

Introduction

Male Friendship and Greek Love

Friendship is rarely as simple as it sounds. In the classical world, it was celebrated as among the highest human achievements. Nothing was more likely to lead to the divine than looking for it in the eyes of a friend. The friend could offer a reflection of one's own worth and a celebration of a kind of mutuality that was not connected to family or home. As Ivy Schweitzer reminds us, "by the time of Socrates, an ideal of friendship emerged as a primary personal connection that was separate from the exchange relations of marriage and commerce and vitally concerned the moral character and disinterested actions of the partners."¹ Throughout the history of Western culture, this notion of a friend might have held sway, or it might just as easily have been challenged or undermined. Schweitzer's study considers how this ideal changes over time. It is important to emphasize, however, just how central this concept remains to the articulations of friendship throughout the early modern age in England, and indeed still has resonance in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

If friendship has always held a special place in the English literary imagination, then it is worth looking at a group of literary works to tease out the meaning of this trope in both personal and cultural terms. In drama, fiction, opera, and oratorio, friendship was regularly represented and enthusiastically celebrated throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the celebration of heroic friends in the dramas of the late seventeenth century to the representation of more common friends in novels such as *Great Expectations* or *The Longest Journey*, the concept of friendship offered a means whereby same-sex intimacy could be explored within a context that was culturally idealized. At times, as the novels of Smollett or Wilde suggest, these friendships are openly erotic and potentially transgressive.

¹ Ivy Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 32.

At others, as in Sterne or Scott, the intensity of friendship is not especially erotic or transgressive, but it can speak for itself.

Friends are physical, emotional, and psychological partners, who love and are loved in ways that culture at large has always preserved for cross-gender relations. What continues to fascinate me, however, is not the transgressive potential of this love, but rather its own seeming normativity.² So often in the works I discuss, men turn to each other for emotional support and erotic-seeming expressions of devotion. Friendship models offer writers the opportunity to contain this emotional excess in intimately personal terms.³ The more closely we look at these models of male friendship, the more clearly they redefine and at times even confound our sense of the normative. Indeed, they repeatedly push in directions that force us to reconsider what friendship actually means when it is invoked as a trope in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴

Male–male relations may have been idealized in the culture as a whole, but these examples challenge that idealization, either with something more than “male bonding” can accommodate, or with an obsessional fixation that belies their seemingly secondary role. These same-sex friendships are memorable because they give shape to the novels of which they are a part; and they have cultural significance because they have been hiding in plain sight throughout the period I examine. Just like Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, which became a widely celebrated poem despite its insistence on male love – or, perhaps because of that love – these works harbor loving relationships that are all too easy to overlook.⁵ We often want to assume that the love between friends is different from the love between lovers. As I hope to show, that is rarely an easy distinction.

The works I discuss celebrate male friendships in ways we are only just beginning to understand. I use the overarching rubrics of “Elegiac Friendship,” “Erotic Friendship,” and “Platonic Friendship” in order to distil the central rationales for intimate relations. By grouping works

² George E. Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 26.

³ George E. Haggerty, *Horace Walpole’s Letters* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), chapter 1.

⁴ Laurie Shannon calls Renaissance friendships “homonormative.” See *Sovereign Amity: Figures of Friendship in Shakespearean Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 19. See below, pp. 6–8.

⁵ What we mean by “love” has of course tremendous bearing on this argument. As Susan Ackerman argues, in *When Heroes Love: The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), the meaning of the Hebrew word for love, specifically as used in the Old Testament story of David and Jonathan from 1 and 2 Samuel, has everything to do with how we can interpret that story (170–4).

together in this way, moreover, I can place them in meaningful relation to one another and use them more precisely to expand our understanding of how friendship functions in these seemingly disparate literary texts. The groupings also help to explain significant features of each example.

