

Affectionate Friends:
Friendship and Collaboration in the Renaissance and the Romantic Era

by

James J. Stevenson

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Supervisors: _____

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Signature of Author

For Brice, my one true friend.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the representations of friendship in letters, collaborations, and paratexts from the Renaissance and the Romantic era to uncover the affection behind the performances taught in classical manuals of friendship. The pairs of Shakespeare-Fletcher and Middleton-Rowley from the Renaissance are compared with Wordsworth-Coleridge and Keats-Brown from the Romantic era to show that the representations did not change even when the myth of the solitary genius began to develop. The representations of friendship based on the ideal of the one true friend allow men to express their affection for other men without being homoerotic or even homosocial. The textual evidence of friendship does not always prove that two people were each other's "one true friend," but the signs of friendship signify affectionate friendship for readers who desire such a true friendship for themselves.

List of Abbreviations Used

- CLSTC* *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*
Electronic edition. Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation,
2002. Web. 23 August 2011.
- CLW* *The Collected Letters of the Wordsworths.* Electronic
edition. Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 2002. Web.
23 August 2011.
- CPJK* *Complete Poems of John Keats.* Ed. John Barnard. London:
Penguin, 2006. Print.
- LCAB* *Letters of Charles Armitage Brown.* Ed. Jack Stillinger.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1966. Print.
- SLJK* *Selected Letters of John Keats.* Ed. Robert Gittings.
Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“I have been and always shall be your friend.”

– *Spock to James Tiberius Kirk (Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan)*

Few friendships in pop culture are as celebrated as the “bromance” between *Star Trek*’s Kirk and Spock, perhaps because of the longevity of the TV series and movies, including the 2009 story of origins. Their bromance—a word Oxford Dictionaries defines as “a close but non-sexual relationship between two men”—is well established in films like *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, but the recent revival of the characters catered to the expectations of an audience who wanted to see the relationship foregrounded. The same can be said of the 2010 film *Sherlock Holmes* in which Holmes and Watson’s friendship is highlighted because of the desire of the audience to see that friendship performed. The entire phenomenon of “buddy cop” films (see *Lethal Weapon*) speaks to the popularity of bromances, which are almost always between two men—or sometimes a man and dog (see *Turner and Hooch*). The model has also been used for women (see *Thelma and Louise*), but the popularity of bromances has always, as the name suggests, been focused on men. Sisterhood movies tend to focus on a group of women (see *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*), whereas bromances are about two men (see *I Love You, Man*) with some exceptions (see *The Three Amigos*). The two men do not necessarily have to be the main characters like Kirk and Spock or Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid; they can be supporting characters like Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrin Took or R2-D2 and C-3PO, who have literary forerunners in bros such as Rosencrantz and

Guilkenstern (until Tom Stoppard made them the leading men of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*).

The recent popularity of bromances, which fanfiction has helped to encourage, does not mean that male-male friendships are a new topic of interest. Aristotle, St. Augustine, Michel de Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Kant all wrote about the true friendship between men that is now called bromance. The manuals and representations of friendship they developed continued to influence not only subsequent authors who wrote about friendship, but also actual friends who tried to behave according to their prescriptions. Rather than seeing the Romantic era as a turning-point for representations of friendship, as individualism and the myth of the solitary genius developed, I argue that friendship continued to be performed and represented in the same ways as it was in the Renaissance, a time when homosocial performances were thought to be at their peak. The collaborative poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge and Keats and Brown, as well as their letters and the paratexts surrounding their work, shows that friendship in the Romantic era had every bit as much potential for being affectionate—in the sense of “having warm regard or love [of a person]” (*OED*)—beyond homoerotic or more pragmatic homosocial performances. These textual representations create a web of meanings that indicate a perception of affectionate friendship that does not have to signify the homosocial or homoerotic bonds that scholars tend to read back onto works from the Romantic era as well as onto those of the Renaissance that had a powerful influence on the Romantics. Much work has been done on friendship in the Renaissance and the Romantic era, but these periods are often uttered in the same breath only to be placed as polar opposites—“a linear narrative in which the ‘corporate’ writing practices of the early modern period

gave way to a Romantic cult of the individual genius” (Stone and Thompson 15). Instead of an assumed contrast, I compare the two to show how public and private performances of friendship in the Romantic era were rooted in the Renaissance and classical conceptions of friendship.

My thesis is divided into three chapters that will look at letters, both literary and actual; collaborative works of poetry and plays; and paratexts such as gravestones, title pages, and prefaces. The collaborative pairs of Fletcher-Shakespeare and Middleton-Rowley represent the Renaissance in my discussion while Coleridge-Wordsworth and Brown-Keats are my examples from the Romantic era. This is not to say that every set of collaborative authors are friends, especially in the “true friend” sense that will be discussed below, but the dynamics of writing with another individual on works that deal with friendship produce texts that provide examples of what friendship meant to the writers. The representations of friendship between these pairs of men show that there is in fact a type of friendship that is not necessarily homoerotic or even homosocial, but genuinely affectionate. Scholars, such as Jeffrey Masten and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, have privileged the erotic and social aspects of friendship in the Renaissance and the Romantic era to the point that it seems as if modern conceptions of these terms are still being pushed on the past even by those critics who claim to be taking a historical approach. I explore how classical ideals of friendship (although truly idealised) act as the foundation for the ways in which heterosexual men can interact with one another. Rather than explaining away the behaviour as homosocial, I intend to show the ways in which friendship can be affectionate—that is, invested in non-erotic love and without purely social motivation.

The Renaissance court, according to Alan Bray, was a “network of subtle bonds amongst influential patrons and their clients, suitors, and friends at court” (“Signs” 42). The patronage of a noble secured income for playwrights and poets, but ticket sales were still important for the entire troupe involved in producing a play. Shakespeare published *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece* early in his career and both are dedicated to Lord Southampton (Alexander xxxv). The importance of friendship in the sonnets is of no surprise considering that the performative language was expected. Even though friendship in practice was *not* the ideal structure defined in the classical texts of Aristotle and Cicero, the Renaissance court wanted to imagine that it was. Likewise, the attractive language of friendship was picked up by the Romantic era as it looked back not only to antiquity, but to the Renaissance looking back to antiquity.

The literary marketplace that became the primary scene of literary production in the Romantic era took shape in the seventeenth century. According to Dustin Griffin, some writers chose to maintain the patronage system at court; “[s]ome writers kept their distance. But even John Milton was visited by literary friends and admirers from the court world, including Marvell and . . . Dryden” (38). The Renaissance “culture in which an author typically sought to please the court gave way to a culture in which an author typically addressed a broader ‘reading public’” (Griffin 42) and those out of court “writers largely remained pawns in the literary marketplace; a famous few gained fortunes from their books but none undermined the overall commercial structure of the book trade in which authors were routinely the very last to benefit financially from publication” (Raven 15). Pope was one of these rare exceptions, and when he received the “contract with a bookseller to produce [the] translation of Homer [that] made his

fortune, [he] dedicated the book not to a patron but to William Congreve, a fellow writer” and a friend (Griffin 43). Rather than completing a survey of friendship from the Renaissance to the Romantic era, I compare texts *from* those two time periods to show their similarities and continued reliance on the classical conceptions of friendship, which means that most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will not be discussed in this paper.

Any study of friendship, a vibrant scholarly field since the early 1990s, invariably addresses the conceptions of ideal friendship outlined and passed down from Plato and Aristotle, to Seneca and Cicero, to Augustine, to Montaigne. Their texts, primary themselves in many ways, are excellent resources to understand how friendship was understood in the Renaissance, but one must be careful in addressing the term *friendship* because of difficulties in translation, especially because the Greek “*philia* encompasses many relationships” (Baltzly and Eliopoulos 2). However, as Dick Baltzly and Nick Eliopoulos explain, “our evidence from the ancient Greek philosophers looks at it from fewer viewpoints than one might like. As with nearly every other document from antiquity, the theorizing about friendship takes place entirely in a masculine voice” (2). The public nature of male friendship is responsible for this. Friendships between men existed in the public sphere to solidify political and social alliances that presented “a challenge to collective action. In response to this tension a notion of ‘civic friendship’—characterized as ‘like-mindedness’ or *homonoia*—emerged as a political commonplace” (Baltzly and Eliopoulos 5). To prove that these bonds of friendship existed, men performed in ways outlined by philosophers who theorized what an ideal friendship should look like. Baltzly and Eliopoulos argue that these performances

are ideals in the sense that they are explicitly normative: they say what friendships should be like, what they should be based on and who may genuinely be friends. These ideals are not plucked from thin air. Rather, they depend on competing philosophical theories about the nature of men and women, society and even the nature of the divine. (50)

The most read and cited philosophers from antiquity in the Renaissance are Aristotle and Cicero, both of whom—although separated by several hundred years—championed similar conceptions.

Although Plato discusses friendship in several of his dialogues, principally in *Lysis*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was the more popular model for friendship read in the Renaissance (Caine x). In a typically Aristotelian way, he outlines the five major points which he argues must be present in a friendship: a friend 1) "wishes for and does what is good or what appears to him to be good for his friend's sake," 2) "wishes for the existence and life of his friend for the friend's sake," 3) "spends time in our company," 4) has "desire[s that] are the same as ours," and 5) "shares sorrow and joy with his friend" (Aristotle 252). Spending time in the company of one's friend is especially important to Aristotle because he claims that "it is impossible to be friends, [if] they cannot live together" (251-252). He makes this statement not only in relation to friends who live apart, but also to friends who have *grown* apart and whose personalities are not as compatible as they used to be. The exchange of letters in the Renaissance solves this problem; the letters act as physical stand-ins for friends who are able to continue to grow together.

Another important concept to Aristotle is that before one can be a good friend, one must be a good man and “[a] good man has all these feelings [listed above] in relation to himself” (252). Like Richard Lovelace’s “I could not love thee dear so much / Loved I not honour more,” in the affectionate sense of *love*, one must be virtuous to be a good friend and must see oneself as a friend before one is able to be that friend to another. This virtuous aspect is popular in, as Baltzly and Eliopoulos claim,

much of the intellectual discussion of friendship that follows [that] is dominated by the desire to harvest from Greek philosophy a conception of friendship that works—one that is an appropriate conception of friendship for the weak, fallible, and self-interested people that we actually are most of the time. (50)

Even though the conceptions of friendship were for idealized friends, the models were used for all friendships as if friends *had* to behave in those idealized ways.

In his *De Amicitia*, Cicero states that he is “not now speaking of the ordinary and commonplace friendship—delightful and profitable as it is—but of that pure and faultless kind, such as was that of the few whose friendships are known to fame” (Cicero 133). This idealized friendship is not one of general acquaintances or business relationships, but something deeper and more meaningful wherein equality is key. For Cicero, “he who looks upon a true friend, looks, as it were, upon a sort of image of himself” (133), and the bond is such that the friend is like a second self “with whom you may dare discuss anything as if you were communing with yourself” (131). If one feels that one’s friend is a second self, it follows that “friendship adds a brighter radiance to prosperity and lessens

the burden of adversity by dividing and sharing it” (133), or as Francis Bacon rephrases it in “Of Friendship,” a friend “redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves” (174).

To find this perfect friend, however, one cannot just be of the same social class and age. Cicero argues, as did Aristotle, that “it is hard for friendship to remain if you have forsaken virtue” (149). This concept of the true friend does not allow for bad people to be ideal friends. Because one must always be striving for good and a friend wants this good for his or her friend, then both must be the same in their virtuous behaviour. If this virtuous nature is intact then the friends can experience “that kindred impulse of love, which arises when once we have met someone whose habits and character are congenial with our own; because in him we seem to behold, as it were, a sort of lamp of uprightness and virtue. For there is nothing more lovable than virtue” (Cicero 139). Because of their influence, the fact that both Aristotle and Cicero champion the necessity of virtue greatly affected the way Renaissance courts constructed circles of friendship. However, Cicero’s language makes it clear that he is not talking about groups of friends, but only about a single couple:

virtue cannot attain her highest aims unattended, but only in union and fellowship with another. Such a partnership as this, whether it is, or was, or is yet to be, should be considered the best and happiest comradeship along the road to nature’s highest good. (191)

The partnership between two friends, in specifically male language elsewhere in *De Amicitia*, is a greater bond than an erotic relationship between members of the opposite sex—and, in modern terms, between same-sex erotic couples.

In the Renaissance, writers such as Francis Bacon, Dorke, and Michel de Montaigne applied the rules of friendship to the patronage system of the court, and in 1797, Immanuel Kant wrote *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* based on the idealised friendships described in the Renaissance and antiquity. Kant was well known in the Romantic era, largely through the efforts of Coleridge who quotes Kant in his *Biographia Literaria*. Kant's strong interest in classical models of friendship shows how relevant these models were thought to be in the late eighteenth century. Kant's theory follows conceptions from antiquity and the Renaissance, but he makes a few clarifications of his own. He agrees that "[f]riendship (in its perfection) is the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect[,] . . . yet perfect friendship is a mere idea (but still a practically necessary one), unattainable in every attempt to realize it" (135). The idealised and "rare" (Montaigne 216) friendship that Montaigne claims to have had with Boëtie is impossible to Kant. The only possibility is a friendship in which

one finds a man of good disposition and understanding to whom he can open his heart with complete confidence, without having to worry about [political] dangers, and moreover with whom his opinions about things are in accord, [and to whom] he can give vent to his thoughts. Then he is not completely alone with his thoughts, as if in prison, but enjoys a freedom which he misses in the mass of men. (138)

Kant does not think that even this level of friendship is often attained, but admits that "[t]his (purely moral) friendship is no mere ideal, but (like the black swan) actually exists now and then in its perfection" (139).

More recently, modern scholarship has taken a great interest in the erotic language of Renaissance friendships. Jeffrey Masten, in his enviably named book *Textual Intercourse*, does an excellent job of finding the potential for the erotic in the language of friendship to rethink potentially homophobically-minded, political readings of those representations. Because of the social and political aspects that informed the ways male friends behaved towards each other, the erotic language was brushed aside as nothing more than performances to secure social standing and to *not* be accused of the catch-all term for sexual deviance that challenged social structures: sodomy. As Jonathan Goldberg explains in *Sodometries*,

although sodomy is, as a sexual act, anything that threatens alliance—any sexual act, that is, that does not promote the aim of married procreative sex (anal intercourse, fellatio, masturbation, bestiality—any of these may fall under the label of sodomy in various legal codifications and learned discourses), and while sodomy involves therefore acts that men might perform with men, women with women (a possibility rarely envisioned), and men and women with each other, and anyone with a goat, a pig, or a horse, these acts—or accusations of their performance—emerge into visibility only when those who are said to have done them also can be called traitors, heretics, or the like, at the very least, disturbers of the social order that alliance—marriage arrangements—maintained. (19)

Masten and Goldberg are indebted to Alan Bray, who outlines, in a historical reading, how *not* adhering to the accepted performances of friendship in the early modern period would make it look as if two men had something to hide. Therefore, the more their

friendship publically imitated the classical models of friendship, the less likely it was that the friends were actually erotically involved with one another.

Masten, Goldberg, and the other scholars who have worked to find the erotic potential in representations of friendship have done some much needed work, but their methodology has ignored the potential of affectionate friendships (and other collaborative couplings) that, as Stone and Thompson state in *Literary Couplings*, “ha[ve] been overshadowed by the privileging of the erotic” (14). These friendships, as represented by both the characters of collaborative authors and by the authors themselves, provide examples of how male friendship can be read as an emotion like love and not only as a structure like desire. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses desire in her definition of the “homosocial” which she explains

is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with “homosexual,” and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from “homosexual.” In fact, it is applied to such activities as “male bonding,” which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. To draw the “homosocial” back into the orbit of “desire,” of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted. (1-2)

Rather than showing the erotic potential in the homosocial, I argue that the erotic language used to express affection between men has taken away from the fact that the

emotion of affection can be completely legitimate and separate from the erotic. I make this claim not in opposition to Sedgwick's method, but to show how her definition of homosociality is not the only way to read male friendships. Some homosocial and even homoerotic readings stem from homophobia and I want to make it clear that I am not arguing against erotic readings of friendship—I firmly believe that eroticism is involved in some of the representations of male friendship in the Renaissance and the Romantic eras—but I want to reopen the possibility for love between friends that is not involved in the erotic or social language that informs the way the friends speak about each other.

This affectionate form of friendship for which I am making a case is not something that is limited to one time period or another. By comparing the Renaissance and the Romantic era, it will be clear that although writing practices changed and began to affect the ways in which friends related to each other and composed works, friends still *did* represent their friendships in extremely similar ways. Although authors like Wordsworth were trying to set themselves apart into what became the “myth of the solitary genius” (Stillinger), they were still working collaboratively in many different ways. David Watson Rennie, in *Wordsworth and His Circle*, claims (in perhaps a limiting list, but with a good point) that

[f]ive important sources exist as to the Alfoxden life[:] a journal kept by Dorothy[,] . . . the last book of *The Prelude*[,] . . . *The Nightingale*, . . . Wordsworth's and Coleridge's prose accounts of the origin of the *Lyrical Ballads*[,] . . . [and l]astly, and best of all, there is the totality of the work of the two poets which originated at Nether Stowey and Alfoxden. (68)

All of these works are testament to the fact that Wordsworth was not writing in a vacuum. He was with his sister and friends and the production of his work was not only dependent upon his solitary genius.

The myth of the solitary genius is what Roland Barthes attempts to kill in his “Death of the Author” and what Michel Foucault theorises instead under the term “author-function” in “What is the Author?” Barthes argues that “[t]he *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us” (1466; emphasis original). The “single person” does not give credit to the complex relationships with the living and the dead that helped create the work that we credit to only one Author and “[t]o give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (1469). If the author’s voice is granted complete authority then it takes away interpretive opportunities from the reader. Similarly, Foucault argues that the author-function “results from a complex operation whose purpose is to construct the rational entity we call an author” (1629). The decisions of editors and approaches of literary critics have the power to turn the name of a writer, like Shakespeare, into a sign under the banner of Author that signifies all of his works and has the last word on all of them.

