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Constructing Desire: Alfred Tennyson, Walt Whitman, and the Development of Homoerotic Desire in Elegiac Poetry

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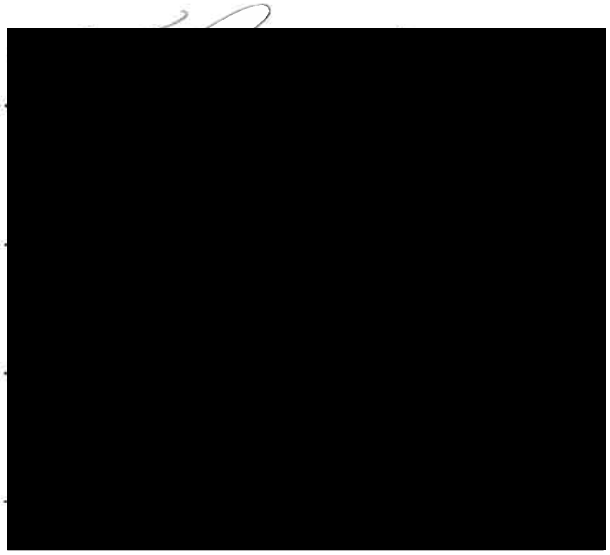

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Résumé de synthèse

Constructing Desire: The Development of Homoeortic Desire in Tennyson's and Whitman's Elegiac Poetry

Tennyson et Whitman emploient la poèsie élégiaque comme l'instrument d'expansion et de justification de leur ardent désir. Leurs poèmes sont imprégnées d'un désir de rechercher une nouvelle épistémologie d'une identité explicitement homoérotique. Selon Tennyson, la poursuite du savoir n'est pas simplement la résultat de son voyage du chagrin spirituelle, mais aussi la résultat avoir vaincu le honte de sa personnalité homosexuelle. Whitman se sert de la sexualité pour explorer, dans son poésie, la sensualité érotique afin de remodeler la famille et la société en Amérique du dix-neuvième siècle.

Mon étude commence par une exploration des contextes historiques et les biographies des deux poètes. Celle-ci me permis de développer une compréhension des relations homosociales qui influencèrent chaque poète par rapport à sa perspective sur l'affection homoérotique. Dans le deuxième chapitre, je postule que la tradition élégiaque pastorale s'informe directement la confession d'un désir homoérotique de Tennyson et d'un certain degré celui de Whitman. Dans les deux chapitres finals, je lie directement l'emploi de la langue par les deux poètes à leur expression d'une identité "queer." Le chapitre final montre que les deux poétes rejettent le monde banal et adoptent le désir homoérotique pour exposer leur compréhension des implications sociales et politiques d'une identité homosexuelle.

Mots clés: homosexualité, études victorienne, épistémologie, sexe, identité

Abstract

"Constructing Desire: The Development of Homoerotic Desire in Tennyson's and Whitman's Elegiac Poetry"

Tennyson and Whitman adopt elegy as a poetic form to extend and rationalize desire and longing. Their poems, imbued with an explicit desire, seek a new epistemology of homoeroticism. For Tennyson, this search for knowledge is not merely the result of his spiritual journey of grieving, but also the sublimation of shame arising from his homosexual leanings. Whitman's use of sexuality, which attempts to redefine the social and familial order, enables him to explore erotic sensuality in nineteenth-century American society.

My study begins with nineteenth-century English and American historical contexts and the two poets' biographical backgrounds. This exploration studies how male homosocial relations map homoerotic affection. The second chapter argues that the pastoral elegiac tradition directly influences Tennyson's and, to a lesser degree, Whitman's approach to the confession of homoerotic desire. The last two two chapters connect Tennyson's and Whitman's poetic rhetoric with their queer expressions of identity. The final chapter demonstrates how the two poets move beyond the mundane world, the grave, towards a poetic articulation that accommodates both homoeroticism and homosexuality as both social and political acts.

Key Words: Homosexuality, Victorian Studies, Epistemology, Gender, Identity

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Toronto, Ontario

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Dedication

Comradeship – yes, that's the thing: getting one and one together to making two – getting twos together everywhere to make all. (qtd. in Traubel, 370-1)

To my partner Matthew Jiggins who has demonstrated the meaning of queer comradeship and genuine love.

