mild punishment when compared with your offence. (94-5)

Through this model and its emphasis on timing, *The Pocket Letter Writer* teaches a normative temporality for romantic relations, in which the slowing of relations is a virtuous punishment for baseness, so that there is time to study conduct further. This temporality is also predictably gendered and heteronormative: it presumes an opposite-sex relation defined by gendered difference, such that the base letter is from a writer gendered masculine and the virtuous and punishing response from a writer gendered feminine.<sup>35</sup>

Manual instruction in heteronormative relations taught letter writers to use studied restraint not only as punishment for, but also as precaution against, hastiness. *The Art of Correspondence* asserts, “Of all letters those on matters of love and marriage should be written with mature deliberation—not under the influence of hasty impressions, nor sudden impulses” (Locke 141). *Chesterfield’s Art of Letter Writing Simplified* (1857) is especially cautious about letters and proposals deemed “hasty” or “precipitate” (63). *Chesterfield’s* spells out what *The Pocket Letter Writer* implies about the relationship between cautious restraint, timing, and the study of conduct. In one model, a “lady” writes, “Let us not...be too hasty in our conclusions—let us not mistake momentary impulse for permanent impression; let us seek rather to know more of each other, to study each other’s tempers, and to establish...sincere esteem” (64).

Such slow study is crucial to crafting letters restrained in not only timing but also intensity, so as to avoid passionate outbreaks. In another model titled “To an acquaintance

of long standing,” the letter writer preempts concerns about potential haste by explaining as follows:

From constantly meeting with you, and observing the thousand acts of amiability and kindness which adorn your daily life, I have gradually associated my hopes of future happiness with the chance of possessing you as their sharer. Believe me, dear Miss ----, this is no outbreak of boyish passion, but the hearty and healthy result of a long and affectionate study of your disposition. It is love, founded on esteem. (64)

This writer insists that he engages in constant observation, observation of a thousand acts, and so his expression of affection is based on long study, and his love is true. His writing from the heart is far from an unrestrained expression, a momentary impulse, or a passionate outbreak. Complete letter-writers thus taught how learners were to both date their romantic letters and pace their romantic relations. In teaching genre conventions for the pacing of romantic exchange, manuals taught cultural norms for the exercise of restraint with respect to relationship timing and even intensity.

#### **2.2.4 Rhetorical Purpose and the Marriage *Telos***

Third and finally, complete letter-writers taught the generically conventional rhetorical purpose for romantic letters. The rhetorical purposes taught for other subgenres of the letter, concerned with business, friendship, and family, were varied. But in the case of the romantic subgenre, the purpose was quite narrow. For instance, while the introductory chapters to manuals made claims about letter writing and national unity that I will later

argue hold relevance for romantic life, the chapters on romantic letters represented the subgenre's content and immediate purpose as distinct from political life. Moreover, even as manuals advised that romantic letters were to express heartfelt feelings of love, model letters were directed to a very narrowly defined type of love relationship. Manuals taught learners to compose romantic letters not to develop just any sort of romantic correspondence or relationship, but for the particular purpose of courting and being courted in pursuit of a culturally normative *telos* and generic end: union through marriage between a man and a woman.

This normative *telos* is apparent throughout the various elements of manual instruction in romantic letter writing. Consider, for instance, these typical titles to chapters about the romantic subgenre: "Love, Courtship, and Marriage" (*Pocket* xii, 65), "On Love, Courtship, and Marriage" (*Fashionable* vi, 56), "Letters on Love, Courtship, and Marriage" (Turner ix, 95), and "Letters of Love, Courtship, and Marriage" (*Useful* v, 91). Some of this repetition within and among chapter titles is probably a function of nineteenth-century textbook production and compilation practices (Bannet; Carr, Carr, and Schultz; Nietz).<sup>36</sup> But the consistent ordering of the key words in chapter titles—love, courtship, and then marriage—figured romantic love, however heartfelt, as teleological. This ordering figured the romantic letter as a subgenre for moving from love through courtship to marriage.

Chapter contents were predictably in keeping with these common titles, in that most model romantic letters were concerned with marriage. Even in *Frost's* chapter "Love Letters," which obviously does not include the word "marriage" in its title, more than half of the model romantic letters link love and courtship to the end of marriage. Among *Frost's* 37 models, a majority of 20 are unquestionably oriented to marriage proposals and responses

to those proposals, or to maintaining, fortifying, or terminating an engagement to be married. Consistent with other complete letter-writers, for example, the first model in *Frost's* chapter is a "Letter from a Gentleman to a Lady Offering her his Hand," followed by a "Favorable Reply to the Foregoing" and an "Unfavorable Reply" (Shields 119-21). Other models include a letter "From a Gentleman to a Lady Seeking to Renew a Ruptured Engagement," also followed by both a favorable and an unfavorable reply, as well as a letter "From a Gentleman to a Lady, after Heavy Business Losses, Offering to Release her from an Engagement," to which there are replies both accepting and declining his offer (133-4). Even in romantic letters less obviously directed toward the rhetorical purposes of negotiating marriage proposals and engagements, the exchange in process is oriented to the normative *telos* of marriage. The content within a model reply to a "Letter from a Gentleman to the Father of the Lady he loves, Requesting Permission to Pay his Addresses" makes clear, for instance, that "addresses" is simply a euphemism for "marriage proposal," because in the favorable response, the father answers that the gentleman is "acceptable...as a son," welcoming him into the "family" (121-2).

This normative teleological orientation of romantic letters was reinforced through manual commentary about the genre. In *Chesterfield's* account of the romantic letter's rhetorical purpose, the manual includes reference to writing "of the heart," but specifies that this writing is directed to marriage: "Affairs of the heart—the delicate and interesting preliminaries of marriage, are oftener settled by the pen than in any other manner" (54). That the romantic letter conventionally settles marriage is more bluntly put by another manual from later in the century, *Hill's Manual of Social and Business Forms* (1883). *Hill's* states, "The love letter is the prelude to marriage" (Hill 110). Manuals clearly taught that

romantic letters were not for the sake of themselves, or romantic love, or “the heart,” but for marriage.

Indeed, even where manuals emphasized the basic importance of writing from the heart, of being sincere and avoiding deception, the culturally normative goal of marriage seems to have overridden the cultural valuing of sincerity and honesty. In fact, manuals went so far as to warn against deceptive romantic rhetoric *because* of its potential to interfere with a relationship’s culmination in marriage. Where *Letter-Writing Simplified* advises a “strict regard to truth” and avoidance of “extravagant flattery,” the manual emphasizes that, “In honorable minds courtship is always regarded as *the porch to marriage*” (61, my emphasis). Similarly, in one of *The Natural Letter Writer’s* many models of fathers warning daughters to be wary of deception and flattery, the father writes, “guard yourself against the snares and temptations designing men throw in the way of young inexperienced girls. Young girls are too apt to persuade themselves that young men who fawn over, and flatter them, wish to *make wives of them*; but no mistake can be more fatal” (Shepard 72, emphasis added). This model letter reinforces advice throughout complete letter-writers, not just to resist being persuaded by flattery because of its questionable sincerity, but because flattery within romantic letters does not lead to the *telos* of marriage.

Ultimately, manuals taught readers to write romantic letters from the heart, sincerely expressing their love, but in keeping with generic conventions for the gendering of romantic epistolary address and the temporality of exchange. These generic conventions were significant, manuals instructed, not merely so that writers and readers could compose well-crafted romantic exchanges, but so that that these exchanges could accomplish their conventional rhetorical purpose. As a generic means of accomplishing what Carolyn Miller



calls the “ends [one] may have” in the context of the nineteenth-century U.S, romantic letters were to culminate in the heteronormative *telos* of marriage between a man and a woman.

### 2.3 MODEL ADAPTERS: INVENTION STRATEGIES WITH QUEER EFFECTS

While manuals predominantly taught heteronormative genre conventions for the romantic letter, this instruction also more subtly suggested how those conventions were subject to challenge (Bakhtin 80; Devitt 579). My point is not merely that the romantic subgenre was inherently susceptible to queer challenge by writers whose nonnormative desires and relations motivated inventive rhetorical practices (though it was). Rather, complete letter-writer manuals themselves pointed to possibilities for such practices, because of how these manuals taught invention strategies. Complete letter-writers taught that learners who pursued normative romantic relations through letter writing did so by becoming model adapters: by using invention strategies such as copying and adapting the model letters provided.

I argue that, in the hands of at least some manual users, these models could be copied and adapted with “queer effects” (Thomas 36-7). Borrowing the phrase “queer effects” from Kate Thomas, who theorizes and historicizes the queer effects of postal networks in Victorian Britain, I use the phrase to refer to *potential effects of manual instruction that subvert the very conventions and norms emphasized by that instruction*. In doing so, I am turning attention to potential *uses* of manuals, and I am necessarily working

in the realm of speculation, to the extent that I imagine how learners could have used manual models given how those models were presented (though, in Chapters 3 and 4, I will turn to the queer rhetorical practices of actual letter writers).<sup>37</sup> Here I consider how the same three genre conventions already considered—for gendered epistolary address, pacing of exchange, and rhetorical purpose—were susceptible to challenge through gender-crossing address, unrestrained outbreaks, and queer repurposing. Manuals enabled such challenges by teaching readers to copy and adapt the language of the heart as written by others.

### **2.3.1 Copying from Others' Hearts**

The most basic instruction for romantic letters, to write from the heart with sincerity, was especially susceptible to queer challenge given manual instruction in the invention strategy of copying model letters. Certainly a manual such as *Frost's* provided a model "Letter from a Gentleman to a Lady Offering her his Hand" so that readers could study the model in order to learn generic conventions for how a gentleman proposes to a lady. Whereas the model writer expresses his "true, abiding love," asks if his feelings prompt "any response in [the lady's] heart," and then proposes, learners were expected to write their own letters, from their own hearts (Shields 119-20). They were to express their true feelings, though in keeping with genre conventions for heteronormatively proceeding toward marriage. But, while the letter may have been offered as a model of conventional rhetorical practice, of writing from the heart, this model was susceptible to outright copying. In other words, a

learner could copy what was allegedly written from another's heart, as those it were his own.

This susceptibility to epistolary invention through the practice of copying what was written from another's heart was widely discussed across nineteenth-century letter-writing culture, especially within other manuals *not* taking the complete letter-writer form. Not surprisingly, much of this acknowledgment appeared as criticism that complete letter-writers and their provision of models were culturally suspect. Consider, for instance, H. T. Loomis' *Practical Letter Writing*, which was structured by parts of letters and clusters of numbered tips, rather than chapters of models in each subgenre. Loomis criticizes the more common complete letter-writer form because learners "fall into the habit of copying these almost word for word, instead of writing original letters. This is a bad practice; it is better to send a poorly constructed letter, of which you are the author, than a copied 'model'" (67). Bothered by this copying of models, Loomis warns of its consequences, particularly in the case of romantic correspondence: "A young man who copied and used such a letter proposing marriage, received a reply saying, 'You will find my answer on the next page.' It was a polite refusal" (67). In other words, because this man copied his proposal from a manual, he was directed to view the next letter in the manual, which was a model for how to reject that proposal.

In another manual, *The Youth's Letter-Writer* (1836), Eliza Rotch Ware Farrar offers an even stronger critique, claiming that complete letter-writers "are filled with absurdities, vulgarisms, and the flattest nonsense" through "models calculated to mislead the rising generation and pervert their taste" (vi, 125). Nor were Farrar and Loomis alone in their criticism. Manuals frequently warned of model copying gone wrong and, in the case of

romantic letters, almost always with the same consequence: a marriage proposal denied (*Complete American; Hardie; Letter-Writing Simplified; Locke; Westlake*).<sup>38</sup>

Even complete letter-writers themselves acknowledged the susceptibility of their models to outright copying, and thus the risk that romantic letters would not be written from the heart. The preface to *Chesterfield's* declares, "The fact is a complete letter writer is a complete sham and absurdity. People want to write letters, 'out of their own heads,' and it is impossible to give them 'ready made' letters, which like ready made shirts, shall fit every subject that may require clothing" (8).<sup>39</sup> Not without sense of humor, *Chesterfield's* illustrates the "absurdity" of copying "'ready made' letters" by representing a scenario in which an "uneducated" writer struggles to begin a letter,

...and eighteen cents are expended on that very remarkable work, "The Lady's and Gentleman's Complete Letter Writer, 90<sup>th</sup> edition." The time comes for another letter; the "Complete Letter Writer" is dragged out from the darkness of the drawer...and an hour is spent in the search for a model letter that will just express the writer's feelings and ideas. But, alas! among the three and forty-seven specimens of every style of correspondence, there is not one in which...Eliza is reminded that Walter still hopes to meet her, with sentiments unchanged, when she next visits New York...As to the "love letters," the writer thereof has made no provision for Jemima's acceptance of Joseph on condition that he will at once shave off his moustache, and take to all-around collars, and give up punning at the dinner-table. (7)

Lest readers presume these absurd examples are the "sham," *Chesterfield's* offers yet another: "We know a case of a gentleman—at least, a person—who offered his hand to a

lady with the help of a letter writer. The letter began, 'Reverend Miss;' how it finished the reader need not be told, but of course the lover was rejected" (8). And lest readers presume the problem in this example is the not-so-gentlemanly person's inadvertent mistake, *Chesterfield's* continues, "Perhaps he should have copied it 'Revered Miss,' but he should not have copied it at all" (8). *Chesterfield's* concludes, "The first step, then, towards attaining the art of letter-writing is, to tear up the 'Complete Letter Writer'" (8).

*Chesterfield's* still goes on to provide countless model letters, much like any other complete letter-writer. Yet the concerns in *Chesterfield's* echo those of Farrar and Loomis: the advice that romantic letters be written from the heart was susceptible to challenge by learners who invented letters by copying models instead of writing their own from the heart. The heartfelt sincerity of these learners would then be in question. These learners could make mistakes when copying—consequential mistakes that closed down the possibility of courtship proceeding to heteronormative marriage. Or, worse yet, these learners could be unable to find, even in a complete letter-writer, a model fit for what was peculiar to their rhetorical situation. Of course, this sort of completeness would be unnecessary if a wide variety of model letters were available not only for the simple practice of complete copying, but also for the more complex practice of invention through partial copying in combination with adaptation.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, for particularly inventive composers, the models provided by complete-letter writers were susceptible to being adapted in order to invent romantic letters that further "pervert[ed]" genre conventions and cultural norms—though perhaps not in the ways Farrar had in mind.

### 2.3.2 Category-Crossing Forms of Address

In light of how complete letter-writer manuals provided model romantic letters, the first genre convention already discussed for heteronormative epistolary address was susceptible to queer challenge. Although manuals marked the gender of letter writers and readers such that romantic epistolary address was heteronormative, these same manuals provided at least some resources for composing queerly category-crossing forms of address. Certainly models indicated to learners what was considered appropriate, or how manual users should address their letters based on gender. But manuals could not guarantee how learners would use the models. Indeed, because of how models were presented as resources for invention—not merely as models of writing from the heart, but as models with the potential for invention through copying and adaptation—these same model letters were susceptible to being copied and adapted in ways that crossed gender categories.

Part of what rendered the generic conventions for romantic epistolary address susceptible to gender crossing was how manuals made the same models available to all learners regardless of gender. There were some manuals, and especially conduct and etiquette guides, titled specifically for either men or women. But most complete letter-writers, in their bid to be “complete” by providing models for all letter writers in all situations, offered the same set of models to both men and women. Complete letter-writers even emphasized the usefulness of their models to “both sexes.” For example, the preface to *The Complete Art of Polite Correspondence* (1857) states that the “volume is particularly recommended to...both sexes” (10). Similarly, *The Complete Letter Writer* (1811) and R.

Turner's *Parlour Letter-Writer* (1835) both include in their subtitles the following phrasing: *Containing Letters...Adapted to the Use of Both Sexes*. Complete letter-writer models were to be of "Use," then, by "both sexes."

Manuals not only made the same model romantic letters available for use across sex or gender, but also hinted at the possibility of uses involving gender-crossing adaptation. In the above subtitle, for instance, reference to "the Use of Both Sexes" is preceded by the action word, "Adapted." In terms of romantic epistolary address, learners in same-sex romantic relationships would be especially likely to pursue possibilities for using and adapting models regardless of how manuals marked the gender of letter writers and readers. In short, such learners could use the models made available by manuals, copying the models suited to their purposes, but adapt those models by crossing gender categories in order to compose same-sex romantic epistolary address.

Consider, for example, how such a hypothetical learner might use a model from *The Complete Letter Writer* (1811). Imagine this learner as a woman in a same-sex, cross-class relationship with another woman from a wealthier family. Much like *Chesterfield's* example of the hypothetical letter writer Jemima, who finds no model for how to accept Joseph "on condition that he will at once shave off his moustache" (7), our imagined learner searches the table of contents of *The Complete Letter Writer* for a model of how to address another woman. Though no such model is provided, she would find the letter, "From a Gentleman to a young Lady of a superior Fortune" (vi, 102). This model is intended for letter writers who are gentlemen, but because all complete letter-writer models are available for use and even adaptation by "both sexes," the hypothetical manual user could select this model from the table of contents. She could then use the model as a resource for inventing her own letter,

copying from the model yet adapting it by crossing gender in order to compose romantic epistolary address to “a young lady of superior Fortune.” Through this sort of model adaptation, gender-crossing forms of romantic epistolary address “can detach subjects from gender and sexual subjectivities that then reattach to queer effect” (Thomas 37).

Some manuals even suggested, as opposed to merely hinting at possibilities for, such detaching and reattaching, with its potentially queer effects for romantic epistolary address.<sup>41</sup> As already discussed, *Chesterfield's* is critical of how complete letter-writers provide models, claiming, “it is impossible to give...‘ready made’ letters” (8). But the same manual does provide what it calls “skeletons of love letters” (58a). These ready-made skeletons include an introductory paragraph and a closing paragraph to be copied, and readers are advised to “fill up between the bones to suit themselves” (58a). While most of the skeletons are written by men, presumably because romantic letter writing comes more naturally for women, and they thus need less instruction, “Nevertheless, some of the above skeletons, or parts of them, could be adapted by ladies into letters to their lovers, if they were hard up for ideas” (61a). *Chesterfield's* thus encourages learners to copy from and adapt models “to suit themselves,” including by crossing gendered subject positions for writers and readers. While most manuals did not directly encourage such gender crossing, all of them at least provided an extensive array of model romantic letters. These models were available for invention through copying and adaptation, rendering the genre conventions for romantic epistolary address subject to queer challenge through gender-crossing forms of address.



### 2.3.3 Letter Writing with Urgency and Intensity

Manual instruction also offered at least some invention resources for letter writers interested in romantic relations nonnormative with respect to the second genre convention. Most of the romantic letters included in manuals modeled how to write in keeping with, and even seeking to uphold, conventions for the exercise of restraint and “straight time” in the pacing of romantic epistolary exchange (Halberstam, *Queer Time*). Usually manuals only alluded to, but did not include within their pages, letters that were urgently timed and emotionally unrestrained. For instance, where *The Pocket Letter Writer* includes the model “From a lady to a gentleman, in answer to a dishonorable proposal,” it also includes “The gentleman’s apology,” but does not provide a model of the gentleman’s dishonorable proposal (93). There were, however, some exceptions.

Later in *The Pocket Letter Writer*’s chapter on romantic letters, the manual does include a series of three models that more ambiguously teach the genre conventions and cultural norms for the timing of romantic letters and relations: “From a gentleman to a young lady, proposing an elopement,” “The lady’s answer, consenting,” and “The lady’s answer refusing.” Not surprisingly, the third letter, modeling refusal, gets the final say. In keeping with the predominant manual instruction, the letter writer characterizes the proposal to elope as “repugnant to decorum, prudence, and female delicacy.” She insists that, while she feels “equally anxious” for their “union,” their “separation will be for a few months only,” so they must exercise restraint until “that period so long desired arrives” (103-4).

But the other two letters in this series offer manual users models for how to develop romantic epistolary exchange nonnormative in its urgency and intensity. One of these is a model response in which the writer *does* consent to the proposal of elopement. She writes, “Your letter has agitated me greatly; indeed I know not how to conduct myself.” Yet, rather than restraining herself and the pace of their relations, she concludes that, while “reason condemns the step you are so anxious for me to take...my heart decides in your favor,” praying “that nothing unpleasant may attend our rash expedition” (102-3). The other letter included in the series even models how to compose such a “rash” proposal. While the writer admits his proposal is of a “hazardous and delicate nature,” he implores the reader to respond “without delay,” in hopes that “every arrangement shall be made for the journey by to-morrow’s sunset” (102-3). He signs the letter, “Yours in anxious expectation” (103). At the very least, manual users copying from these two model letters would find language for making and accepting proposals to elope quickly, in defiance of the heteronormative temporality for proceeding cautiously from love, through courtship, to marriage. Moreover, even where manual users did not copy such language directly, the inclusion of these models would suggest to learners the possibility of letters in defiance of genre conventions and cultural norms for the pacing and intensity of romantic relations.

*Chesterfield’s* goes even further in suggesting this nonnormative epistolary possibility, by offering manual users resources for composing letters both urgent and intense. In keeping with the predominant manual instruction, where *Chesterfield’s* provides the model “From a young Lady, in answer to the proposal of a gentleman who had met her the previous Evening,” the manual does not also include the gentleman’s “precipitate” proposal (62-3). But *Chesterfield’s* does provide one exceptional letter characterized by an

un-recommended urgency and intensity. Titled “From a young Man, avowing a passion he had entertained for a length of time, and fearful of disclosing it,” this letter lacks restraint in its intensity of expression. Though the writer has entertained his passion “for a length of time,” he describes his process as one not of constant dispassionate study, but of constant obsession. He writes that he has “so long struggled with [his] feelings;” he “is continually agitated;” he has “been oppressed with a passion that has entirely superseded every other feeling of [his] heart;” and he is “unable to entertain but one idea, one thought, one feeling” (61). This writer obviously composes precisely the “outbreak of boyish passion” avoided in the more normatively paced *Chesterfield’s* model discussed in a previous section of this chapter (64). As though realizing the extent to which he is not exercising restraint, he writes that he is “throwing aside hesitation,” is “alarmed at [his] own boldness,” but still, will “lay open [his] whole heart.”

Of course, *Chesterfield’s* cautions, “we should not recommend this letter for imitation; but people *will* send such letters” (61, emphasis in original). In spite of such caution, the manual *did* provide this model. Again, the letter was marked as a model of what *not* to do. But, in the hands of at least some writers, the letter could be imitated to do precisely what manuals otherwise taught to avoid. Even in instructing people in normative restraint and temporality, manuals provided models for composing letters that threw aside caution and study.

### 2.3.4 Repurposing the Romantic Subgenre

Third and finally, through instruction in genre conventions for rhetorical purpose, complete letter-writers taught the romantic subgenre as teleologically oriented to heteronormative marriage; but again, manuals simultaneously rendered this same convention susceptible to queer repurposing. While the categorization of romantic letters into chapters titled “Love, Courtship, and Marriage” served to emphasize the normative purpose distinctive of the romantic subgenre, other aspects of manuals’ extensive use of categories came with queer effects. The categorization of relationships, subgenres, and purposes throughout manuals was beset by slippages creating openings for nonnormative repurposing.

Some of these openings were queer effects of baggy, catchall categories such as “miscellaneous” and “etc.” A number of manuals included an entire catchall chapter with “miscellaneous” in the title, in effect signaling that new model letters emerged in excess of prior or conventional categories of relationship and subgenre.<sup>42</sup> *How to Write Letters* (1886) even states as much directly, where offering a definition of “miscellaneous letters.” The manual defines miscellaneous letters as, “those letters of an accidental or unusual character, to which our complicated relations to society give rise; in short, all letters not elsewhere classified” (Westlake 13). That the “complicated relations to society” which “give rise” to “unusual” letters could include complicated romantic relations and unusual romantic letters is indicated in *Chesterfield’s* use of another catchall category, “etc.” In *Chesterfield’s*, this catchall is added to its unusual title for a chapter on romantic letters: “Love, Courtship, Marriage, etc.” (53). This open-ended extension to the romantic chapter

title more common throughout complete letter-writers reveals the inability for conventional categories of relationship and subgenre to ever be complete—as well as the likelihood that actual romantic purposes would exceed manual attempts to categorize.

Throughout manuals, the use of catchalls such as “etc.” and “miscellaneous” even suggested that manual users, like textbook makers, may need to break with conventional categories in order to adapt models when inventing “unusual” romantic letters. This opening to adapt models across subgenre categories could also give way to related adaptations for rhetorical purposes in defiance of the normative *telos* for romantic relations. One model exceptionally susceptible to adaptation through queer repurposing is “Female Ingenuity,” a cryptogram presented in at least one edition of *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832).<sup>43</sup> This letter’s title is unusual in that, rather than clearly describing a rhetorical situation, the title hints at more ambiguous purposes, of ingenuity. Manual users selecting this model for adaptation would find it particularly useful for pursuing queer romantic purposes.

The model cryptogram is preceded by an explanation that, “A young lady, newly married, being obliged to show to her husband all the letters she wrote, sent the following to an intimate friend” (178; see Figure 2). Importantly, this is a letter to a friend *about* romantic relations, rather than one written *within* a romantic relation. It is also a letter written by an already married person, rather than for the purposes of pursuing marriage. The model’s title and preceding explanation acknowledge explicitly the gendered power dynamics at work within nineteenth-century marriage and, more implicitly, how such dynamics constitute a rhetorical situation in which women may desire ingenious ways of subverting norms. The model is followed by directions for reading cryptogram letters: “The

key to the above letter is to read the first and then every alternate line only" (179; see Figure 3).

A young lady, newly married, being obliged to show to her husband all the letters she wrote, sent the following to an intimate friend.

"I cannot be satisfied, my dearest friend ; blest as I am in the matrimonial state, unless I pour into your friendly bosom, which has ever been in unison with mine, the various sensations which swell with the liveliest emotions of pleasure, my almost bursting heart. I tell you my dear husband is the most amiable of men. I have now been married seven weeks, and have never found the least reason to repent the day that joined us. My husband is

Figure 2. Opening to model cryptogram from *The Fashionable American Letter Writer*.

of the man whose name I bear. To say all in one word, my dear ——, and to crown the whole, my former gallant lover is now my indulgent husband, my fondness is returned, and I might have had a Prince, without the felicity I find in him. Adieu; may you be as blest as I am unable to wish that I could be more happy."

✍ The key to the above letter is to read the first and then every alternate line only.

Figure 3. Closing to model cryptogram from *The Fashionable American Letter Writer*.

Not decoded, the letter first reads as praise for the writer's husband and her life with him. Yet in following the cryptogram's instructions, readers discover that the letter, if literally read between the lines, complains about the marriage and expresses desire for a former lover. For instance, the letter first seems to say that the writer is "blest...in the matrimonial state," as her "husband is the most amiable of men," and she has "never found the least reason to / repent the day that joined" them. But, once decoded, the letter indicates the writer does "repent" her marriage. By the first account, her "former gallant lover / is now [her] indulgent husband," whereas in the second decoded account, the former lover "is returned," and she grieves that she "might have had / ... / him" rather than her husband. In the first account, the writer is "un- / able to wish that [she] could be more / happy." In the second, she is "un- / ... / happy."

While this woman writes about and participates in marriage, her letter suggests purposes that surpass the normative marriage *telos* taught by manual culture. She subverts norms for marriage by composing a letter with a less teleological rhetorical purpose: instead of using the letter to pursue the ends of marriage, she composes intercourse more mischievously navigating genre conventions and cultural norms. This model cryptogram would be instructive not only for married women, but for any letter writers whose romantic relations were not entirely in keeping with heteronormativity, whose purposes were not met by the conventional genre of the romantic letter. Taken together, manual inclusion of this cryptogram along with "miscellaneous" letters and even "etc." romantic letters, suggests that even the "ends [one] may have" for romantic letters was subject to the "queer effects" of repurposing across conventional categories of genre and to nonnormative relational ends (C. Miller 165; Thomas 36-7).

Thus, while complete letter-writer manuals instructed readers to compose romantic letters by writing from the heart in keeping with generic conventions for gendered epistolary address, pacing and restraint of exchange, and rhetorical purpose, these manuals also taught rhetorical strategies of invention with queer effects. Given the instruction in invention through copying and adapting models of language written from others' hearts, manual users may have challenged generic conventions by composing gender-crossing address, exchanging letters with urgency and intensity, and repurposing the romantic subgenre to nonnormative ends. Through my analysis of instruction in genre conventions, cultural norms, and invention strategies specific to the romantic subgenre, I have focused thus far on letter-writing instruction as a form of rhetorical education for *romantic* engagement. But, as we shall see, this instruction was not without *civic* implications.

#### **2.4 MODEL "AMERICANS": MANUALS AS NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROJECT**

Instruction in romantic epistolary rhetoric held implications for civic life in that complete letter-writers taught everyday people how to rhetorically participate in specifically "American" life, romantic and otherwise. Indeed, manuals worked to distinguish their instruction from "English" and "savage" cultures of letter writing and instruction; manuals emphasized their model letters were not "English," but "American" and "civilized" (Bannet; *Complete American*; *Complete Art*; Shields).<sup>44</sup> These manuals thus taught how model "American" citizens were to rhetorically participate in the everyday life of the nation through letter writing. To illustrate the relationship between this instruction in civic



participation and my focus on romantic engagement, I now situate manual chapters on romantic letters within the broader pedagogical context of how manual prefaces and introductions presented the books as a national educational project. I begin with an emphasis on how manuals figured national unity as an ideal achieved through letter writing in two ways: first, across social differences through letter writing and letter-writing instruction as universal, and second, across geographic distances through letter writing as a traveling rhetorical practice. I then turn to Kenneth Burke's theory of the "rhetoric of courtship" to articulate how manuals linked this ideal of national union to their instruction in the heteronormative forms of romantic union already considered throughout this chapter. In linking romantic unity to national ideals, I argue, manuals reinforced heteronormative union through romantic letter writing.

#### **2.4.1 Unity across Difference through Universal Instruction**

As a national educational project, manuals first taught that model "Americans" achieved national unity across differences of social class through letter writing as a universal rhetorical practice. Characteristic of manuals framing letter writing as universally practiced regardless of social difference is R. Turner's *The Parlour Letter-Writer*. Turner speaks first to the importance of letter writing among "the most distinguished actors on the great stage of life," but continues that, "The same general principle is applied in the humbler walks of life, and the merchant, farmer, and mechanic, the father and mother, son and daughter—all *the situations and relations of life* acknowledge certain general forms and modes of written address, resulting from their mutual relations which are highly important to be

understood” (iii, my emphasis). While of course not using contemporary language for difference, Turner recognizes social differences between those “most distinguished” in occupation and status, and those “in the more humbler walks of life.” Florence Hartley’s *The Ladies’ Book of Etiquette* [1860] similarly characterizes letter writing as a practice embracing “all subjects and all classes...and every relation in which one person can stand to another” (118). Although acknowledging social differences, which would limit who writes to whom, Hartley and Turner emphasize “mutual relations” rather than separation, figuring letter writing as universally practiced by “all classes,” in “all the situations...of life,” with the potential to unite across those classes.

Manuals taught that model “Americans” achieved national unity across social difference not only through letter writing as a universally shared rhetorical practice, but also through letter-writing instruction as a universal rhetorical education. Pointing to a “universal need and craving for...intercourse” through letter writing, *Frost’s* states it “is carefully prepared to meet the wants of the large class of individuals,” who “will shrink from attempting to wield a pen, and fear that their own want of practice will cause them to make blunders that will excite the ridicule of their correspondent” (Shields 13). Hartley makes quite explicit the link between practice and education that is here only implied. Hartley explains, there is “no station, high or low, where the necessity for correspondence is not felt: no person young or old, who does not, at some time, write, cause to be written, and receive letters” (116). For this reason, “There is *no branch of education called so universally into requisition as the art of letter writing*” (116, my emphasis). Rather than questioning social difference in the form of hierarchical distinctions by station or age, Hartley concludes that these differences “universally” necessitate instruction in letter

writing. In this sense, both letter writing and letter-writing instruction are universal: needed and used and open to all.

Manuals even claimed this vision of letter-writing instruction as universal was distinctive of the U.S. as a nation. *Frost's* goes so far as to exclaim that, "Letter writing in an enlightened and educated country like the United States, should be an accomplishment universally understood and practiced" (15). While this U.S. exceptionalism of course calls for skepticism, it remains important, on the one hand, to notice how prefaces and introductions frame manuals as furthering an educational project that is national, that is universal in uniting the entire country across social difference, with this sort of universality distinctive of the nation itself.

On the other hand, it is equally important to keep in mind that such framing is not entirely distinctive of complete letter-writer manuals. Rather, it is characteristic of a broader culture of both letter writing and education. As recounted in Chapter 1, public literacy instruction expanded over the course of the nineteenth century, so as to reach a wider range of students, although forms of education remained "stratified" (Carr, Carr, and Schultz 4-5, 10-11). The consequence for letter writing, again, was "that the pervasive if often marginal literacy of the population (itself the reflection of a democratic republic's recognition of the necessity of common schools)...made writing a resource on which a large portion of the population could draw in attempting to preserve communications over distance" (Decker 11; see also Zboray and Zboray, *Everyday*). Letter writing is a practice that has been available in at least some way to at least some people of most social groups throughout the history of the U.S. (Decker 4, 14, 60). It was in this educational and

historical context that manuals promised national unity could be achieved across social difference through shared practices of letter writing and letter-writing instruction.

#### **2.4.2 Unity across Distance through Traveling Practices**

Second, manuals taught that model “Americans” achieved national unity through letter writing as a rhetorical practice that could travel across geographic distance. Of course, letter writing has long been understood as a traveling practice. The question of the letter’s travel across distance was central in the commonplace definition of the genre already introduced.<sup>45</sup> As *The Useful Letter Writer* states, copying almost word for word from Hugh Blair’s definition, the letter “becomes a distinct species of composition...when it is a conversation carried on upon paper between friends *at a distance*” (xxii, my emphasis).<sup>46</sup>

While this general definition of the letter genre precedes its iterations within nineteenth-century manuals, William Decker’s scholarship on letter writing delineates how the nineteenth-century U.S. context is particularly marked by physical separation across vast geographic distances, because of how migration and mobility have characterized the colonization of the Americas, including what became the U.S. He writes, “distance from spouses, family members, and friends has always been a common experience given the unprecedented mobility of the population” (10). There are important distinctions between kinds of distance, of course, especially between relatively voluntary migration and those separations forced by poverty, removal, and enslavement. In manuals, the types of separation most emphasized are those necessitated by employment or, to a lesser extent, schooling. Model titles include, for instance, “From a servant in New York to her parents in

the Country,” “From a merchant at St. Thomas, to a brother in New-York desiring him to sell some goods and purchase others,” and “From a Mother, in Town, to her Daughter, at a Boarding School in the Country” (*Pocket; New Parlor; Complete Letter*). It was in this distinctly nineteenth-century U.S. context, variously defined by “space, settlement, separation, and reunion,” that manual culture promised those separated by geographic distance could reunite through the letter.<sup>47</sup>

To be clear, these promises of unity were national ones. After making the claim about “an enlightened and educated country like the United States,” *Frost’s* describes the recurring cultural and rhetorical situations of nineteenth-century U.S. life that render the letter genre so crucial to national unity:

It is a rare exception *in our nation* when families remain together after the children have arrived at years of maturity. One marries and goes hundreds of miles from her parents, another finds a business opening in a distant city; one child is placed at a far away boarding school; one goes to college; in fact, *in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred*, the family is scattered. (Shields 13, emphasis added)

The letter, *Frost’s* explains, is “the link to bind these hearts closely together,” especially in a national context so frequently (“ninety-nine” percent of the time) marked by scattering and separation across geographic distance. Similarly, in Hartley’s representation of letter-writing instruction as a universal means to national unity, she continues that, “From the President in his official capacity, with the busy pens of secretaries constantly employed in this branch of service, to the Irish laborer who, unable to guide a pen, writes, also by proxy, to his kinsfolks [sic] across the wide ocean; all, at some time, feel the desire to transmit

some message...by letter" (116). Of course the President's "official" letters are a matter of national unity. Just as distinctive of the nation, though, was the preponderance of letter-writing immigrants such as "the Irish laborer." In this sense, the letter genre is promised as a means to unity for a nation with many recent immigrants. Manuals thus framed the letter genre as a traveling rhetorical practice that could enable forms of unity fitting for the nineteenth-century U.S.

Nor was such framing unique to complete letter-writer manuals. Reformers of the U.S. Post Office similarly claimed letter writing was a means to national unity. As literary historian Elizabeth Hewitt argues, "From the establishment of the Post Office Act of 1792 to Southern Secession (and the subsequent establishment of a Confederate postal system) in 1861, we discover an insistent rhetoric that depicts American letter-writing as the means by which both national and familiar consensus are to be established" (7). One nineteenth-century postal reformer insisted, for instance, "a [reformed] post-office...would keep alive affections and friendship which now die out in distance; it would, in short, be a *new bond of union*'; only the 'free and frequent communication by mail' ...can...keep bright the chain of affection between the scattered families...and keep them united" (emphasis in Hewitt 7). Similarly asserting the potential for national unity across distance through the U.S. Post Office, an 1841 postage committee claimed, "Our Post Office system...is one of the most powerful of the influences which hold our Union together, and keep these States from falling apart" (7). Postal reformers were relatively successful in advancing such arguments: as indicated in Chapter 1, Congress' Postal Acts in 1845 and 1851 reformed the Post Office by lowering the cost of sending letters (Gaul and Harris 9; Schultz 111).<sup>48</sup> Postal reformers, like the national educational project of complete letter-writers, represented the

letter genre as a traveling practice—its travel made possible by a national postal system, and making possible national unity across geographic distance.