While I look closely at the concept of friendship, building on the work of Alan Bray and others, in order to show how friends became a touchstone of intimate value in the works of writers from Defoe to Forster, I also try to show how certain friendships defy even our broadest understanding of that term.⁶ When friendships become tantamount to a marriage between men, as they do in many of the works I discuss, then even the term friendship itself starts to seem inadequate. I will discuss such configurations at length. It is no accident that friendships are central to the works I discuss, nor is it perplexing that they loom so large in the lives of which they are a part.

In his deeply powerful study of friendship, *Love Undetected: Notes on Friendship, Sex, and Survival*, Andrew Sullivan makes a cogent argument about the place of friendship in the lives of gay men: “For, of all our relationships, friendship is the most common, and the most natural. In its universality, it even trumps family. Many of us fail to marry, and many more have no children . . . But any human being who has lived for any time has had a friend.”⁷ Sullivan wants to distinguish friends from lovers. It is an important feature of his argument that erotic desire does not complicate friendships: “[a virtuous man] comes to a friend in exactly the opposite way that a lover comes to a beloved. He comes not out of need, or passion, or longing. He comes out of a radical choice. Friendship, in this way, is a symbol of man’s freedom from his emotional needs; love is a symbol of his slavery to them.”⁸ I think these distinctions between erotic love and friendship are sometimes overly rigid; but even as he celebrates gay friends as a special case, Sullivan is looking for a kind of love that transcends (rather than avoids) the erotic. I am confused that he does not turn to Plato in order to solve his dilemma, but instead he considers friendship’s failures and wonders with Cicero, “how can one love another imperfect human being?”⁹ Sullivan’s friendships are liable to this kind of betrayal, unless they are secured from betrayal in the virtue of Christ. If instead of Christ

⁶ I am speaking of Alan Bray’s study, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); another important study is that of Richard Dellamora, *Friendship’s Bonds: Democracy and the Novel in Victorian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁷ Andrew Sullivan, *Love Undetected: Notes on Friendship, Sex, and Survival* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 176.

⁸ Sullivan, *Love Undetected*, 211.

⁹ Sullivan, *Love Undetected*, 225.

we imagine a higher power of love in friendship – an ideal, say, of platonic love – then we may be able to understand how friendships became so important in the English literary tradition.

For the purposes of this introduction and a consideration of friendship in these terms, I think the most useful text of Plato's would be the *Lysis*, in which he discusses the nature of friendship and love between young men and their admirers, both young and old. In the dialogue, Socrates advises the young Hippothales, who is infatuated with Lysis, how best to express his love and what he can expect in return for his affection. Lysis is an attractive young man: "He stood out among the boys and older youths, a garland on his head, and deserved to be called not only a beautiful boy but a well-bred young gentleman."¹⁰ While Socrates carries on his conversation with some other young men, Lysis keeps looking over, and finally he joins in the conversation. Socrates engages him in a conversation in which the young man is led point by point to declare, with Socrates' encouragement, that he would choose wisdom over other virtues: "if you become wise, my boy, then everybody will be your friend, everybody will feel close to you because you will be useful and good" (694). Later, Socrates turns to Lysis's friend Menexenus and says:

So Menexenus, tell me something ... You know how it is, everybody is different: one person wants to own horses, another dogs, another wants money, and another fame. Well, I'm pretty lukewarm about those things, but when it comes to having friends, I'm absolutely passionate ... and, I swear by Zeus above, that I would rather possess a friend than all Darius' gold, or even than Darius himself. That's how much I value friends and companions. And that's why, when I see you and Lysis together, I'm really amazed; I think it's wonderful that you two have been able to acquire this possession so quickly and easily while you're still so young. (695)

After this flattering opening, Socrates challenges Menexenus to talk about the kind of affection that friends feel. At first Menexenus insists that he and Lysis love each other equally, but then Socrates poses a relation in which one participant may love and the other hate: "Isn't this how men are often treated by the young boys they are in love with? They are deeply in love, but they feel that they are not loved back, or even that they are hated" (696); and he goes on to ask: "then which is the friend of the other? Is the lover the friend of the loved, whether he is loved in return or not, or is even hated? Or is the loved the friend of the lover? Or in a case like