Collaborative authorship complicates the idea of the author-function, because there is more than one identity acting as the authority on the text. Barthes states that “[t]he *author* still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs” (1466; emphasis original) in relation to a

single person, but when there are two authors attributed to a given work, the surrounding texts can construct a friendship out of the relationship. For Barthes, “the birth of reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (1470), and when the reader is granted more responsibility in the construction of the author-function, it becomes easier to see the complex network of collaboration at place in any work of literature—especially in those works attributed to two authors. However, as Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson argue, “the standard historical narratives tracing the deconstruction of authorship back to these roots tend to construct a myth of origins that reinscribes the Author at a metatextual level by casting Foucault and Barthes as the solitary creators of a new theory of textuality” (11).

The author is not dead, but it is important to see the solitary genius for the myth it is and to understand the power the reader has in the construction of narratives of the author-function, be it singular or plural. Ede and Lunsford argue that

the Romantics[’ . . .] assertions of originality, all the more striking because of their contrast with the increasing alienation and loss of independence catalyzed by the Industrial Revolution, helped further establish this new view of the writer as author. No longer would the writer be one of a number of craftpersons participating in the creation of a book. (85)

Despite what the Romantics asserted, however, their works still were part of complex relationships and collaborations. James S. Leonard and Christine E. Wharton argue that “[t]o write, in this myth of poetizing, is to emerge, but only partly from a trance of unhindered vision; writing, in its silent solitariness, is the nearest approach to recapturing the originative inspiration” (26-27). The process was in fact much more collaborative, as

M. Thomas Inge writes: “[i]n the study of cultural products, it is important to recognize that in many, if not most, cases we are talking about things which came into being by cooperation and delicate negotiation between creators, producers, and consumers” (15). In George Poulet’s *Phenomenology of Reading*, he theorises that when he reads a book, “what I hold in my hands is no longer just an object[;] . . . I am aware of a rational being, of a consciousness; the consciousness of another . . . [that] is open to me, welcomes me, lets me look deep inside itself, and even allows me, with unheard-of licence, to think what it thinks and feel what it feels” (39). The reader becomes involved in the identity of the poetic *I*, if there is one; however, when there are two known authors of a work, then the *I* becomes more complex. It is no longer the mingling of two identities, the author’s and the reader’s; it is between *at least* three if there are two collaborators, but, in reality, even more.

Every influence on collaborative authors is involved when reading oneself into the poetic *I*, as are the details of their lives and the production and publication history of the text. Jerome J. McGann argues that

[o]ne does not simply move through [critical editions of texts] in a linear way[;] . . . [r]ather, one moves around the edition, jumping from the reading text to the apparatus, perhaps from one of these to the notes or appendix, perhaps back to some part of the front matter which may be relevant, and so forth[.] . . . This is a process by which the entire sociohistory of the work—from its originary moments of production through all its subsequent reproductive adventures—is postulated as the ultimate goal of critical self-consciousness. (120)

Reading in this way is how readers see the friendship narratives signified in the letters, poetry, and paratexts of collaborative authors, and so it is with these reading practices in mind that I conduct my analysis.

My chapters are divided into discussions of letters, collaborations, and paratexts to show how friendship is represented in different mediums by or about the same authors. Letters are not always the perfect biographical records we expect them to be because of the performances of friendship that men used when writing to each other in the Renaissance and the Romantic era, but the affectionate subscriptions and gratitudinarian flourishes distinguished how the writers felt about friendship. When friends were living together or near each other they had no need to send letters, so collaborative works are the textual artefacts most suited to be analysed for representations of friendship in these cases. The paratexts of those collaborative works, from title-pages and prefaces, and the shared or adjacent gravestones of friends are other fascinating textual signs of friendship that only signify when the reader allows them to. My thesis explores the ways in which collaborative authors and their circles of friends left representations of friendship—dependent upon classical conceptions—that uncover/recover the emotion of love behind those friendships, not only for the friends themselves but for the readers who see the signs.

Chapter 2: Letters

“Every day I come by your house and I pick you up. And we go out. We have a few drinks, and a few laughs, and it’s great. But you know what the best part of my day is? For about ten seconds, from when I pull up to the curb and when I get to your door, ’cause I think, maybe I’ll get up there and I’ll knock on the door and you won’t be there. No goodbye. No see you later. No nothing. You just left. I don’t know much, but I know that.” – Chuckie to Will (Good Will Hunting)

When friends who are accustomed to spending much of their time in each other’s company part ways, their separation is not usually quite as dramatic as the one in *Good Will Hunting*, but a goodbye does provide an opportunity for friends to talk about their friendship. In the Renaissance and the Romantic era, letters allowed friends to maintain contact in an “epistolary space,” as James How calls it. The main reason for talking about a friendship was because of absence: either a separation of friends because of distance or a final separation when one of them died. This chapter will explore the ways in which letters in the Renaissance and the Romantic era were used in similar ways to express affection for friends that were not simply performative pieces required of the writers because of popular conceptions of friendship but legitimate expressions of emotion. Scholars such as Alan Stewart have argued that letters written between men in the Renaissance were understood to be public documents that would be read not just by the recipient, but by his friends as well (Stewart 10). As I explain in the Introduction, if male friends did not display their friendship publically, they ran the risk of being accused of

sodomy: a blanket term for all manner of sins in the Renaissance not necessarily (but including) homosexual activities. I argue that in some cases letters written between separated male friends and biographies written about dead male friends express private emotions regardless of the public presentation of the letters in certain circumstances that are often overlooked as being completely for the sake of public performance.

Seneca is not the first, but certainly one of the most influential letter writers for shaping the Renaissance manuals of letter writing. Seneca's letters to his friend Lucilius are "a collection of essays rather than letters" instructing his friend on how to behave morally, as Gummere, paraphrasing Bacon, points out (in Seneca x). The letters themselves are models for how letters should be written because Seneca takes great care to *perform* his friendship to Lucilius while also describing what friendship should be. In Letter III, "On True and False Friendship," Seneca is shocked at how lightly Lucilius uses the word "friend." If "friend" is used too liberally, then it begins to lose its loftier meaning, reminiscent of the conception of the "true friend" that was outlined in my introduction. For example, Seneca tells Lucilius that

Indeed, I would have you discuss everything with a friend; but first of all discuss the man himself. When friendship is settled, you must trust; before friendship is formed, you must pass judgement[.] . . . Why need I keep back any words in the presence of my friend? Why should I not regard myself as alone when in his company? (III 9)

Seneca echoes the conception of friendship outlined in my introduction, but his genre is different.

Packaging the lessons as letters to a friend allows Seneca to convey the rules of friendship to a person whom he considers to be his one true friend. However, because they were compiled and circulated in a group, the letters are also public documents. The letters were not for Lucilius alone. In fact, there did not even have to be a *real* Lucilius. Seneca could have created an imagined recipient of the letters, like an imagined interlocutor for Sophocles in a Platonic dialogue, who stands in for the reader. The letter format, especially when discussing friendship, is effective because the letters also stand in for Seneca. The reader is put in the privileged position of having Seneca write to him or her as a friend if one enters into that intimate role and feels the “I” speaking to him or her.

An original letter (not, that is, in a bound version like Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales* or Keats’s *Selected Letters*, or a web edition like the *Complete Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*) is a physical representation of a friend because it can be touched and held. A letter from a friend bears his or her hand writing, and although it is a poor substitute for the real person who wrote the words, it is the writer’s signifier nonetheless. These letters are able to physically signify the friend, as Seneca says at the beginning of letter 40:

I thank you for writing to me so often; for you are revealing your real self to me in the only way you can. I never receive a letter from you without being in your company forthwith. If the pictures of our absent friends are pleasing to us, though they only refresh the memory and lighten our longing by a solace that is unreal and unsubstantial, how much more pleasant is a letter, which brings us real traces, real evidences, of an absent

friend! For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter—recognition. (XL 263, 265)

The physical aspect of the letter is that which allows Seneca to feel as though he is in the company of his friend. The “real evidences” are important because they affirm that the friend is alive.

Seneca's letters are an effective starting point for a discussion of friendship in letters because he was read in the Renaissance as well as in the Romantic era. Richard M. Gummere points out that proving whose work Shakespeare read is almost impossible, but some of his contemporaries do quote and reference Seneca. In the Romantic period, Wordsworth quotes him directly in the *Ode to Duty* (Gummere 130) and Coleridge does in letter 41. Coleridge also mentions Seneca in *Table Talk* and “quotes him on many occasions with approval” (Gummere 130). Although Coleridge does not directly reference descriptions of friendship from Seneca, it is easy to discern that he did read those letters, not only because of his interest in friendship (and his later work *The Friend*), but because Coleridge's letters follow the models that Seneca develops.

Like Seneca, Shakespeare too provides a link between the Renaissance and the Romantic era conceptions of friendship because all the Romantic poets in my analysis read him.¹ Even though we have no letters from him to friends, he does write about such letters in his plays. Alan Stewart, in *Shakespeare's Letters*, makes a strong argument for the importance of letters in Shakespeare's plays in representing the letter writing practices of the Renaissance. Stewart shows that “the reception of letters was by no means a private affair[;] . . . letters are usually delivered in public, and often read silently

¹ For an analysis of Keats's notes in his copy of Shakespeare's work, see R. S. White's *Keats as a Reader of Shakespeare*.

in public, or aloud in gatherings of various sizes. These habits necessarily change our casual linking of letter-writing and individual privacy” (10). Letters performed on the stage were, by necessity of the medium, read aloud, enacting their public nature. Stewart also argues that letter writers in the Renaissance did not actually follow the advice in manuals of letter writing:

“real” extant early modern letters are perversely ignorant of anything approaching the epistolary theory that was supposed to dictate them. Then as now, it seems that experts vigorously dispensed “how-to” advice in an attempt to bring some order to an activity that was, in reality, wonderfully miscellaneous, even chaotic. Thus, while letter writing manuals can tell us something about the practice they seek to regulate, they signally fail to explain or contain the myriad of forms of letter writing in the period. (14)

Letters in the Renaissance and the Romantic era were diverse, but certain representations of friendship emerge especially between those characters and poets who were concerned with roles of true friends.

2.1 Literary Letters

The Two Gentlemen of Verona's main plot is inspired by the story of Titus and Gyssipus from Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governour*. The friends in Elyot's book are examples of friendship because Gyssipus is willing to give up the woman he loves to save the life of his friend who will die of heartbreak if he does not have her. In Shakespeare's play, the offering of the woman is also made but without the urgency in the source. This actually makes the performance of friendship stronger

because it appears in the context of impassioned speeches about friendship between the two friends when they are forced to part ways. The play begins with their leave-taking, which inspires them to comment on their strong bond. The absence will require them to write letters to each other, but Proteus hopes that Valentine will imagine that they are together while Valentine is having new experiences abroad. He tells his friend

To Milan let me hear from thee by letters
Of thy success in love, and what news else
Betideth here in absence of thy friend;
And I likewise will visit thee with mine. (1.1.57-60)

The play depicts common conventions of Renaissance letter writing, so Valentine's assertion that he can "visit" his friend through his writing implies that the letters, between men in this case, can stand in for the self. Frederick Kiefer argues that

[L]ove letters become a repository of conventions for a variety of reasons: they allow a writer to express an otherwise ineffable state of mind; they give attractive form to passions that are by nature unruly and turbulent; and by their durability they obscure the fact that passion may subside as quickly as it surges. Of course lovers would deny such inconsistency. They want—perhaps need—to believe that the beloved will remain steadfast; and they themselves want to be perceived the same way. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they seek the illusion of permanence. To this end epistolary conventions prove useful: in a world of shifting emotion, conventions by virtue of their stability provide psychological reassurance. (147)

Letters provide permanence through the preservation of the written word. As long as a letter exists, it can be read as a document proving the emotions it contains, not only to the recipient, but to anyone who reads the letter afterwards. Although Kiefer writes primarily about love letters in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, his argument applies equally well to letters between friends. The friendship feels stronger if it is represented in carefully chosen words that can be read over and over than in spoken dialogue. The play does not contain any recitations of the letters between the friends, so it is only from their dialogue one can infer the contents of the letters they are said to have sent to each other.

Despite the favourable representation of the letters between friends in the play, Speed is critical of epistolary transmissions and says “Pox of your love letters!” (3.1.368). His curse is intended to show the complications that arise from sending letters to represent the self, especially when the letters are intercepted. The love letters certainly move the plot in a way that “friendly letters” would not have, but the reference to the letters between friends assumes a knowledge of the conventions of friendship that require it to be properly performed. If, for example, one friend does not perform the friendship as well as the other, then it creates an inequality that makes it impossible for the two to be true friends. Even though none of the letters between the two gentlemen are read aloud in the play, they are assumed to have occurred. Proteus is more critical of himself than Valentine is, which suggests that Proteus sees himself as unworthy of Valentine’s friendship. Were it not for Proteus’ focus on love, it would appear that he might long for friendship more than his friend; however, it is Valentine who expresses their friendship more deeply, especially with the controversial gift-giving of Silvia at the end of the play. Valentine privileges friendship over heterosexual love when he makes this performative

act, and he expects Proteus to respond appropriately with a refusal. When Valentine speaks of love, he thinks of it in terms of its relationship to friendship, whereas Proteus does just the opposite.

When Valentine is banished, Proteus echoes Valentine's earlier claims about letters when he says that

Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that

And manage it against despairing thoughts.

Thy letters may be here, though thou art hence

Which being writ to me, shall be delivered

Even in the milk-white bosom of thy love. (3.1.246)

Proteus tries to console Valentine not just about being away from Silvia, but also about being away from him. He calls Valentine a "lover" and then immediately places himself as the object of that love; this has been read by critics like Masten to be a signpost of homosexuality that could not then be described as such. Proteus' language is actually indicative of the fact that he always puts friendship in a position secondary to love—to which he is also "false," as S. Asa Small argues (23). Proteus uses the same language, but the details of his behaviour in the rest of the play suggest that he means different things when he uses language almost identical to Valentine's. In the play, similar performances of love do not necessarily mean that the emotion described is equally felt.

2.2 Gratiudinarian Flourishes

In the 1790s, the decade of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, letters were a popular form of literature. Alan Stewart's research reveals that

great figures, both dead and still living, were read through multiple-volume editions of their collected correspondence. After half a century of consuming fiction dominated by the epistolary novel, British readers expected letters to provide insight not only into events of the letter-writer's life, but also into emotions and self-reflection, producing a kind of ongoing autobiography with narrative vigour. (2)

Shakespeare's popularity in the late eighteenth century was due entirely to his plays and poetry because none of his personal letters or notebooks still existed. Scholars, as well as the public, wished that they did, so in 1795 Samuel Ireland held a showing in London of the Shakespeare Papers, which were quickly found out to be forgeries (Stewart 1).

Stewart argues that "[f]orgeries they may be but the Ireland papers are intriguing because they tell us what readers were thought to want from Shakespeare papers in 1795[;] . . . [the] top of the wish-list at the time were the letters" (2). The letters that Ireland's son forged were exactly

the letters that Ireland knew his readers wanted: letters to Anne Hathaway (complete with verses and a lock of his hair) providing proof that the Bard was in love with his wife-to-be; a letter to fellow actor Richard Cowley, the first Verges in *Much Ado About Nothing*, proof that he was a hands-on player immersed in the colourful theatrical world of the day; correspondence between Shakespeare and the earl of Southampton, proof

that he was a poet blessed with the personalized patronage of the aristocracy. (Stewart 2)

I agree with Stewart's arguments for the inclusions of these letters, but add that the letter to Cowley conveys signs of friendship in addition to showing Shakespeare's active role in the theatre. Letters created an epistolary space for separated friends to express their friendships, and not only did the public in the Romantic era want to read them but they wrote them as well.

In the years leading up to his collaboration with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads*, Coleridge's letters reveal his constant need to have a "one true friend" at all times with whom he could confide. Although the recipient of his most sentimental letters was and continued to be Thomas Poole, he was not poetic enough to be the true friend Coleridge desired. In letters to Richard Southey, Coleridge admits to revering Southey even though his friend was "averse to Gratiitudinarian Flourishes" (*CLSTC* July 6, 1794).² These examples of Coleridge's attempts to express his affection provide insight into his relationship with Wordsworth, who was far less inclined to express his emotions or partake in as much social company as Coleridge. While they were living at Alfoxden and Nether Stowey, they did not need to send letters to each other; they were frequently together. Without textual artefacts in the form of letters, an analysis of their poetry becomes even more important; however, Coleridge's attitude towards friendship is possible to determine through the letters he wrote to friends, like Southey and Poole, whom he kept—off and on in Southey's case—throughout his life.

² For *The Complete Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, I have chosen to cite quotations using dates rather than page numbers because it makes them easier to locate on the online version I used.

In a letter to Southey, Coleridge alludes to the fact that letters were expected to be publically shared.³ Coleridge informs Southey that “To *you alone*, Southey! I write the first part of this letter — to yourself confine it” (*CLSTC* October 21, 1794; emphasis original). Indeed the first part is not actually Coleridge, but his transcription of a letter he received: “No name was signed; — it was from Mary Evans. — I received it about three weeks ago. I loved her, Southey! almost to madness. Her Image was never absent from me for three Years — for more than three Years” (*CLSTC* October 21, 1794). Coleridge sends Southey a letter of rejection from the woman he loves so that his grief may be halved by sharing it with a friend.