### **2.4.3 National and Romantic Union through the Rhetoric of Courtship**

This manual instruction emphasizing national union—across differences through letter writing and letter-writing instruction as universal, and across distances through letter writing as a traveling practice—was linked to instruction in romantic union. Helpful for articulating these links between national and romantic union is Burke’s theory of the “rhetoric of courtship.” Burke theorizes the rhetoric of courtship, in both a metaphoric and a literal sense, as a form of identification. For Burke, identification is a rhetorical process through which one identifies or is made “consubstantial” with another, though one is “both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another.” This process is “compensatory” to the “division” that is an inevitable reality of human life; there would be “no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” if they “were not apart from one another” (*Rhetoric* 20-22). As a type of identification, Burke defines the rhetoric of courtship, metaphoric and literal, as “the use of suasive devices for the transcending of social estrangement” (208). In Burke’s metaphoric sense, the rhetoric of courtship is for identification within communication that requires “transcending...social estrangement” between different social classes (208). In his literal sense, the rhetoric of courtship is for transcending estrangement within the process of romantic courting. This estrangement may include the “mystery” involved in any courtship, though Burke focuses especially on

the social mystery between “different kinds of beings,” including differently sexed or gendered beings, who court each other (208-9).<sup>49</sup>

The connection Burke makes between metaphoric and literal courtship is productive for exploring how manuals linked the achievement of unity, both national and romantic, through a shared logic. According to this logic, one may attempt to transcend differences and estrangement of any kind, whether social or romantic or both, through rhetorical practice and education. Individuals may seek to transcend differences and estrangement person-to-person, through universal and traveling rhetorical practices such as letter writing; by extension, a culture may seek to transcend differences and estrangement through widely available rhetorical education that teaches the practice of letter writing, including romantic letter writing, to all.<sup>50</sup> Through these forms of metaphoric and literal rhetoric of courtship, manuals promised, both national and romantic union could be achieved.

I showed first how manuals idealized national union as achieved through universal letter-writing practices and instruction. Here manuals taught a metaphoric rhetoric of courtship, for transcending social differences. But this promise of a means to national unity also resonates with manual instruction in chapters focused on the literal rhetoric of courtship through romantic letter writing. Manuals framed not only letter-writing instruction and practice in general, but also romantic letter-writing instruction and practice in particular, as universal means for uniting across social differences. The now familiar titles to models suggest the romantic letter’s potential, however limited, to enable romantic unity across at least some class differences: “From a Gentleman to a young Lady of superior Fortune,” “Letter from a young Tradesman to a Gentleman, desiring Permission



to visit his Daughter,” and “Letter from the same to the young Lady, by permission of the Father” (*Complete Letter*). In some cases, the commentary framing such common model titles also highlighted their intended universality. *North’s Book of Love-Letters*, for instance, characterizes its models as “120 Specimen Letters, suitable for Lovers of any age and condition and under all circumstances” (qtd. in Mahoney 414, emphasis added). Manuals taught that the literal rhetoric of courtship—the heteronormative union of marriage achieved through the subgenre of the romantic letter—was linked to the metaphoric rhetoric of courtship—the national union achieved through universal letters and letter-writing instruction.

I showed second how manuals idealized national union as achieved through the letter as a rhetorical practice that could travel. Here too, manuals taught a metaphoric rhetoric of courtship, in this case for enabling identification across the separation of geographic distance. This promise of national union was also linked to the romantic union pursued through the specifically romantic subgenre of the letter, which also united people across geographic distances. Other titles to model romantic letters include, for example, “From a young man commencing business in Boston, to his sweetheart in the country,” “From a young man, commencing business in New-York, to his intended wife in the country,” and “From a gentleman abroad, to his wife in America” (*Pocket* xiii-xvi). In a romantic model from another manual, “From the gentleman, after his arrival in New-York, to the lady in the country,” the writer begins, “My Dear, For so I must now call you: I arrived here last night, and embrace the opportunity of writing” (*Useful* 117). After a lengthy description of New York, the gentleman returns to his romantic purposes, demonstrating his intention that this “writing” will enable romantic unity in spite of the current

geographic separation from the lady. He writes, “As soon as I have settled my affairs here...I intend [sic] going to Windsor to visit my daughters at the boarding-school, and then thence hasten to your brother’s, when I hope that *union* will take place that must terminate only with our lives” (118, emphasis added). This manual model represents the romantic letter as uniting the man and women across the distance separating them, until they may be united through heteronormative marriage.

Manuals thus taught simultaneously a metaphoric rhetoric of courtship—in which social class differences were transcended through a national unity enacted via universal letter writing and instruction—and a literal rhetoric of courtship—in which gender differences were transcended through a romantic unity similarly enacted. Through this national educational project, model “Americans” were taught cultural ideals for rhetorical participation in both civic and romantic life. This linking of ideals for romantic and national union served to reinforce the cultural norms and genre conventions taught for romantic letters and relations. As we have seen, genre instruction in the romantic letter taught conventions for achieving the end of romantic union—not just any form of romantic union, or even any form of romantic union across gender differences, but a particular form of heteronormative romantic union deemed culturally appropriate within the nineteenth-century U.S.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In my first case study of rhetorical education for romantic engagement, I have begun with complete letter-writer manuals because they are the sources most obviously teaching romantic letter writing as well as most widely available to everyday people in the nineteenth-century U.S. Linking national and romantic unity as ideals, and figuring both as achievable through letter-writing practice and instruction, manuals used model letters to instruct nineteenth-century people in how to be model “Americans,” even in the supposedly private realm of their romantic lives. While teaching the genre conventions for composing romantic letters, manuals embedded a heteronormative conception of romantic relations, of the forms of romantic union deemed appropriately in service of national union in the U.S. But these same manuals, in their attempt to instruct through modeling, taught invention strategies of copying and adaptation that rendered learners model adapters as well. Thus equipped with invention strategies, as well as model romantic letters, particularly inventive adapters could learn and develop queer means for composing letters and relations that negotiated, subverted, and even defied genre conventions and cultural norms. As Chapter 3 will show, this is precisely what some romantic letter writers did.

### **3.0 “WHAT A PLEASURE IT WOULD BE...TO ADDRESS YOU *MY HUSBAND*”: ADDIE BROWN & REBECCA PRIMUS’ RHETORICAL PRACTICES, 1859-1868**

Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus were writers who composed romantic letters and relations in defiance of cultural norms and generic conventions. Both freeborn African-American women, Brown and Primus maintained a same-sex, cross-class romantic correspondence before, during, and after the Civil War. In examining their romantic epistolary exchange, I turn attention from rhetorical *education* for romantic engagement through complete letter-writer manuals, to rhetorical *practices* of romantic engagement within letters. This shift to actual correspondence is important for considering how romantic letters were not only rhetorically learned through genre instruction, but also rhetorically crafted in practice.

The Brown-Primus correspondence in particular is ideal as a case study for three reasons. First, their correspondence enables study of how writers whose same-sex romantic relations were not modeled in the popular manuals learned to use the widely taught genre conventions and invention strategies when crafting romantic letters. Second, examination of Brown and Primus’ writing enriches my account of the sources from which everyday people learned to rhetorically participate in romantic relations. There is no indication Brown and Primus consulted the complete letter-writer manuals discussed in Chapter 2. But, as Brown avidly pursued opportunities for self-education, she wrote about

and drew “the language of the heart” from many other types of sources when composing her romantic letters to Primus. Third, the Brown-Primus correspondence sheds light on the civic implications of romantic participation because, as African-American women in a same-sex relationship, Brown and Primus were especially likely to challenge the forms of romantic and national union idealized by manuals.

I begin Chapter 3 by introducing further the Brown-Primus correspondence. I then analyze their letters with an emphasis on the same three generic conventions—for romantic epistolary address, dating, and purpose—taught by manuals and examined in Chapter 2. I show how Brown and Primus learned and used these conventions, but challenged the normative gendering, pacing, and *telos* embedded within the genre instruction of complete letter-writer manuals. Next I consider Brown’s invention strategies in relation to the paradoxical manual instruction to write “from the heart.” In crafting romantic letters to Primus, Brown used invention strategies of copying and adapting existing texts. Rather than drawing on the models in complete letter-writers, however, Brown crossed generic lines in order to compose with and about language she found in literary texts such as poetry and the novel. Finally, I turn to the civic implications of Brown and Primus’ romantic epistolary exchange. I argue they used letter writing to develop sociopolitical critiques of precisely those forms of union, both romantic and national, which were so idealized by complete letter-writer manuals yet unavailable to Brown and Primus as African-American women.

### 3.1 THE BROWN-PRIMUS CORRESPONDENCE

Primus was born in 1836 to a middle class family that was prominent in the African-American community of Hartford, Connecticut (Griffin 10). Primus' father worked as a grocery clerk, her mother sometimes took in seamstress work, and they owned their family home. Primus was trained as a schoolteacher. While less is known about Brown's family, she was born in 1841 and spent her early years in Philadelphia. Brown worked primarily as a domestic in multiple locations across New York and Connecticut (10-12). Brown and Primus met in Hartford. Although it is unclear exactly how they met, one possibility is that Brown was a boarder with the Primus family, which helped young black women find work. What is clear, as African-American studies scholar Farah Griffin notes, is that Brown "was already part of the Primus family circle" by the time her letters to Rebecca Primus begin (18).

The Primus family circle was active within Hartford's religious, educational, and civic organizations. These organizations included two black churches, the Zion Methodist Church and the Talcott Street Congregational Church, "a site of abolitionist meetings and organizing" where activist pastor James Pennington served as minister. Also significant within the African-American community were "African schools, where Pennington and the essayist Ann Plato had been teachers," and social and civic organizations such as the Hartford Freedman's Aid Society and Prince Hall Masonic Lodge (12-3). Brown and Primus both were members of this "black community committed to racial uplift" (5, 10). Being from a family prominent in the community, Primus especially "worshipped in, was

educated in, and was employed by black institutions with an explicit political focus—that of black freedom and uplift” (12).

Most significantly, Primus participated in the cause of self-education for racial uplift through her work with the Hartford Freedmen’s Aid Society.<sup>51</sup> Following the Civil War, she went south to Royal Oak, Maryland, where she helped the Society start a school for newly freed slaves. Primus’ letters articulate the political purposes of this work.<sup>52</sup> In one letter to her family, Primus reports that she “rec’d a very friendly letter from Mr. Burton,” who said Primus’ “letters are read at their [the Society] meetings & they are just what they need to keep up the interest in the cause” (February 16, 1867). Clarifying the goals of the cause, Primus quotes Burton:

He adds ‘I do not know any sort of labor in the world more interesting than this teaching the Freedmen at the South...at the present rate of work we shall in a few years have so many of them taught to read, that all of the Andrew Johnsons in Creation will not be equal to the job of keeping them down in the dirt under the white man’s heel.’ (February 16, 1867)<sup>53</sup>

In addition to writing such letters, Primus also spoke about the cause of self-education for racial uplift. For instance, in the written version of a speech she delivered at a Society meeting, she describes collaboration with another organization, the Baltimore Association, which was “formed solely for the moral and educational improvement of the col’d. people of that state” (September 1, 1867). Educated as a schoolteacher, Primus was clear about her role in this “educational improvement,” and her participation in self-education for racial uplift was supported by a number of civic organizations.<sup>54</sup>

Brown in contrast had little access to formal education, but as an everyday learner, she aggressively pursued opportunities for self-education. As Griffin writes in her edited collection of Brown and Primus' romantic letters, Brown's "letters reveal the lively...voice of a woman who keeps up with current events and seems to read more books than does her more educated friend. As time passes, Addie's...writing improves, and she takes advantage of every opportunity to improve herself and her station in life" (79). Brown articulates her views on education in a letter to Primus that references Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this letter, Brown admiringly describes meeting someone who "is very much of a Lady very much accomplished" (June 20, 1866). Brown recounts how the "Lady," after being away from home to work as a bookkeeper, tried to return, but "the Miss. River was frozen and she had to cross it." The lady doubted she could cross, until she imagined "how grand it would be to handed it down from generation to generation that she had to walk on the *ice* and also thought of Eliza in Uncle Tim Cabin."<sup>55</sup> Commenting on the lady's story, Brown writes, "It beautiful to hear her relate it her language is superb. I often think when people has a chance to have a Education why will they throw it away they have lost golden opportunities." Brown does not intend to "throw...away" any chances or opportunities for self-education through reading and letter writing.

While Brown's pursuit of self-education was not explicitly directed to collective racial uplift in the way Primus' work with the Hartford Freedmen's Aid Society was, Brown did resist racism as it played out in her daily life. She insisted on being paid for her work as a domestic, refused to return to a church with segregated seating, declined an invitation to a concert that included a minstrel show, participated in fundraising activities on behalf of fugitives who had escaped slavery, and attended lectures, meetings, and debates focused on



racial politics (January 30, 1862; January 21, 1866; February 25, 1866; May 19, 1867). As Griffin introduces both Brown and Primus, they were “women who loved each other romantically and who were no less committed (in fact, were more committed than most) to the struggle for black freedom and progress” (7).

To examine the Brown-Primus correspondence, including portions of letters not contained in Griffin’s necessarily condensed collection, I conducted primary archival research at the Connecticut Historical Society. Brown’s romantic letters to Primus begin in 1859. Most of these letters were written while the women were separated by work, whether because Brown left Hartford to find employment as a domestic, or because Primus left to teach in the school she helped start. The letters cease in 1868, after Brown married Joseph Tines. Brown died shortly after, in 1870 (235), and Primus then married Charles Thomas at some point between 1872 and 1874 (White, “Rebecca” 281). Primus saved letters from Brown until her own death in 1932 (284). Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, only Brown’s half of the romantic exchange was saved. However, it is possible to infer Primus’ participation because Brown generally responded to Primus in an explicit way, repeating back an understanding of what Primus had written and then composing a response (Beeching; Griffin; Hansen, “No”). In addition, the envelopes that held Brown’s letters were saved, with some of Primus’ writing on the outside of them. As far as I know, prior studies have yet to account for these envelopes, perhaps because they were separated from the letters during early archival processing. Finally, letters from Primus to her family are extant. I cite these letters and Primus’ notations on envelopes where relevant to my analysis of her and Brown’s romantic epistolary exchange.

Also of note with respect to the primary materials is the matter of spelling, punctuation, and transcription. Brown's spelling and punctuation reveal her lack of access to formal schooling in textual conventions. But it is important to keep in mind that those conventions for spelling and punctuation were less standardized in the nineteenth century. In my transcriptions of the letters, I have maintained spelling and punctuation, as well capitalization and underlining, as they appear in the originals. Where the original language remains unclear, I have bracketed my best estimations or question marks. Where language is scribbled out, I have used the overstrike function. My choice to transcribe in keeping with the original letters does mean that Brown's may be difficult to read, particularly because she so rarely uses punctuation, especially early in the correspondence. Yet I make this choice, mainly out of respect for what Brown learned and accomplished rhetorically in spite of her limited access to formal education. I also make this choice in order to be transparent about my own uncertainties in attempting to understand certain portions of her letters. That said, readers who prefer edited letters can find them in Griffin's collection.

My case study of Brown and Primus' romantic letters is the first within the field of rhetoric and composition. But their rich and extensive correspondence has garnered the attention of historians, including those interested in sexuality and nineteenth-century romantic friendship between women.<sup>56</sup> Most relevant to my study is how Griffin and historical sociologist Karen Hansen interpret the letters in order to characterize the nature of Brown and Primus' relationship and consider whether it was erotic as well as romantic.<sup>57</sup> Griffin, who shows equal interest in Brown and Primus' commitments to "both each other and black liberation," offers that, "If we are to believe Addie's letters, her relationship with Rebecca was not simply an affectionate 'friendship' or sisterhood. Several

of Addie's letters have fairly explicit references to erotic interactions between herself and Rebecca" (5-6).<sup>58</sup>

Like Griffin, Hansen highlights these explicit references to erotic interactions.<sup>59</sup> In "No Kisses Is Like Youres': An Erotic Friendship between Two African-American Women during the Mid-Nineteenth Century," Hansen intervenes in scholarly debates about romantic friendship by challenging the romantic friendship thesis—that women involved in romantic friendships, while using the language of romantic love to express strong feelings, were not engaged in erotic or sexual relationships. Hansen argues instead that, "Indisputably, Addie and Rebecca had a romantic friendship, one common to nineteenth-century womanhood. However, they also indulged in an erotic sensuality" (186). One of moments in the letters that led Hansen to thus interpret their relationship is "an explicit discussion of a sexual encounter between Addie and a white woman" (180). In that discussion, Brown "revealed a sexual practice" that Hansen terms "'bosom sex'" (185-6). As Hansen explains, Brown writes that she did not allow the white woman she slept with full access to her breasts, and Brown's later letters seem to respond to Primus' jealous reactions and inquiries (186). Across the letters, "'Bosom talk' appears everywhere," with Brown referencing bosoms in association with physical longing and sensuality (187). As Hansen details, Brown "expressed her longing for Rebecca by evoking the image of Rebecca's bosom," "often spoke of exchanging caresses, kisses, and hugs, and of sharing a bed," "repeatedly compared her feelings toward Rebecca to those between women and men," and "delighted in the fantasy of marriage to Rebecca" (186-7). Read alongside the primary letters, Hansen's analysis is convincing in its conclusion that Brown and Primus' relationship was "an explicitly erotic—as distinct from romantic—friendship" (184).

I do not disagree with Hansen and Griffin's interpretation of the Brown-Primus correspondence. But, as a historian of rhetoric of writing instruction, I suggest another approach to reading the correspondence. Already in Chapter 1, I introduced the interpretive difficulty facing historians of sexuality and nineteenth-century romantic friendship: the difficulty of ascertaining based on letters (or diaries) whether a given writer not only made use of romantic language, but also engaged in same-sex erotic and sexual relations. Rather than offer another reading of the Brown-Primus correspondence that characterizes the nature of their romantic relations by trying to determine their erotic practices and what they did outside of the letters, I focus on their rhetorical practices and what they did in the letters themselves. I pursue an approach to reading romantic letters not as evidence of past identities or relations, but as learned and crafted rhetorical practices. Here, in Chapter 3, I ask, how was romantic epistolary rhetoric learned and crafted even by letter writers whose same-sex romantic relations were not modeled in the genre instruction of complete letter-writer manuals?

### **3.2 QUEERING GENRE CONVENTIONS WITHIN SAME-SEX ROMANTIC EPISTOLARY EXCHANGE**

As we saw in Chapter 2, complete letter-writer manuals that taught conventions for the romantic letter genre embedded a heteronormative conception of romantic relations. Manuals taught romantic epistolary address as heteronormatively gendered, they taught exchange as restrained in pace and intensity, and they taught the rhetorical purpose of the

letter as oriented to a marriage *telos*. Yet these same generic conventions were susceptible to queer subversions. In Chapter 2 I identified *potential* epistolary subversions by hypothetical learners. Now in Chapter 3 I analyze how Brown and Primus *actually* queered genre conventions within their letter writing. Considering the same three genre conventions, I argue that Brown and Primus learned and used these generic conventions, yet queered both genre conventions and cultural norms by addressing each other across normative categories of gender and relationship, pursuing their romantic exchange with urgency and intensity, and repurposing their romantic letters to nonnormative erotic and even political ends.

### **3.2.1 Romantic Address across Categories of Gender and Relationship**

To some extent, Brown and Primus learned and used the genre conventions for epistolary address as taught by complete letter-writer manuals. In addressing Primus, Brown began her letters with a left-aligned salutation line, positioned just below the right-aligned date and above the body of the letter. Also in keeping with conventions for address, Brown often used the words “My” and “Dear” within the salutation line. But Brown and Primus obviously defied conventions for specifically romantic forms of address. Whereas manuals taught romantic epistolary address as marked by gender difference, Brown composed romantic epistolary address to another woman. Primus’ notations on envelopes, of when she received and responded to Brown’s letters, confirm that she affirmed that same-sex romantic address with response. Yet more interesting is how, in the absence of generic conventions for how exactly one woman was to address another in a romantic letter,

Brown and Primus negotiated alternative forms of address that crossed both the categories of gender and the categories of relationship emphasized by manuals.

Brown's salutation lines include the following category-crossing terms of address: my dearly adopted sister, my ever dear friend, my dear & dearest Rebecca, my darling friend, my loving friend, my beloved Rebecca, my dearest & most affec[tionate] friend, my only dear & loving friend. These terms of address suggest a same-sex relation that is familial (these are sisters, even adopted sisters), *and* that is friendship (these are friends), *and* that is romantic (these sister-like friends are not only dear, but also dearest; darling, loved, beloved, affectionate; only, most, and ever). These terms cross not only the normative gendering of romantic epistolary address, but also the very categories of relationship that manuals used in separating chapters on familial and friendship letters from chapters on romantic letters.

Brown and Primus wrestled with generic conventions for address through further negotiation of these terms within the bodies of their letters. Consider, for instance, their negotiation of the epistolary address "sister." In an 1862 letter, Brown seemingly responds to Primus' request to be addressed as "my *sister*":

now My Dearest here is nex question you ask a favor and that is this too *call*  
you my *sister* and then you ask me if it will be agreeable O My Darling Darling  
you know it would it has been my wish for sometime I dare not ask My Dear I  
cannot find words to express my feeling toward you is all I can say I will  
address you as such. (March 1862)

Although Brown "cannot find words to express [her] feeling toward" Primus, Brown not only finds it "agreeable," but also insists it is her own "wish," that she "address" Primus as

“sister.” Later, just before closing the letter, Brown in turn asks Primus, “my Dear will you in your nexce address me by my new title...don’t forget.” Keeping the agreement, Brown addresses Primus as “sister”—not “friend”—in the salutation lines of subsequent letters.

Still, conversation continued as Brown and Primus struggled with the terms of address for their relationship and what those terms meant. Even in the 1862 letter, Brown states that she “cannot find words to express” her feelings, suggesting the term “sister” does not quite do it. Then, four years later, Brown assures Primus, “you have been to me more then any living soul has been or ever will be you have been more to me then a *friend* or *Sister*” (April 10, 1866). Brown begins the next line with the address “My Idol Sister,” a variation of which she uses in another letter, but never in a salutation line (June 25, 1861). Yet in closing the letter, Brown laments, “I wish that I could express my feelings to you,” and signs the letter, “Sister Addie” (April 10, 1866). Again, Brown agrees to use the address “sister” within the salutation line, and sometimes even the signature line, but within the body of her letters, she negotiates with Primus over the meaning of that address. Within these negotiations, Brown makes grand romantic claims about Primus being “more then any living soul has been or ever will be,” insisting that Primus is “more” than a sister, “more” than a friend. At the same time, Brown asserts that the terms of address available within their negotiations do not “express” her feelings.

Brown fantasizes about another term of address that might better express her feelings: “husband.” In a letter with the salutation “My Truest & Only Dear Sister,” Brown begins the body of her letter with this line: “What a pleasure it would be to me to address you *My Husband*” (November 16, 1865; see Figure 4). “Husband” is certainly an address in defiance of the genre conventions for letters between women. It defies heteronormative

genre conventions by crossing categories of both relationship and gender: a woman writer addresses a woman reader not only romantically, but with the term “husband”—and, at the same time, with the term “sister.” Yet Brown does not entirely defy genre conventions. In fact, she seems hyperaware that the address “husband,” whatever she may write about it within the body of her letter, does not belong in the salutation line. She does not use the term there and, where she does, she also uses the conditional tense (“What a pleasure it *would* be”). Brown keeps her agreement, not only with the conventions of the genre, but also with Primus, by continuing with the salutation “sister.” Yet keeping “husband” out of the salutation line does not prevent Brown from fantasizing about it and its associated “pleasure,” from sharing that fantasy with Primus. This line is more a shared fantasy than a request, but Brown continues to negotiate the genre conventions for address, the terms she will use with Primus, and even what those terms may—or “would,” under different cultural conditions—mean. While Brown and Primus learned the conventions for epistolary address, they used and negotiated terms of address in ways that crossed the categories of gender and relationship taught by manuals.

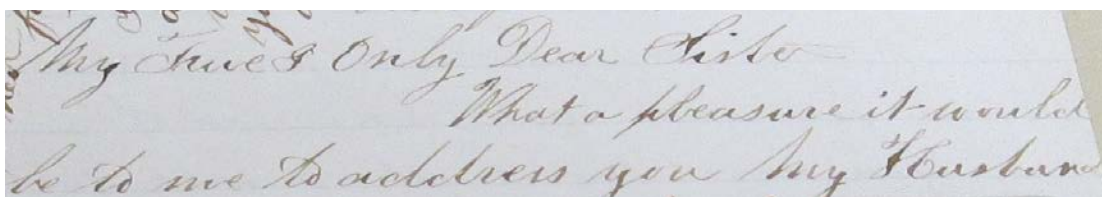


Figure 4. Opening to Addie Brown’s letter to Rebecca Primus (November 16, 1865).



### 3.2.2 Epistolary Exchange with Urgency and Intensity

Brown and Primus similarly learned genre conventions for dating letters yet subverted cultural norms for pacing and restraint in romantic epistolary exchange. In the most basic sense, Brown and Primus did date their letters in keeping with formal conventions. In Brown's romantic letters to Primus—as well as in Primus' letters to her family—the women preceded their left-aligned salutation with a right-aligned date, where they provided the location from which they wrote followed by the date. The first of Brown's saved letters, for example, begins with "Waterbury Aug. 2 1859." Yet, in teaching this basic convention for dating letters, complete letter-writer manuals also embedded cultural norms for "straight time," for normatively timing romantic epistolary exchange through the exercise of restraint with respect to the pacing and intensity of romantic relations (Halberstam, *Queer Time*). Brown and Primus defied this widely taught temporality by composing their romantic exchange with urgency and intensity.

Paradoxically in Primus' case, her lack of restraint is evident precisely because she kept such disciplined track of the timing of her letters. Although Primus' letters to Brown are unavailable, the saved envelopes from Brown's letters include Primus' notations in which she tracked the dates when she received and responded to each of her letters. The backside of a typical envelope, for instance, includes a notation like the following: "Rec July 3rd / 1861 / Ans July 8th / 1861" (see Figure 5).<sup>60</sup> This careful attention to timing details is matched by an exercise of discipline in her epistolary exchange with family.<sup>61</sup> While away from Hartford and teaching in Royal Oak, Primus maintained a regular practice of writing to them once a week. In the opening lines of a letter addressed to "My dear Parents &

Sister,” Primus expresses her awareness of conventions for letter pacing by explaining that she is “writing your weeklie—I style it “The Home Weeklie” (April 27, 1868). Primus apparently maintained this regular schedule of writing to her family. In another letter to family, she begins, “This quiet Sabbath P.M. I seat myself with pen in hand to write my ‘Home Weeklie” (November 29, 1868). In fact, it was cause for explanation when Primus did not stick to her disciplined schedule for writing. She explains elsewhere, for instance, “I have been obliged to postpone writing your weekly until now on acct. of being from home” (April 4, 1868).

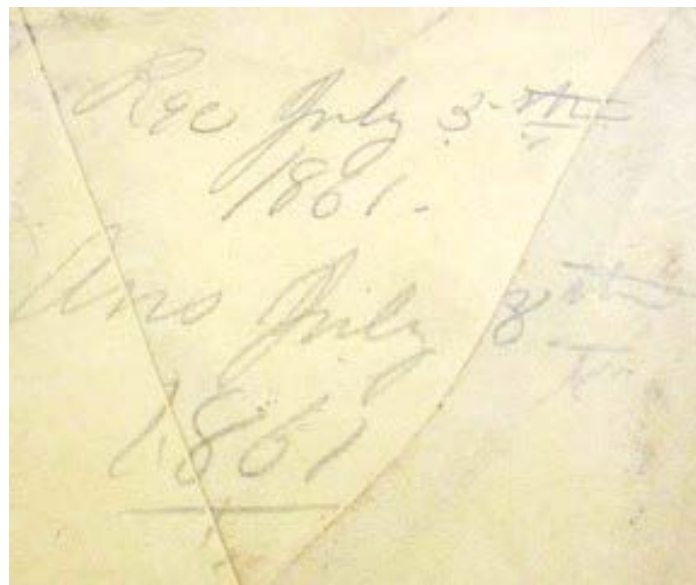


Figure 5. Rebecca Primus’ notations on an envelope (1861).

In contrast with her home weeklies to family, Primus was less restrained in the timing of her romantic letters to Brown. On the one hand, some of Brown’s letters do suggest there was an expectation that the women exchange regularly timed letters, perhaps one letter per week. Brown even begins one letter with an explanation much like Primus’ to

her family. Brown writes, "My reason for not sending my weekly missive last week was on account of sickness" (January 19, 1868). But, on the other hand, the body of correspondence makes clear that neither woman exercised the normative restraint taught by manuals. While aware of the possibility for an evenly paced epistolary exchange, both wrote more frequently than once a week during the periods when they were separated by distance. In Primus' case, her notations on envelopes indicate that she frequently "Ans[wered]" letters from Brown within one to four days, thus writing more than just once per week.

Yet even this frequency was not marked by consistency. Suggesting Primus' inconsistency, Brown begins an 1865 letter by acknowledging with delight that Primus has written sooner than expected. Brown writes, "To my surprise you send me a ans sooner then I expected how delighted I was even those around me could see that I was...I work with much lighter heart then I have all this week" (November 16, 1865). In another letter from 1867, Brown questions Primus about not writing as expected: "What shall I attribute to your silence to? You are not punishing me for not writing last week are you?" (January 14, 1867). Of course, Brown's first question quickly leads to a second, which indicates that she too does not write when expected. These questions suggest both an awareness of genre conventions for letter pacing and a practice of pacing letters somewhat inconsistently, with the timing of their letters, like the terms of their address, being negotiated through their romantic epistolary exchange.

Brown exercised even less restraint than Primus, writing to her with frequency and sometimes urgency. Brown often wrote another letter to Primus even before there had been enough time for Primus to answer the prior letter, even before the notes on envelopes

suggest Primus had answered. At times Brown wrote as much as once a day, or more than once in the same day. Relatively early in their correspondence, for example, Brown mails Primus letters dated September 25, September 28, September 29, and October 2, 1861. On September 28, Brown writes not once but twice, first in the “morning” and then again at “midnight – twelve o clock precisely.” In the first entry, Brown writes, “I think its about time that I heard from you I have been looking very patincely for a letter and have not received any as yet.” By the second entry, it seems Brown has received a “kind and Affec letter,” but her early remarks “about time” and “looking very patincely” of course raise questions about just how patiently she looked for that letter. Brown thus wrote with frequency (five letters in seven days) and urgency (“its about time”).

Brown’s frequency and urgency are matched by still another lack of restraint. Her writing spilled over the spatial boundaries of the letter, including into the space conventionally reserved for the date of the letter. Most telling is a letter that Brown closes with a comment about the timing of her correspondence with Primus. Brown implores, “write as often as you can I would ask to hear from you every week” (November 16, 1865). Here Brown not only writes with urgency and requests frequency; she also exceeds the spatial boundaries for a conventionally placed letter date. Though her closing comment begins in the right margin of the last page, the comment spills over to the top margin of the first page. There she writes directly over the date, vertically rather than horizontally, making the conventional date of the letter very difficult to decipher.<sup>62</sup> While Brown and Primus generally dated their letters according to convention, their romantic epistolary exchange was not in keeping with the measured and studied restraint recommended by manuals. Instead, it queered norms for the temporality and intensity of romantic relations.

### 3.2.3 Repurposing to Erotic and Political Ends

Where Brown and Primus most defied the cultural norms embedded in the genre instruction of manuals, however, is in the rhetorical purpose of their romantic letters. Manuals taught that romantic letters served a generic purpose within a courtship process that was teleologically oriented to heteronormative marriage. But, like the exceptional cryptogram writer discussed in Chapter 2, Brown and Primus composed letters to each other with more subversive purposes (even if they did later marry others). In at least three ways, Brown and Primus navigated their rhetorical situation by writing for purposes not entirely in keeping with the generically conventional marriage *telos*.

First, in spite of how Brown and Primus otherwise adapted conventions, cultural constraints were such that they simply could not marry each other. Brown wrote a good deal about marriage not being an option with Primus, because of course neither of them was a man. I have already quoted the letter in which Brown fantasizes about “What a pleasure it would be to me to address you *My Husband*,” but realizes her would-be address could not be (November 16, 1865). In another letter, Brown proclaims romantic love for Primus, but pauses over the question of what her claims may actually “come to” given that Primus is a “Girl” and not “a man”: “no kisses is like yours...You are the first Girl that I ever love...you are the *last* one...I mean just what I say...if you was a man what would things come to” (August 30, 1859). Elsewhere, Brown relays that Primus’ mother “said I thought as much of you if you was a gentleman she also said if either one of us was a gent we would marry” (January 21, 1866). Across their correspondence, Brown recognizes and articulates that their letters cannot pursue heteronormative marriage. One of Brown and Primus’

purposes for writing romantic letters, then, was to acknowledge and find ways of coping with the constraints that prevented them from pursuing the generic ends of marriage with each other.

A second way Brown and Primus defied the conventional purpose for romantic letters is by writing about nonnormative erotic relations with others. They wrote about not only relations with the men who later became their husbands, but also relations with other women that were not teleologically oriented toward marriage. In one such exchange, while Brown is working at a private boarding school, she makes frequent mention of her flirtatious interactions with other workers, at times writing in response to Primus' inquires. Brown informs Primus that the workers "visit" each other—"two of them English - one of them I call her my female lover"—and, a week later, that, "the girls are very friendly towards me...sometime just one of them wants to sleep with me perhaps I will give my consent some of these nights I am not very fond of White I can assure you" (October 20; October 27, 1867).

In Brown's next reference to those nights, she responds to Primus' concern, "that is my bosom that captivated the girl that made her want to sleep with me," with the assurance that Brown "had my back towards her all night and my night dress was button up so she could not get to my bosom" (November 17, 1867). Brown further assures, "I shall try to keep you favorite one always for you," but then provokes with, "should in my excitement forget you will pardon me *I know*." In a later letter, she insists, "I thought I told you about the girl sleeping with me," evading the question of "whether I enjoyed it or not," and even back peddling with, "I don't know what kind of an excitement I refer to but I presume I know at the time" (December 8, 1867). Certainly Brown's purposes include

flirtatiously provoking jealousy. What I mean to emphasize, though, is how she and Primus discuss yet another nonnormative relation, a cross-race erotic interaction between two working class women, an interaction certainly not teleologically oriented to marriage. This discussion simultaneously composes Brown and Primus' own nonnormative relation: it perhaps fuels their ongoing exchange; it definitely is part of what they write about, and so what constitutes their relationship through letters. In writing about relations with others, they—like the cryptogram writer—repurposed the letter genre to nonnormative ends.

Third, Brown and Primus defied conventions for rhetorical purpose by using their romantic letters to comment on political life. Not surprisingly, given gendered norms for interactions between women and men, manuals did not model conventions for incorporating political discussion within romantic letters. Such discussion was simply absent from models, which represented the romantic subgenre as distinct from other letters, as if the rhetorical situations of romantic and political life were distinct. In contrast, over the course of her romantic correspondence with Primus, Brown developed an increasing interest in politics, especially after the War and as Reconstruction had supposedly begun. Brown's interest in politics extended to figures elected to public office—even though African Americans were denied the right to vote in Hartford until 1876 (Griffin 90). Depending on the figure in question, Brown expresses both glee and disdain. Upon learning that “in Boston the Republican have nominated a colored man for the legislature no one but Mr. Charles B. Mitchell,” Brown writes that she is “delighted our color will be a people get a few more states like Mass.” (November 4, 1866); upon hearing that “the President Johnson expect to be in Hartford the 26<sup>th</sup>,” she writes that she “wish some of them [*his friends*] present him with a ball through his head” (June 23, 1867). Brown's

commentary on political figures is not separate, however, from her romantic purposes. In the same letter, and even in the lines directly following her wish for Johnson, she expresses a more conventional romantic longing, wishing for Primus to return from Royal Oak to Hartford so they may see each other: “how long will it be before I can have the pleasure of seeing you...do not Rebecca consent to teach another month O do come home won’t you” (June 23, 1867).

Brown’s letters also served purposes simultaneously romantic and political where she wrote to Primus about participation in public debates, lectures, and publications explicitly about racial politics. In an 1867 letter, Brown reports, “Colonel Trimble of Tennessee is going to lecture at Talcott street Church on Wednesday evening the subject is the capacity of colored men.” She anticipates, “I think I shall go for I would like to hear him” (February 24, 1867). In the next letter, Brown offers her most lengthy account of a lecture. In part, she writes,

Col Trimble his subject was, Colored Mans Capacity, he spoke very well...he also spoke of [Reverend Henry Highland] Garnett, [Frederick] Douglass and other distinguish men the day would come when states would allow every man vote he also said that he was going back to Tennessee and take two blackest men one on each arm and go up to the ballot box. (March 3, 1867)

Brown’s account of Trimble’s lecture about racial politics and the vote coexists with her more romantic sentiments. In the same letter, for example, Brown writes of how she would like to send her “very nice” breakfast to Primus, promising that when they are together next, “I shall make some...for you and only you.” Brown also writes that Primus’ letters “always affords me much pleasure...and I sometime feels that you are near,” and mentions,



“I had a singular dream about you.” Through letters like this one, Brown continues her romantic epistolary exchange with Primus while also exchanging information and commentary about racial politics. Although legally barred from political participation in the form of voting, and although instruction in the genre conventions for romantic letters seemed to bar all political discussion, Brown repurposed the romantic letter genre in order to share with Primus her sentiments about not only their romantic relation, but also electoral and racial politics. Brown thus challenged manuals’ separation of romantic purposes from political life.