¹⁰ Plato, *Lysis*, trans. Stanley Lombardo, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 687–707 (691). Further parenthetical references are to this edition.

this, when the two do not both love each other, is neither the friend of the other?" (696).¹¹

Before going further or anticipating where Socrates hopes to lead his interlocutor – and of course the conversation itself is the model of platonic love at work – it is important to notice the role that love, which for Plato clearly includes the concept of sexual desire, plays in this articulation of friendship. That is the assumption with which Socrates starts the entire discussion. Later, when he moves beyond physical love per se to talk about the love of the beautiful, that attachment to beautiful bodies has not been lost:

Maybe the old proverb is right, and the beautiful is a friend. It bears a resemblance, at any rate, to something soft and smooth and sleek, and maybe that's why it slides and sinks into us so easily, because it's something like that. Now I maintain that the good is beautiful. What do you think? (700)

What is fascinating about Socrates' perspective here is his attachment of the good to this concept of the beautiful. Friendship encompasses the good and the beautiful by means of a physical connection that is unmistakable. I cannot here follow the ups and downs of the *Lysis* any further, but I can say that this concept of friendship, which includes intense personal affection, is something that reappears in the works I am going to discuss, even as the friendships themselves can function also in the public in ways that will become clear as I proceed.

In this context, it is interesting to consider a provocative and often overlooked comment made by Alan Bray in the Introduction to his posthumous study, *The Friend*. In discussing some of the features of this topic, Bray makes the following assertion:

What I have sought to convey is the conviction at the heart of these cultural practices that the ethics of friendship operated persuasively only in the larger frame of reference that lay *outside* the good of individuals for whom the friendship was made. To pose the historical question in terms of the essential good or ill of sexuality therefore, the question that has come to dominate the corresponding debates, operates necessarily by contrast *within* the friendship. The inability to conceive of relationships in other than sexual terms says something of contemporary poverty; or, to put the point more precisely, the effect of a shaping concern with sexuality is precisely to obscure that larger frame.¹²

¹¹ For a similar assessment of *Lysis*, see Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 33–4.

¹² Bray, *The Friend*, 6.

Before I address some questions that emerge from this statement, I want to make clear what a splendid job Bray has done in taking friendship out of the chambers of privacy and into the public staterooms of power. He has made it clear that in early modern culture, in England and elsewhere, friendship, even publicly acknowledged and sworn bonds between two men, most often served a larger cultural purpose of alliance and public recognition. I do not need to rehearse the splendid work Bray has done with Antonio Perez and the accusation of sodomy to make it clear that I find this work valuable and inspiring in many ways.¹³

In this book too, Bray makes the absolutely persuasive point that in early modern culture friendship serves a public function, and that expressions of intimacy are best understood in terms of power relations and jockeying for position among members of the elite class of courtiers and those aspiring to the court. These observations are a wonderful corrective to the impulse among gay and queer scholars to eroticize friendship first and then afterwards look for the possible public implications of the eroticization. I think Bray is right to say that “the inability to conceive of relationships in other than sexual terms says something of contemporary poverty,” and I want to start with that comment in the hopes of articulating an alternative thesis.¹⁴

If we look at those friendships embedded in the literary culture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, a richer and more varied picture emerges. For me, what Bray’s stunning study leaves out is the way that emotion, once expressed, can begin to convey a kind of intimacy that the term “friendship” can hardly represent. I am not saying that I want to reintroduce sexuality into these friendships – I see what Bray means by poverty, and I have confronted those limitations in my own work on Walpole and others – but instead I want to think about the kinds of male intimacy that Bray describes and reintroduce private meaning into these public displays. Laurie Shannon makes a similar argument: “Renaissance friendship’s inter-subjective position founds itself on emphatic principles of sameness; its most consistent impulse is homonormative. Using the word *normative* in this way, I mean to evoke the strange blend of ordinariness, idealization, and ideology entailed in this rhetorical regime. Homonormativity ... suggests both an affective regime and a political one” (19). If I am interested

¹³ See Alan Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” *History Workshop Journal* 29 (Spring 1990): 1–19; reprinted in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 40–61.