Coleridge’s love letters to Mary Evans are also full of flourishes and he privileges the letter’s form as being representative of their relationship when he tells her, after she asks him to stop contacting her, “I have burnt your Letters — forget mine” (*CLSTC* December 24, 1794). To help him forget her, Coleridge seeks out support from Southey, hoping that he can be the one true friend to halve his grief:

He cannot be long wretched who dares be actively virtuous. I am well assured, that she loves me as a favorite Brother. When she was present, she was to me only as a very dear Sister: it was in absence, that I felt those gnawings of Suspense, and that Dreaminess of Mind, which evidence an affection more restless, yet scarcely less pure, than the fraternal. The Struggle has been well nigh too much for me — but, praised be the All-

³ For a discussion of the feminine myth of private letters in the Romantic era see Mary Favret’s *Romantic Correspondence* in which she argues, “[r]ather than determine any single fiction of the letter’s ‘femininity,’ we should trace historically specific tensions between publication and correspondence, between the Post Office and letter-writing, and between the epistolary novel and other representations of the letter. And we should ask how the woman writing the letters situates herself within the field of connections between gender and genre” (15).

merciful! the feebleness of exhausted Feelings has produced a Calm, and my Heart stagnates into Peace. [. . .] To lose her! — I can rise above that selfish Pang. But to marry another — O Southey! bear with my weakness. (*CLSTC* December 29, 1794).

Despite their subsequent falling out, Coleridge seems to mean what he says when he asks Southey to “bear with my weakness.” Coleridge needs a friend to help him and he uses language appropriate to that cause gleaned from the letter-writing manuals of the Renaissance and antiquity. With Southey, Coleridge often puts himself in the position of the unrequited lover, so it is not surprising that Southey was not suitable for the position of one true friend that Coleridge craved. He tells Southey,

My very Virtues are of the slothful order — God forbid, my Vices should be otherwise — . I never feel anger — still less retain resentment — but I should be a monster, if there had risen in my heart even a propensity to either towards you, whose conduct has been regulated by affection——. I wish my heart was more worthy of your esteem. (*CLSTC* December 9, 1794)

His incessant self-deprecation does not put him in a position to have a true friend because he does not see himself as worthy enough for one.

In some of his letters to those other than his closest friends, Coleridge uses the same gratitudinarian flourishes Southey disliked, but this does not indicate that Coleridge was simply performing for political reasons when he wrote to Southey and Poole.

Although the language is similar, the focus is different. When he writes to Samuel Butler,

for example, Coleridge focuses on his emotional reaction to being appreciated by Butler rather than emphasising his affection for him:

I assure you I received pleasure almost to tears from your letter. There are hours in which I am inclined to think very meanly of myself, but when I call to memory the number & character of those who have honoured me with their esteem, I am almost reconciled to my follies, and again listen to the whispers of self-adulation. (*CLSTC* c. June 14, 1794)

Coleridge describes his overflowing emotion as if he is attempting to secure more of Butler's favour through his admission of how much it meant to him, but he does not praise Butler himself.

His letters to Poole are perhaps the most affectionate, including one where Coleridge writes, "My beloved Poole / The sight of your villainous hand-scrawl was a great comfort to me" (*CLSTC* December 11, 1796). The hand-writing of his friend, which he teasingly mocks, is a physical representation of his friend, because, as illegible as it may be, it *is* Poole. The writing signifies his friend and provides a physical object for him to hold in lieu of Poole himself, when Coleridge is in Bristol and Poole at Nether Stowey in Somerset. Some of Coleridge's letters to Poole contain his most "romantic" phrasing: "My *whole Being* so yearns after you, that when I think of the moment of our meeting, I catch the fashion of German Joy, rush into your arms, and embrace you — methinks, my *Hand* would swell, if the whole force of my feeling were crowded there" (*CLSTC* May 6, 1799; emphasis original). The use of *swell* contains erotic connotations that Coleridge acquired from classical and Renaissance traditions of performing friendship. Poole receives the strongest displays of this language because, even though Coleridge longs to

be joined in an intellectual bond with another poet, he considers himself Poole's one true friend. Coleridge often ends letters by asking God to bless the recipient of the letter as well as himself, and in one such letter to Poole writes, "God bless you, and him who is ever, ever yours — who, among all his friends, has ever called and ever felt you the Friend" (*CLSTC* December 31, 1799).

Coleridge's letters from Germany to his wife Sara include similar flourishes, but he often includes Poole as well:

Or perhaps you anticipate that if I received a letter, I should idly turn away from my German to *dream* of you — of you & my beloved babies! — Oh yes! — I should indeed dream of you for hours and hours; of you, and of beloved Poole, and of the Infant that sucks at your breast, and of my dear dear Hartley. (*CLSTC* November 26, 1798)

He mentions Poole before his own children in regards to whom he will dream about. The relationship is extremely important to him, and he mentions it again in a letter which equates some of his feelings of love and friendship:

Not that I should wish to see you & Poole immediately on my Landing — No! — the sight, the touch of my native Country were sufficient for one *whole Feeling* — one most deep unmingled Emotion! But then & after a lonely walk of the three miles — *then*, first of *all* whom I knew, to see you, & my *Friend!* (*CLSTC* April 23, 1799; emphasis original)

Coleridge considers Sara to be on equal footing with Poole and does not disguise his feelings for his friend.

One of the few times Coleridge writes angrily to Poole is when Poole accuses Coleridge of idolising Wordsworth:

You charge me with prostration in regard to Wordsworth. Have I affirmed anything miraculous of W.? Is it impossible that a greater poet than any since Milton may appear in our days? Have there any great poets appeared since him?... Future greatness! Is it not an awful thing, my dearest Poole? What if you had known Milton at the age of thirty, and believed all you now know of him? (*CLSTC* March 31, 1800)

Coleridge's defence does not refute the claim, but tries to convince Poole that Wordsworth is indeed worthy of being treated as one of the greatest poets of all time, even though time had not yet had a chance to immortalise him as such. Poole's accusation might have been one of jealousy at seeing his friend searching out a new true friend, but it might also have been out of concern for Coleridge who was investing himself in a friendship in which he would never be treated as an equal.

In the case of Wordsworth and Coleridge, their personal communications are not recorded during their time together when writing *Lyrical Ballads* because they were together so often in the year on which I am focusing—during 1797-1798 when the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was composed and published. If one wanted to contact the other, he could simply walk to the other's residence in the Quantocks in Somerset,⁴ so that correspondence was probably more along the lines of invitations rather than long explanations of their daily activities. Only in Germany when they parted ways did they send some letters back and forth. Dorothy and William write bland accounts of their

⁴ It is also worth mentioning that the homes in which they lived are comparable to the inequality of friendship that I am exploring. Wordsworth's Alfoxden was a gentleman's house whereas Coleridge's Nether Stowey was a cottage.

experience (such as a price list from a general store) whereas Coleridge's letters to them contain more of the exciting insights that he likely shared with them when in their physical company. Coleridge also makes a snipe at Dorothy in an early letter during their German travels. He complains to Wordsworth: "You have two things against you: your not loving smoke; and your sister. If the manners at Goslar resemble those at Ratzeburg, it is almost necessary to be able to bear smoke. Can Dorothy endure smoke? Here, when my friends come to see me, the candle nearly goes out, the air is so thick" (*CLSTC* November, 1798). Coleridge thrived on the company of others and wanted a different experience in Germany than the Wordsworth siblings did. "Smoke" represents the friends with whom Coleridge wanted to surround himself and he blames Dorothy, who was in the constant company of the man he admires as a scapegoat. Coleridge uses the language of friendship to try to secure the friends he respects and admires and therefore backpedals from these statements by including praise of Dorothy in a subsequent letter: "William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear Dorothea! You have all in each other; but I am lonely, and want you!" (*CLSTC* Early December, 1798). Even though Coleridge writes dear in front of both names and expresses his affection equally, his jealousy is still apparent. He is alone and is not the friend to Wordsworth that he wants to be.

The time Wordsworth and Coleridge spent together writing *Lyrical Ballads* provided them with an intimacy based on the feeling of each other's poetry—exemplified in Coleridge's claim to be able to recognise Wordsworth's style in an unattributed phrase. In a letter to Wordsworth, Coleridge tells him, "[t]hat 'Uncertain heaven received/ Into the bosom of the steady lake,' I should have recognised any where; and had I met these lines running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out

‘Wordsworth!’” (*CLSTC* 10 December, 1798). Coleridge’s claim is impossible to prove, but the sentiment behind it is clear. He claims to know his friend well enough to be able to detect his poetic production as if it were seeing Wordsworth himself. Like a letter, the poem can stand in for the friend because of the time they spent writing collaboratively together and sharing manuscripts. Even once they were separated in Germany this sharing continued, as seen in the previous example, and also in a letter in which Coleridge sends a long poem on which he had been working. His letter ends with one of his typical flourishes of friendship: “I am sure I need not say how you are incorporated into the better part of my being; how, whenever I spring forward into the future with noble affections, I always alight by your side” (*CLSTC* Early December, 1798). Even when Coleridge is writing he feels the presence of his friend. He also becomes anxious when he has not seen enough work by his friend. He tells Wordsworth,

I long to see what you have been doing. O let it be the tail-piece of ‘The Recluse!’ for of nothing but ‘The Recluse’ can I hear patiently. That it is to be addressed to me makes me more desirous that it should not be a poem of itself. To be addressed, as a beloved man, by a thinker, at the close of such a poem as ‘The Recluse,’ a poem non unius populi, is the only event, I believe, capable of inciting in me an hour's vanity — vanity, nay, it is too good a feeling to be so called; it would indeed be a self-elevation produced ab extra. (*CLSTC* 12 October, 1798)

Coleridge’s gushing delight at having the “Recluse” being written for him is unconcealed, but the most interesting part of this passage is that he says that “nothing but ‘The Recluse’ can I hear patiently.” The poem of his friend is the only work that he wants

to read because of the fact that he feels involved in it. Rather than reading a poem as an involved reader, as Georges Poulet suggests we do, Coleridge is *actually* the intended recipient. The poem was still meant to be public, but in this early stage of its composition it was much more personal because Coleridge was one of the few who had read it.⁵

The letters of Coleridge show that he used the often romanticised or erotised language of friendship passed down from antiquity and the Renaissance to express the affection he had for his male friends. He was striving for a true friend and never found one. He saw himself as above Poole and below Wordsworth, and Southey never responded in the same affectionate language that Coleridge wanted to hear. The tradition of a discourse has the power to shape one's expectations from others, but Coleridge was unable to connect in the manner for which he longed with friends who did not use the same affectionate language with him.

2.3 Permanent Absence

As much as Coleridge poured forth his soul abroad in the hopes of reciprocation, so did his younger contemporary, John Keats, have similar displays of affection heaped upon him. There was something about Keats that inspired friendship—not just while he was alive, but perhaps even more so after his death. But this “everlasting spell,” as Joanna Richardson calls it, that bewitched Hunt, Haydon, Clarke, Taylor, Hessey, Brown, Woodhouse, Dilke, Bailey, Rice, Severn, Reynolds, Haslam, and Mathew (Bate 52), made Keats uncomfortable. Fanny Brawne once told Keats's sister that

⁵ The poem never was completed, but remained as a manuscript that became worked into Wordsworth's *Excursion*.

I am certain he has some spell that attaches them to him . . . or else he has met with a set of friends that I did not believe could be found in the world. [He did not] exert himself to gain people's friendship . . . [at social functions] where all the evening's amusement consists in saying your good health *your* good health, and YOUR good health—and (O I beg your pardon) your's Miss—" &c. (Richardson 11)

Performances like those that Brawne describes frustrated Keats; he did not like the "social conventions" (Richardson 11) of keeping up appearances in the Regency Period, so when he does use affectionate language with his friends he probably means what he says. The letters that he wrote to his closest friend, Charles Armitage Brown, and the letters between Brown and Joseph Severn during the time of Keats's declining health are excellent sources of how friends communicated in the Regency Period especially when the death of one of the friends was imminent. At first Keats's departure for Rome was a temporary leave-taking, such as the one in *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, but when it became clear that he was going to die, the threat of his permanent absence encouraged stronger reflections and expressions of friendship from his friends in England.

Before his waning health, however, Keats found opportunities to ruminate on friendship—especially on what he saw as the unequal relationship he had with Brown. Even early in their friendship Brown did as much as he could to help Keats, but it made the poet anxious because of the unbalance in their relationship. Keats tells Brown on September 22, 1819,

And here I will take an opportunity of making a remark or two on our friendship, and all your good offices to me. [. . . G]ood God! what a short

while you have known me! . . . You have been living for others more than any man I know. This is a vexation to me because it has been depriving you, in the very prime of your life, of pleasures which it was your duty to procure . . . I speculate upon it frequently; and, believe me, the end of speculations is always an anxiety for your happiness. This anxiety will not be one of the least incitements to the plan I purpose pursuing. I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties. This very habit would be the parent of idleness and difficulties. You will see it is a duty I owe myself to break the neck of it. [. . .] I look forward, with a good hope, that we shall one day be passing free, untrammelled, unanxious time together. (*SLJK* 279)

Keats worries that Brown has been trying too hard to be everything to everyone and, without being in a position to repay his kindness, Keats asks Brown to stop spoiling him. Ronald A. Sharp states that in this passage “Keats’s gesture is itself a great act of generosity and friendship, in which Keats keeps Brown’s gift moving” (135). I think Sharp is trying to defend Keats too much to no real end. Keats is not being a bad friend by questioning Brown’s motives; rather, he is worried that Brown is not sincere. Once they became closer friends and Keats realised that Brown’s affection was true, Keats offered himself to Brown in the same language—in fact, describing his emotions more eloquently than his more straightforward and less poetic friend (although compared to Keats, who *isn’t* less poetic?). Because Keats lived with Brown in Hampstead during the most poetically productive year of his life, they did not exchange many letters at that

time; the most heart-wrenching letters appear after Keats suffered a major haemorrhage in 1820 and was prescribed a trip to Italy for the dry climate (Bate 655).

Brown was travelling and unable to reach London in time to accompany Keats, but Joseph Severn, a friend not as close to Keats as some of the others mentioned above, immediately agreed when Haslam asked him to go. At first Brown corresponded directly with Keats, but then exchanged letters with Severn when Keats's health deteriorated. One of the first letters he received from Keats was a letter similar to Coleridge's to Southey when he sought support about his unrequited love for May Evans. On November 1, 1820, Keats wrote Brown an intensely personal letter, disguising Fanny Brawne's name and their engagement, but baring his deepest anxieties to his friend:

I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter;— if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would the faintest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;— perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I cannot q—
—⁶ My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. (*SLJK* 367-368)

Brown knew more about Keats's relationship with Fanny Brawne than did any of Keats's other friends, including Severn. Instead of speaking to Severn who was with him, Keats decided to confide once again in his closest friend even though the letter took exactly one month to reach Brown from Italy. When Keats asks later in the letter, "My dear Brown, what I am to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease?" (368), the answer is exactly

⁶ More modest editors gloss this as "quit", but considering the context I agree with Jon Mee's gloss of "probably 'quiff' (that is, fuck)" (*SLJK* n. 418).

what he just did: write a letter to his friend. However, a letter from Brawne is something that Keats does not think he can handle. He tells Brown that “I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her hand writing would break my heart—even to hear of her any how, to see her name written would be more than I can bear” (368). Any representation that signified Brawne would be too much for Keats because the letters would function exactly as Shakespeare says they will in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The physical object of the lover is unbearable to see because of the likelihood of that being the closest that he would ever be to her again. Keats tells Brown not to come to Italy, but in a humble subjunctive phrasing that clearly implies that he wants Brown to come: “If I were in better health I should urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort” (368). Brown certainly would have comforted Keats, but with the painfully slow speed of their correspondence, it appeared that Keats’s health was improving by the time he died. This letter, signed, “Your ever affectionate friend, John Keats” (369), was the penultimate letter Keats wrote to Brown.

Brown kept in close correspondence with William Haslam while Keats was in Italy and references this letter in one to Keats’s schoolfriend on December 3:

You call Severn’s letter a heavy narrative!—what would you say to Keats’ letter of despair to me? . . . I am glad he unburthened his mind to Severn,—that is good. I still have cheering hopes,—but I am afraid,—very afraid. Keats’ letter to me *I must not show*,—I wish I might,—the showing of it would relieve me, for the thoughts of it quite weigh me down. (*LCAB* 62; emphasis original)

Brown tells his friends about Keats's letter, but will not show it to them, presumably to prevent the circulation of stories about Keats and Brawne. The letter becomes a burden to him, so he has indeed taken Keats's burden upon himself but because of the distance between them and Keats's fragile state of mind, Brown must take his share of his friend's troubles upon himself. The letter also explains that Keats "unburthened his mind to Severn" but probably not in as explicit detail as he did in the letter to Brown.

Keats's final letter before Severn took over all the writing responsibility was to Brown and it conveys the affection he had for his closest friend:

My dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. [. . .] I cannot answer any thing in your[s] . . . because I am afraid to look over it again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any hand writing of a friend I love so much as I do you. (*SLJK* 369)

Brown's writing becomes as difficult for Keats to bear as he feared the writing of his beloved Fanny would. The signification of Brown is more important than his words and indeed, Brown's abrupt style does not afford much affection to shine through. Keats's final thoughts are to his friends and the letter winds down to an ironic conclusion for the eloquent letters of John Keats: "Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends[;] . . . I can scarcely bid you good bye even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow" (369-370).