Brown and Primus’ rhetorical practices exemplify how at least some rhetors creatively reinvented genre conventions in defiance of cultural norms. Their letters demonstrate a familiarity with genre conventions, which they certainly used. But the pace and intensity of their romantic epistolary exchange was more urgent and less restrained than advised. They negotiated forms of epistolary address that crossed the categories of gender and relationship taught by manuals. And they repurposed the romantic letter genre to compose their same-sex relationship, to write about erotic relations with other women, and to comment on racial politics—none of which were modeled by manuals.

### **3.3 CROSS-GENRE COPYING TO INVENT THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART**

In addition to learning but queerly subverting the genre conventions taught by manuals, Brown and Primus practiced rhetorical strategies of invention remarkably parallel to those taught by manuals. As we saw in Chapter 2, manuals characterized romantic letter writing

as a matter of simply expressing sincere feelings by writing from the heart, yet paradoxically taught strategies for invention through copying and adapting model letters written from others' hearts. Like the hypothetical learners imagined in Chapter 2, Brown and Primus were in a prime position to not merely copy but queerly adapt models, in large part because manuals did not include models of same-sex romantic letters. While there is no indication Brown and Primus consulted the model letters circulated within complete letter-writer manuals, their correspondence suggests Brown did practice the rhetorical strategies of invention taught by manuals. But rather than copying model letters, she crossed generic lines to copy and adapt language from literary genres such as poetry and the novel.<sup>63</sup> In analyzing Brown's rhetorical strategies of invention, I consider how she invented romantic letters to Primus in two ways: by composing *with* the language of the heart as copied from poetry, and by composing *about* the language of the heart as copied from the novel.<sup>64</sup> In both cases, I argue, Brown adapted the language of others' hearts, making it her own by putting it in service of her same-sex romantic epistolary rhetoric.

### **3.3.1 Composing with Language of the Heart from Poetry**

When inventing romantic letters to Primus by copying and adapting language from poetry, Brown neither used quotation marks nor attributed her sources. Yet it is clear Brown did copy, even where the earlier sources cannot be located, because of a marked change in style (Beeching 70; Griffin 64). Most of Brown's letters were written in a conversational style, by which I mean that her seemingly stream-of-consciousness language is in keeping with the commonplace manual instruction to simply write as though speaking on paper.

But where she copied from poetry, her style shifted quite drastically; the copied language utilized repetition, rhythm, and scene in ways familiar from poetic verse. Even where Brown copied the language of the heart directly from poetry, however, she did not passively adapt to the language or its sentiments.<sup>65</sup> Instead, she took ownership of the copied poetry in three ways: by using others' language to initiate her romantic letters to Primus, where Brown then took over with her own language and sentiments; by reframing the second-person address of poetry with direct epistolary address; and by actively selecting specific lines to redeploy for her own same-sex romantic purposes.

First, Brown most often copied language from others' poetry in order to open her romantic letters to Primus. Consider, for instance, the following opening to what is an eight-page letter. After dating and addressing her letter, Brown begins with language likely copied from poetry. Then, in what is here the ninth line of the letter body, I have noted where Brown makes the shift in style characteristic of her copying from poetry.<sup>66</sup>

New York Nov 14 1861

My Ever Dear Friend

yes when twilight comes starlings  
[?] us with all its gentle influences when the purple and gold have melted  
quite out of the sky when clouds of bright amber splashed with crimson have  
sunk deep into a rosy bed and the day-god ~~have~~ himself has you down into  
that far off lake beyond the world and only above there seems to hang out  
still silent canopy of deeply darkly blue it tis then I ~~think~~ am in this deepest of  
thought of you you only yes tis then I think of joys which can never be mine  
tears streams down my cheeks and some flow down the channel back into

my heart.. [note the shift in style here] one day last week I felt sad I did not rec your letter and I thought perhaps mine had shared the same fate as the other but on Monday between [?] o clock that sadness was remove I could not express the joys in perrusing you very loving & interesting Epistle but still there was one or two things made me feel bad

I describe the copied language with which Brown begins the body of this letter as poetic in part because of the repetition of “when,” which creates rhythm and rhymes with the primary romantic sentiment: “it tis then” that the speaker thinks of the addressed—and, as Brown makes this language her own, that she thinks of Primus. Brown’s shift, from the copied language she begins with, to her more typical and conversational language, is especially evident in the ninth line. Brown writes, “tears streams down my cheeks and some flow down the channel back into my heart,” and she uses the only periods on this page of the letter. Then, in stark contrast, she writes, “one day last week I felt sad” and “one or two things made me feel bad.” Brown thus uses this copied language to get started with composing her romantic letter to Primus.

Brown takes ownership of the copied language by adapting it to express romantic sentiments she likely shares and to transition to still other sentiments. In the letter above, Brown seems to use the copied poetry to convey what she probably means: it is nighttime when she thinks of Primus, but with bittersweet tears because Primus will never be hers in the way she would like. Moreover, Brown transitions from the copied “joys which can never be mine,” to her own “joys in perrusing” Primus’ “very loving & interesting Epistle.” Similarly, Brown transitions from the sadness in the copied language to another sadness, about not receiving a letter from Primus when desired. Finally, she transitions yet again to

what caused her to “feel bad.” Brown thus adapts the copied language not merely to imitate clichéd expressions of romantic feeling, but to begin her letters and then express a complex range of feeling.

In this letter, it is also important to note the dual way Brown’s epistolary rhetoric is both romantic and Romantic. In copying from poetry, Brown composes a letter that is both romantic—as in, of or relating to romantic love—and Romantic—as in, of or relating to Romanticism. The letter is romantic in its contemplation of, and expression of longing for, a love object; and, speaking of an “object,” the letter is also romantic in its version of love as possessive (“mine”) and narrowly focused on one (“you only you”).<sup>67</sup> At the same time, the letter is Romantic in its crafting of a scene of beauty, simultaneously natural and aesthetic, as the occasion for both contemplating love and inspiring composition; and, speaking of inspiration, phrasing such as “deeply darkly blue” is reminiscent of language particular to the well-known Romantic poets, Lord Byron and Robert Southey (“Darkly, deeply, beautifully blue” in Byron, and “Blue, darkly, deeply, beautifully blue” in Southey). Yet Brown makes Byron and Southey’s Romantic language her own in order to share her romantic sentiments of joy, longing for Primus, and grief at her absence.

A second way Brown took ownership of copied poetry was by combining it with direct epistolary address. Brown reframed the language she copied from poetry by interspersing it with salutation-like forms of epistolary address. In another letter, for example, Brown follows her salutation, “My Ever Darling Rebecca,” with a contemplation of the moon that was definitely copied (March 16, 1862; see also Griffin 64).<sup>68</sup> Most of the language Brown uses here can be found in “Reveries by Night,” which was published in the literary periodical *The New-York Mirror* (1831) and later in Theodore Sedgwick Fay’s

*Dreams and Reveries of a Quiet Man* (1832).<sup>69</sup> Yet Brown deletes from Fay's text an early phrase and, later on, several sentences and even an entire paragraph. In one of the places where she cuts Fay's language, she interjects with another epistolary address, only to proceed further with copying language that comes later in Fay's piece. Brown writes,

the moon tonight is so exquisite in its picturesque effects – so magical and subduing every thing that is touched by it is etherealized and elevated and softened beautiful object are invested with higher beauty grandeur rises to sublimity and sublimity oppresses the mind with heavy weight of admiration.  
*Dear friend* how perfectly still how hushed is all around but for... (March 16, 1862; emphasis in original)

Brown finishes this last sentence and train of thought differently than Fay does. Then, after a few more lines about the moon, she again uses direct epistolary address, this time quite conversationally: "well my Darling I suppose you think enough of [expatiate?] about the moon." Aside from Brown's addresses of "Ever Darling" and "Darling," this portion of the letter is not especially romantic.<sup>70</sup> What I mean to highlight, though, is how Brown makes what is certainly copied text her own, by reframing it with the epistolary address of "My Darling" and "Dear friend."

A third and final way that Brown's use of language from poetry amounts to invention through active adapting rather than passive copying is that she selected which words, lines, and stanzas to redeploy for her own romantic purposes.<sup>71</sup> In another letter from that same month, Brown elects to insert just one copied line, which is both preceded and followed by her more typical conversational style. Following more conversational sentences about a party, she writes, "wish I could see you when billows roll and waves

around me rise one thought of *thee* will clear the darkest skies My Dearst to day I rec you very kind & Affectionate Epistle” (March 1862). The more poetic phrasing here is a version of “When the billows roll and waves around me rise, / One thought of thee will clear the darkest of skies.” These lines appear in a later edition of *Hill’s Manual of Social and Business Forms* (1883), as one among many poetic “Selections for the Autograph Album” (Hill 141). Of course Brown did not have access to this edition of *Hill’s*, published after her death.<sup>72</sup> But in keeping with the tradition of poems collected in autograph albums, these same lines were almost certainly compiled from elsewhere before they appeared in *Hill’s*. Regardless of where Brown encountered the lines, my point is that she selects these specific lines, rather than others just before or after them, and she elects where to place the lines in relation to the rest of her letter. Brown also redeploys the lines in service of her own purposes. Once adapted for her romantic letter to Primus, the lines amplify both her prior expressed longing, a desire unfulfilled—“I wish I could see you”—and her next expressed pleasure, a desire that was fulfilled—Primus’ “very kind & Affectionate Epistle” may not “clear the darkest skies,” but does leave Brown “in good spirit” and “gave [her] a great deal of pleasure” (March [?] 1862). Here and elsewhere, Brown copied the language of the heart from poetry, but she took ownership of that copied language when rhetorically inventing her romantic letters to Primus.

### **3.3.2 Composing about Language of the Heart from the Novel**

Brown’s rhetorical strategies of invention included not only composing *with* the language of the heart as copied and adapted from poetry, but also composing *about* the language of

the heart as copied and adapted from the novel. Most interesting is Brown's writing on Grace Aguilar's domestic novel, *Women's Friendship* (1850), about the relationship between middle class Florence and aristocrat Lady Ida. Whereas Brown copied from poetry without attributing her sources, she cited this novel. In her first letter to Primus about the novel, Brown prefaces the language she copies with a direct reference to the novel's title and author. Brown writes, "O my Darling I read a book called women friendship it was a [splendid?] book I wish I could sent it to you for to read...the author of it is Grace Aguilar" (January 30, 1862). Brown further marks her practice of copying with, "I will give you little idea of it." In this way, Brown distinguishes between Aguilar's language and her own. As with her copying from poetry, however, Brown copied from Aguilar's novel in order to invent romantic letters to Primus. In copying from the novel, Brown not only relayed its story to Primus, but also reframed that story with direct epistolary address in order to prompt an ongoing exchange with Primus about friendship, marriage, and the nature of their own same-sex romantic relations.

On the one hand, Brown quite predictably copied from *Women's Friendship* in order to share with Primus a version of the novel's story. In Brown's first letter about the novel, the text she copies amounts to a total of three and a half pages of her eight-page letter. She begins her retelling by copying directly from the opening of the novel (January 30, 1862). Here Florence's mother offers a "warning address" about her "warm attachment" to Lady Ida when, "on the receipt of a note" from Ida, Florence becomes "animated" with "its rapid perusal," "bound[ing] toward her mother with an exclamation of irrepressible joy" (Aguilar 1). The mother warns that, "friendship even more than love demands equality of station" (1). Later in Brown's letter, she begins to copy more selectively from portions of the novel,



especially Chapters Two and Seven, and she combines this copied language with her own summary of the novel's plot (10, 39-40). Brown describes how Florence is continually cautioned against expecting anything other than disappointment from her relationship with Ida: not only will they be separated for a time by distance, when Ida is away from England in Italy, but also Ida will marry. Part of what Brown copies is Ida's insistence that "I may still be Florence's friend," and Brown emphasizes Ida's promise to be there for Florence in case of any difficulty (January 30, 1862). Through a combination of copying and summarizing, Brown thus retold the novel's story, sharing it with Primus.

On the other hand, Brown did more than simply retell the novel's story. She reframed this retelling through her insertion of epistolary address, in order to make explicit connections between herself and the middle class Florence, between Primus and the aristocrat Ida, and between the two pairs' relationships and feelings.<sup>73</sup> In copying language from the novel's opening, for example, Brown first interrupts with, "my Darling I'm writing this miscellaneous I know you will understand it." Here Brown directly addresses Primus with the salutation-like "my Darling," and Brown signals that Primus' understanding of what is copied from the novel depends on the larger context of their ongoing romantic epistolary exchange and relationship. In another interruption to the language copied from *Women's Friendship*, Brown claims, "Florence and Lady Ida became warm friends Florence love her as I do you." In this case Brown is more direct about how Primus might take the "little idea" Brown "will give" of the novel: Brown intends for the story of Florence and Ida's friendship to speak to the ongoing narrative of Addie and Rebecca's relationship. Interrupting copied language with direct epistolary address, Brown

initiates an ongoing epistolary exchange with Primus about relationships in general and their romantic relationship in particular.

Even without Primus' written responses, it is clear from a later letter that Brown's invention strategy affected just such an exchange about friendship and love. In spite of Brown's earlier insistence, that "I know you will understand it," it turns out Brown's writing about *Women's Friendship* was anything but clear to Primus. Instead, Brown's writing prompted a back and forth questioning about these women's own friendship. Three weeks later, after two other letters and an "unexpected visit," the exchange continues:

you say that you have suffered for the last few months yes I now do credit your words and never again will you suffer if I can help it then you ask me if I believe that you love me or did I ever believe you did yes I did think you love me and truly think you do now you ask my forgiveness for the pain that you have cause me my Darling my Sweet Friend you have my forgiveness my Darling your friendship is ever been pure to me Rebecca when I spoke of that book I did not mean in that light that you think you did but some day I may be more capable of making you understand what I had reference too no Rebecca you never did anything [? ly] to me no anything else that way my only beloved friend I will not agree with you in this point you say I need never name the tie which exist between us Friendship this term is not [? ble] to you and you even say that you are not worthy of it call it any thing else but this O My Darling is that you no no never well call it any thing else as long as *God* is my witness it pure and true Friendship and you are worthy of it and more so never again pen such thought if *love* me. (February 23, 1862)

With Brown's references to both "the book" and what Primus "say," this letter evidences an ongoing epistolary exchange prompted by Brown's writing about *Women's Friendship*. In conversation with each other and the novel, Brown and Primus trade expressions of suffering, apologies, and assurances. Brown refuses to agree with Primus on at least some points. They explore questions about their relationship: Is it "pure"? Is it "true"? Is it best called "friendship"? What makes one "worthy" of pure and true friendship? What thoughts may one who truly loves "pen" within a same-sex romantic letter?

Had Brown turned to the model letters in complete letter-writers manuals, she would not have found a "name" specific to her love for and relationship with Primus. But Brown instead crossed generic lines, drawing on the model offered by a novel. Brown both copied language from *Women's Friendship* and wrote about the novel, in order to invent her romantic letters to Primus. In addition to Brown sharing with Primus the story of the novel, Brown reframed that story with direct epistolary address, developing an ongoing exchange about friendship, love, and marriage. Moreover, Brown crossed generic lines by copying language from poetry. Also reframing poetic language with direct epistolary address, Brown took ownership of the copied language. She actively selected specific lines to copy, and she used the copied language to initiate her romantic letters and develop expressions of romantic sentiments. Brown thus practiced rhetorical strategies of invention that, while not learned from letter-writing manuals, relied on adapting language copied from others' hearts.

### 3.4 SOCIOPOLITICAL CRITIQUE WITHIN ROMANTIC EXCHANGE

While Brown and Primus' epistolary exchange was decidedly romantic, this exchange held significance for civic life. Earlier in this chapter, I showed how Brown and Primus repurposed the romantic subgenre of the letter to overtly political ends. Now I consider further their rhetorical practices for both romantic and civic engagement, particularly as the women developed critiques of the cultural ideals lauded by complete letter-writer manuals. As discussed in Chapter 2, manuals reinforced their genre instruction in a heteronormative conception of romantic letters and relations by linking idealized forms of romantic union to idealized forms of national union. Manuals idealized the romantic letter as a means to romantic union through its culmination in opposite-sex marriage across gender difference. Through a similar logic, manuals also idealized letter writing as a means to national union across social differences and geographic distance. Manuals thus taught that learners ideally achieved both romantic and national union through letter writing. But I argue that Brown and Primus, through their letter writing to each other as well as others, exposed these cultural ideals as just that—ideals. Like other nineteenth-century writers, Brown and Primus used the letter genre not to achieve the idealized forms of union, but to generate compelling sociopolitical critiques (Carlacio; Favret; Gaul and Harris; Henkin; Hewitt; Spring, "Meditation"). Specifically, they critiqued marriage and the post office as national institutions that offered neither national nor romantic union to them as African-American women in a same-sex relationship.

### 3.4.1 Critique of Romantic Union through Marriage

In romantic letters to Primus, Brown composed sociopolitical critique of idealized romantic union through courtship letters in pursuit of marriage. Countering the ideals taught by manuals, Brown's letters conceived of marriage as anything but romantic. She realized that marriage is a political and legal institution through which property rights are organized and, for most nineteenth-century women, the only way to gain (albeit limited) access to certain rights of citizenship. Rather than representing marriage as a form of union with a person for whom one experiences romantic love, she represented it as a form of union with a person who brings one relative economic security. Brown also exposed how deeply the ideal of union across gender difference was embedded within the institution of marriage, such that she and Primus could not marry each other—such that their romantic letters, no matter how romantic, could not unify them within the national institution of heteronormative marriage.

Already I have considered multiple letters in which Brown articulates the problem she and Primus faced in not being able to achieve the idealized romantic union of marriage with each other. Again, Brown questions what “what things [would] come to” if Primus were “a man,” fantasizes about addressing Primus as “*My Husband*,” and reports Primus’ mother expected they “would marry” if either “was a gent” (November 16, 1865; January 21, 1866; August 30, 1859). With romantic union through marriage to Primus not an option, Brown's letters presented her realistic options for marrying less in terms of romantic love and more for economic reasons. Relatively early in their romantic correspondence, Brown writes to Primus about feelings for a suitor, Mr. Lee. “I act so

indifferently that he dont know what to make of me,” Brown explains, “I like him as a Friend and nothing more then that...I cannot reciprocate his love” (May 24, 1861). Still, Brown concedes, “but Dear Rebecca if I should ever see a good chance I will take it for I’m tired roving around this unfriendly world.” Here, as Griffin asserts, Brown “begins to express her philosophy about the institution of marriage as a practical choice that provides economic stability” (34). Marriage could provide relative economic stability particularly for an African-American woman such as Brown, whose employment as a domestic involved being “tired” not only from working nearly nonstop, but also from “roving around” from one state and job situation to the next.<sup>74</sup>

While Brown’s philosophy about the institution of marriage reflected the material conditions in which she lived, it is important to keep in mind how this philosophy also developed through her romantic epistolary exchange with Primus. Consider again, for instance, Brown’s ongoing exchange with Primus about their relationship and Aguilar’s novel *Women’s Friendship*. In another letter within that exchange, Brown attempts to persuade Primus to view marriage differently. At a time when work has taken Brown to New York, she writes,

My loved one I want to ask you one question that is will you not look at my marrying in a different light then you do...perhaps see you about three time in a year I’m sometime happy more time unhappy I will get my money regular for two or three week and then irregular what would you rather see me do have one that truly *love* me that would give me a happy home and or give him up and remain in this home...Rebecca if I could live with you or even be with you parts of the day I would never marry. (February 23, 1862)

Through ongoing conversation with Primus about marriage and *Women's Friendship*, Brown develops her economic argument for marrying. Brown insists she would “never marry” if she could “live with” Primus, “or even be with” Primus more often. But they are separated by work, and Brown neither sees Primus nor gets paid regularly. Primus is Brown’s “love one,” but with no option to marry each other, Brown prefers marrying a man who “would give...a happy home” over staying in her current work and living situation as a domestic.

Of course Brown’s “good chance” did come, after years of being courted by another suitor, Joseph Tines. But Brown’s romantic letters to Primus continued to represent this coming union as anything but romantic or ideal. Brown wrote to Primus about Tines many times over the years, with most statements about him lukewarm at best. Brown unfavorably compared her feelings for him to those for Primus. Brown also expressed greater delight about Primus’ approval of Tines than about Tines himself. In the year prior to their marriage, Brown began to write of Tines more fondly, but even the letter most overtly expressing “love” for Tines is ambivalent. While Brown writes, “I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Tines twice last week,” she clarifies, “I shall miss him very much *if your not here* I should not care very much he seems to be rather doubtful of my love for him I do love him *but not fasinated and never will*” (October 25, 1866, my emphasis). One year after expressing these ambivalent feelings about Tines, Brown complains her employer does not pay her fully or fairly. Then, although her letter prior mentioned postponement of her marriage to Tines, Brown announces their coming elopement: “We are to be married at 6 PM and leave at 7 whenever take place. Please dont mention to no one” (October 6; October 15, 1867).<sup>75</sup> As Griffin describes, Brown “welcomes the opportunity to leave her job as a

live-in servant and to begin a new life as the wife of her longtime suitor, Joseph Tines. Nonetheless, though she views marriage as an escape from life as a domestic servant, she continues to express some ambivalence and fear about the institution” (236).

As I join Griffin in pointing to Brown’s ambivalence, I am less concerned with the intricacies of ambivalence as an emotional or psychological state, and more interested in how Brown’s ambivalence accompanied her sociopolitical critique of the institution of marriage. Through romantic epistolary exchange with Primus, Brown articulated and developed a conception of marriage as *not* romantic. She described marriage not as a form of idealized union composed by two people who correspond romantically, but as an economic union composed by a woman with a man who may offer her economic security, “a happy home.” I understand Brown’s writing about this conception of marriage as sociopolitical critique because she exposed how the romantic union through letter writing as taught by manuals was an ideal—an ideal obscuring the material reality of heteronormative marriage as a political and legal institution.

### **3.4.2 Critique of National Union through Letter Writing**

Whereas Brown’s letters critiqued the idealized forms of romantic union taught by manuals, Primus’ letters similarly critiqued the related forms of national union also taught. Manuals linked ideals for romantic and national union, idealizing letters sent via the post office as a means to national union across social differences and geographic distances. Yet Primus’ letters exposed the limitations of idealized national union, highlighting instead the ways a local post office and its officials could disrupt such unity. Primus’ romantic letters to



Brown are not extant. But in Primus' letters to family, she developed her critique of idealized nation union, reporting on how her letters were intercepted and confiscated. Interestingly, a postal official interfered with Primus' mail not because of her same-sex romantic and erotic relationship with Brown, or the many ways these women defied the genre conventions and cultural norms for romantic letters and relations. Instead, the official interrupted Primus' mail because of her civic engagement in pursuit of racial uplift. As Primus indicated in developing her sociopolitical critique, she was treated not as a letter writer threatening idealized romantic union, but as one threatening national union, precisely because of how she revealed the national lack of unity with respect to social differences of race.

Just as Brown clearly articulated to Primus what prevented their romantic union, Primus articulated to her family what prevented idealized national union through letter writing. In a letter expressing "hope" about the Civil Rights Bill of 1866, Primus makes early note of problems with the handling of her mail: "I shall be obliged to enter complaints at the office about my letters for I think they must forget to send them sometimes and so they lie over" (April 7, 1866). In time, however, she articulates critical awareness of the connections between those problems with her mail and the problem of racist resistance to political change. Primus writes of "the little difficulty I've had with this poor old secesh Post-master here," Richard Lane.<sup>76</sup> She explains, "It's all on account of the papers you've sent me and which he & his old jebusite wife have taken the liberty to open...He says he's had more trouble with the d-m niggers papers than have with any one's else" (December 1, 1866). Primus also explains that Lane holds her papers, claiming he will not return them unless she pays a fine and additional postage. Through her use of racially and politically

charged language—such as “secesh,” “jebusite,” and “d-am niggers”—Primus makes clear her awareness that Lane’s actions are motivated by racist resistance to the attempts at political change described in the papers and letters.<sup>77</sup>

Primus’ criticism of Lane’s actions also demonstrated critical awareness that he delayed or let “lie over” her letters primarily because she sent with them political papers. As Primus recounts, her difficulties with Lane are “all on account of the papers...sent,” and he uses most obviously racist language when referring to “the d-m niggers papers” (December 1, 1866). Indeed, most of Primus’ later letters about problems with Lane and her mail refer not to letters per se, but to “papers” sent with the letters (December 8, 14, 1866; March 23, 30, 1867). The papers she notes sending or receiving through the mail include *The Communicator*, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, *Freedmen’s Record*, and *The Independent*, which she describes as “full of able & very interesting articles, all advocating the rights of the colored man” (April 7; December 8; n.d. [1866]). As Griffin notes, nearly every single one of Primus’ saved letters offers critical commentary on racial politics in the U.S. (15). But an important aspect of Primus’ civic engagement included her mailing of political papers. Lane interrupted this civic engagement by interrupting her mail, at which point Primus’ critical commentary came to include criticism of his office. Primus’ criticism highlighted the extent to which the national post office could not facilitate national unity—and could even be made to facilitate resistance to attempts at unity that included African Americans as citizens.

Primus not only critiqued the ideal of national unity through epistolary and postal exchange, but also took additional actions to resist Lane’s attempts at interfering with her civic participation. While there is no indication she considered it an option to appeal to the

national post office, Primus did use her own local connections, established through her work with civic organizations, in order to subvert Lane's local site of the national post office. In her first letter critical of Lane's interference, Primus composes a plan for responding. After referencing Lane's racist remark about his "trouble" with political papers, Primus continues,

But I do not intend to trouble them with them hereafter. I wrote a note to the Post Master at Easton to take charge of all my papers & letters hereafter and he sent me word that he would. Mr. Thos. is personally acquainted with him. A friend living near the office has promised to call for my mail & send it to me so you see I'm all right and P.M. Lane & his companion are all wrong. So please do not forget to direct all of my mail to Easton. (December 1, 1866)

Primus plans to work around Lane and his wife by writing to another postmaster in Easton and appealing to her connections with Thomas, whose family she stayed with while teaching in Royal Oak (and whom she would marry some years later). Primus' subsequent letters suggest her plan to redirect mail through Easton came to fruition successfully (December 8; December 14, 1866; February 23, 1867). Part of what Primus did was outsmart Lane in using the local post office. Lane managed to disrupt her civic participation through correspondence, to the extent that the national post office did not offer idealized unity to Primus as a letter writer or as a citizen. But, recognizing this, Primus instead relied on her other local and civic connections to enable the sending and receiving of letters and papers.<sup>78</sup> She thus turned to her advantage the lack of national unity evident across post offices and their officials.

Primus held her critical stance even after Lane and his wife later came around, in “an unexpected turn of events” (Beeching 150). Months later Primus writes that Lane and his wife “are very particular of late to send me word when there are letters at the office for me if I’ve not previously sent to enquire. And they will not send them by any & everyone, for they say I’m so very particular about my mail. I don’t know what led them to be so considerate” (February 23, 1867). Yet Primus is wise to this seeming consideration. “I’ve not had more than one letter mailed from their office since our little difficulty,” she writes, “I suspect they feel the slight. These white people want all the respect shown them by col’d. people. I give what I rec. & no more.” While continuing to hold her critical stance, Primus also continued to watch the handling of her mail carefully. Within letters, she made note of it when she did or did not receive expected letters or papers.<sup>79</sup> On the outside of letter envelopes, she tracked whether letters were sent through Easton or Royal Oak.

Obviously, Primus’ critique of the post office is to be found in letters to her family. But even without Primus’ romantic letters to Brown, the letters from Brown suggest the women wrote to each other about the problems with the post office. Even prior to the letters cited above, Brown inquires about those postal problems. She writes, “I read your mother last letter from you what is the matter that the letters has got to be sent to Easton It nothing very serious is there” (November 3, 1866). As Brown and Primus’ romantic epistolary exchange continued, Primus probably told Brown more about what was indeed a “very serious” interference with her mail. In Brown’s December 7 letter, for instance, she refers directly to a letter from Primus “received on last tuesday Dec 4<sup>th</sup>,” and continues, “That Mr Lane and wife will find they have got somebody to deal with and is not afraid of any one or any thing” (December 7, 1866). It is unclear whether Brown is implying a threat

to Lane and his wife, protectively proclaiming herself as the “somebody” they will have to “deal with,” or if she is responding to Primus’ proclamations, validating that Primus is that “somebody.” Regardless, Brown’s comments point to the likelihood that she and Primus, within their romantic letters, conversed about Lane and his wife’s postal interference.

Brown and Primus developed sociopolitical critique of the nineteenth-century ideals propagated by manuals, postal reformers, and the culture at large. Linked forms of romantic and national unity were lauded, with letter writing and the national post office idealized as important means to achieving both types of union. Yet through their letter writing, romantic and not, Brown and Primus exposed the extent to which the letter genre and the post office could and did not guarantee romantic and national unity to them as African-American women. Still these women persisted in using the national institution and its local offices. Brown and Primus used the post to compose a romantic relation not institutionally sanctioned as a civic marriage relationship. At the same time, they used the post to participate in critical conversations about civil rights, racial justice, and unity. They used letters to compose other relations and political networks, ones in which non-state-sanctioned forms of unity, however fragile, could be imagined and even enacted. Of course, their critique of idealized unity took on particular significance just before, during, and after the Civil War, when Primus and Brown wrote romantic letters to each other. At a time when questions of unity were a violently fraught national concern, Brown and Primus used epistolary rhetoric to weigh in on romantic and cultural ideals.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

In order to examine how romantic letters were not only learned but also crafted, Chapter 3 has examined the rhetorical practices of actual letter writers who participated in same-sex romantic epistolary exchanges and relations. I have shown how Brown and Primus' rhetorical practices for romantic engagement both make sense within the context of nineteenth-century complete letter-writer manuals, and yet pose key challenges to manuals and the broader national culture. Brown and Primus learned and used the genre conventions manuals taught for the romantic letter genre. But these women queered those conventions and related cultural norms by negotiating forms of same-sex romantic address that crossed normative categories of gender and relationship, by pursuing their romantic epistolary exchange with urgency and intensity, and by repurposing the romantic letter genre to erotic and even political ends. Brown and Primus also learned and used rhetorical strategies of invention similar to those taught by manuals. Rather than copying and adapting model romantic letters, however, Brown crossed generic lines in order to compose with and about the language of the heart from poetry and the novel. Finally, Brown and Primus developed sociopolitical critique of the very forms of romantic and national union idealized by manuals. While these African-American women in a same-sex romantic relationship were not able to pursue romantic or national unity through letter writing, they used their epistolary rhetoric to critique those ideals. Next, in Chapter 4, I turn to the rhetorical practices of another letter writer, an upper class white man who, while also participating in same-sex romantic exchange, had greater access to formal rhetorical education and developed still other queer practices for romantic engagement.

#### 4.0 “SOMEHOW OR OTHER, QUEER IN THE EXTREME”: ALBERT DODD’S CIVIC EDUCATION & MULTI-GENRE ROMANTIC PRACTICES, 1836-1838

Like Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus, Albert Dodd defied generic conventions and cultural norms for composing romantic letters and relations. According to his diary, Dodd wrote romantic letters to multiple young men and women; he addressed these letters to his “Dear, beloved trio”—John Heath, Anthony Halsey, and Julia Beers—along with Elizabeth Morgan and Jabez Smith (March 24, 1837).<sup>80</sup> Dodd not only wrote about romantic epistolary relations in a diary, but also composed a commonplace book and poetry album, while a college student. An upper class white man, Dodd was formally educated at Washington (now Trinity) College and then Yale College (now University). In this final case study, I explore both Dodd’s multi-genre *romantic practices* and his college-level *rhetorical education*. My study of his rhetorical practices and education advances the dissertation’s larger investigation in two significant ways.

First, accounting for Dodd’s rhetorical practices in addition to Brown and Primus’ enables consideration of a diverse range of learners. Most obviously, Brown, Primus, and Dodd are diverse by gender, race, and class. But they are also diverse in terms of educational background. For instance, while Brown avidly pursued opportunities for self-education, there is no indication or reason to believe she had access to formal schooling in rhetoric, much less to a rhetorical education classically oriented to civic engagement. This

was precisely the sort of education that Dodd, in contrast, accessed as a privileged college student.

Second, through my analysis of Dodd's college-level rhetorical training alongside his commonplace book, diary, and poetry album about romantic relations and epistolary exchanges, I am able to investigate romantic epistolary practices within a broad network of related genres. Whereas Chapters 2 and 3 focus more narrowly on romantic letter-writing instruction and practice, Chapter 4 situates the teaching and learning of "the language of the heart" within a broader network of education and practices in other genres related to the epistolary. In analyzing Dodd's participation in this broader network, I am informed by composition historian Suzanne Spring's notion of "epistolary logic" ("Seemingly" 638). In a study of early-nineteenth-century writing by students at a women's college, Spring describes writing that resembles features of the letter genre even where not taking the form of a letter. She understands these "complex generic hybrids" as operating according to an "epistolary logic" insofar as they are addressed and exchanged (633, 638). Following Spring, I understand Dodd's writing as simultaneously multi-genre and epistolary: as taking the form of multiple genres other than the letter, yet framed by an epistolary logic of address.

Examining Dodd's rhetorical training and practices across multiple genres, I argue that he repurposed his rhetorical education for civic engagement to romantic ends. While Chapters 2 and 3 ended with the civic implications of romantic engagement, Chapter 4 begins with how Dodd was taught civic engagement. Dodd's rhetorical education at Washington and Yale was classically oriented to civic participation through training in public oratory about political questions. Not surprisingly, this education prepared him for



civic engagement through participation in law and politics. Yet this same education was marked by two other features that made it susceptible to Dodd's repurposing for romantic engagement: Dodd was exposed to a broad range of rhetorical and literary genres, and his training in oratory involved a great deal of practice with writing. Dodd repurposed this formal training to develop multi-genre epistolary practices for participation in romantic relations. In perhaps expected ways, Dodd drew on the examples of same-sex erotic relations that he encountered in classical literature as a strategy for making sense of his relations with men. More interesting, however, are two of Dodd's multi-genre practices for addressing men and women. First, he made a generic shift from composing a school-sponsored commonplace book to a diary, in which he wrote about his romantic epistolary exchanges. Second, in his poetry album, he experimented with composing forms of romantic address that were simultaneously epistolary and poetic. While Dodd used these rhetorical practices to participate in romantic relations with both men and women, his practices were, in his own words, "something how or another, queer in the extreme" (April 1836). What makes them "queer," as we shall see, is how Dodd repurposed his education and crossed generic lines in order to participate in nonnormative romantic relations and epistolary exchanges.

#### **4.1 THE ALBERT DODD PAPERS**

Albert Dodd shared with Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus a close relationship to Hartford, Connecticut. Twenty-three years before the first of Brown's extant letters to Primus, sent

from Waterbury to Hartford, Dodd inscribed the opening pages of his commonplace book and poetry album with, "Albert Dodd / Washington College / Hartford, Conn." (July 26; January 1836). Like Primus, Dodd was from Hartford. He was born in 1818, probably on April 26 (April 27, 1838).<sup>81</sup> But like Brown, Dodd died young. In June of 1844, he drowned while crossing the Mackinaw River on horseback (*Biographical* 53; Dexter 288; "Obituary").<sup>82</sup>

According to Dodd's obituary, he never married (see also Dexter 288). But historian Jonathan Katz suggests Dodd may have been romantically involved with his "law partner," "the bachelor Jesse W. Fell" (31). Fell was "a tree and flower enthusiast, a temperance advocate, and a civic leader"; in 1834, Fell "had begun a friendship and long political association with Abraham Lincoln," and Fell later "worked hard to win Lincoln the Republican nomination for president" (n. 11, 354-5). Dodd's obituary indicates Fell was one of the "citizens" present at a meeting called when Dodd died. Six months later, Fell married for the first time, at the "advanced age of thirty-seven" (Katz 31).

Dodd's obituary references his studies at Washington and Yale, celebrating that, "He was a finished classical scholar, well informed in general literature." It was while a student at Washington that Dodd started writing in his commonplace book turned diary and his album of poetry. The commonplace book suggests Dodd began his studies at Washington in 1834. In an entry dated July 31, 1836, Dodd writes, "In a few days Commencement arrives, and with it, the completion of the second year of my Collegiate course." While at Washington, Dodd was probably a member of  $\Phi K$ , a local secret society founded in 1832 "with the mystic motto 'Di Chado'" (Steiner 247). The Greek letters for  $\Phi K$  are inside the

front cover to Dodd's poetry album, and the motto "Di Chado" appears throughout the album, commonplace book, and diary.