Introduction

Much of the critical exploration of the epistemological journey to define a homosexual self that Tennyson and Whitman undertook has not been done. In 1972, Christopher Rick's biography of Alfred Tennyson asked the question: "Is Tennyson's love for Hallam a homosexual one?" (215). Ricks's answer, based on the argument in T.S. Eliot's essay entitled "In Memoriam," published in 1936 as the Introduction to *Poems of Tennyson*, was "no." Eliot argues that the poem was "not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt" (245). At the turn of the twenty-first century, criticism that does not touch on issues of sexuality imbedded within the text seems simplistic. In 1988, the first major breakthrough in Tennyson scholarship occurred when critic Christopher Craft, acknowledging the significant role of homoeroticism in *In Memoriam*, asserted that "Tennyson's elegy manages to counterspeak its own submission to its culture's heterosexualizing conventions" (70). Clarity and inclusion now permit this type of elegiac poetry to be linked with what was called at the height of the Victorian era in 1877 by Oxford Don Reverend John Tyrwhitt, "Greek love of nature and beauty that went frequently against nature" (557). This type of affection can now be classified as an expression of homoerotic desire in the elegiac poetry of Tennyson and Whitman.

In this thesis, I will not only compare Tennyson's and Whitman's styles, dictions, and contexts, but I will also assess the implications of naming and controlling discourses on homoeroticism in nineteenth-century poetry. Both poets choose a poetic form to extend and rationalize desire and longing: the poetry of elegy and loss. However, the elegiac poetry is imbued with an explicit desire to seek a new epistemology of a conspicuous homosexual identity. For Tennyson, this search for knowledge is not merely the result of his spiritual journey of grieving, but also the

result of a sense of shame he overcame in order to express a homosexual self. Whitman's use of anonymous sexuality, which attempts to redefine the social and familial order, enables him to explore erotic sensuality on the poetic page. Tennyson's and Whitman's elegiac poetry develops from confession to the evasion of surveillance and ultimately to the articulation of knowledge about homoeroticism and their own homosexual selves. This journey was an endeavour to create a legacy of homoerotic verse within nineteenth-century poetry.

Almost by chance, writing in the United States at almost the same time as Tennyson wrote in England, Walt Whitman created a space to examine homoerotic desire in poetry. However, until Robert K. Martin's foundational work, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, the presence of homoeroticism in Whitman's poetry was flatly denied. Critics such as Edwin Miller in his book, *Walt Whitman's Poetry: A Psychological Study* and James Miller, Jr. in his book *A Critical Guide to 'Leaves of Grass,'* published in the period prior to the start of the gay liberation movement in 1968, denied the existence of homosexuality in Whitman's poetry. Robert K. Martin ironically notes that these critics felt that, "if Whitman is to be a great poet, he must be straight" (*Homosexual* 3). Martin's book permits an honest and direct examination of homoerotic desire in Whitman's poetry. Martin argues that Whitman's work considers "the extent to which an author's awareness of himself as a homosexual has affected how and what he wrote" (*Homosexual* xv). A little more than ten years before Craft's exploration of the homoerotic in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Martin was moving Whitman's poetry out of the closet of homophobia into a serious, academic assessment of what homoerotic desire in nineteenth-century poetry meant.

However, there have been almost no studies in a comparative context of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Whitman's *Calamus* and *Drum Taps*. These three collections of poetry are instances of homoerotic poetry from a period before official definitions of homosexuality existed. Throughout my thesis, I will inquire into Tennyson's and Whitman's different approaches to a poetic language based on the elegy that achieved the common objective of developing a poetic language (i.e. diction and metaphors) in which to describe homoeroticism and homoerotic desire. My study will provide a new reading which will illustrate the homoerotic elements in the poetic language used by Tennyson and Whitman. This thesis will endeavour to place Tennyson's and Whitman's elegiac poetry together in a comparative context in order to address the poetic elements and epistemological journey that each poet undertakes in the creation of a homosexual identity.

The culture in which Tennyson and Whitman wrote is essential to understanding their search for identity through the medium of elegiac poetry. Tennyson embodied the Victorian, English mores of the 1840s and 1850s with his outward focus on being seen as respectable and middle-class. In contrast, Whitman's poetry reflects an America that bases its vision of society on being a culture that is uniquely founded on newness, liberty, and freedom. I will first inquire into these differences to contend that, despite their different writing styles, Tennyson and Whitman both develop a poetic language based on homoeroticism.