Keats sent his letter on November 30, 1820: one day before Brown received his letter written on November 1. Brown received the above letter on December 21 and responded that day with language that is altogether cold compared to Keats's offering:

“And so you still wish me to follow you to Rome? and truly I wish to go,—nothing detains me but prudence. Little could be gained, if any thing[,] . . . unless it were a matter of necessity, and I see none while you are in such good hands as Severn’s” (*LCAB* 63). Brown did not know that on December 10, Keats had endured another haemorrhage—the one from which he would never recover—but his style appears insensitive compared to how well he always treated Keats in England. However, the humour at the end of the letter suggests that Brown was perhaps trying not to aggravate Keats’s condition with too emotional an account of his feelings for his friend. Brown jokes that

If I were in Severn’s place, & you insisted on ever gnawing a bone, I’d lead you the life of a dog. What the devil should you grumble for? Do you recollect my anagram on your name? – how pat it comes now to Severn!—my love to him & the said anagram.—“*Thanks Joe!*” If I have a right guess, a certain person next door is a little disappointed at not receiving a letter from you, but not a word has dropped. She wrote to you lately, & so did your sister. Your’s most faithfully,

Cha^s Brown. (*LCAB* 65)

Brown keeps his tone conversational perhaps to prevent exciting Keats. Even his reference to Fanny Brawne is made in passing. Brown and Keats spent much of their time on their walking tour of Scotland making up doggerel rhymes and puns, so his jokes are actually quite appropriate for their friendship.

The other reason that I think Brown was being rhetorically careful in the letter is because of how he writes about Keats to Severn, whom Brown befriended during Keats’s illness. Brown, who had strong opinions about whom he did and did not like, had a very

high opinion of Severn. He felt so invested in Keats's well-being that anything Severn did to help his sick friend was as if it were a favour for him. In January, 1821, one month before Keats's death, Brown writes to Severn that

I feel—and I cannot help it—all your attentions to my unhappy Keats as if they were shown to myself,—yet how difficult I have found it to return your thanks,—until this morning it has been utterly out of my power to write on so melancholy a story. He is present to me every where and at all times,—he now seems sitting by my side and looking hard in my face,—though I have taken the opportunity of writing this in company,—for I scarcely believe I could do it alone. So much as I have loved him, I never knew how closely he was wound about my heart. (*LCAB 67*)

The emotion that Brown has hidden from his dying friend, he confesses to Severn who is not only taking his place as Keats's friend but also Keats's place as Brown's. After Keats's death, Brown summarises this sentiment in the line, "my dear Severn, I feel towards you as a brother for your kindness to our brother Keats" (*LCAB 73*). His familial language bonds the three of them together as brothers, and probably better ones, in Brown's opinion, than Keats's actual brother George was for him.

When Keats died, his friends in London's literary community reacted against the earlier attacks on his poetry from politically motivated magazines who disagreed with the politics of Leigh Hunt's Cockney School. P. B. Shelley, also friend of Hunt's, composed "Adonais" as an elegy for the poet with whom he had tried to become friends but who always resisted. Keats had refused Shelley's company and help on several occasions because he feared Shelley's commanding influence might affect his own philosophy and

poetry. So even though they were both friends with Leigh Hunt they were never friends with each other. This suggests that Shelley's "Adonais" was a performance of friendship intended for politic reasons. By allying himself with the now popular-to-pity Keats, Shelley created an elegy that would always associate him with Keats's posthumous fame—which was not guaranteed at that point, but did of course occur.

Some scholars, such as Mark Meritt, argue that many of the defences were indeed made for political reasons, and Meritt includes Brown's biography of Keats in this category as a work that "can be dispensed with as yet another example of the literary propaganda that came swiftly upon the heels of the poet's death" (207). However, the fact that Brown's book was not written immediately afterwards but begun nine years later (and finished eleven after that) proves this argument to be, ironically, without merit. Brown was furious at the speed with which the papers were advertising a biography of Keats and wrote to Severn, still in Italy, about the matter on August 21, 1821:

I, among others, was applied to by Reynolds to collect with all haste, papers, letters, and so on, in order to assist Mr. Taylor. This indecent bustle over (as it were) the newly covered grave of my dear friend shocked me excessively. I told Mr. Taylor it looked as if his friends had been collecting information about his life in expectation of his death. This, indeed, was the fact. I believe I spoke warmly, and probably gave offence. However, as I was jealous of my own feelings upon such a subject, I took precaution to sound those of Hunt, Dilke, and Richards, who were all equally hurt with myself at such an indecorous haste[.] . . . I rejoice you

sent *me* the papers, and under the circumstances, I think you will rejoice likewise. (*LCAB* 90)

Brown did indeed feel jealous of those who claimed to be better friends of Keats because he did not want the politics of Keats's death to benefit those who did not deserve to be remembered as his friends. On August 14, he tells Severn that

I shall always be the first to acknowledge Taylor's kindness to Keats; but towards me his conduct has been ungracious and even unmannerly.

Reynolds is the secret spring; it is wished he should shine as the dear friend of poor Keats—at least I suspect so—when the fact is, he was no dear friend of Keats, nor did Keats think him so. (*LCAB* 86)

Reynolds was in fact a dear friend of Keats's, but Brown's hot-headed argument proves his adamant dislike of posturing friendship—even if he misrecognised it.

In the end, Brown was able to hold onto all of his "Keatsiana" (Stillinger 27) to write the *Life of John Keats*, which serves as an example of what a friend might write, outside of the bounds of poetry, to eulogise the death of a friend. The biography is definitely a public document, but the emotions it describes are extremely private and make it a weak biography for its bias but a touching account of a friendship. Brown, intentionally or not, echoes the same themes we have seen in antiquity and in the Renaissance: proclamations of friendship that look like performance. And indeed they are. However, these performances are like written speech-acts that allow the friend left behind to communicate his love in a public forum to make the friendship known to posterity.

Brown's biography allows Keats to be remembered living after death through the fond remembrances of his friend. During their walking tour of Scotland, for example, the two of them behaved according to the classical laws of friendship—or at least so Brown says. Brown might be reconstructing an image of their friendship in his biased biography that suits his own values. Regardless of the truth of the biography, Brown's portrayal of their travels demonstrates the importance he places on his friendship with Keats. One of his fondest memories of the trip is Keats's reaction to the landscape: "I cannot forget the joy, the rapture of my friend when he suddenly, and for the first time, became sensible to the full effect of mountain scenery" (48). Brown's pleasure is heightened because he is able to see the happiness in his friend and perhaps is able to remember his own memory of seeing similarly impressive scenery for the first time himself. This is similar to Wordsworth's reaction to Dorothy's presence in "Tintern Abbey" except that William is more inclined at first to pretend that his sister is not there at all. For Brown, the very fact that Keats is there makes the experience better for him, and when Keats becomes ill and has to return home, Brown admits that "[i]n my solitary after-wanderings I much lamented the loss of his beloved intelligence at my side" (52). This statement alludes to another of Walter Dorke's sentiments about friendship: that "the admiration . . . would be but unpleasant without some friend to whom[] [one] might make relation of the same" (2). Having a friend to share an experience also allows for conversation between the two as if between one. The memory is a shared experience that will forever be linked to the friend.

Even without his friend, Brown can imagine him being at his side, and I argue that the performative qualities of his sentiments are consistent with how he always felt

about and talked about his friendship with Keats. Although the erotic charge of his language suggests the political motivations of performances of friendships from the Renaissance and antiquity, Brown used them as the only vocabulary available to express his friendship with his permanently absent friend. In fact, Brown was so unable to forget Keats that he transferred his affection to Severn. Joanna Richardson explains that

[t]he last few months, disturbed by the bitter quarrels of friends, bitter as only the quarrels of friends can be, had also been marked by a growing friendship between Brown and Severn. Brown had felt Severn's devotion of Keats as if it were shown to himself; and when Severn, "ill, out of spirits, and friendless," wrote for his help in solving a personal problem, it seemed like a renewal of his old responsibility. (49)

Brown never forgot Severn's kindness to his friend and, in his stubborn way, transferred his affection to the young painter.

When Brown was about to leave England for New Zealand he entrusted all of his Keatsiana to Richard Monckton Milnes because, he says,

as I am on the eve of quitting England for ever, I considered it would be my wiser plan to confide in a true lover of Keats, and place the *Life and Poems* in his hands, to act in my stead. Such confidence I am ready to repose in you, if you will undertake the task—the responsibility—the gratification—or whatever you may be induced to call it. (*LCAB* 408)

Brown finally finished his biography and, in his fifties, recalled to Milnes that

[a]ny other Poet's works I can coolly criticize, from Shakespeare downwards, but I feel there is no cool judgment in me while I am reading

anything by Keats. As soon as I begin to be occupied with his Ms poems, or with the Life I have written, it forcibly seems to me, against all reason (that is out of the question) that he is sitting by my side, his eyes seriously wandering from me to the papers by turns, and watching my doings. Call it nervousness, if you will; but with this nervousness I am unable to do justice to his fame. (*LCAB* 412-413)

This mirrors his sentiments in the passage quoted above that he wrote shortly after Keats's death. For the duration of his life Brown remained faithful to his love of his deceased friend. "He was dearly beloved, and honoured as a superior being by me. Now that twenty years have passed since I lost him, his memory is still my chief happiness; . . . His fame is part of my life" (Brown 40). Brown did not make Keats's fame part of his own life to make himself famous, but as the dearest friend of Keats, he felt responsible for securing fame for his friend even after death and, by virtue of this, their friendship itself became deservedly famous.

Letter writing in the Romantic era was strongly influenced by the examples in life and literature left by the Renaissance. Friends expressed their feelings to each other in the language that was available to them and through that language, a historical unity of friendship's representation emerges. The true emotions of friends can be difficult to detect because of the performative qualities of the language of friendship, but it is the representations that are important. The striving for the affection of one true friend has never left the life and literature of poets. Whereas non-literary friends still could write letters to each other while they were apart that survive for posterity, when friends were

together, it is from poets that we can see their friendship preserved in collaborative works, and we will turn to those collaborations in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Collaborations

“Without you, I’m just the Dynamic Uno.”

- Barney Stinson to Ted Mosby (*How I Met Your Mother*)

The utterance of the word “Shakespeare,” as signifier of William Shakespeare’s poetry and plays, perpetuates the myth of a solitary genius who has complete authority over those works. In practice, however, an author is in constant collaboration with all the influences—living or dead—that inform his or her writing. When two people collaborate on a project that is subsequently attributed to both of them, the “author” has a dual identity that is pressed together into a narrative of friendship. Our desire to locate authorship tells us that Wordsworth and Coleridge *must* have been best friends when they wrote *Lyrical Ballads*. If we ask “who wrote the book?” and are answered with the names of two authors, the names become forever married in our minds as true friends who, even though two people, were one.

The collaborative works of men in the Renaissance and the Romantic era, respectively, are a rich source of material for studies of homoeroticism in literature because of the intimacy found in creation, but this intimacy does not have to be erotic. The works I have chosen to study provide a spectrum of examples of how the collaborators wrote about the topic of friendship within the works that join their names. Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Two Noble Kinsmen*, despite its theme of friendship, does not appear to have been written as closely as Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling*. Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* contains textual examples that support my

reading of their differing views on friendship in Chapter 2, and Keats and Brown's *Otho the Great* is an example of a work that was written collaboratively between extremely close friends, and yet Keats, who saw himself as the midwife, described it as Brown's child. Rather than providing biographical evidence for or against friendships, these collaborative works can be read to suggest how the authors viewed friendship when working collaboratively with another man.

3.1 "Collabrotive" Playwrights

Compared to Shakespeare's other plays, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* feels disjointed—which is understandable in a collaborative play.⁷ Critics have attempted to prove which scenes were written by which author, while some argue that the work was written by only one or the other.⁸ Without the training to detect which hand wrote which sections, I defer to the notes to the Oxford and Arden editions of the play.

The friendship of Arcite and Palamon is the main plot of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*,⁹ a play based on Chaucer's "Knight's Tale." As in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the friends fall in love with the same woman, which is not surprising: true friends are meant to have everything in common, even taste in women as Titus points out in the *The Boke Named the Governor*: "Alas, why forgate ye that our myndes and appetites were euer one?" (Elyot 139). The representation of the friendship however, feels disjointed in *Kinsmen* because of the, apparent, lack of communication between

⁷ Kathleen Campbell argues that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is also a collaborative play because of actor Will Kempe's influence on his role of Launce (184).

⁸ For a full discussion of the debate, see Eugene M. Waith's "Introduction" to the Oxford edition of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (4-23).

⁹ For a discussion of female friendship in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, see Laurie Shannon's *Sovereign Amity* (96).

Shakespeare and Fletcher when writing the work. They seem to have written their sections without a great deal of attention to what the other writer was doing. This disunity is most apparent in the repetition of the “sum of money to her [the jailer’s daughter’s] marriage” that is given in Fletcher’s 4.1.23 and later in Shakespeare’s 5.4.32. Waith argues that this “may be because of an oversight in the collaboration” because in Shakespeare’s lines “we see Palamon making such a gift, apparently for the first time” (167 n.).

However, the lack of a strong bond of friendship between Shakespeare and the younger Fletcher improves the play in some ways when their unique talents and styles are used to complement each other. For example, when Arcite and Palamon discuss their friendship and subsequently fall in love with Emilia, most critics assign the prior scene to Shakespeare and the latter to Fletcher. Waith notes that “[s]tartling dramatic turns such as this are conspicuous features of the plays Fletcher wrote alone and of those he wrote with collaborators. The careful preparation of the theme of friendship in the earlier scene is equally characteristic of Shakespeare” (18-19). The play works because of the individual talents of the two playwrights.

The representations of the friendship are also interesting regardless of authorship. Early in the play when Arcite says “Dear Palamon, dearer in love than blood” (1.2.1), he implies that the love of friendship is greater than that of their blood relation. The characters are kinsmen—cousins as Arcite specifies in the next line—but their friendship makes them closer than the fact that they are family. Their friendship is even used as an excuse by Theseus who understands that any emotional relationship can lead people to make bad decisions:

Since I have known frights, fury, friends' behests,
Love's provocations, zeal, a mistress' task,
Desire of liberty, a fever, madness,
Hath set a mark which nature could not reach to
Without some imposition, sickness in will
O'er-wrestling strength in reason. (1.4.40-45)

The request of a friend is put immediately before a similar request from a sexual lover, indicating that the emotions felt in both of these bonds are equal. However, the earlier positioning of friendship can also allude to the common structure of Renaissance plays in which the male friendships are privileged until the heteronormative love-plot takes over.

The discussion between Arcite and Palamon about their friendship that occurs in prison follows many of the classical requirements that true friends must have. At first, Arcite laments that he will never have "The sweet embraces of a loving wife" and "shall know nothing here but one another" (2.2.30, 41). His language is sexual and Palamon follows it with the phallic imagery of "pointed javelins" and "well-steeled darts" that they used together in war (2.2.49, 51). The eroticized language, although easy to read in modern contexts as revealing underlying homosexuality, was typical for friends to use when describing their affection for one another. The Renaissance audience would likely have enjoyed the references as much as audiences today, but would also have understood the real emotions the friends felt for each other. The two friends also have this revelation when Arcite turns the discussion to what he sees as the positive aspects of their mutual imprisonment:

Yet, cousin,
Even from the bottom of these miseries,
From all that fortune can inflict upon us,
I see two comforts rising, two mere blessings,
If the gods please, to hold here a brave patience,
And the enjoying of our griefs together.
Whilst Palamon is with me, let me perish
If I think this our prison. (2.2.55-62)

Arcite's "wooing" language, typical of courtly love, is full of "twos" to emphasise their connectedness. Palamon catches on and responds in kind:

Certainly,
'Tis a main goodness, cousin, that our fortunes
Were twinned together. 'Tis most true, two souls
Put in two noble bodies, let 'em suffer
The gall of hazard, so they grow together (2.2.62-66)

The sharing of compliments is crucial to the scene because it is crafted to set up the punch-line entrance of Emilia, who will destroy the friendship. Arcite claims that they do not need women because "We are one another's wife, ever begetting / New births of love" (2.2.80-81). Although his language is again clearly sexualized for effect, he also makes reference to other familial bonds that are not erotic. He lists all manner of emotional bonds to stress that friendship deserves a place among them, even though he admits that friendship is ultimately a fragile relationship:

Were we at liberty,

A wife might part us lawfully, or business;

Quarrels consume us; envy of ill men

Crave our acquaintance. (2.2.88-91)

Marriage is a threat to male (or any Platonic) friendship because it will impose an emotional relationship with the addition of the erotic, which will likely be privileged by one of the friends over the friendship. Business is also listed as an equal threat; money can ruin a friendship as easily as the introduction of a new love. With the fragility of friendship established, the joke is ready to be played on the friends to the *schadenfroh* delight of the audience:

Palamon: Is there record of any two that loved

Better than we do, Arcite?

Arcite: Sure there cannot.

Palamon: I do not think it possible our friendship

Should ever leave us.

Arcite: Till our deaths it cannot.

Enter Emilia and her Woman below

And after death our spirits shall be led

To those that love eternally.

Palamon sees Emilia and says nothing

Speak on, sir. (2.2.112-117)

Arcite's final line and several of his subsequent urgings for Palamon to speak show his expectation of mutuality in friendship as if to say "I have just complimented our friendship, and now it's your turn Palamon."