Dodd was suspended from Washington following what historian Peter Gay calls "some disagreeable imbroglios with college authorities" (206)—and what Dodd himself calls the "Junior Rebellion" (February 5; March 2; May 17, 1837). In 1837, after a nearly three-month silence between diary entries, Dodd writes, "I have left Washington C. now, doubtful forever" (February 2, 1837). He explains, "The causes which led the Faculty to punish me were mostly erroneous, but I own that I deserved what was inflicted, only, of the many dark deeds which were committed, they did not happen to hit upon the right ones, which by I should suffer" (February 2, 1837). The next day, Dodd continues, "Having expiated the reckless course of the last term by suspension I returned to College again, fully determined to behave tranquilly...nor make any more trouble" (February 3, 1837). Determination was not enough, apparently, because another day later, Dodd refers to the "The affair which has now resulted in my second...suspension from College" (February 4, 1837). In these same entries, Dodd also implies that one of the young men he was interested in romantically, John Heath, may have played some role in the suspension. But the precise "causes," "affair," or "rebellion" which led to Dodd's suspension from Washington are unclear.

Dodd quickly resumed his studies at Yale. Indeed, while the suspension "made a fuss at home," and "was the cause of...partial estrangement, on the part of John Heath, from me," Dodd insists, "I do not and did not care much for the suspension" (February 2; February 3, 1837). Nor did the suspension impede his educational advancement. Less than two weeks after first writing about the suspension, Dodd turned to plans to resume his studies at Yale.

He writes, "Here I am at home spending day after day and week after week in idlene[ss],<sup>83</sup> when I ought to be 'up and doing.' If I expect to enter at Yale the next term, I have got much yet to do to gain an easy admission" (February 14, 1837). While Dodd had "much yet to do" before his admission to Yale, this work was accompanied by the play of fantasy. Dodd fantasizes about being a student at Yale with another of the young men who interested him romantically: "If he would only go to Yale now, and I too, how I should like it!" (February 26, 1837).<sup>84</sup> Just a few months later, Dodd reports that at least the latter half of his fantasy has come true. He locates himself in New Haven, noting, "Shall apply to be examined tomorrow," and two days later, "got through my examination and am a Junior at...Yale" (May 28; May 30, 1837). Inside the front cover to his diary, Dodd entered a second inscription, "Albert Dodd / Yale University / New Haven, Conn." (July 11, 1837).

Soon after beginning his studies at Yale, Dodd joined another secret society, Scull and Bones. Even prior to the above inscription, a diary entry exclaims, "Lord, Lord, Lord...I have just been notified by a Senior calling here of my election to the 'Scull & Bones'...I am glad of it. It is a right welcome piece of news to be initiated with 14 other of own class this evening. *good*" (July 5, 1837).<sup>85</sup> Dodd's other extracurricular involvements at Yale included a less-than positive experience getting published in the *Yale Literary Magazine*. According to Dodd's diary account, "Yesterday the Y.L.M. came out, and my piece was published, but so altered and mangled by the d—d editors that I hardly know the [?]. Some of the corrections I would not object to, but others were so d—d foolish that they made it worse even than before" (July 17, 1837).<sup>86</sup> While Dodd's extracurricular experiences at Yale were both "good" and "d—d," he successfully graduated with the class of 1838 (*Catalogue* 13).

I conducted archival research on Dodd in the Yale University Library's Manuscripts and Archives, which holds the Albert Dodd Papers. According to Katz, Fell "personally carried Dodd's private papers (including, apparently, his diary) to Dodd's father in the East" the year Dodd died (31). The Albert Dodd Papers include Dodd's commonplace book turned diary, his poetry album, and a few letters to family members from during his post-Yale years. The poetry album and commonplace book turned diary are rich in their accounts of Dodd's educational and romantic life while a student at both Yale and Washington.

Unfortunately, Dodd's romantic letters were not saved. But, as my subsequent analysis makes clear, Dodd wrote about his romantic epistolary exchanges with men and women in his diary. Like much nineteenth-century writing about same-sex romantic relations, this diary account is marked by intriguing absences and moments of self-censorship. There are places where Dodd does not name "things," but instead refers to them with dashes or abbreviations. For example, Katz highlights Dodd's entry about "things that trouble me particularly." These "things" include "that ---- which has long troubled me; and also ----...Besides there is M. O. ---- I dare not write even here these things ---- which it is my prayer may soon be settled" (February 5, 1837).<sup>87</sup> There are also places where Dodd or someone else cut pages from the diary. In one of these instances, Dodd ponders his affections for a young man and a young woman. Dodd writes, "it seems the nature of my affection...was really the same...Yet one was for a female, the other for"—and it is precisely here that pages are cut from the diary (February 7, 1837; see also Katz 28). Still, there are many other places in the diary where Dodd's writing about his romantic relations and epistolary exchanges remains available for study.

My case study of Dodd's romantic epistolary practices and rhetorical education, like my study of the Brown-Primus correspondence, is the first in the field of rhetoric and composition. But as in the case of Brown and Primus, Dodd's writing has elicited the attention of historians of sexuality and nineteenth-century romantic friendship between men especially. Historians such as Katz and Gay, as well as E. Anthony Rotundo, examine Dodd's diary in order to account for how his same-sex relations with men constituted friendships romantic and even erotic in nature.<sup>88</sup> Gay, for instance, highlights a diary entry in which Dodd directly contemplates whether his feelings for John Heath suggest more than friendship. Dodd writes, "It is not friendship merely which I feel for him, or it is friendship of the strongest kind. It is a heart-felt, a manly, a pure, deep, and fervent love" (February 4, 1837). Commenting on this entry, Gay continues, "It might in fact be manly and pure, but it was heavily invested with libido, a 'flame,' as Albert Dodd pictured it to himself, 'that was burning' in his heart" (208). Whatever Dodd felt for Heath, Dodd's diary indicates he did not "confess" these feelings directly to Heath (February 4; February 19, 1837).

But in Dodd's "next male romance" with Anthony Halsey, as Rotundo explains, "Dodd was not at all cautious about confession" ("Romantic" 7). To support the interpretation that "Dodd enjoyed an erotic relationship" with Halsey, Rotundo points to diary entries in which Dodd admires Halsey's physical appearance and describes spending the night together, embracing and kissing. Dodd writes, "Often too [Halsey] shared my pillow—or I his, and then how sweet to sleep with him, to hold his beloved form in my embrace, to have his arms about my neck, to imprint upon his face sweet kisses!" (March 27, 1837). As Rotundo remarks,

Not only does Dodd kiss Anthony Halsey as they embrace in bed, but there is an undertone of passion to Albert's Dodd's account of his mention of Anthony's 'beloved form' and in his remembrance of the kisses—and the nights—as 'sweet' ones. All these subtle differences take additional erotic force from Albert's confession that he found Anthony "*so handsome.*" ("Romantic" 7, emphasis in original)

Like Rotundo, Katz considers these and other diary entries and, seeming to echo Karen Hansen on the relationship between Brown and Primus, concludes, "The intensity of Dodd's feelings exceeded romantic friendship by including an erotic element" (32).

While Dodd pursued romantic and erotic relations with men, these relations occurred alongside and simultaneously with his other relations with women. As previously mentioned, Dodd uses the phrase "Dear, beloved trio" to refer to not only John Heath and Anthony Halsey, but also Julia Beers. In one of many diary reflections on his affections for both women and men, Dodd writes, "L-o-v-e, love; what is love? I can't describe it. All I know is that there are three persons in this world whom I have loved, and those are, Julia, John, & Anthony. Dear, beloved trio" (March 24, 1837). While Dodd may have "loved" just "three persons" up to that point, he later met and wrote about romantic relations with Elizabeth Morgan and Jabez Smith as well.<sup>89</sup> Commenting on Dodd's love for both men and women, Gay advances that Dodd's diary moves "without apparent strain from male to female loves," often from one line to the very next, and his "sexual choices" repeatedly "vacillate between women and men" (207-8). Describing Dodd's writing, Rotundo explains, "Dodd's romantic life...mixed male and female love objects," such that "His rapturous musings about John Heath mingled freely with love poems to a woman named Julia, and the

journal entries which glowed with his passion for Anthony Halsey filled the same volumes as those which his yearning for a beloved young lady named Elizabeth” (“Romantic” 8). Katz similarly concludes that Dodd experienced “strong attraction to men as well as women” (32).

While obviously drawing on these histories of sexuality and romantic friendship, I again take a different approach as a historian of rhetoric and writing instruction. I examine Dodd’s seemingly private writing about his romantic epistolary exchanges alongside his school-sponsored writing and accounts of educational experiences. Rather than reading his commonplace book, diary, and poetry album as evidence of the nature of his romantic and erotic feelings for men and women, I read them as writing that was rhetorically taught, learned, and crafted. In order to understand how Dodd learned his multi-genre epistolary practices, I identify potential relationships between what he was taught at Washington and Yale, and how he crafted his romantic writing. To do so, I study not only Dodd’s account of his educational experiences, but also institutional records of instruction at Yale. I piece together the specific features of Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education by drawing on a range of primary sources including annual catalogues and student and professor lecture notes. As I do so, it is important to acknowledge how existing secondary scholarship on Dodd tends to emphasize his time at Yale. This emphasis makes sense given that he graduated from Yale and the Albert Dodd Papers are held there. Yet Dodd spent more time at Washington than Yale, and more than half of his extant writing was actually composed during the time between his formal studies, while he was suspended from Washington and preparing for examination in order to enter Yale. For this reason, I also



consider these periods and relevant materials as much as possible in describing Dodd's rhetorical education.

#### **4.2 CLASSICALLY MODELED RHETORICAL EDUCATION FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

To set the stage for my argument about how Dodd repurposed his formal rhetorical training to romantic ends, this section characterizes Dodd's education. Dodd's training was classically modeled in three ways. First, Dodd's rhetorical education was *classically oriented*, meaning it was designed with the purpose of preparing students for civic engagement as citizens and civic leaders. I consider this feature of Dodd's rhetorical education first because it is the one most widely emphasized and celebrated within existing histories of rhetorical education. Indeed, as I have emphasized, the near wholesale focus on civic engagement has methodologically marginalized questions about romantic engagement.

But there are two other features of Dodd's classically modeled rhetorical education that I identify as salient. A second feature of Dodd's rhetorical education is it was *classically broad*, encouraging study of a range of rhetorical and literary genres. Dodd studied not only classical treatises and oratory by Greek and Roman rhetors, but also Greek and Latin literature. Third and finally, Dodd's practice in public oratory involved both speaking and writing. Dodd wrote a great deal as he prepared for debates and exhibitions about political questions. In what follows, I consider all three features of Dodd's training, before turning to

how the second and third features enabled Dodd to repurpose his rhetorical education in order to develop multi-genre epistolary practices.

#### 4.2.1 Orientation to Civic Participation

Dodd's rhetorical training was classically modeled in keeping with Yale's reputation. As historian of rhetorical education Robert Connors recounts, then-President Jeremiah Day's "Yale Plan was the touchstone of conservative classical college curricula in the nineteenth century" ("Day" 161). Composition historian John Brereton further explains how the Yale report of 1828 was in favor of not only classical education in general, but also classically modeled rhetorical education in particular (5-6). Especially early in the century, when Dodd studied at Yale, rhetorical education there may have come closer to following a classical model than any other form of nineteenth-century rhetorical education in the U.S. collegiate system.<sup>90</sup> First and foremost, Dodd's education was classically modeled in that all of his rhetorical training was oriented to civic engagement.

Such an education was designed to prepare students for participation not in specialized professions, but as *citizens*. In keeping with the ideals of classically informed education, for instance, Yale's annual *Catalogue* insists on "a *thorough* course," one that "maintain[s]...proportion between the different branches," and in which "*all* the important faculties be brought into exercise" (28, emphases in original). "The object" of the college, as opposed to professional schools, "is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the *professions*; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all" (28-9). In this sense, Dodd's rhetorical training at Yale was a general training, of citizens rather than particular

kinds of professionals. In keeping with this link between classical education and citizenship, Dodd's obituary refers to him as not only "a finished classical scholar," but also "a citizen."

Yet Dodd's education did prepare him for rhetorical participation in a particular sort of professional life. Rhetorical education has long trained privileged young men for civic participation via the senate, pulpit, or bar. These potential arenas for civic participation were directly taken up as a topic of debate assigned by Rev. Chauncey A. Goodrich, the Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Yale from 1817 to 1839 (Hoshor). Alongside other educational and political topics, Goodrich prompted students to debate, "Which affords the greatest field for Oratory: the Pulpit or the Bar?" (Wightman).<sup>91</sup> Regardless of which side Dodd might have taken when debating this question in college, he later put his own rhetorical education in service of civic engagement through the bar—as well as through the beginnings of a career in politics.

Following graduation from Yale, Dodd "pursued his legal studies with Hon. Mr. Ellsworth, and was admitted a few years since as an attorney at the Hartford county bar" ("Obituary"). "Determining to settle in the growing West," Dodd moved to St. Louis, Missouri and then Bloomington, Illinois, where "he opened a law office." According to *Biographical Notes of Graduates of Yale College*, Dodd "prospered in his profession" there (Dexter 288). Dodd reported the same in a letter from Bloomington to his brother Edward. Dodd writes, "in the legal line I can safely say I am doing very well, considering the whole amount of business done of which I get a fair share" (March 13, 1844).<sup>92</sup>

Also in Bloomington, the *Biographical Record of the Class of 1838 in Yale College* notes, Dodd "took an active part in politics; and had promising prospects before him" (53).

In the same letter to Edward, Dodd goes on, “As to my political debut it is not yet made, and I content myself with talking in favor of Van Buren, free trade &c., against Clay, a tariff &c. A number of my friends want me to run for the Legislature, and I should get the nomination” (March 13, 1844). Dodd expresses some hesitation, having “hardly been [in Bloomington] long enough to push forward,” but concludes, “I am not at all concerned that I can do something in that line in the course of time.” Dodd’s lack of concern was warranted, for “On the very day of his death, he was nominated by a convention which assembled at Bloomington, as a candidate for the State Legislature” (“Obituary”). Ultimately, Dodd’s obituary describes him as “a finished classical scholar” and “citizen” as well as “an attorney” and “candidate for the State Legislature.” Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education thus prepared him for civic participation as a citizen, a lawyer, and a politician.

#### **4.2.2 Study of Rhetorical and Literary Genres**

Part of how Dodd’s rhetorical education prepared him for this civic participation was through study of classical orators and rhetorical theorists concerned with legal and political affairs. Yet a second feature of Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education was that, in addition to being classically oriented to civic engagement, it was also classically broad in its coverage of a range of both rhetorical and literary genres. So while Dodd studied classical Greek and Roman rhetorical treatises, he did so alongside study of Greek and Latin literature.

Certainly Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education paid considerable attention to classical oratory and rhetorical theory. Dodd studied the rhetorical theorists

Isocrates, Plato, and Quintilian. But most studied were the Greek orator Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.E.) and the Roman orator Cicero (106-42 B.C.E.), both statesmen whose rhetorical practice and theory were concerned largely with law and politics.<sup>93</sup> According to Yale's annual *Catalogue* from the academic year Dodd was admitted, "recitations in the books here specified" included, in the second part of sophomore year, "Cicero's Brutus" and "Select Orations of Demosthenes, begun"; in the third part of the sophomore year, "Select Orations of Demosthenes, finished" and "Cicero de Oratore, begun"; and, in the first part of junior year, "Cicero de Oratore, finished" (27-8).<sup>94</sup> Dodd would have been responsible for this reading even though he entered Yale as a junior. As the *Catalogue* explains, "A candidate for an advanced standing...from another college...in addition to the preparatory studies, is examined in the various branches to which the class he proposed to enter has attended" (25). Dodd's diary entries indicate he did take an examination in order to enter Yale as a junior (May 28; May 30, 1837). Moreover, in addition to the above reading for the examination and junior year, "A course of Lectures on the oration of Demosthenes for the crown, [was] delivered to members of the Senior Class" (*Catalogue* 28).

Along with Yale's *Catalogue*, lecture notes also indicate Dodd would have been trained in the oratory and rhetorical theory of Demosthenes and Cicero. Lecture notes by Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory Goodrich make frequent mention of Cicero. Even more often, perhaps because of the "course of Lectures on the oration of Demosthenes" cited above, the notes mention Demosthenes (Goodrich, "Family Papers").<sup>95</sup> In keeping with Goodrich's own notes, those taken by one of his students, though predating Dodd, also reference Demosthenes (Wightman).<sup>96</sup>

Nor was such training in classical rhetoric limited to Dodd's time at Yale. In the "Preface" to the commonplace book Dodd began while a student at Washington, he references Lord Chesterfield, who in one letter of advice to his son recommends, "pray read *Cicero, de Oratore*, the best book in the world to finish [an orator]" (July 29, 1836; Chesterfield 134).<sup>97</sup> Moreover, just as Dodd's study of classical oratory and rhetorical theory probably predated his time at Yale, it stayed with him following graduation. In his own letter of advice, to his brother Julius, Dodd's postscript includes "Cicero's oratory" in a list of "good books to study" (April 12, 1842).<sup>98</sup> As the above range of primary materials makes clear, Dodd was thoroughly learned in classical rhetorical theory and oratory, especially that of Cicero and Demosthenes.

Yet, with important implications for how Dodd repurposed his rhetorical training to romantic ends, his study of Greek and Roman political speeches and rhetorical theory was not distinct from the study of Greek and Latin language and literature. At Yale, entering freshman were examined on not only Cicero, but also "Virgil, Sallust, the Greek Testament, Dalzel's *Collectanea Graeca Minora*...Andrews and Stodard's Latin Grammar, Goodrich's Greek Grammar, Latin Prosody, Writing Latin" (*Catalogue* 25). In addition to "a Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory," there were on the faculty "a Professor of the Latin Language and Literature" and "a Professor of the Greek Language and Literature" (26). And required books from across the years of instruction included "Folsom's Livy," "Adam's Roman Antiquities," "Xenophon's Anabasis," "Horace," "Homer's Iliad," "The Captivi of Plautus," "Tacitus," "Select Tragedies, viz. the Prometheus of Aeschylus; Antigone and Electra of Sophocles; Alcestis of Euripides" (27). Dodd's own writing was more specific about the literary genres he encountered during his studies at Yale as well as Washington.<sup>99</sup> While at

Yale, his poetry album cites the *Greek Anthology* as a source for lyric poems and epigrams. These include several attributed to the lyric poet Anacreon (582–485 B.C.E.). Far from being rhetorically oriented to civic life, most of these poems are about wine. Dodd's translation of one, for instance, begins as follows before turning to wine: "Why teach me the laws / And rhetorician's rules, / And all the profitless / Learning of the schools" (April 1838). Another entry in the poetry album, the final one in the section marked as from the *Greek Anthology*, includes an epigram about wine and love: "Wine, and the baths, and love of ladies / Leads one quickest down to Hades" (December 1838). Dodd's classically modeled education at Yale thus exposed him to wide range of classical texts, ones both rhetorical and literary, and the literary texts included poetry.

Of course, as with classical rhetoric, Dodd would have studied classical language and literature before starting as a junior at Yale. During his years at Washington, he also entered lyric poems in his album. Dodd's album includes a "Translation from the Aeneid / Book fifth, line 835," an epic by the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BC) (February 1834). Importantly, Virgil's *Aeneid*, unlike the poems above, was concerned with politics. While including the tragic love story of Aeneas and Dido, the poem's emphasis is on Roman empire, political conflict, and war. Dodd's poetry album also includes three translations of odes and epistle verses from another Augustan-era lyric poet, Horace (65-8 BC): "Translations from Horace / Book 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ode 16<sup>th</sup> / To Grosphus," and "Translations from Horace / Book 4<sup>th</sup> Ode 7<sup>th</sup> / To Torquatus" (April 1836). Dodd's poetry album thus indicates that, while studying classical rhetorical genres, he also learned classical literary genres, including epigrams and lyric poems taking the form of the epic, ode, and epistle. Not surprisingly, then, when Dodd writes his letter of advice to Julius, Dodd's recommended list

of “good books to study” included not only “Cicero’s oratory,” but also “Virgil” (April 12, 1841).<sup>100</sup> Also not surprisingly, as Dodd develops multi-genre practices for participating in romantic life, these practices are both epistolary and poetic.

#### 4.2.3 Practice with Oratory and Writing

A third and final feature of Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education was that it prepared students for civic participation through significant practice in oratory. Rather than simply reading and studying classical rhetorical theory and oratory, students trained as orators themselves. Through this training, Dodd gained practice with public speaking on questions of political import. Yet here too Dodd’s rhetorical education was classically broad, in that training in oratory was accompanied by significant practice with writing.

At Yale, Dodd’s rhetorical education emphasized declamations, debates, and exhibitions as forms of training for public speaking. The *Catalogue* explains,

Specimens of English composition are exhibited daily by one or more of each of the divisions of the Sophomore and Junior Classes. The Senior and Junior Classes have forensic Disputations once or twice a week, before their instructors. There are very frequent exercises in Declamation before the Tutors, before the Professor of Oratory, and before the Faculty and Students in the Chapel. (28)

The importance of this training in public speaking was further underscored by awards, with “Premiums [of about forty-six dollars a year] also given for Latin and English composition, and for declamation in public” (29).



Dodd gained practice with public speaking even before becoming a student at Yale. During his period of suspension from Washington, an exhibition preoccupied him nearly as much as his romantic feelings and affections. In fact, in a diary entry about his affections for both women and men, he ponders, "I don't know what; it may be this Exhibition which most occupies my mind at present" (February 7, 1837). While the rest of this diary entry lends little credence to the possibility that the exhibition *most* occupies Dodd's mind, there is no doubt he thinks and writes of it often, variously referring to it as "W. C. P. Exhibition" and "the Panthenon [sic] Exhibition" (February 5, 13; March 19; April 8, 1837). Most likely because of his suspension, Dodd writes in one entry of needing to get "a final permit of the Faculty" in order to "speak at" the exhibition (March 19, 1837). In another entry, Dodd reports that he went "to College to attend Society," and he goes on to describe a "debate," which eventually turned to "the question of putting off the exhibition," suggesting his participation may have been related to membership in a debating society at Washington (March 4, 1837). In multiple entries, Dodd records that he intends to complete the exhibition before truly turning his attention to other activities, including studying for the Yale entrance examination, and that he has gone "to College" to prepare for the exhibition (February 5, 7, 13; March 4; April 2, 1837).

Exhibitions, debates, and declamations at Washington and Yale served as practice in public speaking because they took place before audiences. Again, as Yale's *Catalogue* states, declamations were "in public," and students frequently spoke before the Professor of Oratory, before other instructors, tutors, and faculty, and before fellow students (28-9). Dodd's writing also confirms that he served as an audience member for other students, and himself spoke before audiences. While at Yale, Dodd writes in his diary, "Got a letter from

Jabe; and an invite to the Junior Exhibition” (August 30, 1837). While preparing for the Washington exhibition, Dodd writes about inviting Elizabeth Morgan to attend. Then, after the exhibition, he concludes his speaking “went off well considering. The room was full, with an audience very select. On the whole, I believe the audience was quite pleased” (April 8, 1837; see also April 5, 1837). Of course, no matter how “select” the audience was, this exhibition functioned as training for speaking publically before an audience.

Such rhetorical training prepared Dodd for speaking publicly on questions of civic and political import. Certainly Dodd encountered political speeches. For instance, on the same day he records his final preparations for the Washington exhibition, he remembers, “Last Wednesday went up to the City Hall to listen to Daniel Webster’s speech” (April 2, 1837). Dodd himself also spoke on and debated political questions. The debate topics Goodrich assigned at Yale are suggested by the papers of another student of rhetoric (Wightman). This student preceded Dodd at Yale, but Goodrich was the Professor of Oratory during both students’ tenures, so the kinds of debate topics were likely similar. The student’s papers record well over twenty debate topics. Yet with few exceptions, many of the topics can be categorized as having to do with education, and most to do with politics (Wightman).<sup>101</sup> Debates on education include, for instance, “Ought the higher branches to be included in the education of ladies?” and “Which is the most beneficial a public or private education?” Some of the more overtly political topics are: “Which is entitled to the most honor—Columbus for discovering the new world—or Washington for preserving our Country?” “Which is productive of the most happiness; a savage or civilized state of Society?” “Are wars beneficial?” “Ought the United States to take possession of Cuba?” “Ought the Poor to be supported by Law?” “Are the abilities of the sexes equal?” and “Ought

free blacks in our country to be allowed the right of suffrage?" Dodd presumably spoke and debated on a similar range of educational and political topics, including questions about what the country's laws and government should do or support.

While Dodd's rhetorical education at Yale and Washington offered practice in public speaking through participation in exhibitions, declamations, and debates, it is important to keep in mind the role of writing. As Brereton notes, a shift from public speaking to more private writing is often cited as one feature of the mid-nineteenth-century decline in classically informed rhetorical education (4). "Yet plenty of writing took place" even in eighteenth-century colleges, Brereton cautions. He cites Yale in 1766 as one example, in that students submitted writing to an instructor before delivering it orally (Brereton 4). Dodd's writing during his time at Yale confirms that assigned debates were something that, at least initially, he had "to write." In one diary entry, for example, Dodd explains, "I have got a debate to write on the question 'Ought government to support a class of men exclusively devoted to literary pursuit?'" (June 18, 1837). With no hesitation about his position, Dodd adds, "I espouse the negative." Less than a month later, he exclaims, "O dear me, I have got to write a Debate for tomorrow! A job!" (July 11, 1837). These diary entries confirm that debate *writing* was a common assignment for Dodd.

Also according to Dodd's diary, much writing was involved in his preparations for the Washington exhibition. In one entry, after remarking that he has "done more [writing] in the past month or two," Dodd describes in detail what exactly he has written:

Besides letters and this diary, I have scribbled a poem of 200 lines, for the Pantheon Exhibition, together with one or two smaller pieces in the rhyming line on various occasions. Then I finished a philosophical Colloquy

which Gillett [probably another student] began, though I did more than three fourths of the whole, for the same exhibition, and now I have finished my comedy of about 45 pages letter paper. On the whole the goose quill has lately become more habituated to my hand, and writing has seemed to come more readily than in a long time before. (February 14, 1837)

By Dodd's own account, preparing for an exhibition involved much writing, including writing across a range of rhetorical as well as literary genres. The exhibition thus functioned as training for public speaking in particular, as well as for writing "more readily" in general.

As we have seen, Dodd's rhetorical education was classically modeled: it was classically oriented to civic engagement through law and politics, it included study of classical oratory and rhetorical theory, and it provided training in public speaking on political questions. At the same time, Dodd's rhetorical education was classically broad: he studied Greek and Roman rhetoric alongside Greek and Latin language and literature, and he practiced oratory alongside writing. So even as Dodd's classically oriented rhetorical education emphasized public discourse for participation in civic life, his classically broad education exposed him to multiple genres—rhetorical and literary, spoken and written—with a range of purposes. As I consider next, it was this exposure to and practice with multiple genres and purposes that enabled Dodd to repurpose his training to not only civic but also romantic ends, as he developed multi-genre epistolary practices for romantic engagement.

### 4.3 QUEER MULTI-GENRE PRACTICES FOR ROMANTIC ENGAGEMENT

While Dodd's classically modeled rhetorical education served its intended purposes, preparing him for civic engagement through law and politics, Dodd also repurposed this formal training for romantic engagement. Drawing on his classically broad training in both rhetoric and literature, and his exposure to writing in a multiple genres, Dodd developed three practices for composing about romantic relations with women and men. The first of these was not a multi-genre epistolary practice, but holds significance because it is queer in the perhaps expected way. Having encountered examples of same-sex attraction and homoerotic relations in classical texts, Dodd wrote about these texts as a strategy for understanding and comparing his nonnormative romantic epistolary relations with both men and women.

Yet, whereas exchanging romantic letters with men quite obviously defied the cultural norms and genre conventions widely taught by the manuals analyzed in Chapter 2, Dodd's other practices were queer in a different way more reflective of his own use of the term "queer." Like the "complex generic hybrids" Spring studies, these practices operated according to an "epistolary logic" of address and exchange even where not taking the form of the letter ("Seemingly" 633). In Dodd's case, his multi-genre epistolary practices are queer in that his romantic epistolary address not only crossed categories of gender, but also transgressed boundaries of genre. In Dodd's second practice, he made a generic shift from composing a school-sponsored commonplace book to a diary, in which he wrote about romantic epistolary exchanges and even practiced direct epistolary address. In the third practice, Dodd experimented in his diary and poetry album with composing forms of

romantic address that were simultaneously epistolary and poetic. Indeed, it was a poem titled “Epistolary” and addressed to a love interest that Dodd called “somehow or other, queer in the extreme.”

#### **4.3.1 Literary Representations of Same-Sex Erotic Relations**

My analysis of the relationship between Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education and his queer practices begins in a predictable place, with his writing about representations of same-sex erotic relations. I say “predictable” because the homoerotic undercurrents throughout classical education, rhetoric, and literature are well known (Bizzell and Herzberg; Fone; Gunderson; Halperin, *One Hundred*; Hawhee). In fact, as I venture in Chapter 5, another queer history of rhetorical education could focus entirely on how classical rhetorical training prepared young men for participation in culturally specific forms of same-sex erotic relations. In the case of Dodd, because his early-nineteenth-century education was classically modeled, he not surprisingly wrote about classical representations of homoerotic relations.

Through Dodd’s classically oriented and broad training in rhetoric and literature, he read, translated, and wrote about texts that include representations of same-sex relations. Recall, for instance, some of his references discussed earlier. Depending on the specific texts Dodd had in mind when making these references, he may have found homoerotic representations in rhetorical and literary works as varied as those by Demosthenes and Virgil—as well as Sappho, as we shall soon see. In addition, depending on how much of the *Greek Anthology* Dodd studied, he may have encountered still other representations of

same-sex relations in Book 12, “a collection of over 250 epigrams devoted to pederastic sentiment,” including “the earliest anthologies of homoerotic verse, the *Garland of Meleager*” and “poetry by a wide selection of Greek writers celebrat[ing] love, desire, and sex between adult males and youths, often with great specificity” (Fone 40-4).

Most relevant to Dodd’s romantic epistolary relations with young men and women, however, was his writing about the Greek myth of Zeus and Ganymede. The myth of Zeus and Ganymede first appears in Greek literature in Homer’s *Iliad*, which the *Yale Catalogue* indicates was required reading for students (27). As literary scholar Byrne Fone explains, “the homosexual status of the myth at the time of Homer’s writing” is a matter of debate (16). But, by “the beginning of the thirteenth century,” Ganymede “had become the eponymous symbol for homosexual love,” and “there can be no doubt that later readers generally interpreted the story to be a founding myth of male love” (16, 107). Dodd’s reference to this myth of male love appears in “The disgrace of Hebe & preferment of Ganymede,” a rhymed verse in his poetry album (December 1837).<sup>102</sup> In Dodd’s verse, Jove “had a dinner / ...all of the gods, male and female, present were,” and “The radiant Hebe, all blooming in beauty, / Was flying about, performing her duty / As cupbearer.” Although “accustomed was she to the business...she hit / her foot against Mercury’s wand.” As she “fell,” “her robes” opened, and “those parts were exhibited / To show which by modesty’s law is prohibited.” Jove, “vex’d at this breach of decorum,” “sent her away in disgrace,” and “Ganymede he sent for, to serve in her place. / Which station forever he afterword had, / Though to cut Hebe out so in fact was too bad” (December 1837). In this rendition of the myth of Zeus and Ganymede, Dodd locates a story about the replacement of Hebe by Ganymede, about her “disgrace” and his “preferment.”

As someone who rhetorically participated in romantic epistolary relations with men and women, Dodd may have drawn on this story in a couple ways. For one, it is significant that the myth of Zeus and Ganymede even offers an example of same-sex erotic relations. As discussed in Chapter 2, such relations certainly were not modeled within manuals teaching nineteenth-century people how to participate in romantic relations through letter writing. Yet what is perhaps of greater significance is how Dodd may have drawn on the story about the “preferment of Ganymede” over Hebe in order to understand his own affections for both men and women. The story in Dodd’s verse not only references the early myth of Zeus and Ganymede, but also bears thematic resemblance to *Hebe and Ganymede*, a poem from the Middle Ages that, “is an example of an extensive debate literature that argued the merits of desire for boys and that for women” (Fone 107; see also Boswell).<sup>103</sup> In Dodd’s diary, he certainly argued with himself, back and forth, about the relationship between his affections for young women and his affections for young men.

On the one hand, Dodd wrote about his feelings of attraction to men and women as though those feelings were the same. For example, Dodd admired in remarkably similar ways the (Western, white) physical form he found attractive in both men and women. After also commenting on Elizabeth Morgan’s personality and demeanor, calling her “interesting,” Dodd writes in his diary, “In truth she is a beautiful girl, and I like my first acquaintance with her much. She is handsome, of the style of beauty which I admire, viz: light complexion and hair, and blue eyes;—just like Julia” (February 26, 1837). Then, a few months later, Dodd writes of Jabez Smith: “Went up in the City Hotel with Jabe and slept with him. He is a fine, handsome fellow, and he interests me much, light curly hair, light complexion, blue eyes, handsome [?] countenance, and a slight graceful form” (April 24,



1837). While Dodd never wrote of sleeping with Morgan or Beers, as he did with Smith, what Dodd found attractive in all three romantic interests, whether female or male, was a “light complexion” and “blue eyes.”<sup>104</sup>

On the other hand, where Dodd wrote directly about the similarity of his feelings for men and women, he generated more questions than conclusions. For example, in the diary entry most widely cited by histories, Dodd writes, “it seems the nature of my affection for A. H. and J. F. H. was really the same as that which I had for Julia. Yet one was for a female, the other for...” (February 7, 1837). Here someone cut pages from the diary, but as Katz notes, “Obviously, ‘a male’ completed the thought” (28). Katz continues, “Dodd was struck by the *similarity* of his ‘affection’ for men and for women” (28, emphasis in Katz). Dodd does indeed point to similarity—“it seems the nature of my affection...was really the same”—but what seems to have “struck” him, I would say, is that such affection was the same *even though* “one was for a female, the other for...” (February 7, 1837; Katz 28). In my view, Dodd seems to ponder this possibility rather than complete his thought in any conclusive way.

As Dodd explores questions about his feelings for men and women, he draws on basic rhetorical strategies of comparison. Consider also Dodd’s question, “what is love?” Dodd answers his question with the already mentioned declaration of his “Dear, beloved trio”—John Heath, Anthony Halsey, and Julia Beers—the “three persons in this world whom I have loved” (March 24, 1837). But as soon as Dodd names the trio he has loved, he quickly narrows his focus. In the very next line of this diary entry, Dodd writes, “But I leave the others, and turn my thoughts to the latter, Tony [Anthony Halsey]. What a sweet, lovely fellow he is! I do love him” (March 24, 1837). In this entry Dodd merely turns his thinking

to Halsey, writing more about his love for this particular member of the trio. Just days before, however, Dodd described this love as greater than that for Heath. Here Dodd writes that Halsey “lately seems to have occupied my thoughts *more than* J. H. and I feel as if I loved him *more ardently and intensely than* John. I do perhaps; but both are very dear to me” (March 21 1837, emphasis added). In this moment of ranking, Julia Beers receives no mention. Even at a time when Dodd compares his love for Beers to that for Halsey and Heath, Dodd writes the least of his affections for her, and suggests he prefers Halsey over Heath. Rather than settling the question of what love is, Dodd admits he “can’t describe it,” and writes instead to compare and understand his feelings and preferences.

In light of how he questioned his affections, and even the possibility of preferring Halsey over the other members of the beloved trio, Dodd’s entry of “The disgrace of Hebe & preferment of Ganymede” in his poetry album takes on further significance. Katz explains,

Considering Dodd’s cutting out Julia Beers for John Heath, Anthony Halsey, and Jabez Smith, the poem shows him employing ancient Greek myth, and the iconic, man-loving Ganymede to help him comprehend his own shifting, ambivalent attractions. At Yale Dodd read the *Greek Anthology* and other classical texts and began to use his knowledge of ancient affectionate and sexual life to come to terms with his own—a common strategy of this age’s upper-class, college-educated white men. (31)<sup>105</sup>

Like Katz, I understand Dodd as engaging with classical texts and their representations of same-sex affection as a strategy for coming “to terms with” his own feelings. With “The disgrace of Hebe & preferment of Ganymede” in particular, Dodd references the Greek myth of Zeus and Ganymede, which suggests possibilities not merely for same-sex

relations, but for same-sex relations that, occurring alongside relations with women, show some preference for men. It is in this way that Dodd seems most to have drawn upon his classically modeled rhetorical education. Having studied a broad range of classical texts, Dodd encountered homoerotic representations of same-sex relations. He engaged with these representations in order to compare his feelings for the women and men with whom he exchanged romantic letters.

#### **4.3.2 Generic Shift from Commonplace Book to Diary about Romantic Epistolary Exchange and Address**

Through his classically modeled rhetorical education, Dodd was exposed not only to classical representations of same-sex relations, but also to a classically broad range of writing, in multiple genres for a range of purposes. Indeed, the queer rhetorical practices that most interest me here have less to do with Dodd's crossing of normative gender categories for conventional romantic epistolary address, and more to do with his transgressing of boundaries *between genres*. In the next practice I consider, Dodd transgressed boundaries between the commonplace book, diary, and romantic letter. He shifted from composing a school-sponsored commonplace book to a semi-private diary. This generic shift is significant because, framed by what Spring calls an "epistolary logic," it enabled Dodd's writing about romantic epistolary exchanges ("Seemingly" 638).