¹⁴ Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, 19.

more in the affective regime, that is partly as a corrective to the politicizing of Bray and others.

In her own study of friendship, Schweitzer discusses these issues at length, and she makes it clear that her study allows a richer range of reference:

Aristotle's notion of *philia*, which recurs in various guises with remarkable frequency in early as well as in later and contemporary American texts ... Cicero incorporated ideas from Greek sources that reinforce the classical ideal as a heroic and spiritual connection (although eroticism and sexuality sometimes play central roles) freely entered into by virtuous men of relatively equal and elevated status who mirror each other.

If the heroic and the spiritual are sometimes infused with eroticism and sexuality, then friendship itself can be dynamic and varied in these ways, as this study will show. Schweitzer goes on to talk about the ways in which Cicero's account shifts into the elegiac, and this configuration seems to me as important, if not more important, than the erotic and sexual one. I will of course talk about both.

Cicero's account, however, is saturated with masculine political melancholia arising from the untimely death of his great friend Scipio and the loss of the Republic and its tradition of military and civic honor figured by that friendship. This compelling linkage of friendship and loss influenced other important contributors to the tradition such as Francesco Petrarch and Michel de Montaigne and set the overriding mood for postmodern conceptions of friendship epitomized by Jacques Derrida's 2001 collection of eulogies on friends entitled *The Work of Mourning*.¹⁵

The issues raised here almost outline the study I have begun. For if it is useful to describe this range of friendship's possibilities for American culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, how even more telling for the English literary culture that is at issue here. For now, it is important to remember that Michel de Montaigne articulated the concept of loving-friendship between men for the early modern era, and although he distinguished it from the pederasty of the Greeks, he nevertheless saw it as a "perfect union and congruity." He says: "In the friendship which I am talking about, souls are mingled and confounded in so universal a blending that they efface the seam which joins them together so that it cannot be found. If you press me to say why I loved him, I feel that it cannot be expressed except by replying: 'Because it was him: because it was me.'"

¹⁵ Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 13.

Although Montaigne distinguishes this model of loving-friendship from pederasty, he connects it to marriage: “For the perfect friendship I am talking about is indivisible: each gives himself so entirely to his friend that he has nothing left to share with another ... [I]n this friendship love takes possession of the soul and reigns there with full sovereign sway.”¹⁶ This possession, as spiritual and emotional as it is, seems to assume a physical bond as well: this mutual giving is certainly intense, and body and soul seem almost indivisible. It is interesting to note that the most recent translator of Montaigne’s essays changes the title of the essay that has long been known as “On Friendship.” The new title is “On Affectionate Relationships,” and it is a title that comes closer to describing the kinds of friendships I am looking at in this study. If these friendships can be understood as “affectionate relationships” in the way that Montaigne describes, then they will defy attempts to dismiss their emotional significance.

In his discussion of Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II*, Jonathan Goldberg chides Bray for forgetting his own point about the ways in which sodomy and friendship can so easily be misrecognized.¹⁷ If this is true for sodomy – and I will leave Goldberg to make that argument – how much truer might it be for the kind of friendship I am discussing here. For if the conventions of friendship include deeply emotional language, as Bray argues, then where is the place for the expression of emotion? I would argue that it is present even in the conventionality of the language Bray describes. How often are we assaulted by the public convention of a statement such as “I love you”: how hackneyed that phrase is, and how devoid of meaning. That is true until, of course, it is reanimated with meaning by two people who love each other. The analogy is not exactly the same, but it does begin to get at the nature of language, which can be public and conventional and still express something deeply private and personal.