Once they have both seen Emilia and have both fallen in love with her (as equal friends are wont to do), they attack each other for breaking the rules of friendship. The best example is Arcite's list of rhetorical questions: "Am not I / Part of your blood, part of your soul? You have told me / That I was Palamon, and you were Arcite" (2.2.186-188). Nowhere in the play had they already done this, which implies that in previous discussions of their friendship they described themselves in classical terms as being their friend's other self. Emilia notices this about them as well when she admits that her fancy is a child "That having two fair gauds of equal sweetness, / Cannot distinguish, but must cry for both!" (4.2.53-54). The friends live up to the reputation the Jailer references when he says that "They are famed to be a pair of absolute men" (2.1.27). Because they so strictly follow the laws of friendship, they are considered perfect; however, when love interferes they forget their friendship until the ultimate absence of death is about to take Arcite. Palamon returns to the language of affection when he sees that he is about to lose his friend and says "Give me thy last words. I am Palamon, / One that yet loves thee dying" (5.4.89-90). Arcite responds with a line that is reminiscent of *The Boke Called the Governour* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* when he tells Palamon "Take Emilia, / And with her all the world's joy. / Reach thy hand—" (5.4.90-91). The act of giving the woman he loves to his friend is seen as the ultimate sacrifice for friendship. In the other works, the giver is not about to die, so Arcite's action appears to be completely for the sake of performance. Palamon has already won Emilia's hand, and although he is now physically holding Arcite's, he is losing it for hers. Arcite's final lines go from Emilia to Palamon to himself, as he moves through the stages of important relationships: "One kiss from fair Emilia—(*they kiss*) 'tis done; / Take her; I die" (5.4.94-95). If a true friend must

first love himself as a friend, then Arcite's focus on love of a woman, love of a friend, and love of himself is correct for Aristotle and Cicero's models of friendship. With Arcite dead, Emilia realises that the gods now "charge me to live to comfort this unfriended, / This miserable prince" (5.3.141-142). Without a true friend, she recognises that Palamon will be miserable, regardless of how much they love each other.

In the play, even though sexual love can break friendships apart, friendship is ultimately still the more important bond. Even Emilia claims that "That the true love 'tween maid and maid may be / More than in sex dividual" (1.3.81-82). The never-named Jailer's Daughter also longs for the friendship that she sees between Arcite and Palamon:

It seems to me they have no more
sense of their captivity than I of ruling Athens. They
eat well, look merrily, discourse of many things, but
nothing of their own restraint and disasters. Yet some-
time a divided sigh, martyred as 'twere i'th' deliverance,
will break from one of them; when the other presently
gives so sweet a rebuke that I could wish myself a
sigh to be so chid, or at least a sigher to be comforted. (2.1.38-45)

Female friendship is not given the spotlight as much as male friendship in the play, but it is a rare glimpse into the fact that female friendships were equally important but (un)seen as private.

Despite some collaborative lapses, Fletcher and Shakespeare use their strengths to create a critique of friendship in Renaissance plays. As the action moves from friendship to love and back to friendship once it is too late to recover, one can see the contrast with

The Two Gentlemen of Verona in which the friends are married off but with an unsatisfactory resolution because we do not know if their friendship will survive. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* depicts the danger “true love” holds for “true friendship”—a danger that permeated Renaissance plays, even if friendship was not the main theme.

In Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling*, friendship is a subtheme as it is in so many plays from the Renaissance. Friendship dictates how male characters interact with each other and it is contrasted against the ways in which the “love” scenes are represented. I put “love” in scare-quotes because of the lust Deflores has for Beatrice and the horror that it spawns. The play is also effective because of its collaboration for reasons that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is not: the close attention the two playwrights pay to each other’s writing makes the play work.

One of the most interesting scenes for the presentation of friendship is in the contrast between the handling of an image that both Middleton and Rowley use in their respective tragic and comic plots. Middleton has Deflores say,

Here’s a favour come – with a mischief! Now I know
She had rather wear my pelt tanned in a pair
Of dancing pumps than I should thrust my fingers
Into her sockets here. *[Tries to pull the glove onto his hand]*

I know she hates me,
Yet cannot choose but love her.
NO matter: if but to vex her, I’ll haunt her still,
Though I get nothing else, I’ll have my will. (1.1.224-230)

The sexual image of Deflores' hand slipping inside of and deflowering the glove is grotesque in this scene, especially if the actor performs the action roughly or cannot fit his hand inside completely. These lines end Middleton's Act 1, Scene 1 and are contrasted with the next comical scene of Rowley's. Alibius and Lollo, "his man" as the *dramatis personæ* calls him, exchange some witty banter about Alibius' fear of being cuckolded with the same penetrative imagery used by Deflores:

Alibius: Shrewd application – there's the fear man:

I would wear my ring on my own finger;

Whilst it is borrowed it is none of mine,

But his that useth it.

Lollo: You must keep it on still then; if it but lie by one or other will be thrusting into't. (1.2.26-31)

Lollo's language immediately reminds the audience of the glove that was "lying by" in the previous scene where one was indeed "thrusting into't." However, the tone has completely changed and the audience is allowed to laugh at the same image that likely instilled them with disgust in the previous scene.

Alibius continues to press Lollo to stand in for him and keep his "ring" safe, ironically inviting his friend to cuckold him in defending against other cuckolds:

Alibius: Thou conceiv'st me, Lollo: here thy watchful eye

Must have employment, I cannot always be

At home.

Lollo: I dare swear you can not.

Alibius: I must look out

Lollio: I know't, you must look out, 'tis every man's case.

Albius: Here, I do say, must thy employment be –

To watch her treadings, and in my absence

Supply my place. (1.2.32 -38)

Albius does not actually want Lollio to go as far as sleeping with his wife, but his language reflects the conceptions of friendship engrained in the Renaissance consciousness: that true friends are like one person. The relationship between Albius and Lollio is complicated by their age and position. Lollio is just Albius' "man"; he is a servant in whom Albius confides because he has no one else. Lollio does not treat the relationship as seriously and even abets "the changeling" in his plot to sleep with Isabella. Albius expresses friendship to the only man with whom he has any social relationship, whereas Lollio discovers better companionship with Antonio. When one friend is not committed to the relationship, then the performances of true friendship fall on deaf—or uninterested—ears. The appearance of a more interesting man in Lollio's life easily convinces him to work against Albius because he never behaved as a true friend to him. When the friendship is stronger, however, then the appearance of a third party, especially if it is a woman, has a more dramatic effect.

Alsemero and Jasperino, in Middleton's tragic plot, are a shining example of true friends in *The Changeling*. Beatrice comments upon their friendship as if it is proof that Alsemero can love her:

How wise is Alsemero in his friend!

It is a sign he makes his choice with judgement.

Then I appear in nothing more approved

Than making choice of him;
For 'tis a principle, he that can choose
That bosom well who of his thoughts partakes,
Proves most discreet in every choice he makes.
Methinks I love now with the eyes of judgement,
And see the way to merit, clearly see it. (2.1.6-14)

The compliments are prompted by Jasperino's gracious response when Beatrice entrusts him with a letter. The letter, representing Beatrice, is entrusted to the friend—an action that Alibius longs for in his desire to have a friend whom he can trust as if the friend were himself. Alsemero has this friend in Jasperino whose loyalty shows that Alsemero is capable of "love." The love for his friend is not understood to be erotic but is instead an affection that transcends erotic and even social bonds. The friends are, like Alibius and Lollo, of different rank, but Jasperino is privileged with the title "his [Alsemero's] friend" in the dramatis personæ even though he is actually also "his man." As friends of different classes they are not able to be "one true friend[s]" according to the manuals of friendship, and yet they still achieve that bond despite the biases of social order.

Throughout the play, Jasperino exits the room just as Beatrice enters. He is behaving like a good wingman and allowing his friend time alone with his romantic interest, but his actions also suggest that friendship really is threatened when one friend falls in love with a woman. The affection felt towards the friend is displaced and emotions are forgotten as sexuality takes over. However, even though Jasperino allows for this to occur by giving his friend space, Alsemero never behaves differently towards his friend or ignores him. If anyone is to blame for removing Jasperino from Alsemero's

side as the play progresses it is the playwrights who make Jasperino's role less and less crucial. His goal as a friend is to prove his friend's worth, as Proteus believes Valentine will do by going abroad and strengthening the names of his friends with his own adventures. The friend who stays at home for love profits only himself.

Another important distinction about *The Changeling* is that it is a "domestic tragedy" (Neill 7), rather than a political one. The action is centred in a single home and does not have sweeping political implications like *King Lear* or *Macbeth*. Because the action takes place within the home and deals with treachery aimed at women (and thereby often cuckolding men), friendship is not as important because of the politicised nature of male-male friendships. When friendships and oaths are the primary bond between households or between the general and his commanders, Renaissance plays take on the tone of *Antony and Cleopatra* and highlight the betrayal of friendship, as seen in the death of Enobarbus when he breaks his own heart for turning his back on Antony. In *The Changeling*, however, the friendship (at least in the main plot) is not the threatening force. The villain is clearly marked from the outset and he has no filial bond with his lord or fellow servants. A domestic tragedy can be seen as a microcosm for the state, but without the political implications of friendship, it does not achieve that status.

The Renaissance conventions of friendship that permeate even the plays that do not have friendship as a major theme remained an important part of the poetry written in the Romantic era. The poets did not necessarily follow the models of friendship intentionally, but as they imitated and adapted their literary styles from their Renaissance idol, Shakespeare, and his contemporaries, they imitated the depictions of friendship too.

3.2 Romantic Poets

It is easy to picture Coleridge and Wordsworth wandering the Quantocks and composing *Lyrical Ballads* because of the rich imagery the collection provides. Yet whether they are together; with Dorothy; with Thelwall, Lamb, or other visitors; or alone, their depictions of the scenery create a sense of solitude. Solitude is one of the most important themes running throughout the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and poems like “Tintern Abbey” began to propagate the myth of the solitary genius—the idea that a poet is an island unaffected by suggestions from and collaborations with other poets, living or dead. Indeed, many of the poems seem to try to support Wordsworth’s proclamation in the second edition’s “Preface” that poetry requires experience mediated by imagination or “emotion recollected in tranquility” (in Wu 504). However, what Wordsworth hopes to convey is not what the creation of *Lyrical Ballads* was actually like, but what he wanted it to be.

Coleridge is much more comfortable with collaboration and wants to work with another man as he continues his quest to find a classically defined “one true friend.” Wordsworth instead seeks to erase others from the experiences upon which his poems are based, precisely to be able to put them back in as objects to be longed for, yet ultimately rejected in favour of the gifts of a companionship with nature. Their poetic offerings in *Lyrical Ballads*, therefore, correspond to their attitude towards friendship as seen in their letters in Chapter 2. Two of the most conversational poems in the collection, Coleridge’s “Nightingale” and Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey,” express the differences between their opinions of friendship and collaboration, but the production of the entire work also speaks to these views.

Before they wrote *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth and Coleridge were working on a single collaborative poem, “The Wanderings of Cain.” Coleridge, who is now known for his procrastination and the difficulty he had finishing his poetry, wrote much more than Wordsworth, who seemed to be hindered by the co-authorship. After they abandoned the project, however, Wordsworth produced many more poems than Coleridge for the collection that became *Lyrical Ballads* (Koestenbaum 72-73). It is also interesting to note that Coleridge’s other poems written around the same time as the collection—poems that expressed his anxiety of being alone—were not included. Only four of Coleridge’s poems are in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and the one that has become the most famous created the most controversy at the time.

“The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere,” with its first edition archaic spelling, is placed at the beginning of *Lyrical Ballads*—a fitting spot because after trying to write that poem together as well, Coleridge took over as the sole author (Koestenbaum 72). The poem was “the project’s originating germ,” as Koestenbaum calls it (73), and its thematic issues continue throughout the entire collection. Although Koestenbaum’s study lays some excellent groundwork for mine, I do not find his conclusions about homosexual tension in *Lyrical Ballads* satisfying. I do not agree that the punning on the word “will” in the “Ancient Mariner”—that he believes has a homosexual meaning as Wordsworth’s name and as a Shakespearean euphemism for genitalia—is as intentional as he believes. For me, the stanza in which that word appears is more important than the word *will* itself simply because it was written by Wordsworth (Koestenbaum 77), making the “Ancient Mariner” one of the few poems in the collection with accurately noted instances of collaborative authorship (Gill 132).

The collaborative reality beneath *Lyrical Ballads* runs deeper than it might first seem, especially in the shared morals of the poems that promote a love of the natural world. Wordsworth contributed the stanza in the “Ancient Mariner” where the albatross is killed in Part 2 (Gill 132), and Coleridge writes a moral for the poem that explains why it was wrong of the mariner to kill it:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou wedding-guest!
He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all. (643-650)

Coleridge later regretted the lines for making the moral too obvious (Wu 349n.), and indeed if readers made it to the third poem in the collection, they would see the same conclusion in Wordsworth’s “Lines left upon a seat in a Yew-Tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, yet commanding a beautiful prospect”:

Stranger, henceforth be warned—and know that pride,
Howe’er disguised in its own majesty,
Is littleness; that he who feels contempt
For any living thing that hath faculties
Which he has never used; that thought with him

Is in its infancy. (46-51)

The thematic unity of these poems promotes the idea that the collection was written by a single author. However, between the two poems, Coleridge's "man and birds and beasts" asks for equal love to be given to people and to nature, whereas Wordsworth's "any living thing that hath faculties / Which he has never used" is only talking about non-humans and the connection one can make alone with nature. In fact, most of Wordsworth's poems in the collection are monologues by solitary narrators or dialogues between the narrator and lonely rural figures.

In Wordsworth's "We are Seven," the narrator tells his story to his brother about a little girl he met. The experience is based on one of Wordsworth's but the opening stanza is Coleridge's:

A simple child, dear brother Jim,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb—
What should it know of death? (1-4)

After 1800, Wordsworth cut half of the opening line to make the poem not about sharing an experience with a friend, but about the conversation that takes place within the poem. Koestenbaum argues that the poem "points directly to the two men's collaboration, for Coleridge provided the poem's first stanza" but "[b]y later removing the phrase 'dear brother Jim,' Wordsworth deleted the fraternal frame and obscured Coleridge's self-inscription" (Koestenbaum 100). Wordsworth's action shows that even though he allowed some concessions in the first printing of *Lyrical Ballads*, he began to edit the collection to further erase Coleridge—especially after the joint authorship became public knowledge.

Collaboration did not suit the theme of solitude for which Wordsworth increasingly strove. In “Lines written in early spring,” for example, the poet seems to be alone because of the emphasis on the natural setting:

I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sat reclined
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind. (1-4)

If the grove acted as a proper metaphor, the cluster of trees should actually suggest a group rather than a solitary figure, but because of the emphasis on the mind the narrator *feels* alone. In the context of the other poems, this is not surprising. Even in the dialogue poems “Expostulation and Reply” and “The Tables Turned: an evening scene, on the same subject,” Wordsworth’s moral is that being alone is better than the dialogue that is occurring:

Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone
And dream my time away. (“Expostulation and Reply” 29-32)

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can. (“The Tables Turned” 21-24)

The irony of course is that the lesson is being taught in a book. However, it is not the lesson Wordsworth wants us to learn; to learn the real lesson we must commune with nature and hear what the vernal wood actually has to say. All his poem can do is teach us to seek out the answer.

Wordsworth's idealised conception of experiencing nature, however, is not true to his life, considering that two of the most biographical poems in the collection describe him experiencing nature with others. In "The Nightingale," Coleridge makes his friends, William and Dorothy, prominent in the poem, whereas Wordsworth tries to write his sister out of "Tintern Abbey." He almost reluctantly includes Dorothy at the end, but then continues to stress the importance of solitude. Wordsworth wrote the majority of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, so as one of only four of Coleridge's contributions, "The Nightingale" might seem an anomaly in its praise of friendship and the importance of shared experience.

The full title of Coleridge's poem, "The Nightingale; A Conversational Poem, written in April 1798," has a Wordsworthian over-descriptive sound to it, but the emphasis on conversation makes it quite different from Wordsworth's solitary-seeking poems. In "The Nightingale," the narrator is enjoying nature with others, evident in the "we" and "you" pronouns:

Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge.

You see the glimmer of the stream beneath

But hear no murmuring: it flows silently

O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,

A balmy night, and though the stars be dim

Yet let us think upon the vernal showers
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars. (4-11)

The poem can be read as a monologue addressed to other characters in the poem itself, with occasional apostrophes made to the nightingale that leads the narrator to his musings on nature. At the beginning, the “I” pronoun is completely absent, and the “you” in the poem is directed towards “my friend and my friend’s sister”: William and Dorothy Wordsworth, of course—if we know who the author is. Coleridge makes it obvious in his poem that he longs for their company and that his experience is heightened for having them with him. His “joys are double[d],” to re-invoke Bacon. The narrator is even disappointed that they are going to part for the evening to return to their respective homes:

Farewell, oh warbler, till tomorrow eve!
And you, my friends—farewell, a short farewell!
We have been loitering long and pleasantly,
And now for our dear homes. That strain again! (87-90)

He is interrupted by the nightingale and takes the opportunity to prolong the time spent with friends before finally saying his goodbyes again:

Once more farewell,
Sweet nightingale! Once more, my friends, farewell! (109-110)

The repetition signals the narrator’s desire for company and stresses the importance of sharing the experience with them. Because the monologue is also recited to them, it suggests the idea that one can talk to one’s true friend as one talks to oneself. However,

the narrator—assuming he is Coleridge—is not the friend to William Wordsworth that William Wordsworth is to him.

Whereas the opening lines of “The Nightingale” focus on communal experience, the opening “Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey” emphasise the “I” pronoun and frequently allude to solitude and seclusion:

Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under the dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage ground, these orchard tufts. (4-11)

This comparison would be irrelevant if Wordsworth’s narrator were actually alone in the poem, but he is not. Wordsworth had the experience with his sister Dorothy, but her presence is wiped clean from the majority of the poem while the narrator stresses the importance of the poetic imagination and its relationship with nature in solitude. Near the end, the narrator finally admits that his “dear sister”—the friend’s sister in Coleridge’s poem—is with him on his return to the Wye. The narrator in “Tintern Abbey” is the friend in “The Nightingale,” which shows that the two poems are *not* by the same narrator/poet. I am conflating Wordsworth with his narrator necessarily because of the biographical nature of the poem. To remove Wordsworth from his real experience is like him removing his sister from it, but in the end neither of us commits to the removal:

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay;
For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
Of this fair river—thou, my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! (115-125)

William's sudden admission of Dorothy's presence jeopardises the importance of solitude that was being established in the poem, so he encourages Dorothy to remember the event when she is in solitude later to preserve the theme of communing with one's own thoughts in nature:

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk,
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee. (138-141)

The experience does not have to be solitary, Wordsworth decides, but the remembrance should be. He wants solitude after the experience to reflect, whereas Coleridge wants to remain with his friends to continue to enjoy the remembrance of the event together.