As part of his education, Dodd was encouraged to keep a commonplace book. In keeping with how this book has been categorized by Yale archivists, historians of sexuality and same-sex romantic friendship treat the book simply as a diary. But Dodd's initial

intention to compose not a diary but a commonplace book is clearly marked. One of the pages just inside the front cover is inscribed, “My / Original / Common Place Book” (see Figure 6). As Dodd outlines in his “Preface” to the commonplace book, a professor at Washington suggested the practice of commonplacing, which Dodd eventually took up as a project of self-education in order to improve his writing:

It has seemed to me, reflecting oft and deeply on the necessity of acquiring a proficiency in composition, that the end would be best attained by spending a small portion of each day, if possible, in writing down my thoughts, currente calamo, freely and at random, on any subject which may arise in my mind. This plan was recommend to our Class by Proff. H. some time ago, and though, until now, by me rejected, yet it is not too late now to attempt to profit by the suggestion. (July 29, 1836).

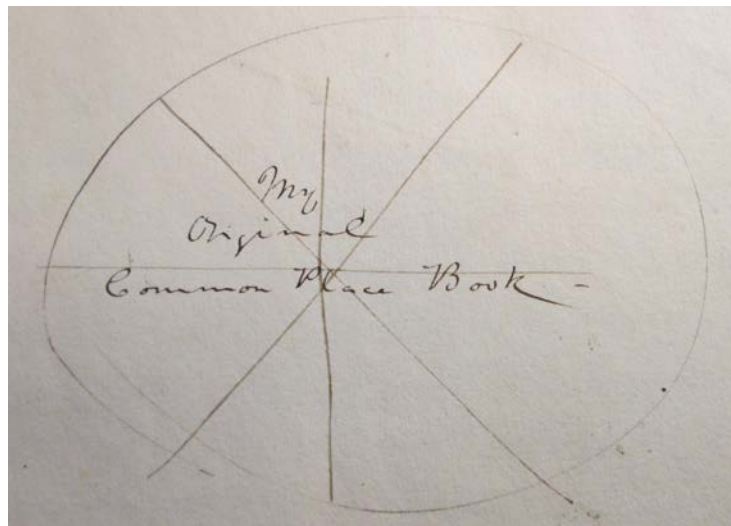


Figure 6. “My / Original / Common Place Book” by Albert Dodd (1836).

As rhetorical scholar Susan Miller describes, commonplace books played an important role in Western rhetorical education that may be traced from Aristotle to Quintilian and throughout medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment education (22). Commonplace books were first conceived of as “repositories for rhetoric’s common topics.” Especially by the nineteenth century, though, commonplace books included not only “the copied quotations that first defined their purpose,” but also “notes, self- and school-sponsored essays, journals, correspondence, speeches, legal documents, school exercises, and many other familiar forms” (35). Commonplace books thus functioned as a practice space to prepare students for discursive participation in more public forums.

In keeping with this rhetorical tradition, Dodd’s commonplace book consists primarily of what seem like self- and school-sponsored essays. In spite of Dodd’s stated aim to compose *currente calamo*, offhand and without premeditation, he “confined himself” in early entries “in the somewhat stilted way of someone following formulas” (Gay 206). There are five dated entries following Dodd’s “Preface” and prior to his generic shift to a diary. The first is an essay-like reflection on time, occasioned by Dodd’s anticipation of commencement and the completion of his second year of college (July 31, 1836). The second, “Miss Clifton, as Ernestine,” accounts for visiting “the new National Theatre” while vacationing in New York, where he saw performances of “Shakespeare’s entertaining comedy ‘Much ado about Nothing’” and the “play...‘The Somnambulist, or the Sleepwalker,’” in which Miss Clifton performed as Ernestine (September 29, 1836). In the third entry, Dodd notes briefly that he has not written as much as intended (October 24, 1836). Dodd begins the fourth entry, most like a school-based rhetorical exercise, with quotation of a question in Latin, which he then translates into English. After promising to first “take up

the subject literally and analytically,” Dodd quotes (again in Latin) a description from Homer, endeavors to “examine the subject in a metaphorical aspect,” and then to “build up an argument for the opposite side” (October 30, 1836). The fifth and final commonplace book entry, “Sketches of Travel,” reports on another trip to New York (November 4, 1836). Dodd thus maintained his commonplace book for just over three months, during which he made a total of only six entries, one of which was about his inattention to the book.

After complete inattention over the course of almost four months, Dodd made his generic shift from the commonplace book to a diary. Whereas Dodd started his commonplace book at the suggestion of a professor, it was reading the diary of one of his romantic interests, John Heath, that “gave [Dodd] the notion” to turn the book into a diary (February 2, 1837). This generic shift, like his initial purpose, is clearly marked. After the last commonplace book entry, Dodd draws a line, leaves the rest of the page blank, and enters a new inscription: “Diary” (see Figure 7). Such a shift within the same book was not uncommon, as described by Ronald Zborary and Mary Saracino Zboray in “Is It a Diary, Commonplace Book, Scrapbook, or Whatchamacallit?: Six Years of Exploration in New England’s Manuscript Archives.” Citing Dodd’s diary as one example, Zboray and Zboray trace the complex ways people “recognized [the] distinct form and purpose” of different genres, yet, “in practice...often merged formats, so that a diary, for example, could easily morph into a scrapbook, or a scrapbook into a commonplace book” (106, 102). As Zboray and Zboray claim, “the very moment these documents shift form or genre is often ripe with significance” (103). This is indeed the case with the moment of Dodd’s generic shift, which is certainly significant for my analysis of his multi-genre rhetorical practices for romantic engagement.

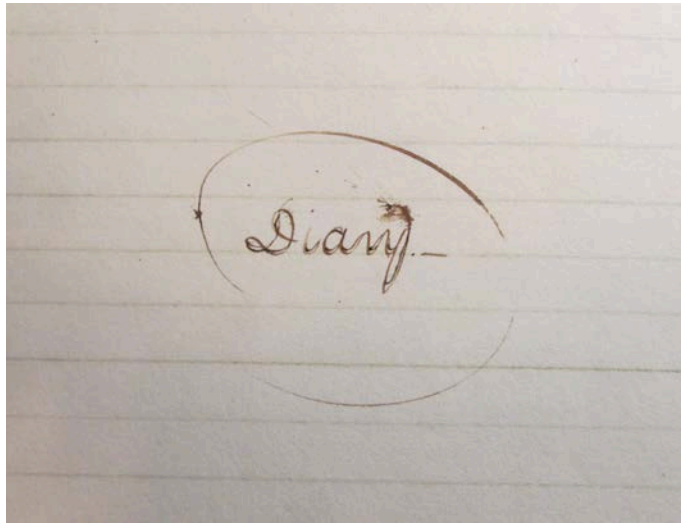


Figure 7. "Diary" by Albert Dodd (1837).

Dodd's generic shift from a commonplace book to a diary is significant because, in writing meta-commentary about the shift, he demonstrated the sort of genre awareness he had learned, an awareness that guided his subsequent multi-genre practices. In addition to separating his commonplace book and diary with blank pages and distinct genre-based titles, Dodd described his generic shift in the first entry following the new title page. With characteristic self-admonishment for laziness, Dodd begins,

The plan which I had laid out for this book, in my preface, seems not to have been followed very closely or faithfully and the reason is sheer neglect and laziness on my part. I am perfectly ashamed of myself, for the last date here is months ago. I might have filled this by the present time if I had done as I ought, and I will strive after this—but I won't make any rash promises; it will be better to scribble along when convenient, and, by the way, it appears to me that it might be better that this volume should rather partake of the

nature of a Diary, than to be followed out exactly after the manner which I first proposed to myself. (February 2, 1837)

Dodd's account, in spite of his use of passive voice, shows him making a purposeful decision about switching from a commonplace book to diary. He acknowledges the possibility of returning to his earlier proposal with greater determination and discipline. But rather than promising to do so, he decides to "scribble along when convenient." More importantly, he recognizes that his decision constitutes a shift in genre: away from the commonplace book he "proposed" in his "Preface," and to "a Diary." In writing meta-commentary about his decision to make this shift, Dodd demonstrates the sort of genre awareness developed through his classically broad training in a range of genres. He also demonstrates his learned rhetorical awareness of how a shift in genre involves a shift in purposes for writing.

This same awareness guides Dodd's other practices, as his move to compose a diary gives way to writing about romantic epistolary exchanges. Dodd writes *about* romantic letter writing in keeping with the conventional purpose of the diary genre, "to record daily events" (Zboray and Zboray, "Is It" 102). For instance, Dodd reports on trips to the post office, letters sent, and letters received (June 16, 1837). He writes about romantic epistolary exchanges with Julia Beers, Anthony Halsey, John Heath, Elizabeth Morgan, and Jabez Smith. Particularly in the case of these romantic letters, Dodd writes of delight at those letters received and anxiously awaits others. In the span of just one month, for instance, Dodd writes, "Yesterday I received a welcome letter from John H. which I have been anxiously looking for...Why don't my dear Tony answer my letter? I do long to hear from him again"; then, "Expect letters from...Heath...& Halsey. Why don't they write!"; and,



finally, “got a letter from Anthony, a very long and interesting one...What a good fine hearted dear fellow Anthony is! I love him beyond all expression” (March 21; April 16; April 17, 1837). Here Dodd’s use of the diary “to record daily events,” such as sending and receiving letters, is generically conventional (Zboray and Zboray, “Is It” 102). Yet this record is indispensable in the absence of extant romantic correspondence, because it identifies with whom Dodd exchanged his romantic letters. Dodd’s record is also suggestive of how his romantic letters defied generic conventions by addressing multiple suitors, women and men, at the same time.

More interesting than Dodd’s diary writing *about* letter writing, however, is the way Dodd used the diary to *do*, or enact, the practice of romantic letter writing. Operating according to an epistolary logic, Dodd experimented with composing direct epistolary address in his diary in order to address John Heath in ways Dodd reported he did not dare to through the actual letter genre. Dodd’s diary suggests that, while he was open about the intensity of his feelings when writing to Halsey and Smith, letters to Heath were more guarded. Consider, for instance, the diary entry in which Dodd writes about his love for Heath, explaining it “is not friendship merely...It is a heart-felt, a manly, a pure, deep, and fervent love” (February 4, 1837). Dodd hopes he will see Heath again, and then shifts to direct address: “...shall I never see him again? O that I could! ‘John, dear John, I love you, indeed I love you. But you are not here, you cannot hear me confess this too [sic] you, a confession which perhaps you would care not for.’” Dodd does more than write about his love for Heath. Dodd declares this love by using the rhetorical figure of apostrophe to compose second-person address with the salutation-like “dear.” Dodd further distinguishes this romantic epistolary address from the rest of the diary entry by using quotation marks.

Dodd also writes aware of Heath's inability to "hear" his epistolary confession of feelings because it is made in a diary. In the rest of this diary entry, Dodd returns to an account of events and describes further his feelings for Heath, referring to Heath in the third person. In the final sentence, Dodd "hope[s] that we may meet again," but concludes, "in the meantime, we can write to each other and thus renew that intercourse which has been so inconspicuously broken off." It is not just that Heath cannot "hear" Dodd's confession, for Heath will not read it either. While Dodd writes to Heath, Dodd does not use epistolary address in the form of the letter to declare his romantic feelings. Instead, he uses his diary to practice the epistolary address he will not compose in his letters to Heath. Dodd's awareness here, of the relationship between different genres and their audiences of readers, was learned through his formal rhetorical education, and further developed through his diary writing about romantic relations.

Nor was the above use of the diary to compose epistolary address an isolated instance. Dodd's learned awareness of genre and audience is evident in another entry from later in the same month. Dodd reports that studying in the room of another student, which used to be Heath's room, "called to mind the beloved form of the latter" (February 19, 1837). After describing how he imagined Heath "in my presence," Dodd shifts to direct address, "Shall I never see you again dear John?" Dodd laments that, when they were in Heath's room together, talking "freely," "I ought to have told him of my deep and burning affection for him...John I love you much, do you love me?" Of course Dodd expects no answer because, again, he writes aware that, however he might address Heath through the genre of the diary, he did not and will not do so through conversation or letters:

I never did tell John this, and perhaps it is all for the best; but John, here, in my private volume, whose pages shall be surveyed by no eyes, here in the receptacle of my passing thoughts, here do I repeat my secret avowal of deep, devoted attachment; my friend, companion...sole inhabitant of my heart.  
(February 19, 1837)

While Dodd does not expect Heath to read or hear his direct address and declarations of love, Dodd uses apostrophe and the multi-genre practice of composing epistolary address within a private diary in order to say to Heath what Dodd cannot bring himself to in conversation or by letter. Yet, however clear Dodd's awareness was about the diary as a "private" genre for making "secret" avowals, the limits of the diary's guaranteed privacy are also clear: here two more pages are cut from the diary (though not necessarily by Dodd). Still, in Dodd's queer multi-genre practice, he composed romantic epistolary address to Heath not within letters, but within what he intended to be a private diary.

It is possible Dodd also used the diary to practice romantic epistolary address that *did* find its way into letters. Dodd certainly uses the diary to address other romantic interests, such as Halsey, with whom he seems to have been more open about his feelings. In the entry about Dodd's "Dear, beloved trio," Dodd declares his "love" for Halsey in the third person. Dodd then turns to a second-person, epistolary-like address, with, "Tony, How I long to see you, to embrace you, to press you to my bosom, my own dear Tony!" (March 24, 1837). A few days later, Dodd again turns from writing *about* to writing *to* Halsey: "Dear, dearest Anthony! Thou are mine own friend, my most beloved of all! To see these again! What rapture it would be, thou sweet, lovely, dear, beloved, beautiful, adored Anthony!" (March 27, 1837). Of course, this extant romantic address is in Dodd's diary, but

in this case the diary may have functioned as a practice ground for composing address in actual letters. In the same entry, Dodd refers to his ongoing epistolary exchange with Halsey: "I must write to him soon in answer to his last letter." Moreover, in Dodd's diary writing about Halsey, unlike that about Heath, there is no indication Dodd held back in expressing his feelings. This romantic epistolary address that Dodd composed in his commonplace book turned diary may have found its way into Dodd's answer to Halsey's letter.

Dodd's second queer multi-genre practice of composing romantic epistolary address within a diary emerged, again, from Dodd's school-sponsored commonplace book. Dodd started with the commonplace book genre, typical to classically modeled rhetorical training and recommended within his formal education. Then, informed by his learned rhetorical awareness of genre, purpose, and audience, Dodd repurposed this training to shift from a commonplace book to a diary. Having made this shift, Dodd operated according to an "epistolary logic," using the diary to write about *and even enact* romantic epistolary address (Spring, "Seemingly" 638).

### **4.3.3 Cross-Genre Poetic and Epistolary Romantic Address**

Dodd also enacted romantic epistolary address through various poetic forms. Enabled by his classically broad training in a range of both rhetorical and literary genres for writing, Dodd developed a third multi-genre practice of composing romantic epistolary address that crossed generic lines between letters, poetry, and epistle verse. He wrote in his diary about addressing romantic interests through not only the romantic letter genre, but also

the “poetique”; he included in his poetry album poems resembling the epistle verse tradition he encountered while a college student; and finally, most significantly, he experimented with forms of romantic address that engaged the generic relationship letters and poetry in ways “somehow or other, queer in the extreme.”

The range of written genres Dodd encountered through his classically broad education included lyric poetry in the form of the ode, as previously discussed, as well as the epistle verse. Epistle verses are, quite simply, poems of direct address that read as letters. The two most influential strands within the epistle verse tradition are those following Ovid, more known for verses taking up questions of romance and love, and Horace, for those taking up questions of morality and philosophy (France 516-21). Yale’s *Catalogue* suggests Dodd would have studied the epistle verses of Horace, who was listed as required reading in multiple places throughout the curriculum (27). The influence of Horace is also evident in Dodd’s poetry album. His translations include Horace’s “To Grosphus” and “To Torquatus,” in which the speaker makes use of direct epistolary address (April 1836).<sup>106</sup> Dodd composed forms of address that, not unlike those of Horace and the epistle verse tradition, were both poetic and epistolary. In one diary entry, for instance, Dodd writes, “I believe the next thing I will do shall be a poetical epistle to College, that is to the fellows in the fourth section” (March 2, 1837). Yet, even as evidence suggests Dodd studied Horace rather than Ovid, Dodd did draw on what he learned about epistle verse to compose specifically *romantic* address that was simultaneously epistolary and poetic.

In addition to writing in his diary about composing romantic letters, Dodd recounted addressing what he called the “poetique” to his romantic interests. French for the adjectives “poetic” and “poetical,” the term “poetique” is used by Dodd as a noun,

seemingly to mean writing with a close relationship to the romantic letter genre. He claims on multiple occasions to write a poetique to the young men he was interested in romantically (June 18, 27; September 3, 1837). In one of these diary entries, Dodd mentions the poetique alongside other rhetorical genres he encountered and practiced writing while a student. After remarking that he has a “debate” to write, Dodd continues, “I have also to write a ‘poetique’ to John Heath, besides numerous other epistles” (June 18, 1837). Here, Dodd’s use of the phrasing “*other epistles*” suggests he views the poetique as just another epistle, or at least another kind of epistle. Yet, when he later reports on having written the poetique, he seems to make a greater distinction between it and other letters: “I have got a letter from Jabe Smith. Have written a ‘poetique’ to J. Heath, a letter home for money, and one to the Tailor for a coat before the fourth of July” (“Tuesday noon,” [June 27, 1837]). In this entry, “a ‘poetique’” is different from “a letter,” and not just familial and business letters, but romantic letters from Jabez Smith. So while it is unclear how exactly Dodd understands the relationship between a poetique and a romantic letter, he certainly sees some relationship.

Dodd represents the poetique as a form of writing that, even if not the same as a letter, similarly operates according to an “epistolary logic” (Spring, “Seemingly” 638). Like the writing by female students that Spring examines, Dodd’s poetique writing resembles features of the letter genre though not taking the form of a letter; it operates according to an “epistolary logic” insofar as it is addressed and exchanged (633, 638). While Spring studies compositions and sermons, as opposed to poetry (or the diary), she emphasizes how students directly addressed these other genres to readers, as well as exchanged the genres, much like a writer would a letter. In a similar way, Dodd’s poetique is marked by a

romantic epistolary logic of address and exchange, in that he addressed the poetique to other young men and exchanged it with them like one does a romantic letter.

Along with the poetique exchanges Dodd described in his diary, his poetry album includes a number of romantic poems framed by an epistolary logic of address. Some of these, in keeping with the epistle verse tradition, are titled with a direct address. In "To Elizabeth," the speaker begins, "I think of thee, Elizabeth," declaring that, "Whatever I do, wherever I roam," the speaker's thoughts turn to "thee at home" (June 1838). The poem returns throughout to versions of the opening refrain, with the final stanza concluding, "I think of thee, I dream of thee. / I sigh for thee, Elizabeth, / Be thou my friend, my guardian be, / And I will love thee while I've breath. / In good or evil destiny, / Elizabeth, I'll think of thee."

Other romantic poems in the album, though not titled with direct address, also address Dodd's romantic interests by name. Within one of many entries simply titled "Stanzas," the speaker begins, "To Love!" (June 1835). But the poem soon addresses the woman of Dodd's "Dear, beloved trio," Julia Beers, with language characteristic of his diary entries about love: "...to be beloved, / what rapture to the soul it gives! / ... / sincerely, deeply, ardently, with pure affection... / .../ Yes Julia I do love thee." In the concluding stanza, Dodd writes, "I adore thee; I confess / the sincere feelings of my heart," even "though my words my thoughts express" not "with Sapphic art" (June 1835). In poems like these, Dodd declares his feelings in ways that blur generic lines between poetic and epistolary address. As with Dodd's diary entries about letter and poetique writing, the poems betray his awareness of both generic overlap and generic distinction: he sees a relationship between the letter and poetry, but he recognizes that his own "words," his

attempt at romantic address both epistolary and poetic, is not exactly “Sapphic art” (June 1835).

Somewhat ironically given Dodd’s reference to Sappho, the early and celebrated poet of same-sex love, all of his extant poems that are framed by an epistolary logic appear to address women readers. Yet these poems are queer in other ways, in that they transgress generic boundaries between the letter, epistle verse, and poem. Most queer is “Epistolary,” the poem that Dodd himself characterizes as a “verse... / ...somehow or other, queer in the extreme” (April 1836). Like the “Stanzas” above, “Epistolary” is framed by an epistolary logic of address not through direct address in the title, but internally: Dodd begins its ninth stanza, “And dearest Julia.” Beyond this epistolary address, and in spite of its normatively opposite-sex construction, the poem is indeed queer. In this poem, rather than simply writing in keeping with the epistle verse tradition, Dodd uses meta-commentary and the rhetorical figure of digression to call attention to what he finds “queer” about his multi-genre practice.

Dodd’s learned genre awareness is evident throughout this poem, as he highlights the generic tensions in what he calls an “epistolary rhyme”—tensions between the conventions for letter writing and conventions for rhyming verse. Dodd’s title for the poem “Epistolary” obviously emphasizes letter writing, whereas the writing itself is located within his poetry album and, consisting of twelve numbered stanzas of eight lines each, clearly takes the form of a poem (see Figure 8). Dodd begins in keeping with the conventions for letters, by locating himself in time and place, and then in the next line, makes a move characteristic of the piece, by calling attention to what he has just done: “At Greenvale, Hartford, in Connecticut, / This nineteenth day, of April...eight- / teen hundred



thirty six.../ ... / ...is the date. / Both as to...time / And place, of this epistolary rhyme.” Also characteristically, Dodd’s meta-commentary includes a digressive parenthetical. He interrupts the provision of location and date, noting that he wants “(a rhyme...in that third line, but / ...cannot find a good one).” This parenthetical puts in direct and obvious tension the requirements of the letter—location and date—and those of verse—rhyming lines.

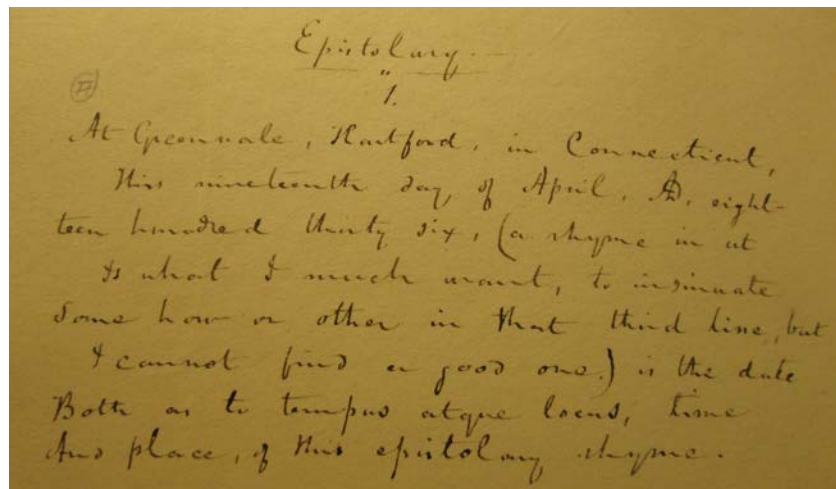


Figure 8. Opening to “Epistolary” by Albert Dodd (1836).

Continuing this rhetorical practice of composing romantic address that is both epistolary and poetic, Dodd also uses the figure of digression to highlight tensions regarding conventions for content. He represents the content requirements of verse as interrupting those of the letter. He begins the second stanza, “But stop: that verse, before I farther go, / If you have no particular objection, / Requires as it doth seem to me, although / ‘Tis right enough, a little circumspection.” After offering this circumspection, Dodd explicitly calls it a “digression.” In the ninth stanza, Dodd returns from his poetic digression to direct address, writing, “And dearest Julia now I turn to thee, / Since this long preface I

am safely through.” Dodd devotes the rest of the poem to content conventional for the romantic letter genre. The speaker asks Julia how she is, what news she has, and even how her family, cat, and dog are. As the piece begins to close, Dodd promises to write again “another day,” and he requests, “in the mean time I do hope and pray / that I from you a letter may receive, / relief to my anxiety to give.”

Finally, Dodd does close with another direct epistolary address and even a form of signature: “Julia, now farewell! / ... / ... / ... / ... / ...I now have got / unto the end... / ... I am ever yours, A. D.” Yet again, Dodd uses meta-commentary to emphasize the strangeness of his generic experiment. It is after declaring he has come to “the end,” but before the signature, that Dodd interrupts with, “which seemeth odd to me.” And it is just before this final stanza that he remarks, “(This verse though, by the way, to me doth seem / somehow or other, queer in the extreme [sic]” (see Figure 9). Throughout this romantic epistolary rhyme, Dodd drew on the epistle verse traditions he encountered through his classically broad education in rhetoric and literature.<sup>107</sup> Yet, with knowledge of rhetorical figures, awareness of audience, and experience reading and writing in a wide range of genres, Dodd repurposed what he learned in order to compose cross-genre romantic address to Julia Beers that was queerly epistolary and poetic.

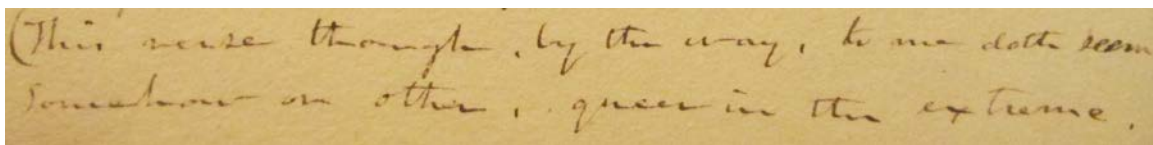
A photograph of a handwritten manuscript snippet on aged, yellowish paper. The text is written in a cursive hand and reads: "(This' verse though, by the way, to me doth seem / somehow or other, queer in the extreme,". The snippet is cut off on the right side.

Figure 9. Lines from “Epistolary” by Albert Dodd.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

Dodd's education was both classically broad and classically oriented. It was classically broad in that he studied and practiced a range of genres—rhetorical and literary, spoken and written. He read classical rhetorical theory and oratory alongside Greek and Latin language and literature; and, as he prepared for public speaking on political questions through declamations and exhibitions, he also wrote a good deal. His rhetorical training was classically oriented in that it prepared him for civic engagement, for participation in public discourse as a citizen, lawyer, and even politician. But Dodd put this training to other uses as well, repurposing it to develop queer rhetorical practices for romantic engagement. As we might expect, Dodd wrote about examples of same-sex relations he encountered in classical texts, as a strategy for comparing his nonnormative romantic epistolary relations with men and women. More interesting, however, were his queer multi-genre practices. Operating according to an epistolary logic of address and exchange, these practices crossed generic boundaries between commonplace book and diary, between diary and letters, and between letters, "poetique," poetry, and epistle verse. After beginning a school-sponsored commonplace book, Dodd made a generic shift to a diary, and he then wrote in the diary about romantic epistolary exchanges and practiced direct epistolary address. Finally, he wrote in his diary and poetry album about forms of romantic address that were both epistolary and poetic. While addressed to women, his extant poems were queerly multi-genre in that, instead of simply writing in keeping with the epistle verse tradition he studied as a college student, Dodd drew on his genre awareness and knowledge of rhetoric in order to call attention to what was "queer" about his writing (April 1836).

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR RHETORICAL EDUCATION, HISTORIES OF SEXUALITY & ARCHIVAL METHODOLOGIES**

In the preceding chapters I have queered the history of rhetorical education. I moved beyond the predominant concept of rhetorical education for civic engagement to investigate what I have termed rhetorical education for romantic engagement. I examined this pedagogy through three case studies of romantic letter-writing instruction and practice: popular letter-writing manuals that taught the romantic letter genre, romantic letters exchanged between African-American women Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus, and a commonplace book, diary, and poetry album about romantic epistolary address and exchange by college student Albert Dodd. Diverse, everyday people such as Brown, Primus, and Dodd learned and crafted “the language of the heart” within a broad network of educational sites, pedagogical texts, and related genres. They crafted romantic epistolary address in relation to not only the genre conventions and cultural norms overtly taught by letter-writing manuals, but also the language of the heart as represented in literary texts, other language practices taught via formal rhetorical training, and even other genres related to the romantic letter.

I argued that this complex constellation of rhetorical teaching and learning shaped romantic letters, relations, and subjects in predictably heteronormative ways, but was simultaneously subject to queer rhetorical practices that traversed cultural norms as well

as generic conventions and boundaries. I argued further that rhetorical education and practices for romantic engagement were of civic import. Citizens were acculturated as model romantic subjects who participated in idealized forms of national and romantic union. At the same time, they repurposed rhetorical training and romantic practices in order to subvert and even develop overt sociopolitical critique of those very cultural ideals and norms.

In this concluding chapter, I draw out the significance of my dissertation for scholarship in three areas. I begin with implications for *re-thinking rhetorical education*. Here, I anticipate implications not only for additional histories of the nineteenth-century U.S., but also for future studies of rhetorical education for romantic engagement across cultural contexts and historical periods. Next I turn to the dissertation's relevance for *re-reading romantic letters*. Having argued that romantic letters were rhetorically learned and crafted, I show what difference this rhetoricity makes to how letters are read within interdisciplinary cultural histories of sexuality and nineteenth-century romantic life. Finally, I close by pointing to still other methodological implications. I reflect on how I navigated the challenges facing my archival study of rhetorical education for engagement, particularly with its emphasis on the queer practices of learners. I emphasize the potential for *re-visiting archival methodologies* of imaginative reconstruction in order develop queer histories of rhetorical education and practice.

## **5.1 RE-THINKING RHETORICAL EDUCATION**

The primary way I have re-thought rhetorical education is, again, in offering a new concept that attends to pedagogical purposes oriented not only to civic but also to romantic engagement. Here I explore the broader implications of this re-thinking of rhetorical education. Returning to the concept of rhetorical education for romantic engagement as I defined it in Chapter 1, for the purposes of this dissertation, I underscore the implications of this new concept for histories of rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century U.S. I then offer an even more expansive account of the concept, suggesting questions it raises for future studies of rhetorical education for romantic engagement across other historical moments and cultural locations.

### **5.1.1 Histories of Rhetorical Education in the Nineteenth-Century U.S.**

Perhaps the most obvious implication of my dissertation is that, although Arthur Walzer may easily characterize Western rhetorical history “as a twenty-four-hundred-year reflection on citizen education,” everyday people in the nineteenth-century U.S. learned and used rhetoric for purposes not limited to civic engagement (“Teaching” 113). As introduced in Chapter 1, S. Michael Halloran claims, “The many other sorts of problems that might be addressed through an art of communication, [including] problems of...personal relationships...are in the tradition of classical rhetoric subordinate” (94). But other arts, such as the language of the heart, have also been taught and learned through popular instruction, self-education, and formal rhetorical training. Whereas rhetorical education is

generally understood as preparation for civic engagement, for participation in the public discourse of political life, I have defined rhetorical education for romantic engagement as *the teaching and learning of language practices for composing and participating in romantic relations*.

Working with this definition, prior chapters have explored how the teaching, learning, and use of rhetoric were oriented to composing and participating in romantic relations within the nineteenth-century U.S. I analyzed in Chapter 2 how complete letter-writer manuals taught everyday people to participate in romantic relations by composing romantic letters, in Chapter 3 how Brown and Primus learned to participate in their same-sex relations through romantic epistolary exchange, and in Chapter 4 how Dodd repurposed his formal rhetorical training to craft multi-genre practices of romantic epistolary address for participating in relations with men and women. In developing this analysis, I have shown another way that, as Walzer elsewhere emphasizes, rhetorical education is indeed “a *complete* art for shaping students” (Octalog III, 124, my emphasis). A *more* complete understanding of this art, as advanced by this dissertation, accounts for how the shaping of learners as “historically appropriate” citizen subjects involves a shaping of citizens as heteronormative romantic subjects.

A more complete understanding of rhetorical education for romantic engagement accounts, at the same time, for how learners shape or craft their own rhetorical practices. Therefore, against the backdrop of those cultural norms and genre conventions widely taught by manuals in the nineteenth century, I have also analyzed how Brown and Primus queerly subverted those norms and conventions in order to compose their same-sex epistolary exchanges and relations, as well as how Dodd queerly repurposed his college-

level rhetorical training in order to transgress generic boundaries while composing romantic epistolary address to multiple men and women. This study of both heteronormative instruction and queer practices has thus sought a more complete and complex account of rhetorical education for romantic engagement. By implication, and as the first extended examination of rhetorical education for romantic engagement, my dissertation suggests there is room for still other histories that continue to expand on the various ways that rhetorical training shaped romantic and sexual subjects and, at the same time, that rhetorical practices shaped romantic relations and life in the nineteenth-century U.S.

Even as my dissertation focused on romantic engagement, I have not left behind—nor do I suggest leaving behind—the concerns with civic engagement that Walzer and Halloran indicate as longstanding within histories of rhetoric and rhetorical education (Atwill; Bacon and McClish; Brereton; Connors, *Composition*; Denman; Enoch; Glenn; Gold; Halloran; Hauser; Kates; Kitzhaber; Logan; Poulakis and Depew). Instead, as articulated in Chapter 1, I have sought to queer normative distinctions between the civic and romantic, as well as between the public and private, the political and personal, the nation and sexuality (Berlant and Warner; Cloud; Elshtain; Favret; Fraser; Morris, “Archival”; Parker, Russon, Sommer, and Yaeger; Radhakrishnan; Ronald). In queerly traversing such distinctions, I have taken up—and do suggest taking up—the question of how the civic and romantic are interrelated within nineteenth-century rhetorical education and practice.

Through my case studies of manual instruction, Brown and Primus’ letters, and Dodd’s multi-genre practices, I found that nineteenth-century preparation for civic engagement was intimately wrapped up in preparation for romantic engagement. Certainly



complete letter-writers such as *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832) trained manual users as “American” writers of romantic letters. Where these manuals modeled genre conventions for the romantic letter, the manuals trained citizens to pursue an idealized form of normative romantic union that was reinforced through connections to idealized forms of national union. Like manual instruction in the romantic letter genre, the correspondence of Brown and Primus was primarily oriented to romantic engagement. Yet their romantic epistolary exchange also supported their civic engagement. Even as these women exchanged letters with purposes largely romantic, they wrote to develop critiques of post-Civil War racial politics. Their critiques exposed just how idealized those forms of romantic and national union taught by manuals were, pointing to how, as African-American women in a same-sex relationship, they were denied the pursuit of such union through the national institutions of marriage and the post. Finally, for Dodd, the multi-genre practices he used to participate in his romantic life were absolutely informed by his college-level rhetorical education, although it was designed to prepare privileged men for full participation as citizens and civic leaders. Even as an upper class white man with access to a classically oriented rhetorical education for civic engagement, Dodd repurposed this training to romantic ends. He became a lawyer and political candidate, but he also developed multi-genre practices of romantic epistolary address for composing relations with men and women.

My study of manual instruction alongside the practices of learners like Brown, Primus, and Dodd thus points to opportunities for historians of rhetorical education to further re-think distinctions between what Halloran characterizes as the rhetorical problems of personal and political relationships. Future histories of rhetorical education in

the nineteenth-century U. S may explore how such training prepares students for both civic and romantic engagement and, in so doing, better understand the full cultural force of rhetorical education in shaping citizens as “historically appropriate” subjects.

Future studies of the relays between both civic and romantic engagement are crucial if histories of rhetorical education in general, and letter-writing instruction in particular, are to grapple with pedagogies of both gender and sexuality. Across the fields of composition and rhetoric, scholars are making productive use of the insights of interdisciplinary queer studies and queer theory (Alexander and Wallace; Morris, “Introduction”; Rawson). Yet in histories of rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century U.S., there is almost no mention of sexuality as a key dimension of analysis.<sup>108</sup> Rhetorical scholar Charles Morris underscores the archival challenges facing historians of rhetoric who study queer or nonnormative relations (“Archival”). But it is in histories of rhetorical education specifically, more than any other branch of rhetorical history, that such relations are ignored. Indeed, it is not merely that queer forms of sexuality have gone understudied, but that questions about *any* sexuality have been treated as distinct from and irrelevant to the more disciplinarily “appropriate” questions about pedagogy, politics, public discourse, and civic life. Histories of rhetorical education that queerly traverse distinctions between civic and romantic life thus hold potential for opening up a whole new arena of sexuality studies within histories of rhetorical education.

Such histories of rhetorical education also hold potential for invigorating feminist scholarship by bringing together studies of sexuality with studies of gender. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, feminist historians who study letter-writing instruction as a form of rhetorical education have examined at length the gendering of instruction in genres of the

letter (Donawerth; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; Spring, "Meditation"). Feminist historians consider, for example, the political significance of nineteenth-century women being taught relatively private subgenres of the letter, such as letters of family and friendship, but not the more public subgenres men were taught. Yet, as Chapters 2 and 4 made clear, the most seemingly private subgenre, the romantic letter, was also taught, learned, and used by men. I thus suggest that the relays between practices of romantic and civic life may be further examined in ways that, rather than focusing on one gender, consider the intersections of gender with sexuality. While my primary interest is in queer and same-sex rhetorical practices, future histories could examine at length how women and men learned and used practices for rhetorical participation in opposite-sex relations, both normative and not. Indeed, across histories of rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century U.S., there is room to further study romantic engagement, taking up its connections to civic life through pedagogies of gender and sexuality.

