

Public Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ways in which the daguerreotype influenced literary celebrity in the United States from the time of its invention in 1839 to the beginning of the Civil War in 1860. The daguerreotype was introduced to America in the midst of the printing revolution that took place in the second quarter of the 19th century. Advancements in printing technology, transportation, and public education created a mass readership that made literary celebrity possible, and the accurate visual representations of authors that the daguerreotype created played a crucial role in the public imagination of these celebrity authors.

After a brief overview of the historical background of the era and the project's methodological approach, this study considers the effect of the daguerreotype on the writing and reputations of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville. The first chapter provides a reading of *The House of the Seven Gables*, arguing that daguerreotypy figures in the novel as a function of Hawthorne's concern with the public/private divide. The second chapter reads Poe's "The Literati of New York City" in relation to his photographic portraiture to explore how the construction of his public reputation was predicated on his visual image. Finally, the third chapter intervenes in the critical dialogue surrounding Melville's *Pierre, or the Ambiguities* to investigate the way in which Pierre's literary celebrity comments upon the compositional history of the novel.