The collaboration of *Lyrical Ballads* is one in which the two poets differed on the act of collaboration even within the themes of the poems they contributed. The collection was not produced by a solitary genius, just as none of the poems in the collection really were. The poems all relied on the give-and-take conversations between Wordsworth and Coleridge—not only with each other, but with Dorothy, Thelwall, Lamb, Southey, Poole, and so on. Wordsworth’s reluctance to collaborate is indicative of his aversion to affectionate bonds of friendship. Coleridge, on the other hand, does not disguise his desire for friendship in his poems. Had the collection included his “Frost at Midnight” or “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison,” the contrast would be even greater, but without them the first edition remains dominated by poems that seem to promote the notion of a solitary genius—a myth that is synonymous with Romanticism.

3.3 Brocreative Writing

The production of poetry, or any kind of creative writing, has often been likened to impregnation and giving birth. Like God who—as Milton so eloquently phrases it—“with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like [sat] brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad[e] it pregnant,” the poet has been imagined to create from nothing. In actual practice, the poet, like Milton in his own poem, needs help and instruction—be it from a muse, from friends, or from dead poets. Keats is praised for the quality of his early poetic imitations of his idols, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, and also of his contemporaries, like Leigh Hunt whom he quickly surpassed. Keats’s ability to connect with dead poets and living friends helped him to master the forms of poetry that in a few short years he would start to rework to his own tastes.

Many of Keats's early poems have a strong emphasis on friendship, either in praising his friends or looking for friendship among the dead. For example, he and George Felton Mathew exchanged a few complimentary poems with each other in published periodicals full of romantic language and gestures of friendship. Keats writes enthusiastically of "their brotherhood in song" in "To George Felton Mathew":

Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view
A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
Than that in which the brother Poets joyed,
Who with combinéd powers, their wit employed
To raise a trophy to the drama's muses. (3-7)

Keats understood the process of writing poems to Mathew and receiving them in turn as a collaborative act. To Keats, "The thought of this great partnership diffuses / Over the genius-loving heart" (8-9), which suggests that collaboration was better than striving for individual fame.

Keats was also concerned with the debt of friendship, as he expresses in "To Charles Cowden Clarke":

Ah! had I never seen,
Or known your kindness, what might I have been?
What my enjoyments in my youthful years,
Bereft of all that now my life endears?
And can I e'er these benefits forget?
And can I e'er repay the friendly debt? (72-77)

As in the letter to Charles Brown discussed in Chapter 2, Keats is uncomfortable being in an unequal relationship. He feels that Clarke has done more for him than vice versa, and hopes that the poem will repay his friend's kindness:

For I have long time been my fancy feeding
With hopes that you would one day think the reading
Of my rough verses not an hour misspent;
Should it e'er be so, what a rich content! (80-83)

Even if the poem achieves its intended purpose—of making the two men equal in friendship—Keats still imagines himself as indebted to Clarke because Clarke's pleasure would make Keats feel better. This is also true with the poems Keats wrote for Leigh Hunt.

One of Keats's poems to Leigh Hunt completes the request for praise that he makes in his poem to Clarke:

I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee. (12-14)

Keats revels in the praise he receives from Hunt and keeps the cycle of friendship going through his self-depreciation and compliments to Hunt. Keats admired Hunt's poetry for its handling of the couplet form, but his formal imitation was not what the critics of Keats cared about. It was Hunt's political leanings that associated Keats with his ideology, so other circles of friends who opposed Hunt's cockney school also developed a bias against Keats. Keats's poems, which are not bombastically political in the way some of P. B. Shelley's are, were read as political not because of content but because of his contacts.

Friendship's public effect could jumpstart or cripple a poet's career and with Keats it almost did both. *Endymion* was harshly criticised by reviewers who disliked Keats because of Hunt, not because of the poem itself. For Keats's next collection, his friends (and Hunt's friends) banded around him to defend him against his previous accusers who were not as harsh the second time around.

The "everlasting spell" that secured friends for Keats wherever he went had the greatest effect on Charles Armitage Brown. Brown has received some criticism from some biographers for not accompanying Keats to Rome when Keats's consumption worsened, but considering the letters and affection between the two discussed in the previous chapter, the moment of bad timing that caused them to miss each other as Keats sailed out of England did not seem to affect their friendship. Their walking tour of Scotland and the time they spent living together at Brown's home in Hampstead manifested itself not only in their letters but also in their collaborative literary endeavours. For example,

[o]n 8 August . . . [t]he near embarrassment of their parting was depressing, and while they waited at an inn for the boat to arrive, they tried to amuse themselves by composing some 'Stanzas on some skulls in Beaulieu Abbey'. It was the prototype of the later and much more ambitious collaboration—*Otho the Great*, which they worked on together the following May. (Motion 296)

Otho the Great has never been considered one of Keats's most admirable works, but it did serve as an excellent testing ground for writing plays. It is also, as Bate points out, by "no means worse than the average tragedy written and produced at the time. [. . .] What

we can say is that it is diluted—inevitably so, given the speed with which it was written and Keats’s own lack of involvement” (Bate 564, 565).

Keats did not live long enough to use the skills he gleaned from working with Brown, but the act of collaboration was also new for him. Because we do have representations of their friendship in their letters and Brown’s biography of Keats, they are always privileged (with good reason because they are directly commenting on their own friendship), but *Otho the Great*—in its production and content—is an overlooked text that shows how collaborative friends discuss friendship. Keats was in the middle of writing “Lamia” when Brown asked him to collaborate on *Otho*, partly as a favour to Keats who needed the money that the play could produce were they to secure Edmund Kean as the lead actor (but it was never produced in their lifetimes). Keats told Taylor in a letter on September 5, 1819 that “Brown likes the Tragedy very much: but he is not a fit judge, as I have only acted as Midwife to his plot, and of course he will be fond of his child” (SL 268). Keats sees himself as the midwife, not as a true partner in the creation of the work. The work was requested with friendship as a pretence, so of course its representations of friendship are intriguing for providing insight into the mentality of the friends who wrote it.

As with the Renaissance plays discussed in this chapter, friendship is more prominent at the beginning of *Otho* than it is later on. This is not to say that this was intentional, but the fact that it was imitated—even unknowingly—suggests that it was natural to Keats and Brown that friendship should be sidelined for love. As the romantic love plot comes to the fore, the friendships become less important and the friends are not in scenes together anymore. It is not until the very end of the play that Ludolph and

Sigifred are reunited with one another so that Ludolph can be comforted at his death. Sigifred waits in the wings until his affection is required again—never abandoning his friend while the love plot reigns. The friendship is not expressed at the end in any overly dramatic performances as is the case with Horatio, Enobarbus, or Arcite, but the friend is there nonetheless.

The representations of male friendship in *Otho* occur between several of the main characters, but the friendship that relies the most upon classical models is that of Ludolph and Sigifred. It is important to note that Ludolph, as the son of the emperor, is of higher rank than his friend, who is one of his officers. In relationships between friends of unequal status, it is impossible, in a classical model, for that friendship to ever be considered a true one. However, it can still be an affectionate friendship that is important to both characters who see themselves as equal—even if they have to behave publically in terms of their ranks.

The conversation they have alone indicates the close bond they share and the expectations that Ludolph has for Sigifred, not as his officer, but as his friend: “Ha! till now I thought / My friend had held poor Ludolph’s honour dear” (1.3.62-63). However, Sigifred still feels compelled to refer to Ludolph as “My lord” (1.3.30) and he positions their friendship in relation to their enemy’s ability to pull them apart if it meant that Ludolph remains proud and happy:

Do not wrong me, Prince.

By Heavens, I’d rather kiss Duke Conrad’s slipper,
When in the morning he doth yawn with pride,
Than see you humbled but a half-degree! (2.1.12-15)

The fear of Conrad influencing their friendship is forgotten, however, when Auranthe, as love-interest for Ludolph, makes the protagonist (and Keats and Brown it seems) forget about Sigifred too.

Friendships are on unstable ground in the play. Not only are they threatened by love, but Otho is convinced that no relationship is as important as his political obligation to his kingdom:

What is son—

Or friend, or brother, or all ties of blood—

When the whole kingdom, centred in ourself,

Is rudely slighted? (2.1.63-66)

He equates friendship with blood-bonds—reminiscent of the cousins in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*—but his condemnation of all these relationships makes it clear that no emotional relationship is going to survive in the harsh political climate of the play. When Ludolph is about to die, he rants about love, even though only Sigifred is there to console him. “Good friend—ah! Sigifred!” (5.5.110) he finally realises just before he dies, but that is all the attention that his friend earns.

Some critics have searched for parallels between the play and the lives of Keats and Brown. Although *Otho* was not written to be a mirror of their friendship, I argue that Keats and Brown’s personal experience and knowledge of classical depictions of friendship led them to write the play as they did. The fact that the friendship falls by the wayside when love takes priority in one friend’s life is indicative of how friendship was viewed in reality and potentially speaks to Brown’s dislike of Brawne, and Keats’s “readiness for jealousy, an expectant preparation for it to become specific” (Bate 541).

Motion goes further to argue that when Keats writes about Ludolph he is in “a state which allows Keats to release his most neurotic fears about Fanny” (421). Although I disagree with Motion’s interpretation, I do think that *Otho* speaks to how they viewed friendship before their emotional displays in their letters and in Brown’s biography of Keats after they were separated.

The language of poetry’s collaborative creation is one of birth, but not between two parents. Rather, one writer tends to present himself as a midwife to the true mother of the poem: the friend who provides the idea for the work. Instead of the erotics of a couple procreating, this metaphor emphasises the situation of one friend helping another. The inequality between Wordsworth and Coleridge is indicative of their views of friendship, but for Keats and Brown, Keats’s aversion to accepting the poem as his own—or even shared—product suggests that he privileges his friendship with Brown enough to forgo credit for the work. Of course, it is possible that Keats did *not* want the drama associated with his name and tries to specify that even though he wrote all the poetry and plotted the fifth act that it was in fact Brown’s. In any case, when a reader comes upon a work with the names of two poets connected to it, the reader’s response is no longer a shared dialogue with a single author; the reader is made aware of both identities mingling together in one text, and this in fact makes it easier for the reader to understand the more complex borrowings and hereditary ideas passed from poets to those who were inspired by them. When reading *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Changeling*, *Lyrical Ballads*, or *Otho the Great*, the reader is invited to take part in an intimate relationship that time has embedded in the text. Even if the authors were not actually close friends, the mingling of

names creates its own narrative that the reader encounters in these artefacts on which we see friendship.

Chapter 4: Paratexts

You must repair him! Sir, if any of my circuits or gears will help, I'll gladly donate them.

– C-3PO about R2-D2 (*Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*)

Alan Bray's *The Friend* leads him to a final resting place for friendship: the shared grave of Ambrose St. John and John Henry Cardinal Newman, who died in 1875 and 1890 respectively. Newman wrote a note a year after his friend's death that said "I wish with all my heart, to be buried in Fr Ambrose St John's grave—and I give this as my last, my imperative will" and over the next two years added even more "emphatic terms" (*Friend* 291). The grave began Bray's interest in what shared graves like this signify and "why Newman was so emphatic—so instant—in these instructions on his burial" (*Friend* 291). Bray's answer is that

[m]y argument has been that Newman's burial with St John cannot be detached from Newman's understanding of the place of friendship in Christian belief or its long history. [. . .] The ethic and moral tradition I have followed was designed to bring about reconciliation, kinship, and friendship in a divided world and to do so directly, face to face. The Enlightenment put aside this traditional ethic with contempt and put in its place a Fraternity that it claimed would be "universal," "rational," even "scientific." (*Friend* 304).

There was a rising trend of "loving everyone" in the Enlightenment, but I believe that many friends still did manage to express themselves as Newman and St. John did with or

without religion. Bray admits that “[t]here are many more [graves like this]. Why have these monuments played so little part in our understanding of the past? Why have we not *seen* them before?” (*Friend* 304). His question was certainly the wake-up call for me that inspired this paper. I have cried at the feet of Keats and Severn’s adjoined graves in the same graveyard as Shelley and Trelawny’s, and these graves have always haunted me. I wanted to be part of a friendship that strong—a friendship that is forever signified even after death. So I began looking for more representations and realised that they *are* everywhere. Not just in shared graves, but in title-pages, reviews, letters to editors, and final will and testaments. I, therefore agree with Masten who is adamant that we can “take the rhetoric and apparatus—no matter how far removed a shared title page may seem to be from a shared bed or grave—to be inseparable from the ways in which that experience may have been structured for those living it” (6-7).

Bray’s answer to why we had not “*seen*” these signifiers of friendship before, is that the world was not in a position to notice them; but now it is. He argues, in the beautiful ending to his book that

the world we are seeing is not a strange new world, revealed as the glaciers draw back, but a strange *old* world: kinship, locality, embodiment, domesticity, affect. All of these things, but I would add that at times we are seeing them in something as actual—and as tangible—as the tomb of two friends buried in an English parish church. We did not see these tombs because they did not signify, but they are beginning to signify again.

(*Friend* 306)

So taking my cue from Bray's research, I use his model to look at the signifiers of friendship that surrounded the letters and poems of collaborative authors: the paratexts.

Letters, plays, and poetry are the most easily justifiable subjects for scholarly inquiry, but in this final chapter I analyse some of the other possible texts from the Renaissance and the Romantic era that are equally responsible for creating the complex network of friendships that surround the collaborative authors already discussed. Gérard Genette defines paratexts as "those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader: titles, forewords, epigraphs, and publishers' jacket copy are part of a book's private and public history" (Genette; appropriately, from the book jacket).

Dramatis personæ are another example of paratexts specific to published plays that have significance for how the characters are described therein. I also include gravestones in this category not for their relationship to a specific text but to all the texts produced by an author that become signified by his or her name. As in the previous chapters, I use these texts to show the affectionate space for friendship that can be found in the performance laden representations left to posterity. Not all of the men I discuss felt these emotions as acutely as others, and it is impossible to prove that any of them actually felt the affection for which I argue; however, it is ahistorical to assume that just because the representations of friendship were based on social constructs that all friends who expressed their affection for each other did so without any actual emotion beyond homosocial or homoerotic desire. These friendships were also often constructed after the death of one friend (or both) by not only those left behind, but also subsequent generations of admirers of those friends.

4.1 Two Noble Playwrights

An important type of paratext relevant to representations of friendship in the Renaissance is a prefatory remark or dedication, such as the one at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. None of Shakespeare's letters survive for scholars to analyze to the degree that Keats's have become almost as important as his poetry—or at least inextricably linked to them. All that remains of an epistolary quality is this dedicatory page to the Earl of Southampton. Because it acts as a sort of preface to a specific text, I include it here among the paratexts than with the letters. As a paratext, it highlights the importance of public performances between a Renaissance playwright and his patron. It reads as follows:

Right Honourable,—

I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty,

William Shakespeare. (Clements and Levant 78-79)

The performative aspects of Shakespeare's address to his patron are difficult to ignore especially with echoes of Robin Goodfellow's "If we shadows have offended, / Think but this and all is mended" (*MSND* 5.1.412-413). This public document, written as if to only one person, allows Shakespeare to humbly perform the role of a servant to his lord. His language is not that of friendship because it is based on inequality. Shakespeare must present himself as weaker than his lord in self-deprecating statements to show that his patron's honour is indeed all in his duty. Rather than expressing himself as an arrogant equal, he takes a modest approach to appeal to Southampton.

Shakespeare has control of the paratext in the case of his dedication, but when his plays were compiled after his death—and reprinted and reprinted—the decisions of the editors create paratexts that in turn create meanings for readers. For example, Jeffrey Masten argues that the intimacy of the shared grave and textual joining of names is not so different from the shared names on the title page of a play like *The Two Noble Kinsmen* by Fletcher and Shakespeare.¹⁰ The bracket connects the names of the playwrights and makes them appear to be wrapped together, sharing the title of "gentleman," perhaps suggesting that they themselves are the two noble kinsmen, or the two gentlemen in Shakespeare's earlier play to which their title alludes. Masten argues that the representation of collaborative authors does not indicate that they are meant to be read as stand-ins for the characters, or assumed to be in the same sort of competition over text as maidenhead, but that the representation suggests a shared authority on the text. Collaborative efforts were not covered up in the Renaissance; as Masten says, "there was no need for closet space in this shared household" (61).

¹⁰ The title pages of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Changeling*, and *Lyrical Ballads* (1st and 2nd editions) are all available online if one does a quick image search for them.

The shared title page for *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (from the 1634 Quarto) is also useful in the authorship debate that has found a place in most criticism on the play.

Eugene M. Waith explains that some publishers *did* use “Shakespeare’s name or initials on the title-pages of plays he did not write” (4), but in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, he argues that

[t]his explanation is made unlikely by the reliability of the publisher, John Waterson, who published several other plays of the King’s Men, none of them falsely attributed. The worst that can be said of him is that in referring to collaborative plays he sometimes omitted the name of one collaborator. (5)

The omission of the name of a collaborator is interesting in the context of Alan Bray’s argument that *not* showing signs of friendship was more indicative of sodomy than when friends expressed themselves openly. If only one collaborator is mentioned on a title-page, it is as if there is something to hide. By putting only one name forward and excluding the other, it calls into question the authenticity of the relationship. In this case, compared to Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* title-pages that are discussed below, it is the publishers *not* the playwrights who have made the erasure. Shakespeare was already dead by the time *The Two Noble Kinsmen* was published (1634), and it was not published in the First Folio (1623) of his plays. However, omitting a collaborator is not always an intentional act. One name is easier to document in a registry, but the lasting representation can still “make meaning,” and potentially a misleading one, for those who see it. It promotes the myth of a solitary genius even when the authors were clear about their shared responsibility.