As hard as it is to imagine how men in earlier centuries narrated their attachment to one another, one thing that we do understand in the twenty-first century is love, even if our contemporary understanding of love is diluted by popular culture and over-familiarity. Still, when two people say that they love each other, we understand what that means. When those two

¹⁶ Michel de Montaigne, “On Affectionate Relationships,” in *The Complete Essays*, ed. and trans. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 2003), 211–12, 215. For Bray, some of the language of intimacy has a traditional valence that challenges modern interpretations; see Bray, *The Friend*, 140–77.

¹⁷ Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992).

people are a man and a woman, we are happy to invest the emotion with erotic feeling as well. We are loath to make the same assumption when the two loving participants are male. But why should we, in cases like some of those before us, assume that this friendship serves only a public and political form when the terms are so deeply personal? I would go even further to say that at the beginning of the longer eighteenth century, it was becoming possible to read these outpourings of emotionality as expressions of a love that is none other than the love that we recognize as existing between men and women in love poetry, Restoration comedy, heroic drama, and even the early novel: physical, emotional, lustful, spiritual love. I have talked about such examples, in my earlier study of male love and friendship in the eighteenth century, but I want to return to them in this context to see what we can make of the love that is expressed between men.¹⁸

In this study, the friendships I will be talking about are exclusively literary representations. I might, in some cases, refer to a writer's life and/or his own friendships, but for the most part my examples will be literary. Another proviso is that I am talking primarily about male friendships and intimate male relations in this study. There are various reasons for this: I have written extensively about women's literary friendships elsewhere;¹⁹ male friendships have a cultural significance that Alan Bray and others have discussed; my interest in the "history of sexuality" dictates this one-sided approach, since male friendships are in so many ways foundational to Western masculinist culture; and finally, I think it is time to reconsider some of the groundbreaking work that was done in this field in the latter part of the twentieth century. I am thinking primarily of the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* is an indispensable source for thinking about this topic. If I feel that homosociality itself now needs revision, then that is not on account of anything in Sedgwick's work, but rather on account of some of the uses to which it has been put in the last twenty-five years. Interestingly, the notion of homosociality that Sedgwick first articulated – far more culturally complicit than the "male bonding" it has come to mean in critical discussion since its first articulation – would dovetail nicely with the public and very masculinist concept of friendship that Bray describes. I am also indebted to work by writers such as Christopher Craft, Cameron McFarlane, G. S.

¹⁸ For this earlier argument, see Haggerty, *Men in Love*, 5–6.

¹⁹ George E. Haggerty, *Unnatural Affections: Women and Fiction in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

Rousseau, Hans Turley, Thomas King, Richard Dellamora, and others, the importance of whose work will emerge in more specific contexts. I am building on this work, I hope, and adding to our understanding of the literary representation of male friendships in the English literary tradition.²⁰

I want to introduce the concept of platonic love into this discussion because I think it offers answers in exactly the places where our questions are most perplexing.²¹ Plato was perhaps not as huge an influence in the eighteenth century as in the centuries before and after – it probably took Jowett and the great nineteenth-century translations to make Plato fully accessible to undergraduates – but in both the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Plato’s literary influence was enormous.²² I hope to examine some of the details of this influence and to show how platonic love, both in its larger cultural and philosophical context and in its more local and popular dissemination, had a profound effect on the history of sexuality as it emerged in the work of sexologists in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Aristotle too, as Schweitzer reminds us, holds an important place in discussion of friendships:

Emphasizing two crucial requirements for the achievement of friendship’s highest form – voluntary, rational choice and an equality between friends that makes such choice possible – Aristotle offers a definition that has dominated the long philosophical and popular discourse: “a friend is another self” (*philos allos autos*) so that “Equality – and likeness – is friendship, and especially those alike in virtue.” Philosophers have taken this to mean that what Aristotle understands as self-love is the best model for love of another.²³