### **5.1.2 Future Studies across Periods and Locations**

While my queer history of rhetorical education for romantic engagement most obviously holds significance for future histories of rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century U.S., this dissertation also raises questions for studies of rhetorical teaching and learning during other periods and in other cultural locations. Certainly my concept of rhetorical education for romantic engagement has emerged from archival investigation of a historically and culturally specific context. Focusing on the postal age in the nineteenth-century U.S., I

researched education and practices related to the language of the heart and the romantic letter genre.

In other locations and moments, however, rhetorical training in other genres and modes will be more salient. Indeed, I formulated my initial definition of rhetorical education for rhetorical education with the goal that it be relevant for studies of teaching, learning, and practice in other genres and modes. Again, I define rhetorical education for romantic engagement as *the teaching and learning of language practices for composing and participating in romantic relations*. Crucial to the potential relevance of this concept for studies across periods and locations is my use of the intentionally broad and perhaps even vague phrase “language practices.” While “language” maintains some interest in the role of alphabetic language, “practices” are not limited to romantic letters or alphabetic writing. Instead, depending on the cultural and historical context under study, future scholarship may consider instruction and practices that are written, spoken, digital, or multimodal.

Histories of Western rhetorical education for romantic engagement could easily begin, for instance, with the ways classical rhetorical training through oral dialogue and declamation exercises prepared young men for rhetorical participation in specific forms of same-sex erotic relations. As noted in Chapter 4’s analysis of Dodd’s encounters with representations of homoerotic relations within classical rhetoric and literature, eroticized same-sex relations between men were a fairly standard feature of classical rhetorical education (Bizzell and Herzberg; Fone; Gunderson; Hawhee). Such relations were seen as pedagogically productive for training in rhetoric, for instance by Isocrates; Plato is perhaps best known for his use of and commentary on homoerotic relations via oral dialogues teaching about rhetoric. Moreover, as classical scholar Erik Gunderson’s work suggests,

rhetorical exercises such as the genre of declamation amounted to another important form of rhetorical training, also with potential connections to male-male relations. While Gunderson's scholarship is more concerned with rhetorical (and psychoanalytic) theory, future historical research could examine rhetorical education for romantic engagement in Ancient Greece and Rome in a sustained way. How, such research may ask, did training in rhetoric teach cultural norms for privileged young men's participation in same-sex erotic relations, pedagogical and otherwise, as well as opposite-sex romantic relations and marriage?

Another potential starting point for historical research on periods prior to the nineteenth century is suggested by Catherine Bates' history of courtly rhetoric in Elizabethan language and literature. Bates considers modern as well as prior meanings of courtship, analyzing literary representations of "both 'courtship' in the sense of wooing or making love to another person, and 'courtship' in the sense of being a courtier, of suing for favour, of behaving as courtiers should behave" (1). Bates offers what is primarily a study of literary and linguistic history. But a history more focused on rhetoric, education, and romantic engagement could investigate how English people were taught rhetorical practices for participating in courtly love during the Elizabethan era.

Of course, future studies of rhetorical education for romantic engagement may consider not only historical but also present-day instances of teaching and learning. Indeed, there is almost no end to the popular pedagogical texts that now teach everyday people language practices for rhetorically participating in romantic relations. These pedagogical texts include a large number of contemporary manuals. While taking book form, such manuals move beyond strictly alphabetic language; they teach the rhetoric of romantic

engagement via multiple genres and modes, addressing language practices that are verbal, embodied, visual, and digital.

One intriguing and disturbing example is Robert Greene's popular "primer," *The Art of Seduction* (2001, 2010). Greene approaches seduction precisely as Plato warned against it in his condemnation of rhetoric, and as nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals also cautioned learners to beware of. Greene instructs readers about the social power of seduction. He identifies types of seducers and "victims," teaching "cunning" strategies and "tactics" for how seducers may make an "art" of persuading and manipulating their victims (xx-xxv). Interestingly, Greene draws most of his types from literary figures of the past, so that the "rake" and "coquette" persist in this twenty-first-century instruction (17-28, 67-78). Greene's book is ripe for a study of present-day rhetorical education for romantic engagement. Such a study could ask, how does Greene bring together historical and present-day examples to teach contemporary readers language practices for participating in romantic relations through the art of seduction? How does Greene perpetuate and question cultural norms for gender, sexuality, and power through this rhetorical training? And finally, how do we understand the obvious ethical dilemmas of such everyday instruction in ways that account for its popularity, rather than simply discounting it as manipulative or even misogynistic?

Other popular manuals are less closely tied to the history of rhetoric, but nonetheless teach everyday learners language practices for rhetorically participating in romantic relations. For instance, Gary Chapman's popular *The Five Love Languages* promises in its subtitle to teach *How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate* (1992, 2010). Chapman's instruction moves beyond alphabetic language and verbal

communication: whereas one of his five “love languages” is “Words of Affirmation,” the other four are, “Quality Time,” “Receiving Gifts,” “Acts of Service,” and “Physical Touch” (37, 55, 75, 91, 109). Chapman also moves beyond the stereotypes and gender binaries that are propagated through communication advice in other popular manuals such as John Gray’s *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992, 2009). Yet Chapman obviously reinforces a heteronormative *telos* for romantic relations: he begins his book with the question “What Happens to Love After the Wedding?” and concludes with separate sections “for Husbands” and “for Wives” (11, 191, 197).

In addition to Chapman’s manual, other books teaching language practices not limited to the alphabetic include guides to online dating. Ranging from *The Rules for Online Dating: Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right in Cyberspace* (2002) to *Love @ First Click: The Ultimate Guide to Online Dating* (2013), from *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Online Dating* (2008) to *Online Dating for Dummies* (2004), these books offer advice on representing oneself in visual images and online writing as well as participating in the various forms of exchange available via online dating sites, email, and other forms of digital communication (Fein and Schneider; Davies; Koppel; Silverstein and Lasky). These guides to online rhetoric for romantic engagement, along with books such as Chapman’s, could be examined in terms of their instruction in shifting cultural norms for and modes of participation in romantic relations.

To fully understand the complexity of present-day rhetorical education for romantic engagement, however, future studies need to examine books like those above alongside other manuals offering less normative instruction in rhetorical practices. While the above examples of popular books seem to presume broad and perhaps “mainstream” audiences,

other manuals address more specific audiences, including “subcultural” ones. In terms of same-sex relations, there are manuals such as Neil Kaminsky’s *Man Talk: The Gay Couple’s Communication Guide* (2007, 2012), which teaches how to use language within romantic relations between men. And books on gay and lesbian relationships more broadly, such as Betty Berzon’s *Permanent Partners: Building Gay & Lesbian Relationships that Last* (1988, 2004), include advice chapters focused on language practices, especially in oral communication. These books raise questions about how, in our present moment, instruction in language practices for same-sex relations may also embed culturally normative conceptions of those relations as oriented to long-term (even “permanent”) coupling.

Indeed, what are perhaps more nonnormative, or queer, in this context are manuals teaching language practices for participation in relationships that, regardless of the gender of those involved, are oriented not to the couple but to various non-monogamous relationship configurations. These manuals include titles such as *Redefining Our Relationships: Guidelines for Responsible Open Relationships* (2004), *Opening Up: A Guide to Creating and Sustaining Open Relationships* (2008), and *The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities* (1997) (Matik; Taormino; Easton and Liszt). Such guides include extensive instruction in how to communicate about emotions, jealousy, and boundaries within non-monogamous relations. Future studies that examine these kinds of guides, alongside the more mainstream ones above, may consider the complexities of how various sites of rhetorical education for romantic engagement teach different language practices and cultural norms.



Future studies of rhetorical education for romantic engagement should also turn to a broader range of cultural contexts, not limited to Western rhetoric (Hesford; Lipson and Binkley; Powell). Such studies would need to interrogate the significance of Western concepts of romantic and erotic love within more global contexts. But, especially in present-day instances, there is room to explore how such concepts travel (in relation to more material flows) within global capitalization. Interdisciplinary scholarship is suggestive of potential starting points for locating primary materials.<sup>109</sup> In social scientist Nicole Constable's *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail Order" Marriages*, for example, she considers multiple modes of correspondence between Filipinas, Chinese women, and U.S. men. These correspondents write to each other in pursuit of marriage within globalization, with hundreds of Internet dating and "mail order" companies involved in the process of exchange. Constable's ethnographic study focuses on the experiences of the women and men involved. But another sort of study, on rhetorical education for romantic engagement, could ask, how are such women and men taught language practices for participating in these cross-cultural exchanges? Exploration of this question would lead not simply to pedagogical books, as described thus far, but to websites, often associated with Internet dating businesses. These websites offer instruction in the rhetorical practices of transnational online dating across significant geographic and cultural distance.

Future studies of rhetorical education for romantic engagement in cultural and historical contexts beyond the nineteenth-century U.S. could open up further investigation of the civic dimensions of romantic life. Like Western concepts of romantic and erotic love, notions of "citizenship" and "civic" would need to be interrogated in relationship to the

contexts under study (Hesford; Wan). Still, there is room to consider how sites of rhetorical education for romantic engagement shape citizens, global citizens, and even citizens as global consumers. As Constable's study indicates, many present-day pedagogical texts—especially those published and sold online—circulate globally. How do these texts teach language practices that encourage particular forms of state-sponsored romantic relations? At the same time, how does their instruction undermine those culturally specific conceptions of romantic relations that are most narrowly conceived? How might such instruction, circulating globally and teaching genres and modes for romantic communication across cultural lines, put further pressure on the very idea of “civic” life as tied to citizenship or nation?

My account of possible starting points for future studies of rhetorical education for romantic engagement is by no means exhaustive. Countless other websites, manuals, and past pedagogical practices could be studied. What I hope this account suggests, however, is the wide-ranging potential for future scholarship to use, extend, and revise my concept of rhetorical education. Re-thinking rhetorical education as oriented to not only civic but also romantic engagement, I invite additional studies that examine the teaching and learning of language practices for participation in romantic relations across different cultural contexts, historical periods and, by extension, genres and modes of romantic rhetoric.

## 5.2 RE-READING ROMANTIC LETTERS

In focusing on the romantic letter genre as a rhetorical practice for romantic engagement, my dissertation prompts not only a re-thinking of rhetorical education, but also a re-reading of romantic letters. Here the dissertation holds implications for interdisciplinary cultural histories of sexuality in general and nineteenth-century romantic friendship in particular. As discussed in Chapter 1, such histories rely fundamentally on romantic letters (and diaries) as records of past romantic feelings, relationships, and even identities. There is no way around this necessary reliance and, indeed, my own dissertation would have been impossible were it not for existing histories of sexuality and romantic friendship. These histories introduce Brown, Primus, and Dodd's writing to audiences yet unfamiliar with the primary archival materials and, especially important in my case, indicate that this writing pursued same-sex romantic and erotic relations (Gay; Griffin; Hansen, "No" and *A Very*; Katz; Rotundo, "Romantic"). Still, many histories of sexuality and romantic friendship tend to reinforce the commonplace conception of romantic letters as "authentic...evidence" of romantic feeling, behavior, and even sexual identity within a given period (Garlinger ix; see also Cloud; Jones; Lystra; Morris, "My Old"). While such histories approach romantic letters as unstudied, I argued they were rhetorically taught and learned through overt genre instruction. And, while the language of the heart is considered an expression of heartfelt feeling, I argued that learners rhetorically crafted this expression. Learners crafted their rhetorical practices in relation to not only the genre conventions for romantic letters widely taught by manuals, but also other educational experiences and even texts not overtly pedagogical.

Having developed this argument throughout the dissertation, I now suggest that historians nuance methodological approaches to reading romantic letters accordingly, by interpreting letters as rhetorically taught, learned, and crafted practices. To illustrate what difference this slight shift in approach makes, I return to examples of how Brown and Primus' letters as well as Dodd's multi-genre writing have been read. In each case, I show how their writing may be read differently if further contextualized as rhetorically learned and crafted in relation to conventions taught for the romantic letter genre and networks of other related genres.

### **5.2.1 Conventions for the Romantic Letter Genre**

Histories of nineteenth-century romantic relations between women rely on letters as evidence because, as historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg writes, "The letters women wrote to one another...constitute one of [the] principal sources of information about women's...feelings for one another" ("Diaries" 234). Yet, "Historians debate how to interpret these letters" (236). Two primary questions are debated. First, historians debate whether "these women's letters...suggest sexual involvement" or "passions [that] were platonic" (236). Second, as historical sociologist Karen Hansen explains, there is "controversy regarding the degree to which society unproblematically accepted the intense emotional relationships between women" ("No" 179-80). Within these scholarly debates, letters are read as evidence of past feelings and relations. But, as most historians realize, the mere existence of the debates indicates that romantic letters are far from transparent in what they tell us about past feelings and relations.

Both Hansen's analysis of the Brown-Primus correspondence and Farah Griffin's editorial commentary make important contributions to these scholarly debates because, as Hansen notes, prior studies of same-sex romantic friendship focused on white women ("No" 179, 183). Yet, in reading the romantic letters exchanged between Brown and Primus, Hansen and Griffin take up the same two familiar points of debate. Here I consider each of the two points, comparing Hansen and Griffin's discussion of each point with the other kinds of analysis enabled once the letters are re-read as rhetorically crafted in relation to the genre conventions widely taught by popular nineteenth-century manuals.

On the first point of debate, about whether nineteenth-century women's romantic friendships were sexual, Hansen elaborates on how she came to her "interpretation" of Brown and Primus' letters ("No" 185). While acknowledging Brown and Primus "left no evidence of genital contact," Hansen argues that, "Rather than simply a romantic outpouring of sentiment, the passion between Addie and Rebecca that suffuses the letters expressed a selfconsciously sexual relationship" (183). As I discussed at greater length in Chapter 3, Hansen's argument is based on her reading of a series of letters in which Brown first mentions sharing a bed at the boarding school where she worked with two English women, one she called her "female lover," and then later describes what Hansen characterizes as the "sexual practice" of "bosom sex," or "providing access to...breasts" (Hansen, "No" 186; see also Brown, October 20, 27; November 17; December 8, 1867). Hansen points to multiple examples of how "'Bosom talk' appears everywhere" within the correspondence, concluding, again, that Brown and Primus' relationship was "an explicitly erotic—as distinct from romantic—friendship" (184, 187). Following Hansen, but without extending analysis on this first point, Griffin concurs that, "If we are to believe Addie's

letters, her relationship with Rebecca was not simply an affectionate ‘friendship’...Several of Addie’s letters have fairly explicit references to erotic interactions between herself and Rebecca” (6).

In hedging with, “If we are to believe Addie’s letters,” Griffin makes clear the limits of letters as evidence offering a full or conclusive picture of what necessarily happened between Brown and Primus. Hansen too, in elaborating on how she reached her conclusions about “bosom sex,” underscores the interpretive complexities of reading letters as evidence of past romantic relations. Still, insofar as both scholars read the correspondence in order to ascertain or at least speculate about extra-discursive erotic and sexual relations, they repeat familiar ways of reading the letters and miss the opportunity to consider other ways. In my study of rhetorical education for romantic engagement, I have shown how the letters may instead be re-read as rhetorically learned and crafted—as evidence, in other words, of how Brown and Primus navigated the genre conventions for romantic letters that were taught within the culture.

In my Chapter 3 analysis of the same series of letters, for instance, I do not ask what Brown’s writing about bed sharing and “bosom sex” suggests regarding her sexual activities with the English woman whom she called “female lover,” or about the sexual nature of Brown’s relationship with Primus (October 20, 27, November 17, December 8, 1867). Instead focusing on how Brown as a learner navigated the widely taught genre conventions for the romantic letter, I am more interested in the significance of Brown electing to write to Primus about erotic interactions with another woman. As considered in Chapter 2, nineteenth-century manuals taught that the normative rhetorical purpose for romantic letters was to pursue marriage; the model letters in these manuals did not take up

the subject of erotic and sexual practices. And, while there is no evidence Brown used complete letter-writer manuals, she composed her romantic letters to Primus within a rhetorical situation culturally subject to the same generic conventions so widely taught by popular manuals. Yet Brown rhetorically crafted her letters in defiance of those conventions. She wrote letters that did not pursue the heteronormative *telos* of marriage and, instead composing with other purposes, she wrote about erotic relations with women other than Primus. Regardless of whether Brown and Primus, or Brown and other women, engaged in “bosom sex,” what the letters do make clear is how Brown rhetorically crafted romantic letters in queer defiance of genre conventions and cultural norms.

On the second point of debate, about the degree to which same-sex romantic relations between women were socially accepted prior to the late nineteenth century, Hansen again offers elaboration on how she developed her interpretation of Brown’s letters. Here Hansen highlights a letter dated January 21, 1866. In this letter Brown offers “a chronicle of a heated debate between Addie, Rebecca’s mother and a disapproving neighbor” about Brown and Primus’ relationship (“No” 180). Hansen, in developing her interpretation of this letter in relation to the broader set of correspondence, acknowledges the relationship “was highly visible and deeply enmeshed in the domestic networks of Hartford’s African-American community,” but support from community and kin was “not without ambivalence” (178, 189). Rather than the relationship being fully socially accepted because it was presumed to be platonic, Hansen argues, it was recognized as competing with the attentions of male suitors, and accepted only to the extent that it did not “interfere with relations with men” (200).

It is on this point (and only this point) that Griffin registers disagreement. In writing about the same “heated debate,” Griffin asserts that, “Rebecca’s family and friends recognize the closeness of the relationship...and seem to treat Addie’s emotional response...as a girlhood crush” (84). “In this respect,” Griffin adds in an endnote, her “interpretation differs from that of Karen Hansen, who argues that the community knew of the nature of Addie and Rebecca’s relationship and supported it, but nonetheless encouraged both women to eventually turn their affection to men” (290). Griffin and Hansen disagree, then, about whether to interpret the letters as suggesting that community members were supportive because they dismissively saw Brown and Primus’ relationship “as a girlhood crush,” or were supportive only if the relationship did not “interfere with relations with men” (Griffin 84; Hansen, “No” 200).

Also with this second question of social acceptance, which is widely debated across the broader scholarship on nineteenth-century romantic relations between women, Griffin and Hansen recognize that Brown and Primus’ letters are not straightforward evidence, but open to interpretation. Griffin, in noting how Hansen’s “interpretation differs,” underscores that reading the letters is indeed a matter of interpretation (290). Hansen also notes, “other interpretations are possible,” concluding that, “Understanding sexual relationships between women in the nineteenth century will always be a challenge, because of the centrality of texts as historical evidence...and their multiplicity of meanings” (“No” 200). Yet here too there is another way to read the letters. Instead of reading the Brown-Primus correspondence in order to “understand...sexual relationships,” I have read them to understand rhetorical education and practices for romantic engagement. I have read the “texts as historical evidence” of *textual* practices.



For example, while my own consideration in Chapter 3 of the above letter from January 1866 is brief, I focus not on what it indicates about whether and to what extent Brown and Primus' romantic relationship was accepted. Instead, I read this letter as suggestive of how Brown and Primus adapted the genre conventions considered in Chapter 2. Again, the convention was to write romantic letters in order to pursue marriage. I asked how, prevented from pursuing marriage with each other, Brown and Primus wrote romantic letters with still other purposes. Here my analysis considered a number of letters. But with the January 1866 letter, I did not write about what Brown's account of Primus' mother's comments might indicate regarding community acceptance. Instead, I noted that, in Brown electing to write that Primus' mother "said I thought as much of you if you was a gentleman she also said if either one of us was a gent we would marry," Brown crafted a letter that defied genre conventions (January 21, 1866). In this and other letters, it is not simply that Brown did *not* write to pursue the generic ends of marriage; she wrote to acknowledge and find ways of coping with the constraints that prevented her from pursuing marriage with Primus, simply because Primus "was [not] a gentleman."

In these brief comparisons among how Hansen, Griffin, and I read a couple of Brown's letters, I do not mean to disagree with Hansen or Griffin's interpretations. Nor do I mean to suggest that re-reading romantic letters with an emphasis on how learners rhetorically crafted them in relation to widely taught genre conventions is a preferred methodological approach. But, because histories of same-sex romantic relations between women seem to return again and again to debating two questions—about whether those relations were sexual, and about how socially accepted they were—I do urge taking up new questions. Potentially productive in this regard are questions about ways to nuance

interpretations of romantic letters through greater attention to how they are evidence of rhetorical instruction and practice as much as they are of romantic feelings, interactions, and relations.

### **5.2.2 Networks of Related Genres**

Interpretations of letters from the past may also be nuanced through greater attention to their significance within networks of other related genres and subgenres. The need for such attention is clear within interpretations of Dodd's multi-genre writing about romantic epistolary address, as well as the broader scholarly debates about romantic friendship between men. Much like histories of nineteenth-century romantic friendship between women, histories of romantic friendship between men also debate how letters evidence whether the romantic relations involved erotic and sexual contact, and to what degree those relations were accepted socially. Within those histories of romantic friendship between men that draw on Dodd's diary about romantic epistolary address, the same two questions are debated (Gay 210, 212; Katz 27; Rotundo, "Romantic" 8).

But rather than consider these two questions again, I reflect on Dodd's multi-genre writing in relation to a third point of interpretive debate: whether romantic relations between men were limited to youth. In "Romantic Friendship: Male Intimacy and Middle-Class Youth in Northern United States, 1800-1900," historian E. Anthony Rotundo argues that what distinguished romantic friendships between men, otherwise similar to those between women, was confinement to one phase of life, the period of youth between boyhood and manhood ("Romantic" 1). In a study of multiple relationships between

different young men, Rotundo even characterizes youth as a key feature of such relationships, which by definition served “the needs of young men at a perilous time of transition” (21). Yet in the case of Dodd, Rotundo comes to this conclusion based on a questionable approach to interpreting Dodd’s diary and letters without consideration of the complexities of related genres and subgenres. Here I examine how Rotundo, along with historians Peter Gay and Jonathan Katz, have interpreted Dodd’s writing as evidence of whether his romantic relations with men continued after graduation from Yale. Beginning with Rotundo and Gay, and then turning to Katz, I show how their approaches to interpreting Dodd’s writing may be nuanced by re-reading it as rhetorically situated in relation to a network of related genres and subgenres.

Rotundo’s conclusion that Dodd’s romantic relations with men were limited to his youth is based, at least on the surface, on a comparison: between Dodd’s diary writing about his romantic epistolary address and relations with men during his college years, on the one hand, and Dodd’s few extant letters to family members during his post-college years, on the other hand. Comparing Dodd’s diary and letters, Rotundo asserts that Dodd’s “correspondence grew impersonal and showed no indication of the romantic passions he had experienced just a few years before” (“Romantic” 88). This interpretation fits with Rotundo’s broader observation across instances of romantic friendship between men, that it was confined to youth. Yet Rotundo’s conclusion is not based, in fact, on a reading of actual primary materials. Rotundo makes no mention of conducting archival research on Dodd and, rather than citing the primary materials, Rotundo cites an account of them by Gay, another historian whose interpretation Rotundo only repeats. To show the limitations

of Rotundo's seeming comparison between Dodd's diary and letters, then, I focus on Gay's more original comparison.

Gay speculates that Dodd's participation in romantic relations with men may have ceased following his graduation from Yale in 1838. According to Gay, "It seems probable...—we cannot be sure—that [Dodd's] masculinity triumphed over his homosexual appetites" (211). To support this hypothesis, Gay draws on Dodd's letters to family following graduation. Just three letters are available: one to his brother Julius in 1841, one to his mother in 1843, and another to his brother Edward in 1844. As Gay rightly notes, Dodd writes nothing of his romantic life in these letters. Also remarkable is Dodd's advice to Edward about emotional "self-mastery" (211). Dodd essentially instructs Edward to focus on the positive, rather than worrying about what one cannot control, as Dodd himself used to do (March 13, 1844). Gay contrasts these letters with Dodd's diary, making the above proposal about Dodd's masculinity overcoming his homosexual desires, "just as his programmatic even temper overcame his intermittent depressions" (211).

In speculating that Dodd later overcame the "homosexual appetites" of his college years, and especially in doing so based on comparison between Dodd's diary and letters, Gay shows far less rhetorical awareness of genre than Dodd himself learned through his formal rhetorical education at Washington and Yale. In Gay's triumph hypothesis—as well as Rotundo's repetition of it—both historians ignore the differences between the genres of the diary and the letter, as well as between the subgenres of the romantic letter and the familial letter. Certainly we can expect that Dodd would write much more about his romantic life in a diary than he would in letters to his family members. And certainly we can expect that Dodd's letters to family, and especially his letter of advice to a brother,

would demonstrate greater emotional control than his relatively private diary, particularly given that the letter is dated more than five years after the last diary entry (Letter, March 13, 1844; Diary, October 14, 1837). In other words, Dodd's letters did not "grow impersonal" about his romantic life; all of his extant letters to family *were* impersonal, relative to his diary, on that particular subject. While Dodd may have experienced growth between 1837 and 1844 in any number of ways, the most significant differences between his diary and his letters to family are *generic* differences. These generic differences across the primary materials available do not disprove Gay's hypothesis; but nor do they prove Dodd "triumphed" over his romantic and erotic attractions to men.

Katz's very different interpretation of the primary materials underscores that the question, about whether Dodd's romantic relations with men were confined to his youth, is a matter of debate. In contrast with Gay, Katz speculates, "That Dodd perhaps found the reciprocal love he sought is hinted at in his later history" (31). Katz recites the familiar account of Dodd's post-Yale years, but adds that Dodd "became a law partner of the bachelor Jesse W. Fell" (31). Here Katz cites his sources from extended research about Fell (n. 11, 354-5). But then Katz claims that, the year Dodd died, Fell "personally carried Dodd's private papers (including, apparently, his diary) to Dodd's father in the East" (31). Here, curiously, Katz does not cite his source.<sup>110</sup> So it is unclear how Katz comes to the conclusion that Fell carried the papers; it is unclear how Katz, based on interpretation of the primary materials, comes to propose that Dodd "perhaps found...reciprocal love" with Fell.

In questioning Katz, Gay, and Rotundo's interpretations of Dodd's extant writing, I am more skeptical than in the case of Hansen and Griffin's interpretations of the Brown-

Primus correspondence. But my intention is not to offer an alternative argument about whether Dodd's romantic relations with men were confined to his youth. Rather, I mean to show how interpreting Dodd's multi-genre writing may be approached differently. Across both cases, what I want to emphasize is the potential for historians to nuance their approaches to reading letters (and diaries) from the past. In addition to suggesting historians read romantic letters as rhetorically crafted in relation to conventions taught specifically for the romantic letter genre, I also urge they read letters as rhetorically crafted in relation to a broader network of genres learned in relation to the epistolary. As I argued in Chapter 4, Dodd developed genre awareness through his formal rhetorical training at Washington and Yale, and this awareness guided his multi-genre practices for composing romantic epistolary address. As historians interpret Dodd's writing, then, this writing demands attention to Dodd's learned genre awareness and the complexity of his practices between and across different genres and subgenres. In this way, both rhetorical studies of genre and histories of rhetorical education have much to offer histories of sexuality and nineteenth-century romantic relations, by enabling scholars to further historicize texts of intimate life within the context of both genre-specific instruction and networks of other related genres.

### **5.3 RE-VISITING ARCHIVAL METHODOLOGIES**

Thus far I have explored the implications of my dissertation for histories of sexuality and romantic relations, as well as future studies of rhetorical education for romantic

engagement. In this third and final section of Chapter 5, I turn to implications for archival methodologies. Already in Chapter 1, I introduced some of the methodological challenges facing what Morris characterizes as the work of “archival queers” within the history of rhetoric (“Archival”). There I emphasized how queer theory framed my selection and analysis of primary archival materials, as I sought to develop the first queer history of rhetorical education in the nineteenth-century U.S.

Here I consider other types of methodological challenges that emerged as I conducted archival research. For each of my three case studies, I account for what I did *not* find in the archives, and how I navigated these archival absences by re-visiting feminist methodologies for “historical reconstruction” through “critical imagination” (Royster 83; Royster and Kirsch 19-20). Jacqueline Jones Royster first defines critical imagination in *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change among African-American Women*, and she further theorizes the methodological practice with Gesa Kirsch in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*. I emphasize the potential of Royster and Kirsch’s “historical reconstruction” through “critical imagination” for scholars seeking to develop queer histories of rhetoric and rhetorical education even where the primary archival materials seem limited.

### **5.3.1 Imagining Subversive Uses of Manuals**

When I encountered the complete letter-writer manuals analyzed in Chapter 2 during an early visit to the Nietz Collection, I was struck by how heteronormative their instruction in romantic letter writing was. At the same time, I was immediately curious about how people

in same-sex and other nonnormative relations would have used such manuals. In light of what I knew of same-sex romantic letters composed during the nineteenth century, I wondered about how to account for the gap between what these letter writers did and what manuals taught. It was in attempting to account for this gap that I first drew on Royster and Kirsch's methodology of "historical reconstruction" through "critical imagination."

For Royster, it was in seeking to historicize the genesis of African-American women's ethos in ancestral relation to pre-colonial West African women that she faced methodological challenges of not knowing as much as she wanted to about "individual" details (83). Grounded in her research experiences of productively working with such challenges, Royster advocates for "making connections and seeing possibility" based on what "traces" of evidence *are* available (80, 83). She suggests, "finding whatever pieces of the complex puzzle...that still exist and then...hypothesizing from the evidence, however skeletal it might seem, about what else seems likely to be true" (81). Royster expands on this initial definition with Kirsch:

The idea is to account for what we "know" by gathering whatever evidence can be gathered and ordering it in a configuration that is reasonable and justifiable in accord with basic scholarly methodologies. The next step is to think between, above, around, and beyond this evidence to speculate methodologically about probabilities, that is, what might likely be true based on what we have in hand...We use critical imagination as a tool to engage, as it were, in hypothesizing, in what might be called "educated guessing," as a means to search methodologically, not so much for immutable truth but



instead for what is likely or possible, given the facts in hand. (Royster and Kirsch 71)

Following Kirsch and Royster, I engaged in imaginative reconstruction by “hypothesizing” and engaging in “educated guessing” about queer and subversive uses of nineteenth-century manuals that seem “possible” and “likely” (71).

For example, in Chapter 2, I showed how manual instruction in genre conventions for epistolary address taught heteronormatively gendered romantic relations, how instruction in conventions for the pacing of exchange taught normative restraint, and how instruction in conventions for rhetorical purpose taught a normative marriage *telos*. Yet, with each of these three genre conventions, I imagined how letter writers participating in nonnormative relations might have subverted the conventions. Given how manuals provided model romantic letters as resources for invention through copying and adaptation, such as *Chesterfield's* “skeletons of love letters,” I imaginatively reconstructed that learners may have copied and adapted these skeletons to compose romantic epistolary address in ways that crossed gender categories (58a). Similarly, based on how manuals included cautionary letters consisting of “hasty” and “precipitate” proposals, such as *The Pocket Letter Writer's* “rash” proposal of a “hazardous and delicate nature,” I imaginatively reconstructed that learners may have subverted conventions for normative pacing and restraint by imitating these models of what *not* to do (103-4). Finally, given how some manuals offered examples of letters subverting rather than pursuing normative marriage, such as *The Fashionable American Letter Writer's* cryptogram, I imaginatively reconstructed that learners may have used cryptogram code to compose still other romantic letters with nonnormative rhetorical purposes (178-9).

While engaging in this methodology of imaginative reconstruction, I needed to be careful about my speculative claims and the connections between those claims and existing evidence. As Royster emphasizes, responsible historical reconstruction involves both imagination and “the need to do the hard work of engaging systematically in theoretically grounded processes of discovery, analysis, and interpretation . . . careful about ‘claims’ to truth” (84). I thus strove to be clear in Chapter 2 about the relationship between existing evidence from manuals as primary archival materials, and my own imaginative reconstruction about how those manuals *might* have been used.

Moreover, I sought to substantiate my hypotheses about potential manual uses as much as possible by systematically considering them in relation to actual letter writing practices. Ideally, as I conducted further archival research for Chapters 3 and 4, I would have found additional “traces” of evidence in the writing of actual people such as Brown, Primus, and Dodd who participated in same-sex romantic epistolary exchange. I hoped, of course, to find evidence of how these writers consulted and used the popular manuals so widely circulating. Unfortunately, I did not. Still, as I imaginatively reconstructed how people in nonnormative romantic relations may have drawn on manuals, I considered each possibility alongside Brown’s letters. The three potential subversions of genre conventions and cultural norms highlighted above are all ones that Brown practiced in her letters, as outlined in Chapter 3. In this way, even what remains part “imagination”—my speculation about subversive uses of manual instruction—is grounded in what Royster describes as the “hard work” of systematic analysis (84).

### 5.3.2 Imagining Participation in Romantic Epistolary Exchange

I again drew on Royster and Kirsch's methodology of "historical reconstruction" through "critical imagination" as I analyzed the Brown-Primus correspondence in Chapter 3. For this case study, the archival materials on which I could draw in order to understand queer rhetorical practices of romantic engagement through letter writing were extensive. Well over a hundred of Brown's letters to Primus, many of them several pages long, were saved. What was absent in the archives was Primus' half of the romantic correspondence. As we might expect given the class differences between Brown and Primus—Brown's work as a domestic required frequent moving from one boarding situation to another, whereas the Primus family owned their home—it was Primus who was able to save Brown's letters over time. Given the absence of Primus' romantic letters to Brown, my analysis in Chapter 3 focused disproportionately on Brown's rhetorical practices. Still, through imaginative reconstruction, I was able to work with the "pieces of the complex puzzle...that still exist and then...hypothesiz[e] from the evidence, however skeletal," about how Primus "likely" participated in the romantic epistolary exchange (Royster 81; Royster and Kirsch 71).

One way I imaginatively reconstructed Primus' participation was through consideration of how Brown framed her responses to Primus. As other historians have noted, Brown often repeated what Primus had written and then developed a response (Beeching; Griffin; Hansen, "No"). While such representation by Brown of Primus' role in their epistolary exchange is evident throughout the correspondence, an example I considered at length is Brown's letters to Primus about the novel *Women's Friendship* (January 30; February 23, 1862). My analysis there focused on how Brown used rhetorical

strategies of invention by writing to Primus about the language of the heart as copied and adapted from the novel. Within this analysis, I asserted that Brown did not simply relay the story of the novel to Primus, but more interestingly reframed that story through direct epistolary address in order to prompt an ongoing exchange with Primus about friendship, marriage, and the nature of their own same-sex romantic relations. This assertion rests, of course, on the premise that Primus did indeed participate in such an ongoing exchange, although evidence of Primus' participation in the form of her letters is not available. However, continuing to work with Royster and Kirsch's methodology, I hypothesized that Primus did participate, based in part on Brown's representation of Primus' letters.

Consider, for instance, just one of Brown's turns in the ongoing epistolary exchange about the novel and her relationship between Primus. In what is Brown's fourth letter referencing the novel, she writes:

*you say* that you have suffered for the last few months *yes* I now do credit your words and never again will you suffer if I can help it then *you ask me* if I believe that you love me or did I ever believe you did *yes* I did think you love me and truly think you do now *you ask* my forgiveness for the pain that you have cause me my Darling my Sweet Friend you have my forgiveness my Darling your friendship is ever been pure to me Rebecca when I spoke of that book I did not mean in that light that *you think* you did but some day I may be more capable of making you understand what I had reference too *no Rebecca* you never did anything [*? ly*] to me no anything else that way my only beloved friend *I will not agree with you* in this point *you say* I need never name the tie which exist between us Friendship this term is not [*? ble*] to you

and *you even say* that you are not worthy of it. (February 23, 1862, emphasis added)

In this letter, and in keeping with the larger body of correspondence, Brown repeatedly references Primus' participation in their exchange. As my added italics emphasize, Brown refers to her understanding of what Primus "say" and "ask" during prior turns in the conversation. Brown then responds with her own reactions to what Primus says and asks. Based on letters like this one, in which Brown represents Primus' participation in a conversation about *Women's Friendship* and their own relationship with each other, I was confident claiming in Chapter 3 that Primus did participate in an ongoing romantic epistolary exchange with Brown.

Another way I imaginatively reconstructed Primus' participation was through examination of Primus' notations on envelopes. Prior to conducting original archival research, I did not know these envelopes existed, because they are not mentioned in other secondary accounts. But upon visiting the Connecticut Historical Society, I found that Primus not only saved the envelopes to Brown's letters, but also took notes on the envelopes. Initially, I was unsure whether Primus' notations would be of any real significance to the dissertation analysis, partly because they were separated from their corresponding letters during archival processing, and also because the notes are limited mainly to an account of when she received and answered the letters. As I described in Chapter 3, for instance, the backside of a typical envelope includes the following notation: "Rec Mar 11<sup>th</sup> / 1862 / Ans Mar 16<sup>th</sup> / 1862." Yet, as I continued my research, I realized the dual significance of these notes. First, and especially in combination with Brown's representations of Primus' participation, Primus' notes seem to confirm that she did affirm

Brown's same-sex romantic address with response. Second, in combination with Brown's practices of dating letters and pacing her half of the exchange, Primus' tracking suggests how quickly she in turn responded to Brown. This timing of Primus' responses is important with respect to the genre conventions for pacing of epistolary exchange and cultural norms for the exercise of restraint within romantic relations as taught by nineteenth-century manuals. Examining the "traces" left by Primus' notations, I was able to imaginatively reconstruct that, in defiance of genre conventions and cultural norms, Primus frequently "Ans[wered]" letters from Brown within just a few days.