Waith also argues that Waterson “never seems to have been guilty of taking Shakespeare’s name in vain, nor can the commercial value of the name in 1634 be given as a reason for putting it on the quarto title-page. By that time Fletcher’s name was every bit as good, and Waterson puts it first” (Waith 5). The order of the names can be explained away by their presentation alphabetically, rather than privileging the more famous playwright.¹¹ Middleton and Rowley’s names are also alphabetically linked on the title page of *The Changeling*. Both men wrote most of their plays in collaboration (not necessarily with each other), so Middleton’s name has become representative of works by {Middleton and Someone Else}. Plays by a single author have continued to be given more authority, leaving Shakespeare’s *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* less widely read or performed. People want Shakespeare’s name to authorize the play; they do not want {Shakespeare and Some Other Guy I Have Never Heard Of} or worse {Some Other Guy and *Then* Shakespeare}.

Another comparison that can be drawn in published versions of the text is between the title page and the “Dramatis Personæ” that immediately follows. In the list of characters, the two protagonists have a shared description using the same bracket found on the title page. Just as Fletcher and Shakespeare’s names share the title “Gent.,” Arcite and Palamon share their character description:

PALAMON	}	the two noble kinsmen, cousins, nephews of Creon,
ARCITE		the King of Thebes

¹¹ Every title-page for a seventeenth-century play that I have seen has had the names of the playwrights in alphabetical order. For example, Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Night of the Burning Pestle* (1635, actually written only by Beaumont), *A King and No King* (1619, 1676), and *The Scornful Lady* (1616); Middleton and Rowley’s *A Faire Quarrel* (1617); and Chapman, Jonson, and Marston’s *Eastward Hoe* (1605).

Nothing distinguishes one from the other. It is particularly apparent in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* because both of them are in love with the same woman. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the situation is different because of the pairings that ultimately occur:

VALENTINE	}	the two gentlemen
PROTEUS		
...		
JULIA		beloved of Proteus
SILVIA		beloved of Valentine

Although their identities are compounded as “the two gentlemen,” their difference is defined by the women whom they love. Even though they both end up falling in love with Silvia during the play, the fact that the “Dramatis Personæ” lists the final coupling suggests that their identities are, in fact, unique. In *Kinsmen*, however, the friends are defined as one because even their taste in women is identical.

Fletcher, who took over Shakespeare’s position as the principal playwright of the King’s Men, collaborated with many of his contemporaries, but most famously with Beaumont. Their names have become an expected, inseparable pair and the first quarto published under both their names actually includes plays that the two playwrights wrote alone and also plays that were written by either Beaumont or Fletcher with someone else, and yet, by virtue of the collection, attributed to the two of them. John Aubrey’s famous description of the two men’s living arrangement has only continued to promote the strong bond of friendship between them. Aubrey writes in *Brief Lives* that “[t]hey lived together on the Banke side; not far from the Play-house, both bachelors; lay together; had one Wench in the house between them, which they did so admire; the same cloathes and

cloake, &c.; betweene them” (21). The relationship would sound homosexual if not for the shared wench between them. This living arrangement came to an end when Beaumont married—once again, a sexual relationship separated male friends.

Fletcher is forever locked in his final coupling, however, in a tomb beneath Southwark Cathedral in London. He is buried with Philip Massinger, another playwright with whom he collaborated, but not as often nor as famously as with Beaumont. Fletcher and Massinger both have plaques in the church, but the exact location of their shared tomb is unknown. Their burial suggests a closeness between the two men that surpassed the friendship of Beaumont and Fletcher, but because of the publication of plays by the latter pairing, the friendship has been overshadowed. Fletcher and Massinger’s plaques are not as obvious in the cathedral as John Gower’s monument, and I wonder whether, if their shared burial were more famous, it would start signifying in the way Bray predicts—that is, the friendship of Fletcher and Massinger would become seen as the privileged friendship of the former’s life because of the overlooked representation that we now see and allow to signify.

4.2 The Erased Friend

As I explain in Chapter 3, Wordsworth and Coleridge have different approaches to how they treat authorship and friendship. While Wordsworth attempts to make his wandering look as solitary as possible, Coleridge highlights the presence of his friends when they were together or longs for them when they are actually absent. The apparatus and production of the collection of *Lyrical Ballads* reveals the same trend.

Lyrical Ballads was published anonymously in 1798, and the lack of a name on the title page led readers, besides those in the know, to assume that there was only a single creative mind behind the poems. This was misleading and has since been read to indicate Wordsworth's attempt to stress the importance of the individual imagination in the creation of poetry. Looking at the title page with what we know now—that Wordsworth wrote twenty poems for the collection and Coleridge only four—it could be titled “William Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads, and a Few Other Poems* by S. T. Coleridge” with the first half in larger lettering than the second. Although also comical, *Wordsworth* in large text and *Coleridge* in small would accurately indicate the inequality between the two in their relationship. Coleridge, in his later letters, admires Wordsworth in language of adoration and idolisation. Coleridge’s difficulty in completing his works made him envious of Wordsworth’s more prolific ability, and Coleridge put himself in a lower position in the relationship. Therefore, their relationship was not one that could be considered an ideal friendship by classical standards. In *Lyrical Ballads*, as much as Wordsworth tries to repress the co-authorship, Coleridge tries to reassert—or at least allude to—it in his textual representations of friendship, as seen in his letters and poems in the preceding chapters.

The prefatory “Advertisement” to the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* appears to be written by a third party, and, although Wordsworth wrote the introductory remarks, Duncan Wu is confident that “its ideas would have been worked out with Coleridge” (Wu 330n.). However, the language that Wordsworth uses makes it look like an editor writing about the work: “It will perhaps appear to [readers of superior judgement] that, wishing to avoid the prevalent fault of the day, the author has sometimes descended too low, and

that many of his expressions are too far familiar, and not of sufficient dignity” (in Wu 331). The only allusion to friends is made at the end of the “Advertisement” where Wordsworth explains that “[o]f the other poems in the collection, it may be proper to say that they are either absolute inventions of the author, or facts which took place within his personal observation or that of his friends” (in Wu 331). Wordsworth admits the influence of friends to lend credibility to the experiences described in the poems. Although poems like the “Ancient Mariner” are obviously fictional, Wordsworth wants the “rustic” poems to benefit from the potential they have of being true. Indeed, many of the stories are based on Wordsworth’s experiences or those of his friends, but the fact that friends are invoked to add credibility to the poems privileges lived experience over the completely imaginative. The imaginative is acceptable, but only to furnish the real.

The collection was not well received, and one of the harshest critics was Wordsworth and Coleridge’s “friend” Richard Southey. In the *Critical Review* of October 1798, Southey delivers a critical review indeed. Wu notes that “Southey was aware of the joint authorship of Wordsworth and Coleridge despite the fact that *Lyrical Ballads* was published anonymously” (Wu 731n.). Southey refers to only a singular author in his analysis, as he does here in his critique of one of Wordsworth’s poems:

With that which is entitled ‘The Thorn’ we were altogether displeased.

The Advertisement says it is not told in the person of the author, but in that of some ‘loquacious narrator’. The author should have recollected that he who personates tiresome loquacity becomes tiresome himself. (in Wu 731)

Southey’s use of “we,” somewhat ironically given its subject, makes his article appear to be written collaboratively by more than one person at the *Critical Review*. For a critic,

pretending to have multiple people with the same opinion strengthens the argument, but when writing a collection of poetry, Wordsworth creates—intentionally or not—the illusion of a solitary mind composing the lines.

Even though Southey knew the authors of *Lyrical Ballads*, “he pretended not to” (Wu 730n.). At the end of the mostly negative review he writes that

[t]he ‘experiment’, we think has failed, not because the language of conversation is little adapted to the ‘purposes of poetic pleasure’, but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects. Yet every piece discovers genius, and, ill as the author has frequently employed his talents, they can certainly rank him with the best of living poets. (in Wu 731)

Southey writes as if the collection has only one author and compliments “him” for a talent which is not shown in this particular work, but in a letter to Charles Wynn, Southey actually admits to thinking that “The Idiot Boy” is “very well done” (in Wu 731 n.). Southey’s public slander, but private admiration, suggests that he had other motivations for his review than an actual dislike of the volume.

Southey’s review was one of the first, and, therefore, as Michael Gamer says, “[i]t had inaugurated the first wave of criticism directed at *Lyrical Ballads* and had provided a rubric to subsequent reviewers who approached the volume” (117). Gamer argues that the collection was written with “Southey’s ample sales” in mind, which “made him a necessary force for Wordsworth and Coleridge to emulate and consider” (106). Because their poetry might have been perceived as a threat, “[t]his poaching of Southey’s ‘turf’ while eschewing his didacticism may well have sparked his famously hostile review of the *Lyrical Ballads*” (106). The friends of the poets who knew of the true authorship

defended the work against these attacks, while still concealing the collaborative nature of the project. Charles Lamb writes directly to Southey to complain that “so far from calling it, as you do, with some wit, but more severity, ‘A Dutch attempt’, etc., I call it a right English attempt, and a successful one, to dethrone German sublimity” (in Wu 731n). The strongest defenders of the collection were Wordsworth and Coleridge themselves, but their defences show how different their opinions of their friendship were.

Wordsworth was determined not to let Southey’s review affect the success of the collection, so instead of re-publishing it as it was with both his name and Coleridge’s on it, he decided to use his name alone and to attach the famous “Preface” to the work to defend the newly organized—and greatly de-Coleridged—collection. Gamer argues that “we must consider rereading the Preface itself along similar lines: as strategic rather than wholesale rejection of gothic sensationalism, as ‘defence’ of the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads* rather than as manifesto, as response to reviewer criticism rather than revolution against it” (126).

Rather than writing with the distanced voice of the original’s “Advertisement,” Wordsworth writes his “Preface” in the first person to put his identity into its argument:

For the sake of variety and from a consciousness of my own weakness, I was induced to request the assistance of a Friend, who furnished me with the Poems of the ‘Ancient Mariner’, ‘The Foster-Mother’s Tale’, ‘The Nightingale’, and the Poem entitled ‘Love’. I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the Poems of my Friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be found no

discordance in the colours of our style as our opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide. (in Wu 496)

Wordsworth wants the reader to have this pure experience with a work and to make sure that the consciousness, of which the reader is aware, is *not* the consciousness of a critic. Because of a negative review from Southey on the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth says,

I have one request to make of my Reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgement of others. [. . .] I have therefore to request that the Reader would abide independently by his own feelings, and that if he finds himself affected he would not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure. (in Wu 506)

When reading is mediated by reviews and conversations with others, the consciousness of each response becomes integrated into the identity shared between the reader and the author.

Wordsworth's request is based on the fear of poor reviews leading to poor public opinion leading to poor sales, but his point is an intriguing one. He predicts a reader's refusal because the reader

will suspect that, if I propose to furnish him with new friends, it is only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition—composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry—and all men feel an habitual gratitude and

something of an honourable bigotry for the objects which have long continued to please them. We not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. (in Wu 507)

Wordsworth's view of what friendship means is not in what he argues, but in what he argues against. He believes that the public perception of friendship is that one can only have a certain number of friends, perhaps even only one, and others will be pushed out when new friends arrive. Indeed, Wordsworth kept his circle of friends small, and he was never as affectionate towards them as they were towards him. His argument for reading new styles of poetry implies that one can also have more than one or two friends, but I argue that Wordsworth is performing here—and performing in complex ways. He is invoking the rules of friendship to suggest that many friends are good to have, which means that he is against the concept of one true friend. However, his following remarks and notes reveal that he is not a good friend to Coleridge—making him a poor authority on friendship at all. The poems promote solitude, and the comparison of poems to friends is a strange one for Wordsworth, except in the sense that reading poems can create a connection that one might mistake for friendship.

Wordsworth's remarks on his own poem are much more favourable than the ones he makes on Coleridge's. When he writes his note to "The Thorn," he is defending his own work and makes no apologies for its quality:

I had two objects to attain: first, to represent a picture which should not be unimpressive, yes consistent with the character that should describe it; secondly (while I adhered to the style in which such persons describe), to

take care that words—which in their minds are impregnated with passion—should likewise convey passion to readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner, or using such language. (in Wu 508)

In his note to the “Ancient Mariner,” however, Wordsworth frames himself as a good friend who wants the best for the inferior poem of his unnamed collaborator, and, indeed, Coleridge’s name is omitted from the title page of all subsequent editions of *Lyrical Ballads* starting in 1800 when Wordsworth’s name first appears. Of the “Ancient Mariner,” Wordsworth writes that

I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such readers as may have been pleased with this poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me, as the author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. [. . .] It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the poem a value which is not often possessed by better poems. On this account I requested of my friend to permit me to republish it. (in Wu 509)

These documents reveal the unbalanced friendship between Wordsworth and Coleridge in the veiled insults that Wordsworth writes about his friend’s poem. Wordsworth liked “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” enough to include it as the first poem in *Lyrical*

Ballads, but after the poor reviews of the archaically written poem, he moved it to the end of the collection.

Wordsworth's decision to remove Coleridge's "Christabel" from the second edition was another move in which he privileged the collection over their friendship. Gamer argues that "to reject 'Christabel' from *Lyrical Ballads* was to inflict more than a slight on Coleridge; it was to threaten their friendship, particularly given the effort Coleridge had expended selflessly on behalf of the new edition" (124). It is no surprise then that their accounts of why the poem was not included in the second edition are quite different in tone. In a letter to Humphry Davy, Coleridge writes nothing accusatory about his friend, but puts all the blame for the inferiority of the poem on himself, writing that "Christabel"

was so much admired by Wordsworth, that he thought it indelicate to print two Volumes with *his name* in which so much of another man's was included — & which was of more consequence — the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the *Lyrical Ballads* were published — viz — an experiment to see how far those passions, which alone give any value to extraordinary Incidents, were capable of interesting, in & for themselves, in the incidents of common Life.—We mean to publish the *Christabel* therefore with a long Blank Verse Poem of Wordsworth's entitled the *Pedlar*— I assure you, I think very differently of *CHRISTABEL*. — I would rather have written *Ruth*, and *Nature's Lady* than a million such poems. (*CLSTC* October 9, 1800; emphasis original)

Coleridge defends the integrity of Wordsworth's vision and politely accepts that he does not want too many of Coleridge's poems printed under his name. Wordsworth, on the other hand, in a letter to Longman and Reese writes that

[a] Poem of Mr Coleridge's was to have concluded the Volumes; but upon mature deliberation I found that the Style of this Poem was so discordant from my own that it could not be printed along with my poems with any propriety. I had other poems by me of my own which would have been sufficient for our purpose but some of them being connected with political subjects I judged that they would be injurious to the sale of the Work. I therefore, since my last letter, wrote the last poem of the 2nd Volume. I am sure when you see the work you will approve of this delay, as there can be no doubt that the poem alluded to will be highly serviceable to the Sale.

(*CLW* December 18, 1800)

Wordsworth uses none of Coleridge's polite language. He is matter of fact and abrupt in his decision to preserve the integrity of the work. He cannot be completely faulted for this considering that the collection was published under only his name, but his manner of dealing with the subject is undeniably cold.

The paratexts of *Lyrical Ballads* erase Coleridge from the collection and contribute to the myth of the solitary genius that has grown around the Romantic poets. However, now that Wordsworth and Coleridge's later remembrances of writing the collection have become as large a part of reading *Lyrical Ballads* as the poems themselves, their friendship has been re-established by the publication choices of modern editors who *do* publish the collection under the names of both poets. The shared names in

Duncan Wu's *Romanticism*, a valuable anthology because of Wu's decision to publish *Lyrical Ballads* in the order of the 1798 edition, contribute to a reading of their friendship that the publication of the collection during their lifetimes did not allow. Each poem includes a bracketed attribution to either Wordsworth or Coleridge, but the shared entry they earn in the anthology—before the poets are dealt with individually—binds their names in a closeness that was not represented in 1798. The modern paratexts that unite their names construct a friendship that continues to exist if readers *see* those representations—as Bray sees gravestones—and allow them to signify.

4.3 The Friend(s) of Keats

Otho the Great was never performed during the lifetimes of Keats and Brown, but even when it is published it appears in collections of Keats's poems without any reference on the title pages to suggest the collaborative authorship of the work. Some collections, like the Penguin *Complete Poems*, have endnotes that discuss the writing process of the play, while others, like H. Buxton Forman's *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats*, contain prefatory remarks about the collaboration. In H. W. Garrod's *Keats: Poetical Works*, however, no mention is given at all to the collaboration. Brown appears in an endnote only to explain that he transcribed a version of the play to which Keats later made additions. There is no mention of Brown's involvement wherein he "engaged to furnish [Keats] with the fable, characters, and dramatic conduct of a tragedy, and he was to embody it in poetry" (CPJK 686n.; Brown 54). Stillinger's *Poems of John Keats* contain excellent notes about the manuscript transmissions of the text, but,

again, where the poem appears in the collection there is nothing mentioning the collaboration with Brown near the title page.

The representation of *Otho the Great* is similar to that of the second and subsequent editions of *Lyrical Ballads* that feature only the name of the primary poet. Even though Wordsworth acknowledges which poems were supplied by his friend—left unnamed in the “Preface”—there is nothing signalling Coleridge’s authorship where the poems appear in the collection. Brown wrote other plays as well, but I have been unable to find a collection of his creative works. Only his criticism of Shakespeare and biography of Keats are widely available. I wonder if *Otho* would also bear Keats’s name if it appeared in a collection of Brown’s work, just as Brown’s grave now bears Keats’s name.