²⁰ See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), esp. 21–7; see also: Dellamora, *Friendship’s Bonds*; Christopher Craft, *Another Kind of Love: Male Homosexual Desire in English Discourse, 1850–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Cameron McFarlane, *The Sodomite in Fiction and Satire, 1660–1750* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Thomas King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600–1750*, 2 vols (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004, 2008); Hans Turley, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality, and Masculine Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); and G. S. Rousseau, “The Pursuit of Homosexuality in the Eighteenth Century: ‘Utterly Confused Category’ and/or Rich Repository?” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 9 (1985): 132–68.

²¹ Richard Dellamora, the most recent of these friendship commentators, makes the important point, following Bray, that “in Greek and Roman philosophic and literary tradition, perfect friendship between two men is often taken as paradigmatic of the virtues that are necessary in a just polity.” He says further that “within the Athenian institution of pederasty, a citizen and an adolescent joined in a mentor–protégé relationship, motivated by erotic attraction.” See Dellamora, *Friendship’s Bonds*, 21.

²² Pat Rogers, Introduction to “The Eighteenth Century,” in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 181–5; see also Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

²³ Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship*, 35; quotation from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9:4, 29: 8:8, 12.

Introduction

II

The chapters that follow explore English literary friendship in three distinct ways: the elegiac, the erotic, and the platonic. The result is a new understanding of the role of friendship in the English literary tradition. I think such a reassessment of friendship is long overdue. In Chapter 1, “Elegiac Friendship,” I explore the role of friendship, melancholic loss, and remembrance in three classic texts and one modern one: Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, Scott’s *Waverley*, and Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. By beginning with these elegiac expressions of love and loss, I hope to establish the astonishing range and depth of male relations, first in two deeply felt accounts of personal loss – an almost shocking moment in Laurence Sterne’s novel, and the decades-long near desperation of Alfred Tennyson – and one evocative reflection of a kind of cultural loss, which is expressed in personal terms in Walter Scott’s *Waverley*. Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* expresses the loss implicit in World War I, but it also cries out in deeply personal terms as well. These three works mark out a vast emotional canvas that some version of friendship is meant to fill. By starting here, we can begin to understand how this emotionality is constituted in loss, and what that means for the literary tradition I am describing.

In Chapter 2, “Erotic Friendship,” I discuss the outright sodomitical friendship in Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random*; I consider the permutations of friendship in Henry Fielding’s novel about marriage, *Amelia*. I also look at the almost Gothic dimensions of friendship as a kind of haunting negativity in Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* and in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The friendships in this chapter are fraught: they are bandied about as the subterfuge for seduction; they are falsely promulgated as a means of deception; and they are elicited only as a pretext for the exertion of class superiority. Erotic friendship suffers by the very contradiction in its articulation, but out of that contradiction some of the most telling distinctions emerge.

Chapter 3, “Platonic Friendship,” takes its title from a philosophical tradition that has a vivid second life in the later decades of the nineteenth century. I start with Charles Dickens’ remarkably moving novel that places a male relation at its very heart: *Great Expectations*. Then I look at the specific quality of platonic love in Wilde’s opening chapter of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The special quality of male friendship and love in E. M. Forster’s two astonishing novels, *The Longest Journey* and *Maurice*, fill out the final section of this chapter.

In the Epilogue, I consider Christopher Isherwood’s novel, *A Single Man*, and its anticipation of contemporary issues in queer theory. This

piece helps me to bring to a conclusion this study placing friendship at the center of the English literary tradition, where it belongs. In exploring the complexities of male–male relations beyond the simple labels of sexuality, I will have shown how love between men has a rich and varied history in English literature, and I hope that the examples I offer here help to make clear how very much in need of reevaluation that history has been.