As I highlight the claims I made about Primus' participation, drawing on both her envelope notations and Brown's representations of that participation, it is important to keep in mind that such claims do require the "careful[ness]" Royster urges (84). While I remain relatively certain about the above claims, they are not claims of "immutable truth," but "educated guessing" (Royster and Kirsch 71). In fact, within this dissertation in particular, I have emphasized that letters from the past absolutely do *not* point transparently to how people truly felt; nor do letters point completely to what people actually did in their romantic relations. Because of the complexities of rhetorical education and practice, I have argued, romantic letters should be approached with the understanding that they were learned through rhetorical training and crafted in relation to genre conventions and networks of related genres. In the case of Brown's representation of Primus' participation, the representation is just that: a representation, which Brown rhetorically crafted. Still, even in cases such as this one, scholars developing queer histories of rhetorical education and practice based on texts like letters, diaries, and even envelope notations may draw on Royster and Kirsch's feminist methodology for imaginative

reconstruction, in order to hypothesize about likely rhetorical participation in romantic relations.

### **5.3.3 Imagining Connections to Educational and Generic Practices**

Finally, I drew on the methodology of imaginative reconstruction when developing my analysis of Dodd's multi-genre writing for Chapter 4. In this case, the available primary materials were both more and less extensive than those for Chapter 3. Archival materials related to Dodd's rhetorical education were *more* extensive, because he was formally trained at Yale (along with Washington). So I was able to also view institutional records of instruction in rhetoric during the years he was a student. Archival materials related to Dodd's rhetorical practices were *less* extensive, at least with respect to the romantic letter genre, because of the obvious fact that none of his romantic letters are available. But with both Dodd's epistolary practices and his rhetorical training, I needed to imaginatively reconstruct what he wrote and learned, in this case in relation to other generic and educational practices.

The biggest absence of archival materials for Chapter 4 is the absence of any of Dodd's romantic letters. Given this absence, I needed to imaginatively reconstruct Dodd's romantic epistolary exchanges based on his diary account. In one sense, this reconstruction was fairly straightforward. Throughout Dodd's diary, he noted when he received and sent letters, usually also noting who they were to or from. Based on what Dodd wrote elsewhere in his diary about his romantic and erotic feelings and relations with these same people, and aided by the prior research of historians Gay and Katz, I was able to claim—again, with

*relative* certainty—that Dodd exchanged romantic letters with Julia Beers, Anthony Halsey, John Heath, Elizabeth Morgan, and Jabez Smith. (Of course, this claim does require carefulness; Dodd’s diary, as much as Brown’s letters, is his crafted representation of those romantic letter exchanges.)

One way historical reconstruction was less straightforward, however, was in terms of how the above romantic epistolary exchanges related to the genres of Dodd’s writing that were actually available. I knew in advance of conducting primary research that Dodd’s romantic letters were not extant, because secondary sources clearly state this fact and focus on what Dodd says in his diary about letter writing (Gay; Katz; Rotundo, “Romantic”). Still, I went into the archives expecting (hoping, really) to learn from Dodd’s diary something more interesting than the basic facts of with whom he exchanged romantic letters. I did, but not at all in the way I had expected.

What was most interesting, in fact, was not what Dodd’s diary said about his writing that was solidly in the romantic letter genre. What was interesting was how Dodd seemed to develop epistolary practices that, while framed by the logic of epistolary address, were multi-genre (Spring, “Seemingly” 638). As considered in Chapter 4, one of these multi-genre practices was Dodd’s practice of composing direct epistolary address in his diary. The evidence that Dodd did so is clear, because the direct epistolary address appears in the diary (February 4; February 19, 1837). But exploring the rhetorical significance of this practice required imaginative reconstruction. Here the “traces” of evidence consisted of Dodd’s inclusion of direct epistolary address to John Heath in the diary. They also included Dodd’s writing about “never tell[ing] John” his feelings, about instead sharing them in a “private volume, whose pages shall be survey by no eyes,” along with Dodd’s calling this



declaration a “secret avowal” (February 4; February 19, 1837). Piecing together these traces, I imaginatively reconstructed that Dodd composed direct epistolary address to Heath in the diary in order to declare feelings Dodd did and would not in the actual letter genre. I imaginatively reconstructed, in other words, the significance of Dodd’s diary writing and direct epistolary address within the diary in relation to his practices of letter writing, although none of his romantic letters are available for study.

Where reconstruction was most required, however, was in imagining how Dodd developed a range of multi-genre practices for romantic engagement by repurposing his rhetorical education for civic engagement. From the available archival materials, I could tell some of what was taught about rhetoric during Dodd’s years as a student at Yale. I could also tell what Dodd wrote, in his commonplace book, diary, and poetry album, about his education and the texts he studied while at both Yale and Washington. I could tell, at the same time, that Dodd developed multi-genre practices for romantic engagement, based on how he enacted those practices his commonplace book, diary, and poetry album. But, in order to analyze the *relationship* between those practices and his formal education, I needed to imaginatively reconstruct potential connections.

Perhaps the greatest leap I made through this reconstruction was in imagining how Dodd’s learned rhetorical awareness of genre enabled his multi-genre rhetorical practices for romantic life. Certainly, Dodd’s writing evidenced that he learned—somewhere and somehow—to be aware of genre, not just in the simple sense of recognizing different genre categories, but in the more rhetorical sense. This rhetorical awareness of genre is most evident where Dodd describes his intentional shift from the genre of the school-sponsored commonplace book, “recommend to our Class by Proff. H.,” to the genre of the diary (July

29, 1836; February 2, 1837). As considered in Chapter 4, Dodd writes about his purposeful decision to make this generic shift. Because he prefers “to scribble along when convenient” rather than follow his initial “plan,” Dodd concludes, “it might be better that this volume should rather partake of the nature of a Diary, than to be followed out exactly after the manner which I first proposed to myself” (February 2, 1837). Yet, it is far from certain, based on the available archival materials, exactly where and how Dodd learned this rhetorical awareness of genre.

This absence of clear evidence as to where and how Dodd learned his rhetorical genre awareness is in no way unique. Even in cases where such evidence does appear to be available, learners are likely to have developed any form of rhetorical or generic awareness not only from formal training but also from living and writing within a broader culture marked by multiple rhetorical and generic practices. Still, imagination was required to reconstruct where and how Dodd might have learned his demonstrated rhetorical genre awareness. Because this dissertation focuses on rhetorical education, I was most interested in how Dodd may have repurposed his formal training in order to develop his multi-genre practices. Thus I examined the wide range of rhetorical as well as literary genres that Yale students were asked to read, perform, and compose; I examined also the wide range of rhetorical and literary genres that Dodd himself reported having read, performed, and composed. Working with these “pieces of the complex puzzle” that were available to me, I “hypothesiz[ed] from the evidence, however skeletal it might seem, about what else seems likely to be true” (Royster 81). I imagined how Dodd likely learned rhetorical genre awareness through his formal training and then repurposed this learned awareness in order to craft his rhetorical practices for romantic engagement.

In all three of my case studies, I have re-visited and drawn on Royster and Kirsch's feminist methodology of imaginative historical reconstruction. In each case, I turned to imaginative reconstruction not in place of careful work with primary archival materials, but where the availability of such materials was marked by absences. As Morris argues, the archives available for queer histories of rhetoric—and especially for queer histories of rhetorical *education*, I would add—are beset with such absences. For this reason, “archival queers must...utilize the tools of rhetorical criticism and theory to enhance navigation of archives” (“Archival” 147). As my dissertation has shown, Royster and Kirsch's methodology for imaginative reconstruction is one of those tools that archival queers may utilize. Imaginative reconstruction holds potential for scholars seeking to develop future queer histories of rhetorical education and practices, as well as for scholars initiating still other histories of instruction and practice for which available archives seem limited and marked by absences.

#### 5.4 CONCLUSION

As this concluding chapter has advanced, my queer history of rhetorical education for romantic engagement holds implications for re-thinking rhetorical education, re-reading romantic letters, and re-visiting archival methodologies. In re-thinking rhetorical education, I offer a new concept with the potential to guide future histories of rhetorical education that more fully account for how training in rhetoric shapes citizens as romantic subjects, preparing both women and men for participation in the interconnected domains

of civic and romantic life within the nineteenth-century U.S. I also define this concept of rhetorical education for romantic engagement expansively enough to be relevant for other kinds of future studies, across historical periods and cultural contexts.

In re-reading romantic letters, I offer a more nuanced approach to historians who rely on romantic letters as evidence when composing interdisciplinary histories of sexuality. While the work of historians already involves contextualizing the texts of intimate life, I urge further contextualization. I argue for reading romantic letters as rhetorically learned and crafted in relation to conventions for the romantic letter genre as well as broader networks of related genres. I exemplify the difference this nuanced approach makes by returning to my reading of the Brown-Primus correspondence, as well as Dodd's multi-genre writing, in relation to specific questions debated within existing histories of same-sex romantic friendship.

Finally, in re-visiting archival methodologies, I show the potential for a feminist methodology of imaginative reconstruction to enhance queer histories of rhetorical education. I underscore the archival absences encountered in each of my three case studies, in each instance emphasizing how I employed reconstruction: to imagine how popular letter-writing manuals may have been used in queerly subversive ways by letter writers participating in same-sex and other nonnormative romantic relations, to imagine how Primus may have participated in the romantic epistolary exchange with Brown, and to imagine how Dodd may have repurposed his rhetorical training to develop multi-genre epistolary practices for romantic engagement.

Not surprisingly, the implications of my queer history of rhetorical education are largely historiographic, concerned with how scholars of both rhetoric and sexuality

conceptualize our subjects, interpret primary texts, and navigate archival challenges. Still, I do point to possible starting points for future studies of how present-day people are taught and learn multimodal rhetorical practices for composing romantic relations through oral, written, and digital communication. To my mind, these are especially intriguing possibilities, particularly where there is room to make connections between past and present-day forms of rhetorical education and practice for romantic engagement. How, for instance, do popular books ranging from *The Art of Seduction* to *Man Talk* to *Love @ First Click* teach rhetorical practices in ways that simultaneously reinforce and challenge longstanding but in-flux cultural norms for romantic relations? Study of such present-day texts also holds potential for the history of rhetoric more broadly. How, on the one hand, might these pedagogical texts revive for everyday readers ancient questions about seduction, power, and rhetoric? How, on the other hand, might such popular texts be used to reinvigorate scholarly histories of both rhetoric and sexuality?

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Especially after the Civil War, increasing numbers of African Americans, Native Americans, and white women learned rhetoric at a variety of institutional as well as extracurricular sites. Many of these men and women used rhetoric to the ends of civic engagement—to impact social and political change on behalf of public good, and often to challenge the very forms of elitism so characteristic of higher education (Bacon and McClish; Enoch; Gold; Kates; Logan).

<sup>2</sup> Kate Ronald usefully challenges this common representation of classical rhetoric in “A Reexamination of Personal and Public Discourse in Classical Rhetoric.”

<sup>3</sup> Yet another potential starting point for exploring these questions is suggested by Walzer’s quick reference to Erasmus’ Renaissance letter-writing textbook, which included an encomium on marriage (‘Rhetoric’ 124).

<sup>4</sup> Also without emphasis on romantic letters, letter-writing instruction makes appearances throughout histories of rhetoric and writing instruction (see, for instance, Berlin 38; Brereton 438; Carr, Carr, and Schultz 18-9; Connors, *Composition* 32-4; Enoch 101; Gold 68, 91-2, 139; Kates 45; Kitzhaber 207-8; Logan 103). In Chapter 2’s analysis of manual instruction, I acknowledge how Eve Bannet, Mary Anne Trasciatti, and Susan Miller do briefly consider the teaching and learning of romantic letter writing.

<sup>5</sup> It is easy to call to mind the most flagrant instances: someone locates letters that “prove” a person was gay, or in a same-sex romantic friendship, or in a romantic friendship that was not sexual. As rhetorical scholars Dana Cloud and Charles Morris show, for example, controversies over how Eleanor Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln are publicly remembered turn in part on alternative interpretations of their letters (“My Old”).

Nor are such approaches to letters limited to histories of sexuality. As David Henkin writes in his history of the postal age, historians rely on letters as evidence, but “often with the underexamined assumption that letters provide unusually transparent windows into the sincere beliefs or private lives of their authors. In most of these accounts, however, letters are read with minimal critical attunement to their construction and with little interest to the material and cultural conditions of their transmission” (6).

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<sup>6</sup> Here I think primarily of Plato's *Phaedrus*, though my understanding of his condemnation of rhetoric and celebration of dialectic is also informed by *Gorgias*. For another account, see William Kelley's "Rhetoric as Seduction." Focusing on Plato's *Phaedrus* as well as *Symposium*, Kelley concludes that, "The ratio developing out of both dialogues is this: Love is to deduction as Truth is to rhetoric. Rhetoric is the semblance of wisdom as seduction is the semblance of love" (79).

<sup>7</sup> In this respect, my dissertation is informed by Lindal Buchanan's approach in *Regendering Delivery: The Fifth Canon and Antebellum Women Rhetors*. Buchanan considers not only how the canon of delivery was taught and learned through the rhetorical education of elocutionary manuals, but also how delivery was enacted through the rhetorical practices of students and speakers.

<sup>8</sup> I use the term here to refer to what Anne Ruggles Gere calls "composition's extracurriculum" (79). Yet as Jean Ferguson Carr qualifies, distinctions between descriptors like "extracurricular" and "university" are often "artificial," whereas actual teaching and learning traverse extracurricular and university sites, and not necessarily in simple, predictable, or one-directional ways ("Rereading" 96).

<sup>9</sup> Here Morris is informed by Cara Finnegan and Barbara Biesecker's "advice" in the same *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* special issue on the politics of archival research (qtd. in Morris, "Archival" 147).

<sup>10</sup> Additionally, as more recent queer scholarship such as that of David Eng, Judith "Jack" Halberstam, and Jose Muñoz makes clear, contemporary practices understood as homosexual or even queer within late capitalism may be quite normative (*Queer Time*).

<sup>11</sup> Simplistic divisions between "public" and "private" are also challenged within literary, cultural, and social histories of the letter (Decker; Favret; Gilroy and Verhoeven; Hewitt). As William Decker writes, nearly echoing Berlant and Warner, "what we identify as the private life is a conventionalized and thus public construction" (6).

<sup>12</sup> In making such claims, queer theorists continue a long tradition within feminist scholarship across disciplines of studying the ways notions of "private" and "public" restrict women's power, sexuality, and movement (Elshtain; Fraser; Johnson, *Gender*). Of course, the feminist slogan "the personal is political" also has an important activist history, which I am especially aware of as someone whose prior professional life involved working with organizations addressing problems of domestic and sexual violence.

<sup>13</sup> The distribution of civil rights via marriage is a central issue in contemporary politics and queer studies. Much queer scholarship in the humanities and cultural studies is critical of liberal assimilationist political projects that attempt to secure rights on behalf of middle class and largely white citizens of the U.S. in ways that, within late capitalism, recuperate liberal political theory and its emphasis on individualism, privacy, and choice. These

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political projects necessarily work at the expense of many people within and beyond current borders of the U.S. As Eng states, “queer liberalism’s claims to state-sanctioned rights, recognitions, and privileges implicitly reinforce a normative politics, not just of family and kinship, but of U.S. citizenship” (28). What is perhaps most troubling about these political projects is that, as Eng admits, borrowing the language of Gayatri Spivak, “we ‘cannot not want’” the rights and recognitions they promise (25).

<sup>14</sup> In Berlant and Warner’s terms, the “official national culture” of the U.S. has been constructed as heterosexual based on ideas about privacy that “cloak its sexualization of national membership” (547). They call this construction “national heterosexuality,” explaining that it “is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized...space of pure citizenship” (549). Yet, in contrast to how this national culture is imagined, “intimacy is itself publicly mediated,” in at least four ways: through the presumed division between personal and public spheres; the “link[ing of] intimacy only to the institutions of personal life”; the rendering of sex as “irrelevant or merely personal,” so that “heteronormative conventions of intimacy block the building of nonnormative or explicit public sex cultures”; and the “mirage,” made possible by those conventions, of “a home base of prepolitical humanity” that citizens leave to enter politics but may also return to (553).

<sup>15</sup> I put “American” in quote marks to create distance between my intended meaning and unquestioned uses of the term. I recognize it is problematic to use the term “American” in reference only to people living in (or citizens of) what is now the U.S., because such use ignores people throughout the Americas in ways complicit with deeply troubling logics and histories of colonialism. Still, I use the term where analyzing how letter-writing manuals from the nineteenth-century U.S. presented their pedagogy as a national “American” educational project.

<sup>16</sup> The standard place of letter-writing instruction as a feature of college-level rhetorical education is suggested first by virtue of the frequency with which it is referenced in historical accounts of rhetoric and composition. For example, while Nan Johnson’s *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America* is concerned with nineteenth-century rhetoric broadly speaking, she mentions epistolary writing a number of times, usually with reference to types of discourse or genres, modes, or divisions of rhetoric (33, 47, 62, 88, 211-2, 258). Similarly, in *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925*, John Brereton is concerned in a general way with the nineteenth-century beginnings of the first-year college composition course, but the primary documents he collects and contextualizes reference letters and letter-writing instruction with even greater frequency, though in this case in relation to composition classrooms, readings, assignments, and examinations (xvi, 46, 91, 93, 334, 335, 338, 355, 359, 368, 369, 379, 438, 518, 537). Finally, in *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States*, Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen Carr, and Lucille Schultz inquire perhaps most broadly into cultures of literacy, not limited to in-school instruction, and they characterize letter-writing guides as “related” and “affiliated” to the three textbooks



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traditions on which they focus (18). They too make a number of references to letter writing (37, 55, 70, 153, 187, 237).

<sup>17</sup> The rhetorical treatise that most influenced letter-writing instruction as a feature of college-level rhetorical education is Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1793). The popularity of Blair's rhetoric played a role in the inclusion of letter writing within nineteenth-century textbooks designed for classroom use. There were some composition textbooks focused entirely on letter writing, such as H. T. Loomis' *Practical Letter Writing* (1897), "a text book giving complete information regarding the construction, forms, punctuation, and uses of the different kinds of letters . . . together with exercises for practice." More commonly, though, school textbooks included sections on letter writing. One example is Samuel Newman's *A Practical System of Rhetoric, or, the Principles and Rules of Style, Inferred from Examples of Writing* (1836). Newman's textbook was incredibly popular—by one account, "first published in 1827 and in its twentieth printing by 1846" (Berlin 36), and by another, "the most widely used rhetoric written in America between 1820 and 1860, going through at least sixty 'editions' or printings" (Connors, *Composition* 220). In what amounts to a significantly condensed version of Blair's section on letter writing, Newman includes "Epistolary writings" in a chapter about style, under "Section 3. On modes of writing suited to different subjects and occasions" (202).

Blair and Newman's books were by no means alone, however. Johnson lists a number of nineteenth-century rhetorics who treated the letter, along with the critical essay, "as forms of composition with close ties to exposition": Jamieson, E. A. Ansley, Quackenbos, David J. Hill, John G. R. McElroy (*Nineteenth* 211-2). Likewise, in specifying those rhetorics and composition textbooks that provided instruction in letter writing, Albert Kitzhaber mentions those by not only Blair, but also Coppens, John S. Hart, A. D. Hepburn, D. J. Hill, Jameson, Kellogg, Swinton, and Quackenbos (85, 123, 208, 212).

Perhaps most telling is John Gage's survey of almost 200 composition textbooks, of which 52 percent included letter-writing instruction (201). Gage concludes that letter writing was "a considerable and consistent feature of composition instruction throughout the period, though clearly a dispensable one" (201).

<sup>18</sup> Likewise, in David Gold and Susan Kates' studies of university rhetorical education that reached non-elite students diverse by gender, race, and class, both historians appear to value letter-writing instruction because it teaches rhetorical practices for engaging with audiences about issues of public concern (68, 91-2, 139; 45, 53). Histories of extracurricular and pre-college rhetorical education also recognize the potential for letter-writing instruction to enable increasing numbers of people to participate in civic discourse. In Shirley Wilson Logan's history of how African Americans learned rhetoric through self-education, literary societies, military camps, and the black press, she recognizes the role of letter writing in the press, as both letters and letters-turned-articles were published (103). Especially in her study of military camps as a "free-floating" site of rhetorical education, Logan highlights the political significance of black soldiers—diverse in their class

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backgrounds, educations, and relationships to slavery—coming together to learn the practice of letter writing and use it not only to maintain ties with family, but also to participate in public discourse through letters to newspapers as well as government officials and offices (11, 18-23).

<sup>19</sup> There are also important differences between these feminist accounts. They seem to disagree, for example, about the extent to which letter-writing instruction constrained (middle class, white) women’s rhetorical participation—limiting it to a private, domestic sphere—or enabled it—providing entry points to public discourse, both through letter subgenres that were only semi-private and through letter writing as a training ground for more public rhetorical practices (Donawerth; Johnson, *Gender*; Mahoney; Spring, “A Meditation”).

<sup>20</sup> As Jane Donawerth explains, letter writing, conversation, and reading aloud—but not speeches and essays—were the forms of rhetorical practice taught and culturally sanctioned as appropriate for women (16). Nan Johnson’s analysis of letter-writing manuals shows how even subgenres of letters were gendered in the guides: while women and men both were taught to write familiar and romantic letters, women were not taught to write letters with “agency in arenas of public or professional opinion” (*Gender* 81).

<sup>21</sup> As Mary Favret, Amanda Gilroy, and W. M. Verhoeven show, this fiction of the letter was instantiated by literacy critics constructing a relatively limited archive consisting mainly of eighteenth-century English and French epistolary novels—ones primarily written by men, and about women heroines, such as in *Clarissa*, *Pamela*, *Julie*, and *Evelina*. More recent scholarship not only reads the same archive differently, but also constructs a broader archive, inclusive of other kinds of epistolary novels, literature, and actual letters that represent both women and men composing epistolary rhetoric. The more expansive archive includes late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century U.S. epistolary novels; spy novels and travel literature that takes epistolary form; other novels that draw heavily on letters without consistently entirely of them; letters understood as written without the intention of future publication, for the purposes of publication, and for immediate “private” circulation, but with the goal of future publication; letter-writing manuals and conduct books that themselves include fictional moments; letters of political protest and insurgence; and letters written by authors and characters gendered masculine. In engaging this more expansive archive, cultural historians come to more complex conclusions about the gendering of epistolary practice, exploding the presumptive association between women and letters and revealing it to be a fiction. These cultural historians also come to more complex conclusions about various epistolary practices understood to be literature, literary, and not; to be private, public, and both. They suggest the line between fictional and “actual” or “authentic” letters is blurry at best (pointing, for instance, to overlap between Samuel Richardson’s letter-writing manual and his epistolary novels).

<sup>22</sup> Letters were frequently published in periodicals and, regardless of the intended purpose of that publication, it provided readers with sample letters from which to learn. In addition,

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my research has uncovered literally hundreds of nineteenth-century periodical articles about letter writing. Many of these articles included explicit advice on how (and how not) to write letters. For analysis of the pedagogical function of periodicals that taught letter writing, see Deirdre Mahoney and Nan Johnson (*Gender*).

<sup>23</sup> In Deirdre Mahoney's research on nineteenth-century letter-writing advice to women, she focuses on manuals and periodicals, but recognizes that women may have learned to write letters through "even the sensational literature of the period" (411). Indeed, the relationship between letters, literature, epistolary fiction, and cultural pedagogy has been extensively analyzed and theorized by literary critics and historians (Altman; Bray; Cook; Favret; Gilroy and Verhoeven; Hewitt; Kauffman; Zaczek).

As far as primary sources go, *Chesterfield's Art of Letter-Writing Simplified* (1857) points to the learning of letter writing from fiction. After providing an example of letters in which the "affection portrayed" was "sweet and beautiful," *Chesterfield's* explains that the letters are "from 'Strife and Peace,' one of the charming novels of Frederika Bremer, a Swedish author contemporary celebrity" (55-6). The manual emphasizes that, while "in the form of fiction," "every line" of the letters "bears the vivid impress of truth and nature" (56). More interestingly, in the concluding paragraph of the chapter "Love, Courtship, Marriage, etc.," the manual points to all of the model letters, fictional and not, as evidence that "lovers, whether single or married, are not under the necessity of writing nonsense—of inditing [sic] nothing but the sickly sentimentalism which Mr. Moore philosophically regards as constituting the essence of amatory epistles" (65). Thus *Chesterfield's* not only suggests that people learned to write romantic letters from fiction, but also seems to evidence an anxiety about what exactly they learned about romantic relations from so-called sentimental literature. Similarly, *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* (1832) cautions against sentimental reading that, by engaging the heart and imagination, could lead to becoming an "old maid" (167).

<sup>24</sup> See especially Elizabeth Hewitt's analysis of epistolary discourse and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).

<sup>25</sup> Consider, for instance, Lady Mary Wortley Montague's letters and epistle verses, which were collected, published, and reprinted throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, New York, and Philadelphia. While collections such as *The Poetical Works of the Right Honorable Lady Mary Wortley Montague; With the Additional Volume of Her Letters* (1769) can be understood as eighteenth-century British literature, they can also be understood as a site of letter-writing instruction within the nineteenth-century U.S. Articles on letter writing that represented Montague as the genius of female letter writing in the English language were published throughout the century by a range of periodicals ("Art. XXII"; "Letter Writing"; "Letter-Writing"; "Odds and Ends"; "On Letters"; "Reviews"; "Woman's Genius"). By introducing Montague to their readerships, these periodicals participated in the circulation of her as not only a literary figure, but also a pedagogical model for letter writers in the U.S.

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<sup>26</sup> The manual contents I cite throughout my analysis are characteristic of the broader sample, except where otherwise indicated. Indeed, many model letters were compiled and reprinted across manuals, as was common within nineteenth-century textbook production (Bannet; S. Carr; Nietz). Of the manuals examined, *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* was especially popular up to and at midcentury. According to Nan Johnson, it was “first published in 1818” and “went through twenty-seven editions into 1860,” making it “The most successful American letter-writing manual for over half a century” (*Gender* 189, n. 5). Another manual I cite frequently, *Chesterfield’s*, was “modestly successful...at midcentury” and “went through three editions between 1857 and 1860” (189, n. 5). Jean Ferguson Carr cautions, however, that it is difficult to pinpoint the popularity of nineteenth-century manuals and textbooks. She explains, “The numbers of textbook copies sold in the nineteenth century is always an elusive bit of ‘knowledge.’ Scholars propose a figure, based on extrapolations from known editions and school populations, publishers’ blurbs, or early bibliographic records” (“Reading” 228, n. 48). Yet as Carr demonstrates through examples of specific books, the sales figures proposed based on such extrapolation vary widely, as do claims about popularity.

<sup>27</sup> I also cite *The New Parlor Letter Writing* (1853), which is catalogued by the library and named on its inside title page as such, but titled *The Complete Letter Writer* on its outside cover. While there are differences between *The Complete Letter Writer* (1811) and *The New Parlor Letter Writing* (1853), there are also series of pages that are exactly alike (see, for example, 68-77 and 78-84, on which the same model letters are printed). In this sense, the models in complete letter-writers were not only subject to copying—as I will go on to argue—but copied themselves, in keeping with the nineteenth-century textbook compilation practices described by Stephen Carr.

<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Deirdre Mahoney’s analysis of letter-writing instruction addressed to women mentions in passing a manual focused on teaching “love-letters,” but her analysis does not explore its instruction (414).

<sup>29</sup> Susan Miller examines a series of letters from Conrad Spence to “Miss Polly Hanna,” which were dated 1791 and saved in a commonplace book (202). Spence “both comments on and pursues a courtship almost entirely on the basis of establishing and then critiquing a discourse on appropriate gender identities” (202). Within the letters saved by Spence, Miller identifies the rhetorical strategies he uses to critique that discourse, inform Polly Hanna of the sort of woman in which he is interested, persuade her that women need not be “superficial,” convince her of the importance of education, instruct her in how to be both attractive and knowledgeable, establish the importance of their correspondence, and ultimately cultivate their romantic relationship.

<sup>30</sup> This series also appears in other complete letter-writers including *The Complete Letter Writer* (1811), *The Pocket Letter Writer* (1840), and *The New Parlor Letter Writer* [1853].

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<sup>31</sup> Manuals marked class distinctions by using terms that distinguish between a “servant,” a “woman,” and a “lady”—or between a “tradesman,” a “man,” and a “gentleman.” *The Useful Letter Writer* (1844), for instance, distinguishes between letters “From a young Tradesman” and those “From a young Gentleman” (v). Similarly, *The American Lady’s and Gentleman’s Modern Letter Writer* [185-] distinguishes between multiple romantic letters from “A Gentleman,” and one letter from “A Man Servant to the Object of His Affections,” which clearly teaches class-specific ways of maintaining and cultivating same-class romantic relationships (43-4). Other models instructed learners in the normative ways one may or may not engage in cross-class romantic relations. *The Fashionable American Letter Writer*, for instance, includes the letter “From a rich young gentleman to a beautiful young lady without a fortune,” to which the lady responds, “You know that I have no fortune; and were I to accept your offer, it would lay me under such obligations as must destroy my liberty,” concluding, “let me beg, that you will endeavor to eradicate a passion, which if nourished longer, may prove fatal to us both” (79-82). In this particular case, readers were taught what sorts of cross-class romantic relationships to not engage in, and why, and were taught as well how to break off those relationships through letters.

<sup>32</sup> Manuals also taught romantic relations as racialized, though less obviously so, in the silent way that renders whiteness as an unremarkable norm. As Julian Carter writes on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, “one of the hallmarks of...‘normal whiteness’...was the ability to construct and teach white racial meanings *without appearing to do so*” (2, emphasis in original). Given the relative absence of racial markers in most guides, it is possible that model letters were to and from white people of various genders and classes, but that whiteness was privileged to the point of being taken for granted, that “American” was taken to mean “white.” This reading of race unmarked as whiteness is confirmed by the few mentions within guides of racial or ethnic markers other than “American.” For example, in *The Parlour Letter-Writer* (1835), R. Turner’s preface mentions “the Irish laborer who...writes...to his kinsfolks across the wide ocean” (116). Turner also marks letters to or from an “English gentleman,” including, quite tellingly, “From an eminent English orientalist to his friend” (xiii-xv). I have found just one guide, *The Pocket Letter Writer* (1836), which includes a single title marking blackness, though not a romantic letter (“From a colored laboring man to a gentleman, soliciting a situation for his son”) (xviii). Thus it seems likely that, except in such marked exceptions, letter-writing guides offered instruction in romantic engagement for those who were presumed to be white “Americans.”

<sup>33</sup> Some manuals even stated outright the importance of and conventions for dating letters. *Frost’s* states, “Every letter or note should be carefully dated...The date of the letter comprises the city or town, state and country in some instances, day of the month, month and year” (Shields 29). *Letter-Writing Simplified* insists, “All letters should be dated,” and offers instruction in how to do so (12).

<sup>34</sup> Halberstam theorizes “straight time” as a temporality in which futures are imagined not only to be heterosexual, but also to operate according to heteronormative bourgeois logics:

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one moves, over time and at so-called stages of life, from birth to marriage to reproduction to death. One lives so as to enable certain forms of reproduction and family, to reduce risk and maintain safety for the sake of longevity, and to plan and save for the inheritance that will ensure further reproduction. In contrast, Halberstam defines “queer time” as “a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (*Queer Time* 6). Halberstam’s concept of queer time is informed by the ways contemporary queer subcultures “produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death” (2).

<sup>35</sup> This gendering of the models is in line with what cultural historians and critics of epistolary novels have put forward about the gendered seduction by men of women. Eva Illouz characterizes nineteenth-century courtship as a “long and careful process, punctuated by a series of tests inflicted by the woman” (46). Elizabeth Hewitt describes the generic expectations and conventional plot of seduction tales within epistolary novels (44, 124-5). In the familiarly gendered narrative of seduction, the “rake” attempts to seduce the “innocent” woman. In the normative outcome, the woman slows the process of courtship by subjecting the man to any number of tests, through which he proves his love is true and will lead to marriage. But if they engage in nonnormative relations, he is guilty of corrupting her virtue, and she is guilty of not being virtuous, of not upholding white bourgeois ideals of femininity, which romanticize women’s supposed morality and place disproportionate pressure on them to protect against men’s supposed immorality.

<sup>36</sup> In the absence of copyright laws, and given limited railroads, roads, and mail services, any printer could copy text from another printer’s book and sell that text locally; books often included material copied and compiled from other books (Nietz 7; see also S. Carr).

<sup>37</sup> As Carr, Carr, and Schultz note, “textbooks contain tantalizing traces of expected use and misuse,” though “a researcher can never know exactly how a textbook was used by either teacher or student” (4). In spite of the limits on what can be known about how people used letter-writing manuals, the books themselves do tantalize with traces of expected use and misuse, including queer effects.

<sup>38</sup> Farrar deems the entire complete letter-writer genre “a serious evil, and one to be guarded against” (vi). Initiating her critique, Farrar remarks on “The numerous editions which the ‘Complete Letter-Writer’ has passed through, and the various forms in which it has, again and again, been presented to the public,” characterizing these editions as marked by “glaring absurdities and gross faults” (v-vi). Later developing her critique, Farrar claims that complete letter-writers “are filled with absurdities, vulgarisms, and the flattest nonsense that was ever offered to the public, as a guide to letter-writing” (125). Vulgarity is also an accusation made by *The Epistolary Guide* (1817): “The various works, called Complete Letter Writers, are well known for the grossness of their matter, as well as the

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vulgarity of their manner...Even a volume of essays would answer a better purpose; because it would not mislead, by pretending to exhibit models of genuine letters” (Hardie vii).

*The Art of Correspondence* warns, “Those who attempt to copy wholly the letters of another will find themselves in the position of the rustic who copied a proposal of marriage from a published Letter-Writer and sent it to a young lady, who replied that the negative answer could be found in the same book from which he copied the proposal” (Locke 11-12). *How to Write Letters* even uses the term “Plagiarism” when warning against “copying[ing another’s] language as our own” as opposed to “imitat[ing] an author’s facilities of expression” (Westlake 84). The manual then tells a very similar story: “Some persons, finding it difficult to express their feelings on paper, resort to what are called ‘Complete Letter Writers’—books containing forms of letters for a variety of occasions. An instance is related of a young man who copied a letter of proposal from one of these books, and received in reply a note in these words: ‘You will find my answer on the next page’” (84-5).

*Letter-Writing Simplified* also warns as follows: “the novice in letter-writing feels himself at a loss as to the manner in which he should pen his epistle, and is often little less so as to the matter wherewith to fill it. In this dilemma he looks around for a guide, and some ‘Elegant Epistolary Correspondent’ falls into his hands, with letters all, nothing to be done but to *copy*: thus the chief charm of a letter, its *originality*, is done away with...It is the design of the author of this Manual to show a more desirable way. He has not filled his volume with lifeless forms of letters—dry bones—bare skeletons, destitute of all beauty—nerveless, and without feeling: on the contrary, he has made a selection from the *real* correspondence of well-known and able man and women, and, where the letters are fictitious, they are taken with care from the work of authors of first-rate ability” (2, emphasis in original).

*The Complete American Letter-Writer* simply refers to other complete letter-writers as “ridiculous trash” and “ignorant productions” (iii).

<sup>39</sup> Johnson also discusses this example in her study of women’s rhetorical education through letter-writing manuals (*Gender* 95).

<sup>40</sup> A twentieth-century manual, *Putnam’s Phrase Book: An Aid to Social Letter Writing* (1922), offers remarkably detailed instruction for invention through the copying and adapting of models. The manual consists largely of a “Dictionary of Phrases,” which are organized by motivation of expression; they include, for example, phrases for expressing “Desire” and “Love” (E. Carr 63, 169). But the manual also includes model letters, compiled through selection of the various phrases, and detailed instructions for how to similarly use the sample phrases and letters to compose one’s own letters (275-81). As the manual’s foreword explains, “The dictionary of phrases is to be used in letter writing in connection with the sample letters. In case the sample letters are not desirable, the instructions and guides, upon pp. 275-81 will show how to use the book when one desires to write his own social letters” (iv).

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<sup>42</sup> *The Useful Letter Writer* and *The Parlour Letter-Writer* both have chapters of “Miscellaneous Letters,” and *The Pocket Letter Writer* a chapter titled “Miscellaneous” (vii, 159; Turner xiv, 255; xvii, 171). These “miscellaneous” chapters consist of a range of letters: family letters, business and employment letters, as well as romantic letters. Included among the “Miscellaneous Letters” in *The Parlour Letter-Writer*, for instance, are “From an English nobleman to his son,” “From a working man to a respectable tradesman in want of an apprentice,” as well as “From a journeyman tradesman to his intended wife” (xiv-xv). In such cases, it is possible model romantic letters were placed within “Miscellaneous Letters” rather than chapters of romantic letters due to nineteenth-century printing technology and textbook production practices. Adding new model letters to earlier editions of a book could be accomplished more easily and affordably through appending them all in a new chapter at the end of the book, rather than rearranging the entire book to categorize each new model within existing chapters.