As Bray’s argument led him to the grave of St. John and Newman, so does my argument inevitably lead towards the graves of Keats, Severn, and Brown. None of them are in shared graves, as are Ambrose St. John and John Henry Cardinal Newman, but Severn is buried in the plot adjacent to Keats, and his grave also includes the name of the poet. Brown’s grave, in New Zealand, is another example of how the importance of their friendship was not limited to their own lives.

The Keats/Severn gravesite has many similarities to the Shelley/Trelawny graves nearby. The Shelley and Byron circle in Pisa—consisting of the two poets, Mary Shelley, Jane and Edward Ellerger Williams, Edward John Trelawny, Thomas Medwin, and Leigh Hunt—is a fascinating group of friends to study in terms of Romantic friendships, but I will confine my discussion to Shelley and Trelawny’s graves and their epitaphs. Shelley and Williams died in a boat accident on June 8, 1822 and their bodies were cremated,

separately, on the respective beaches where their bodies washed ashore. Williams' ashes were given to his wife Jane and in 1884 "[a]t her own request, the ashes of Edward Williams, which she had kept since 1822, were buried with her, in Kensal Green Cemetery" (Jones 16); Shelley's ashes were buried in the same Protestant cemetery in Rome as his infant son William and as Keats. Trelawny met Severn, who was then securing a proper tombstone for Keats, and when Trelawny saw Severn's effort in constructing the perfect tombstone for his friend, he made similar arrangements for Shelley. Trelawny even purchased the plot next to his friend for himself, and, as Newman Ivey White notes, although "Trelawny does not say so in his books, [it] was intended for himself. His official permission to place a blank stone over it is dated March 26, 1823" (383). Trelawny had told Mary Shelley of the grave that "When I die, there is only to lift the coverlet and roll me into it" (St. Clair 84).

Critics have compared Severn to Trelawny, somewhat unfairly because they assume that the year Trelawny spent with Shelley made him more of a seeker of fame through his dead friend than Severn was of his. For example, Daisy Hay argues that

[i]f Severn's [tombstone] symbolises loyalty and self-effacement, then Trelawny's represents the complicated undertow of friendship with the famous. No one, not even Trelawny himself, could claim that Shelley's lines [on Trelawny's tombstone] were an accurate description of their relationship, which lasted for less than a year. But by 1881, to be a friend of Shelley was a significant claim to fame, and Trelawny died entirely convinced by his own fantasy of friendship. (311)

However, in terms of likeliness of being a “one true friend” Trelawny actually meets more of the requirements:

The more he got to know him the more he liked him, and he began to feel that they had a good deal in common. They had been born in the same year, they had both broken with their fathers. Shelley’s father had wanted to put him in the army, Trelawny’s father had put him in the navy. (St. Clair 62)

The similar ages and experiences of the two men made them immediately compatible, and even though they knew each other for only a short time, Shelley had a profound impact on Trelawny who, St. Clair argues, “[i]n his admiration for Shelley[,] . . . began to see his own life in a new light. His disobedience at school was obviously, in retrospect, a manifestation of his early love of liberty” (62).

The detail with which I have struggled to no avail regards the inscription on Trelawny’s grave, composed by Shelley. It is a poem appropriately titled “Epitaph” that Mary Shelley published in a collection of her husband’s work called *Posthumous Poems* in 1824:

They were two friends, whose life was undivided.
So let them mingle. Sweetly they had glided
Under the grave. Let not their dust be parted,
For their two hearts [breasts]¹² in life were single-hearted.

What I want to know is: what occasion prompted these two couplets?¹³ Did Shelley see a shared grave and write it in admiration of the two friends? Or did he, as his cousin and

¹² Mary Shelley misread Percy’s near illegible handwriting and Trelawny trusted her published transcription. The word “breasts” is correct, however (St. Clair 230n.).

biographer Thomas Medwin tells us, write it for himself and Williams? “How prophetic was that epitaph!” exclaims Medwin in his biased 1847 *Life of Shelley* (Medwin 277)—typical of his predilection for constructing narratives, be they real or imagined.

Trelawny and Medwin’s biographies of Shelley and their circle of friends are fantastical accounts that are a pleasure to read, but it is difficult to tell what is true in every case. They write twisted versions of the truth to make their stories more adventurous and to make the bonds of friendship within their group appear stronger. It is very possible that Shelley *did* write the poem for Williams and himself, but without a reference to specific letter or journal entry, I have difficulty taking Medwin at his word. Another option—which, even if it is not true, is certainly a plausible interpretation of the poem—is that Shelley wrote the poem for himself and a friend (but not necessarily Williams) on the occasion of seeing a shared grave, or wrote the epitaph for the grave he saw. It is reasonable to assume that an example inspired him—a precedent, even in literature, to encourage him to think about the bond of friendship and the necessity of preserving it.

The epitaph could also have been about him and his wife, but Mary Shelley is buried with her parents rather than with Percy in Rome. She died much later, but never remarried, so she could have been buried with him if she had wanted to. I wonder if it had already been a topic of conversation between them before Percy died. Was her desire to be buried in her famous family’s plot already known to him when he wrote “Epitaph,” thus inspiring him to look for another relationship to live on after his death? However, if

¹³ I have scoured the journals of Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley and Williams in the hope of finding a reference to the date of composition. I even contacted eminent Shelley scholars to see if anyone had ever considered the occasion that prompted the composition of “Epitaph”. No one seems to know—not even the editors of every edition of Shelley’s works that I have seen which contain the poem.

his friends had known that he had written the poem for Williams and, prophetically, died with him, why were they not interred together? Why were Williams' ashes taken to Pisa when they could have been buried together under Shelley's "Epitaph"? He must not have specified to his friends that he wanted it to be *his* epitaph. Of course, he did not know that his death would come so soon, but Byron composed his before he became sick in Greece.¹⁴ Keats told Severn the epitaph he wanted, but he knew he was going to die. For Shelley, the thought of having a perfect epitaph, at the age of 27, had probably not crossed his mind. Regardless, if the circle had been aware of the poem, especially after Mary Shelley published it two years later, Williams' ashes could have been buried there (and perhaps they were aware, but Jane said no). Instead, over fifty years later, Trelawny appropriated the lines to apply to himself and Shelley. He even wanted to change them to better suit their relationship, but in the end he left them in their superior original version. Shelley had no say in Trelawny's claim of their friendship.

Trelawny planned to be buried next to Shelley, whereas Severn made no such arrangements during his lifetime although he did want to be buried next to Keats. It was through the efforts of his children that he was buried there, as Birkenhead explains:

Joseph's children felt strongly that he should have been buried, as he had always wished, near his friend, John Keats, and his own son who had died as a baby in Rome. But interments had been forbidden in that burial ground for many years[.] . . . Their request was supported by a number of influential friends, including Gladstone and Monckton Milnes, now Lord Houghton[.] . . . After some negotiations their petition was granted, and

¹⁴ Byron's "epitaph" was actually a rejection of one, in a Byronic phrase of defiance: "To mark the spot where earth to earth returns: / No lengthen'd scroll, no praise-encumber'd stone, / My epitaph shall be my name alone" ("A Fragment").

two years after [his] death . . . Joseph's body was moved from the new, unfriendly cemetery and buried beside John Keats. Tennyson, Rossetti, Lord Houghton, all suggested inscriptions for his tomb. In the end the words proposed by Houghton were cut into the stone. (280)

At Keats's request, his own tombstone famously reads "Here lies one whose name is writ in water" and it is only on Severn's where both of their names appear:

To the memory of Joseph Severn, Devoted Friend and Death-bed Companion of John Keats, whom he lived to see numbered among the Immortal Poets of England. An Artist eminent for his Representations of Italian Life and Nature. British Consul at Rome from 1861 to 1872: And Officer of the Crown of Italy. In recognition of his services to Freedom and Humanity.

The epitaph was not composed by Severn, but by Monckton Milnes, the man to whom Brown entrusted all of his Keatsiana when he emigrated to New Zealand because he wanted "to confide in a true lover of Keats, and place the Life and Poems in his hands" (*LCAB* 408). Keats is privileged as one of Severn's three main accomplishments, which speaks to what an impact the poet had on the artist's life. Indeed, had he not nursed Keats on his death-bed, Severn would not have had many of the opportunities that life brought him as "the friend of Keats."

Englishmen visiting Italy who were admirers of Keats sought out Severn to learn about the poet they adored. Birkenhead argues that

[i]t was as Keats's friend that he had first been sought out by Englishmen of rank and influence. [. . .] It was their influence that had won him the

Consulship in Rome, and the addition to his pension when he retired. [. . .]
Though his painting was out of fashion, he could sell a portrait of Keats;
and though there was no market for his novels, his article on ‘The
Vicissitudes of Keats’s Fame’ was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* and
quoted in book after book. The manuscripts and letters among his papers
went to pay his doctor. (280)

By becoming “the friend of Keats” after Keats’s death, Severn has forever had his name bound to Keats’s fame. Were it not for the efforts of Brown and Severn (and others), Keats would never have achieved the fame that he now enjoys as one of the “big six Romantic poets.” Like Trelawny, Severn became a collaborator in the fame of his friend. Even though he had nothing to do with the poems themselves, he ensured that those poems were read and even collaborated posthumously by painting Keats on the occasion of hearing the nightingale at Hampstead Heath where Keats was inspired to write his (now) famous ode.

Despite the fact that admirers of Keats sought out Severn in Italy as “the friend of Keats,” Brown was Keats’s true friend in life, or as close as friendships can reach the classical ideals. However, after Keats’s death, both continued to partake in Keats’s fame as his friends. After handing over all of Keats’s memorabilia to Milnes, Brown immigrated to New Zealand where he died in 1842. He was buried without a marker and it was not until the centennial of Keats’s death, in 1921, that Brown’s family found his remains and relocated them to a more appropriate grave with the simple epitaph of “Charles Armitage Brown: The Friend of John Keats.” Even though Brown had nothing to do with this decision, the friendship was important enough to his descendants that they

wanted him to be remembered for the same reasons that Severn is. This is not to say that the family had a contest in mind between Severn and Brown, but the definite article on Brown's grave does assume that he was the only one. *The friend*. It is as if the most important years of the friendships were *after* Keats was already dead. It was in those years that Severn and Brown were able to live their lives as Keats's friend even if Keats was not involved except through his poetry and letters which they guarded as if they were stand-ins for Keats himself. The textual representations, as Keats himself said of Brown's handwriting, became physical signs of the absent friend. Therefore, even after Keats's death, the friendship was able to survive through his manuscripts and Severn and Brown's memories of him, which they had to deal with constantly as admirers of Keats hounded them for details throughout their lives. In this way, title-pages and graves create narratives of friendship that are not necessarily true, but are made true by the people left behind.

In the Renaissance and the Romantic era, the textual decisions of friends of the deceased and of editors of collaborative poets are responsible for the narratives of friendship that can be read onto the lives and works of these collaborators. Title pages and gravestones, regardless of intentionality, signify friendships that are constructed by readers as much as they are by the friends themselves or those who left the textual examples for us to see. If the reader sees friendship in the paratexts, it allows those spaces to produce meaning—to instruct, by example, how friendships can be represented. So instead of visiting Keats's grave and thinking only of him, as Oscar Wilde and Thomas Hardy do in their poems memorialising the occasion, we should look at Severn's grave too and consider the friendship that those two stones have immortalised.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

“I’m glad to be with you, Samwise Gamgee, here at the end of all things.”

– Frodo Baggins (The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King)

And so the two friends reach Mt. Doom and cast the One Ring into the fires from whence it came; or they party with the Ewoks on Endor; or perhaps they take the Starship Enterprise to warp-speed to set out on another adventure together. The contemporary examples of bromances that have provided the loosely thematic epigraphs to my chapters are not part of a new phenomenon. Manuals of friendship from antiquity, plays from the Renaissance, and collections of poetry from the Romantic era have, in various ways, all provided representations of friendships that have inspired the cult of bromance that flourishes today. These friendships continue to exist in the textual web of letters, collaborations, and paratexts as long as readers find the friendships there. When addressing all manner of textual representations, certain friendships become readable as affectionate relationships where the emotion between the friends can be described as non-erotic love. Similarly, the friendships are not necessarily performances made for homosocial gain even though some people certainly used the affectionate language of friendship to help their social situation.

Letters in both the Renaissance and the Romantic era were written to specific individuals, but the letters had a public expectation attached to them. If one did not want the contents to be shared with others, one specified this at the beginning of the letter. However, the fact that letters that make this request have been published means that at

some point the writer's wishes were ignored and the letter shared. This may have happened years after the writer's death when friends or biographers collected memorabilia of the deceased, and such letters are perhaps better representations of the writer's views of friendship because those letters were not meant to be public performances. The letters between Valentine and Proteus in *The Two Gentleman of Verona* are not shared publically with the audience; it is only the love letters which are shared—love letters that were meant to be private. Reading private letters is a voyeuristic delight for an audience, so perhaps the letters between Valentine and Proteus were assumed to be public and therefore were of no interest to the audience, or at least no interest to the plot. The friends have nothing to hide concerning their friendship, so their letters have served no dramatic purpose because the content is likely the same as the farewell speeches the friends make when they are separated from each other.

When Coleridge wrote letters to men who he hoped would be his true friends, he used the language of friendship gleaned from performances of friendship passed down from antiquity. Coleridge wanted a friend who would return affection to him with the same gratitudinarian flourishes he employed, but Poole, Southey, and Wordsworth did not. A change was occurring in the Romantic era, but it was one that was theorised but not carried out in full. Displays of affection made Wordsworth uncomfortable and his theory of authorship reflects that; however, in 1798, when *Lyrical Ballads* was composed, his ideas were not fully articulated. At the time, he chose to work with Coleridge as much as Coleridge decided to work with him even though he did not express himself in the same language of friendship. Coleridge's affection is not necessarily representative of the entire Romantic era, but neither is Wordsworth's mythical solitude.

Keats, who feared friendships if they were unbalanced, was as affectionate as Coleridge when he found deserving friends who meant the words they said and wrote. The performances of friendship that were used in the literary marketplace in letters and reviews created circles of literary friends who warred with one another, and Keats was only involved in the Cockney School because of his fondness for Leigh Hunt, not just for Leigh Hunt's politics and reputation.

The collaborations between men within a social circle reveal the collaborators' views of friendship in ways that can supplement what we know of their lives. The distance between Fletcher and Shakespeare and apparent closeness between Middleton and Rowley unite the names of the latter pair more than the prior. Shakespeare's contemporary cachet as an Author does not make him as appealing a choice to conflate with the identity of another, not even in friendship. Indeed, Fletcher was closer to Beaumont and Massinger, so the narrative of friendship is easier to place upon Fletcher rather than Shakespeare. Even though their names are joined on the title page, the names do not have the same effect within the context of the rest of the play as do Middleton and Rowley's because of their tighter collaboration.

In the Romantic era, Wordsworth and Coleridge's collaboration was more inspiring to Coleridge who preferred to be in the company of others. Wordsworth's solitary figures do not have the same affectionate longing for friends that Coleridge's do. Both poets promote a love of nature and connectedness to all things, but Wordsworth privileges being alone whereas Coleridge prefers to share his experiences with another. Keats and Brown's collaborative work was done as a favour from both sides: by Brown in the hopes of securing some earned money for Keats and by Keats for acting as the

“midwife,” as he saw it, to bring Brown’s “child” into being. Their friendship is apparent in the selflessness of their reasons for working on the play.

The various paratexts that were printed in the Renaissance folios and those that continue to be used today offer a textual framework in which the friendship of collaborative authors can be read. The title pages signify affection if we see them for this potential, as do shared and adjacent graves, although the latter in a more dramatic fashion. Although it is possible that Massinger, Severn, and Trelawny wanted to be buried next to Fletcher, Keats, and Shelley, respectively, to share in the fame of their deceased friends, the representations remain to signify a friendship that will continue to last as long as the graves do. Friendship does not necessarily exist only in life; it is the *representation* of friendship that is important because it is up to the readers to see the signs *as* affection.

My decision to focus on the Renaissance and the Romantic era was a conscious one to argue that the Romantic era was not the watershed moment of friendship it seems to be, but were this project lengthened, then I would include a discussion of friendship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the patronage system at court gave way to the literary marketplace. A survey encompassing such a vast historical time period would also allow for stronger distinctions to be drawn between the genres of letters, poetry, and prose—the latter would necessarily be added for an analysis of the friendship of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, for example.

Ideally, the argument for affectionate friendship would then be taken even further to bridge the gap between the Romantics and the contemporary bromances in my epigraphs with a discussion of Victorian elegies, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “In

Memoriam,” and modern poetic couplings, such as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound’s. A look at the contemporary collaborative processes that produce the bromances in movies and television programmes would also be a fascinating area on which to apply some of my findings of affectionate friendship in the Renaissance and the Romantic era.

Friends *can* be affectionate towards each other in the language and behaviour of love because while the word “love” invokes emotion and a close bond, it does not connote eroticism. Therefore, the language of love was the most appropriate medium for friends to express the non-erotic nature of friendship. Relationships that do not have any erotic desire can still be as important as romantic love and the eros it is assumed to contain. The contemporary homophobia towards men who do not behave in traditionally “manly” ways is absurd considering that the tradition of affectionate friendship goes back to ancient Greece. Not only are friends capable of expressing love towards one another, but readers can create these narratives regardless of the intention of authors or the facts of biography. The desire of readers to find bromances in literature speaks to the desire that they have for affectionate friendship in their own lives but are perhaps afraid to actually perform or, like Coleridge, are unable to find. Romantic movies appeal to the audience’s desire to find true love, just as bromances do for their desire to find true friendship. The signs of friendship in title pages and gravestones do not necessarily signify a homoerotic relationship, but they *are* signifying and can be read according to the desires of those who see them.

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