<sup>43</sup> The same cryptogram is reprinted in John Locke’s *The Art of Correspondence* (1884). Here, however, the cryptogram is included in the chapter on romantic letters. Locke also offers a longer explanatory title for the letter, though his too emphasizes ingenuity: “A letter with a double meaning, showing how an *ingenious* wife *deceived* an arbitrary, overbearing husband, who compelled her to show him all her letters” (161, emphasis added). Interestingly, Locke seems to admire deception in this rhetorical situation, though elsewhere his manual—like many others—warns against deception in romantic correspondence (140).

<sup>44</sup> In one troubling but perhaps expected instance, *Frost’s* (1867) acknowledges the widespread practice of letter writing in “every country,” but differentiates the practices of “the savage” from those “marked” by “the progress of civilization.” *Frost’s* even describes this “progress” through a detailed narrative about the colonization of “the rough Western wilds” (Shields 14). At the same time, U.S. manuals differentiated their instruction from the closely related eighteenth-century English complete letter-writers (Bannet). The preface to *The Complete American Letter-Writer* (1807) insists that, because it is addressed to “this country” and what is “important in the life of a young American,” their models “are not taken from the English books of forms” (iii). *The Complete Art of Polite Correspondence* (1857) claims its “letters are all carefully adapted to the circumstances of our own country, and a considerable number are taken from approved American writers” (10).

<sup>45</sup> Erasmus defined the letter as “a conversation...between absent friends’,” suggesting distance through his emphasis on absence (qtd. in Masten 378). Blair asserts that, “Epistolary writing becomes...a distinct species of composition...only or chiefly...when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends *at a distance*” (346, my emphasis).

<sup>46</sup> Paraphrased versions of this definition appear in manuals throughout the century. Early in the century, *The Epistolary Guide* (1817) lists as its first “rule” that, “A letter is supposed



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to be part of a conversation between persons at a distance” (Hardie 1). Later in the century, *Practical Letter Writing* (1897) states, “The primary idea of a letter is conversation at a distance” (Loomis 7). In another iteration, the school textbook *Business and Social Correspondence* (1889) explains in its “Social Correspondence” chapter that letters are “for those who are absent from each other” (60). For additional examples of manuals copying other lines from Blair, see *How to Write Letters* (12-4) and *The Useful Letter Writer* (x-xi, xxi-xxii).

<sup>47</sup> Echoing the familiar definition of the letter, *Letter-Writing Simplified* (1844) promises that letters are the “chains” of relationship, holding together those so commonly removed from each other. The manual concedes, “It is true, [letters] are unnecessary when the parties reside in the same town, and have frequent opportunities of seeing each other” (39). But in its cultural context, *Letter-Writing Simplified* insists, “Removals are of so frequent occurrence that many a valuable friendship would be sacrificed, were it not for the ‘silent interviews’ which letters render friends capable of maintaining” (39). *Frost’s* uses the language of the so-called “American” frontier to make a similar promise about the letter’s capacity to travel and, like a chain, unite across distance: “letters will form a chain to keep alive...ties of love and friendship. The wide ocean, the vast prairie, the lofty mountain, the stronger bar of years of time, may stretch between loving hearts, yet a letter will speed from one to the other, keeping alive the tenderest [sic] emotions” (Shields 15).

<sup>48</sup> For additional information about the U.S. Post Office, see the scholarship introduced in Chapter 1, by William Decker and David Henkin, as well as histories by Wayne Fuller and Richard John.

<sup>49</sup> What it means “to court” is culturally and historically specific. As literary historian Catherine Bates explains, older meanings included the courtship of “being at court,” “being a courtier,” “suing for favor,” and “behaving as courtiers should behave.” The more “modern meaning of courtship—‘wooing someone’” emerged in the sixteenth century, and has come to include “the interactive behavior and ritual between two people who are emotionally and romantically engaged” (1, 6).

<sup>50</sup> My choice of the words “attempt” and “seek” is key here, because as Burke emphasizes, division is an inevitable fact of human life. Unity, whether national or romantic, is rhetorically sought precisely where division exists.

<sup>51</sup> For more on Primus’ involvement in self-education for racial uplift, see Griffin (10) and Beeching (22, 113, 116, 119-122, 153, 164, 173).

<sup>52</sup> The political stakes of Primus’ work with the Hartford Freedmen’s Aid Society are evident as well in the resistance such work met. As Griffin notes, the *Semi-Annual Report on Schools for Freedmen* (1866) reports that, “The educational work in Maryland has had much opposition, such as stoning children and teachers at Easton, rough-handling and blackening the teacher at Cambridge, indignation [sic] meeting in Dorchester County with

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resolution passed to drive out the teacher and the burning of churches and schools” (qtd. in Griffin 127).

<sup>53</sup> This February 16, 1867 letter is from Box II, Folder 26, of the Primus Family Collection, held at the Connecticut Historical Society. Box I includes Brown’s letters to Primus, and Box II includes Primus’ letters to family. Within each box, folders are organized by date. Additional letters quoted throughout will be cited according to their date.

<sup>54</sup> Beeching explains: “In a complicated arrangement, [Primus] reported to the Hartford Society, which paid her salary; to the New York National Freedmen’s Relief Association, which supervised local chapters and funneled federal funds to individual teachers; and to the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, which supervised the school she established” (121).

<sup>55</sup> In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the character “Eliza eludes the slave catchers when she crosses the frozen Ohio River” (Griffin 291, n. 4).

<sup>56</sup> The earliest scholarship on Brown and Primus’ epistolary exchange is concerned instead with the history of African Americans in Hartford. Historian David White’s “Addie Brown’s Hartford” appears in the *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin*, and his “Rebecca Primus in Later Life” is appended to Farah Griffin’s edited collection. White pieces together important details and context for understanding not only Brown and Primus’ lives, but also the collection of Primus Family Papers held by the Connecticut Historical Society. White does not go much further, however, than recognizing that the relationship between Primus and Brown was “particularly close” (“Addie” 57).

Historian Barbara Beeching more fully acknowledges their relationship in her MA thesis, “The Primus Papers: An Introduction to Hartford’s Nineteenth Century Black Community.” Beeching characterizes Brown and Primus as “friends and lovers,” who “held for one another an affection that even their contemporaries considered unusually passionate,” maintaining that, “Whether there was homosexual content is not clear from Addie’s letters” (55, 58). Though Beeching considers this affection more fully than White, her work is also more broadly interested in the Primus family and what their particular lives reveal about the middle class black society of Hartford during the 1860s (2-3).

<sup>57</sup> Hansen first discovered the letters when conducting research for her book, *A Very Social Time: Crafting Community in Antebellum New England*, and she writes of them there as well. Hansen is responsible for having “introduced” Griffin to the letters (Griffin xiii). In *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America—A History*, Lillian Faderman also cites Hansen (368). There is no indication that Faderman consulted Griffin and—if I dare say—little indication that she read much of the correspondence. For instance, Faderman refers to “Mr. Games,” an employer who sexually harassed Brown, as “a suitor” (104).

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<sup>58</sup> In *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends: Letters from Rebecca Primus of Royal Oak, Maryland, and Addie Brown of Hartford, Connecticut, 1854-1868* (1999), Griffin collects, edits, and offers commentary on the Brown-Primus correspondence. Griffin's collection highlights the importance of their letters for addressing silences within the historical record—including "self-imposed silence"—about the "personal *and* public" lives of "ordinary" black women not self-censoring in order to write for publication or a white audience (4).

Griffin's edited versions of the Brown-Primus correspondence have been cited and quoted in Renee Harrison's *Enslaved Women and the Art of Resistance in Antebellum America* and Kathy Peiss' *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality: Documents and Essays*. In addition, Griffin's collection has itself become a subject of analysis. In "Edited Letter Collections as Epistolary Fictions: Imagining African American Women's History in *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends*," Linda Grasso approaches Griffin's book as an "epistolary fiction," considering how "the letters tell another story as the result of being organized, annotated, placed in the company of other sources, and published in book form" (250).

<sup>59</sup> Also like Griffin, Hansen explains how the Brown-Primus correspondence "fills a gap in the literature about African-American women in the nineteenth century," because the letters are written by "ordinary women," about their "everyday" intimate lives ("No" 178-9). Moreover, the correspondence "fills a gap in the literature" about nineteenth-century romantic friendship between women, which at that point focused almost entirely on white middle class women (179, 202). Here Hansen cites research on middle class white women by Nancy Cott, Lillian Faderman (*Surpassing*), and Caroll Smith-Rosenberg ("Female"), as well as her own research on friendship and romantic attachment between working class white women (*A Very*).

<sup>60</sup> Primus may have learned this practice from her mother, Mehitable Jacobs Primus, who appears to have done the same.

<sup>61</sup> This careful attention to the details of timing is reflected elsewhere in Primus' writing as well. Primus wrote a poem, "I've Lost a Day" (1854), which reveals how she is "concerned with the most effective use of her time" (Griffin 15).

<sup>62</sup> This lack of studied restraint with respect to spatial boundaries and the materiality of the letter is evident in many other ways as well. Brown's writing in header margins sometimes continues beyond the date, over the body of the letter, with the opening to the body written horizontally and the closing written vertically. She also wrote on the outsides of envelopes, and placed stamps in different positions on the envelopes.

<sup>63</sup> While I focus on poetry and the novel, Brown and Primus' letters reference, quote, copy, describe, celebrate, and challenge texts ranging from novels to anti-slavery papers; from slave narratives to poetry; from speeches to books on religion, politics, and history. These texts range from Grace Aguilar's *Women's Friendship* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *The Independent*; from the work of Frederick Douglass to that of Frances

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Ellen Watkins Harper; from speeches by Henry Ward Beecher and Henry Highland Garnet to books like *Practical Christianity for Men*.

<sup>64</sup> Brown also redeploys phrasing from the Christian Bible. In one of the earliest saved letters, while Brown is working in Waterbury, she uses phrasing from Psalm 55:6 when emphasizing how much she misses and longs for Primus. A few lines into the letter, Brown writes, "*Dearest Dearest Rebecca* my heart is allmost broke...it goes harder with me now then it ever did...if I only had the wings of a *dove* I would not remain long in Waterbury although we cant allway be togethher O it tis hard" (August 30, 1859). Whereas the Psalm uses the simile of wings "like a dove" to imagine flying away and resting, most likely in Heaven, Brown's purpose for such wings would be to fly away from Waterbury and be together with Primus. Of course, there is no telling whether Brown encountered this Psalm in the Bible; she could have encountered it in other reading, at church, almost anywhere. Moreover, she may have encountered it so often that, rather than copying here, she is repeating an intentionally memorized or otherwise internalized verse. Regardless, she clearly puts the verse to her own uses, expressing longing for another woman. And this was an erotic longing, it is important to remember. Still later in the same letter, in fact, she writes, "*Dear Friend* how I did miss you last night I did not have any one to hug me and to kiss...no *kisses* is like yours...You are the first Girl that I ever *love*...you are the *last* one...I mean just what I say...if you was a man what would things come to" (August 30, 1859).

Almost two years later, Brown again returns to "the dove," this time as a metaphor to express her longing for Primus and fantasies of being together. In a letter that begins with, "your most Affec letter to me was like pieces of meat to hungre wolfe," Brown writes, "Dear Rebecca if I had the energy of the dove I ~~would~~ how swiftly I would fly to the arms of my love" (May 24, 1861). Later in this letter, Brown wishes, "if I only exchange this pen and paper for a seat by my loving Rebecca." She laments, "separation how long how long...my heart is breaking for you." Brown thus selects and deploys the metaphoric language of Psalm 55:6 in order to express desire, longing, and grief for Primus.

<sup>65</sup> Nor was Brown's relationship to other texts deferential on the whole. As Griffin points out, Brown "demonstrates her intellectual independence" when writing about reading a speech by Henry Ward Beecher (140). Calling Ward "very plain," Brown writes, "he says the recent history of the nation may be divided into three periods...I should think it was four" (October 16, 1866).

<sup>66</sup> As Beeching writes, "Addie's letters frequently started off as if she were following a formulae...Once under way, however, Addie's writing conveyed the impression of transcribed speech" (70).

<sup>67</sup> In another letter, Brown calls Primus "the *object of my affections*" (March 5, 1862, emphasis in original).

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<sup>68</sup> This letter is one among a series of 1862 letters that Griffin also identifies as potentially “copied” (64). Griffin writes, “The sentiments of the following letters are Addie’s, but the language clearly is not. Perhaps in her efforts toward self-improvement she has either had someone write them for her or copied them from one of the many books she was reading” (64). In my view, it is possible but quite unlikely that Brown had someone write her letters. Throughout the correspondence, Brown represents her literate abilities to read and write as a source of pride, distancing herself from those who do not attempt to become more literate. In fact, in one of the letters Griffin introduces with the above, Brown laments, “Dear Rebecca dont you think its a great pity [Aunt Chat] neather read nor write so she got me to pen those lines to you” (March [?] 1862). Moreover, some of the seemingly copied language within Brown’s letters can be traced to other published texts in circulation. So it seems more likely that Brown copied from her reading, as Griffin alternately suggests.

<sup>69</sup> With George Pope Morris and Nathaniel Parker Willis, Fay served as an editor of *The New-York Mirror: Devoted to Literature and the Fine Arts*, with which he corresponded while traveling abroad. “Reveries by Night” was published in *The New-York Mirror* under the heading “Original Communications” (1831).

<sup>70</sup> Brown also uses this invention strategy of interspersing seemingly copied language with epistolary address in more overtly romantic passages. In the other 1862 letter Griffin identifies as potentially copied, Brown follows her salutation of “My Dearest Sister” with the following: “The day is far spent and I sit quite alone in my little room thinking of *thee* who is far away It is just the twilight hour the hour in which I revel in the most delightfull delusions and you my Dearest figure largely in them I think there is a soothing influence that steals over the spirits and our souls take wings and join those that are nearest and dearest to our hearts and thus it is with me this moment me think my *Dearest Sister* I am near the breathing the same air with your arm gently drawn around me my head reclining on your noble breast in perfect confidence and love. But alas the dream is over the charm is broken” (March 30, 1862). Brown first interrupts with the address “my Dearest,” which may have been present in the text copied. But she later interrupts with “my *Dearest Sister*.” This address is specific to Brown’s epistolary exchange with Primus, and Brown likely inserted it within the text she copied. I have not located the original text. It is also worth noting that lines from this letter—especially those in which Brown dreams of her head reclined on Primus’ breast—are oft quoted by historians and critics referencing the letters (Faderman, *To Believe* 104; Grasso 262; Harrison 224; Peiss 218).

<sup>71</sup> Brown’s active process of selection and deletion is further evident in her use of the poem “Alone” (December 8, 1861). She introduces the poem with, “here is one or two verse of poetry I want to pen I must hurry.” Elsewhere in her letters she uses the verb “pen” to reference lines that do not seem copied. Yet in this case, the poem “Alone” was published in *Peterson’s Magazine* (1855) as written by Clarence May. Rather than copying the poem in its entirety, however, Brown deletes a stanza—one in the middle, not at the end—and this deletion makes sense within the context of her letter. Whereas she retains stanzas expressing sadness and loneliness at being apart from the poetically addressed “you,”

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including a line about “dwell[ing] upon the post,” she deletes the stanza suggesting permanent separation, in which the speaker and addressed “have said—farewell.”

<sup>72</sup> Of course I worked to locate an earlier edition of *Hill's* to which Brown may have had access, but this search did not yield an edition prior to 1874.

<sup>73</sup> As Griffin explains, “Surely Addie was reminded of the differences in class and education between herself and Rebecca” (60).

<sup>74</sup> Brown writes frequently of being tired from work. In another letter, for instance, she reports that her employer Miss Porter “ask me pointedly if I was going to be married,” suggesting that Brown and her new husband continue “to live with [Porter]” (January 19, 1868). Brown, in explaining her response to Primus, states, “I would not stay under no consideration for I am tired already.”

<sup>75</sup> A subsequent letter further suggests Brown’s ambivalence and, at the same time, Primus’ participation in the conversation about marriage as an option. Thinking ahead to her coming “change in life,” Brown writes, “realy I have serious thoughts and make me feel unhappy at times I often wonder if every ones feels as I do I really think I should be little surprise to hear you thought of marrying too well you will have a nerve” (January 19, 1868).

There is reason to believe that Primus too conceived of her relation with Brown in terms more romantic than she did her marriage with Charles Thomas. In 1868, Brown married Tines and her (saved) correspondence with Primus ceased (Griffin 235). When Brown passed away shortly after, in 1870, Primus made note of Brown’s death on the outside of an envelope (235). By 1872, Primus had married Charles Thomas (Griffin 77). Although Primus stayed with Thomas and his wife and family when teaching in Royal Oak, neither her nor Brown’s mentions of him suggest a romantic relation or even flirtation. As far as we can know from the Primus Family Papers, Primus saved two postcards and five letters to Thomas from others. These letters are short, incredibly formal, and for clearly professional and political purposes. Yet Primus did not save a single letter from Thomas to her. In contrast, Primus saved the romantic letters from Brown—well over a hundred of them—until her own death more than sixty years later in 1932 (White, “Rebecca” 284). It may also be of note that, as White describes, there is some mystery surrounding the circumstances of Thomas’ parting with his first wife and marriage to Primus (281).

<sup>76</sup> As Griffin explains, “The Royal Oak postmaster, Richard C. Lane (1852-61), a prominent citizen, was Rebecca’s nemesis, who appears to have been a hardcore Confederate patriot” (146).

<sup>77</sup> A shortening of “secessionist,” “secesh” was used during and after the Civil War to refer to people who supported attempted secession of Southern States from the U.S.

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“The Jebusites,” as Beeching explains, “were the original inhabitants of the area that became Jerusalem. Because they had to be displaced before David could found the city, this may be a stronger epithet than it appears to one unfamiliar with the Bible. Blacks considered Jerusalem or Zion the heaven-like place, in this world or the next, where they would find a real home, free from oppression, degradation, and want” (150).

<sup>78</sup> Still others assisted as well. In another letter, Primus writes, “The mail driver has very kindly offered to bring my mail from Easton every Thurs., and stop at the church so that I can send out one of my scholars to get it” (February 8, 1867).

<sup>79</sup> Examples are as follows: “The postmaster said he’d send my papers to me as soon as they came. I shall watch for them with interest” (March 23, 1867); “I rec’d your letter also Addie’s with the Independent Thurs. that is quite a cunning little paper which you enclosed” (March 30, 1867); “The letter you’ve expressed to me is not yet rec’d. and I think you’d better make inquiries at the office. We’ve sent regularly every mail day & made diligent inquires. Your other letter containing the \$50 note came safely & directly” (April 28, 1867); and “I rec’d your letter from the office yesterday myself. I am very much surprised to hear you had not rec’d those oysters” (December 8, 1867).

<sup>80</sup> The Albert Dodd Papers are held by the Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives. The Papers consist of three folders: the first is labeled as Dodd’s “diary”; the second his “album of poetry”; and the third his “letters” and “obituary.” Entries, poems, and letters are generally dated, and will be cited according to their date throughout this chapter.

<sup>81</sup> Dodd’s diary suggests he was born April 26, 1818. In an entry dated April 27, 1838, he writes, “Yesterday was my birthday, 19 years old.” But other primary and secondary sources conflict regarding the year of Dodd’s birth. Dodd’s “Obituary” does not reference his date of birth. *Biographical Record of the Class of 1838 in Yale College* claims Dodd was “Born about 1818” (53). Yet, as Katz indicates, *Biographical Notes of Graduates of Yale College* “says [Dodd] died at the age of 27, in 1844, which means that he was born in 1817” (Dexter 288, ctd. in Katz 354, n. 1).

<sup>82</sup> According to Dodd’s obituary, “a meeting of the citizens of Bloomington and vicinity” was held regarding Dodd’s death “on Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> day of June, A. D., 1844.”

<sup>83</sup> I have modernized the long s here. I will continue to do so throughout the remainder of the chapter, not marking further instances.

<sup>84</sup> Dodd uses cursive initials here, and it is unclear to me whether they are J. H. (John Heath) or A. H. (Anthony Halsey). At this point, I think A. H. is more likely, because Dodd usually used J. F. H. for Heath (Katz 28).

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<sup>85</sup> In the next entry, Dodd reports, “Initiated into the Scull Bones last Thursday night. Had a splendid time got home at about 3 in the morning” (July 9, 1837). Signs of Dodd’s involvement in Scull and Bones are apparent throughout his writing. On the inside cover to his diary, he includes two lists of names under the heading “Scull & Bones” and subheadings “Class ‘38” and “Class ‘39.” Inside his poetry album, there is a small piece of paper with the word “Poison” blackened out with ink, so that only the image of a skull and bones is left highlighted.

Dodd’s writing also references what may be another secret society or student group. On the same page of the diary listing what appear to be Skull and Bones members, Dodd includes a second list titled “[G]irdires & Smiters” and subtitled “Class ‘38” and “Class ‘39.” To the right of that list, he writes, “[G]irders and Smiters / L. F. & F. / 1837-8 / Yale.” Through discussion with Yale Manuscripts and Archives staff, who reported also consulting Yale historians, I was not able to locate any information about this group.

<sup>86</sup> According to the *Yale Literary Magazine* editors, in a footnote to the piece “The Sea Nymph’s Song,” “The author of this song will discover many alterations which we have deemed it necessary to make; and although they may not appear, in *his* estimation, as improvements upon the original, yet, in a word, without these alterations the piece would have been inadmissible. –Eds” (“Sea Nymph’s” 294, emphasis in original). Neither the “The Sea Nymph’s Song,” nor any of the pieces initialed in the July 1837 edition of *Yale Literary Magazine*, is attributed to Dodd. An earlier version of a piece by the same title, with the same “chorus,” appears in Dodd’s poetry album (August 1835). Also, “The Sea Nymph’s Song” is the only *Yale Literary Magazine* piece with such an editorial comment, which seems like just the sort of editorship Dodd reacts to in his diary.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given Dodd’s experience with *Yale Literary Magazine* editors, he writes in a postscript to his brother Julius almost four years later, “Do you still write poetry and publish...I would be very particular in pieces that you publish...be careful to have every thing you write correct...But after all I would not advise a person to spend much time in writing for publication” (April 12, 1842).

<sup>87</sup> In Katz’s view, Dodd here refers to “two sins unwritable among that day’s college students, most probably sexual sins, which Dodd represented by long dashes.” Katz also speculates about whether “M. O.” is “mutual onanism? masturbation? ononism?” (27).

<sup>88</sup> The first of these historians to publish about Dodd, Gay briefly attends to Dodd’s writing within *The Tender Passion*, the second volume of *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud* (206-12). Rotundo considers Dodd’s writing alongside that of other young men in an article-length study seeking to define the characteristics of nineteenth-century romantic friendship between men, “Romantic Friendship: Male Intimacy and Middle-Class Youth in Northern United States, 1800-1900.” Rotundo cites Gay’s book, however, and Rotundo makes no suggestion that he conducted primary research or viewed Dodd’s writing himself (8; 23, n. 26). Finally, in Katz’s “Dear Beloved Trio,” a chapter of *Love Stories: Sex between*



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*Men before Homosexuality*, he offers the only piece focused entirely on Dodd. Katz also appears to have conducted the most thorough research on Dodd and his romantic relations.

Dodd's diary is widely cited elsewhere as well. Gay's research has received attention in *The New York Times* (Robinson) and, like Rotundo, a range of historians who more quickly reference Dodd's diary appear to do so based on Gay's early account (Quinn; Robb; Woolverton). Material similar to Rotundo's article appears in his book, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*. Katz's research on the diary is cited in the inaugural issue of *Q Magazine at Yale* (Bernard). Finally, Zboray and Zboray briefly reference Dodd's writing; I discuss their work elsewhere in Chapters 1 and 4 (*Everyday* and "Is It").

<sup>89</sup> Like Dodd, Morgan may have experienced "love" for both men and women. In his diary, Dodd writes that he "Had some interesting conversation with her...among other things, she asked me if I had ever fallen in love at first sight...she said she had once so, not meaning love for one of another sex, but of her own" (April 19, 1837).

Smith makes many appearances in the latter portion of Dodd's diary, one of which Gay quotes without naming Smith (210). Smith is considered only in Katz's work, not in Gay or Rotundo's ("Romantic").

<sup>90</sup> Yet, as Nan Johnson cautions, scholars should avoid a "classicist stance," which leads to pejorative assessments of nineteenth-century education as "unstable or inherently compromised" to the extent that it deviates from Ciceronian or Aristotelian rhetorical philosophy (*Nineteenth* 12). While I emphasize how Dodd's rhetorical training was classically oriented, it is important to remember that, like the nineteenth-century North American rhetoric described by Johnson, his education was "synthetic," "a composite of classical assumptions and epistemological and belletristic premises initially popularized in the late eighteenth-century English tradition" (19). I thus acknowledge the influences of the eighteenth-century English tradition in notes throughout.

<sup>91</sup> The Stillman K. Wightman Papers are held by the Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives. Here I quote from Wightman's notes, apparently taken during one of Goodrich's lectures, which are in Box 1, Folder 19.

<sup>92</sup> An earlier letter to Dodd's mother, seemingly after a visit to Hartford, similarly offers a positive business report (November 30, 1843).

<sup>93</sup> While Cicero advances a Roman history and tradition of rhetoric, the Greek Demosthenes is one of the "prominent models" that Cicero references (Enos 108).

<sup>94</sup> In the third part of junior year, "Plato's Gorgias" is listed, but only as one text among others, "At the option of the student" (*Catalogue* 27).

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<sup>95</sup> The Goodrich Family Papers are also held by the Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives. Here I reference Goodrich's lecture notes in Box 7, Folders 61, 71, 73, 77, and 80. Although less frequently, the notes reference other classical rhetorical theorists as well. In "Lecture on Demosthenes," the notes reference Plato's first speech (Folder 77); in "Lectures on Eloquence," they reference Quintilian (Folder 86).

<sup>96</sup> Here I reference notes in Box I, Folder 18 of the Stillman K. Wightman Papers. These student notes also mention Isocrates.

<sup>97</sup> Dodd describes Lord Chesterfield's (1584-1656) advice to his son, "to employ himself each day, in translating into as good English as he was able, passages from Latin or Greek authors" (July 29, 1836). While there is no indication whether Dodd consulted one of the many editions of *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield to His Son*, or of *A Guide to Men and Manners: Consisting of Lord Chesterfield's Advice to His Son*, the former does offer advice consistent with Dodd's description—and, in the line just before, directs the son to Quintilian and Cicero: "You have read Quintilian, the best book in the world to form an Orator; pray read *Cicero, de Oratore*, the best book in the world to finish one. Translate and retranslate, from and to Latin, Greek, and English; make yourself a pure and elegant English style: it requires nothing but application (134). If indeed these were the lines of advice from Lord Chesterfield that Dodd consulted, he also received at least indirect advice to read Quintilian and Cicero even before his studies at Yale.

<sup>98</sup> Dodd's study of rhetorical treatises was not limited to classical ones, however. Instead, his early nineteenth-century rhetorical education brought together classical and eighteenth-century English and Scottish works, just as Nan Johnson's study indicates was common (*Nineteenth*). In the same letter recommending Cicero to his brother Julius, Dodd advises, "Read & study some work on Rhetoric or Criticism, as Blair or Kames, which will influence a person wonderfully, and [sic] absolutely necessary to be learned" (April 12, 1842). Although not listed in the "course of instruction" outlined by Yale's *Catalogue*, the Scottish Henry Home, later Lord Kames (1696-1782), "contributed more directly to the history rhetoric as a patron than as an author" (Desmet 133). But his *Elements of Criticism* (1762) "was highly regarded and read," going through multiple English and North American editions, as well as influencing Blair and U.S. textbooks of rhetoric and composition (Desmet 133). More influential at Yale, as elsewhere, was the Scottish Hugh Blair (1718-1800) and his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (1793). According to Yale's *Catalogue*, Blair's was the assigned rhetorical treatise for part one of senior year.

This emphasis on Blair in the senior year, when Goodrich instructed students, is not surprising. As Connors explains, Goodrich's instruction at Yale amounted to an "elocution-tinged version" of "American Blairian belletrism" ("Day" 162). In his notes for "Lectures on Eloquence," Goodrich references Blair as well as Quintilian (though he disagrees with both, on particular points) (Folder 86). Also notable, though less predominant across primary sources, is the Yale *Catalogue's* inclusion of "Jamieson's Rhetoric" in part three of the

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“course of instruction” for sophomore year; and Goodrich’s reference, in an “English Composition” lecture, to “reputable, present, national” (Folder 72), the “famous doctrine of proper usage” from George Campbell’s *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) (Connors, *Composition* 259). Also not surprising is Goodrich’s attention to English and Scottish rhetorics, for his own textbook was *Select British Eloquence* (1852), a collection of model speeches. Though published years after Dodd’s study at Yale, the book’s “Preface” recounts Goodrich’s teaching at Yale, begun “more than thirty years ago,” as taking “Demosthenes’ Oration for the Crown as a *text-book* in the Senior Class,” but also including “a distinct course” on “Modern eloquence...to show the leading characteristics of the great orators of our own language,” in which he taught the speeches of “the great British orators” later included in *Select British Eloquence* (iii, emphasis in original; see also Folders 62, 70, 86). Thus Dodd’s formal rhetorical education, along with his later advice to Julius, brought together both classical and British rhetorical theory.

<sup>99</sup> Dodd actually writes the most about studying Greek and Latin language and literature during his period of suspension. In his diary, he makes frequent notations about translating and studying both languages, and Greek especially, in preparation for examination to enter Yale. In recording the activities of his days, he writes that he “read 50 lines in the Oedipus Tyrannus, which ought to have been 150 instead,” and then later in the same day, “read 30 more lines in the Tragedy”; the next day, that he “read 100 lines of Greek”; and, still the next, that he “read 100 lines in Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus” (March 1, 2, 3, 1837). He also quotes directly in Greek, later translating the quotation and explaining it within the context of the tragedy (March 10, 12, 13, 15, 17; April 30; May 8, 1837). Dodd records when he has “got through Oedipus Tyrannus, and also now begun Alcestis” (March 17, 1837). Dodd mentions when he studies Latin too, and when he “was examined in Mechanics of Latin” (May 8, 17, 1837). Finally, alongside his record of study, Dodd incorporates Latin words into his English writing. He frequently uses the word “tempus” rather than “time,” and he refers to his diary as “liber,” seemingly in reference the Roman god associated with free speech (March 3; April 8; May 7; June 18, 1837).

<sup>100</sup> This recommendation was not without qualification, however. Like Dodd’s training in classical rhetoric, his training in classical language and literature was a distinctly nineteenth-century and North American one, in that it was marked by at least some awareness of the tensions between studying Greek, Latin, and English. To Julius, Dodd writes, “I would not entirely give up the reading of Latin & Greek,” obviously recognizing that one might do just that. Similarly, in the “Preface” to his commonplace book, where referencing Lord Chesterfield, Dodd states that the Englishman “advises his son to employ himself each day, in translating into as good English as he was able, passage from Latin or Greek authors” (July 29, 1836). “This also I propose to myself to do,” Dodd continues. Yet this advice, as Dodd recognizes, is “in regard to improvement in writing”—improvement in *English* writing. While Dodd’s education focused on classical rhetoric, languages, and literature, then, this education did not preclude training in English.

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<sup>101</sup> One exception, for instance, is “Are there supernatural apparitions?” Still other debate topics, such as “Are early marriages profitable?” and “Intermarriage with the Indians,” recognized marriage as a civic institution of public concern. The materials I reference here are from Folder 19 (Wightman).

<sup>102</sup> It is unclear whether Dodd wrote, compiled, or translated this verse. It is not attributed to another source like many of the other transcriptions and translations in the poetry album. Yet unattributed initials appear next to the date at the bottom of this entry, which is not typical for other entries.

<sup>103</sup> The myth’s association with pederasty and even “abduction” deserves further comment (Fone 16). In spite of these associations, there is nothing in Dodd’s verse about the abduction of Ganymede by Zeus, and there are no direct references to pederasty or even Ganymede’s age. Nor is there any reason to presume Dodd desired or participated in pederastic relations. Quite the contrary, where Dodd hints at the age of his romantic interests, his comments suggest they were students within one to three years of his own age (September 21; October 5; October 10, 1837).

<sup>104</sup> These similarities do not suggest, however, that Dodd’s romantic relations were not carried out in gendered ways. Dodd’s diary represents his interactions as gendered primarily in relation to spatial constraints widely associated with nineteenth-century life. As Rotundo reminds, “The...classrooms where a middle-class youth spent his days were likely to be sex-segregated. The boarding houses and dormitories in which he lived...were all-male environments, and the literary clubs, debating societies, and fraternities where he spent his spare hours were not open to females” (“Romantic” 13). As we might expect, Dodd describes his interactions with Heath and Halsey as occurring largely within and around schooling environments that excluded women. In one diary entry, for instance, Dodd “long[s] to see the dear fellow!” Halsey, recalling how they first met:

Let me recollect when first became acquainted with him. When I went to the Grammar School I used to see him very often [?] he came along down from College, and his appearance was very interesting; he was *so handsome*...Well, I became acquainted with him when I entered College, and soon became intimate, and soon too I loved him with my whole heart. Yes, very intimate we became, and though we did not room together, yet we were with each other much of the time. How completely I loved him, how I doted on him! We often walked out into the fields together arm in arm, and strayed about, talking...Often he shared my pillow or I his, and then how sweet to sleep with him, to hold his beloved form in my embrace, to have his arm about my neck, to imprint upon his face sweet kisses!...To see [Halsey] again! What rapture it would be... (March 27, 1837, emphasis in original)

Questions about bed sharing come up frequently in scholarship about romantic friendships between men (Morris, “My Old” 96-7; Rotundo, “Romantic” 10). But the pillow sharing Dodd describes here is certainly not born of necessity, spatially or economically, as both young men had a separate “room” at Washington. Instead, the environment of the all-male

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college, with its rooms and fields and pillows, afforded opportunities to become “intimate,” “very intimate,” through the “rapture” of talking, embracing, and imprinting “sweet kisses.” In addition, although much less descriptively, Dodd mentions spending the night with Smith on multiple occasions, at both “City Hotel” and “U.S. Hotel” (April 24; May 8; September 21, 1837).

While Dodd shared physically intimate space with men, he describes his interactions with women as limited in large part to church and calling. In one entry, Dodd refers to actually having gone to church as “a wonder for me,” but his attendance does afford the opportunity to see young women: “there I saw many pretty girls and heard some good things, though I fear that more of my attention was taken up in seeing than in listening” (February 26, 1837). Indeed, his reports of having seen Elizabeth Morgan are often associated with going to church (May 17, 1837). Using his nickname for Morgan, “Lib,” he also mentions times when he “called to see Lib” (September 9; March 15, 1837; May 23, 1838). Most tellingly, when he “made a farewell call on Lib” one night before leaving Hartford for Yale, he even “sta[y]ed till half past 10,” and she gave him “a braided lock of her hair” (October 5, 1837). Dodd’s entry about this special farewell call highlights his differential access to women and men especially during nighttime hours. He refers to the practice of calling when writing about his interactions with other young women too (February 26, 1837). Of course, calls—even those lasting until after 10—did not afford the same possibility of physical intimacy that nights spent together did. As such, that Dodd “seems to have come closest to physical consummation” with Halsey may suggest more about the gendering of space than Dodd’s affections (Gay 210). As Katz remarks, “A double standard was operating” (30). In contrast with Dodd’s above entry about nights and kisses shared with Halsey, are Dodd’s entries about a memory of kissing Julia Beers during a game, and an associated dream in which he embraced her. The kiss was “sweet and delicious,” and the dreamt-of embrace “sweet and thrilling,” but with a woman, they were “perceived as verging dangerously toward the lubricious” (February 11, 1837, qtd. by Katz 30).

<sup>105</sup> Gay claims that “boys aroused [Dodd] even more” than girls (208-9).

<sup>106</sup> For more on the epistolary genre in Latin literature, and Horace especially, see Anna De Pretis’ *“Epistolarity” in the First Book of Horace’s Epistles*.

<sup>107</sup> In his poem “Epistolary,” it is possible Dodd not only drew on what he learned about the epistle verse tradition, but also imitated Byron’s epic poem “Don Juan.” Unlike Horace, Byron is not referenced directly in Dodd’s writing or Yale’s *Catalogue*. Nor is “Don Juan” an epistle verse. Yet “Epistolary” resembles “Don Juan” in terms of Dodd’s playful use of parenthesis as well as his rhyme scheme (Barton 15).

<sup>108</sup> Notable exceptions include Lindal Buchanan’s mentions of “sexuality” and more extended discussions of how relationships are significant to women’s delivery, Susan Miller’s account of teaching and learning as occurring through romantic letter writing

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between men and women, and Eve Bannett and Mary Anne Trasciatti's brief consideration of manual instruction in romantic letter writing.

<sup>109</sup> See also Laura Ahearn's *Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal*.

<sup>110</sup> In response to my own inquires about the provenance of the Albert Dodd Papers, the Manuscripts and Archives staff at Yale University Library confirmed only that, as indicated in the Finding Aide, the papers were a gift of Marion Belden Cook in 1981. Prior to this gift, they were held in a private collection, and no further information can be provided.