Tennyson's wrote in a conservative style which closely follows the pastoral and elegiac traditions of nineteenth-century English poetry, particularly the tradition of writing poetry to mourn a lost lover, or a friend. In Tennyson's poetry, the mourning speaker communicates his homoerotic desire by having mystical visions of his grief. In section 55 of *In Memoriam*, the narrator exclaims his doubts about the

unity of the divine and the natural:

> Are God and Nature then at strife,
> That Nature lends such evil dreams?
> So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life. (237; lines 5-8)[1]

In this stanza, Tennyson in a dream state, attempts to unify the lament over the loss of his friend with the idea of evolution. The mystical vision is extended when the narrator resolves to continue his work despite Nature's lack of compassion for mankind. The poet writes, "One set slow bell will seem to toll / The passing of the sweetest soul / That ever look'd with human eyes" (239; 57.10-12). The poet acknowledges that he will remember his friend as the "sweetest soul" as a compensation until they are reunited after death. Here Tennyson uses poetic language to describe heaven as the place of consolation and the reunification with his beloved Hallam. This also means that Tennyson's speaker's invocation of an afterlife is a signification of homoerotic desire.

Whitman, on the other hand, responds to the American culture of newness, freedom, and liberty by creating a form of free verse. By doing so, the poet achieves his desire to promote equality of sexual desire by being an American prophet of homoerotic intimacy. Whitman's adaptation of language in elegiac poetry functions as a forum to discuss sexual and amative relationships between men. For example, the poet reviews an encounter with a soldier in the poem "O tan-faced Prairie-boy" from the 1865 edition of *Drum Taps*: "You came, taciturn with nothing to give /

[1] I use R.W. Hill's 1999 Norton Edition of Tennyson's poetry for all my references to *In Memoriam* throughout this thesis.

When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me" (56; lines 4-5).[2] The word "come" was first used to describe male sexual ejaculation in the early eighteenth century (OED def. 17). The choice of the word "came" demonstrates the potential hidden double meanings in the poetry that allow the poet to divulge his personal homoerotic desires. These new versification techniques, combined with a strong erotic language, are part of the attempt to subvert social convention, class, and nineteenth-century American Protestant, patriarchal, and heterosexual values.

The focus of the first chapter of my work accentuates the cultural context of Tennyson's England and Whitman's America. This discussion helps to establish the differences between the styles of poetry through which Tennyson and Whitman develop their ideas of homoerotic desire and suggests why elegy serves as a critical medium to express desire. Specifically, I address the political and cultural contexts that influenced morality in nineteenth-century English and American society. The details of Tennyson's life reveal that the poet spent much of his life surrounded by men, particularly during his youth in the 1810s and 1820s. The poet grew up and was educated in a world of male friendship and affection. In response to societal pressures, in 1850, Tennyson married during his mid-life. This was the same year of the first publication of *In Memoriam*. It could be argued that having dealt with and articulated his feelings for Hallam in *In Memoriam*, he was now free to engage in the mainstream of Victorian society.

[2] I use Arthur Golden's 1968 edition of Whitman's poetry for all my references to *Leaves of Grass* and F. DeWolfe Miller's 1959 edition of *Drum Taps* and *Sequel to Drum Taps* throughout this thesis.

On the other hand, Whitman, with no formal education, sought to exploit the newness of the American continent and American literature in his poetry. He writes his poetry to explore how he could support a call for societal acceptance of love between men. In poem 24 from the *Calamus* collection in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the poet writes, "I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth / that was the city of Friends" (373; lines 1-2). Whitman's mystical dream vision is based on a Protestant Christian belief of "brotherhood" that symbolizes his desire for communities where homoerotic desire could be openly asserted. In the first chapter, then, I will also analyze the historical context of Whitman's use of free verse forms, within the context of the American Civil War. The carnage and loss of life prompted Whitman to study his own desire for the soldiers as well as the impact of the great national tragedy.

Chapter 2 assesses the cultural context as a means to consider the historical trajectory of the elegy including Virgil's *Eclogues* and Milton's "Lycidas" to show how this tradition informs the kind of elegiac writing that Tennyson inherits to broach the subject of homoerotic desire. I also illustrate that, despite the similar subject matter and his attempt to follow familiar patterns of elegy, Whitman develops the tradition of elegy in order to help construct a culture of homoerotic love in America. Once I have traced a historical lineage for the type of elegy that Tennyson and Whitman deploy in their poetry, I will then examine the confessional features of their application of the elegy. The Foucauldian notion of confession

within the context of the Tennysonian and Whitmanian elegiac paradigm will help to transform my exploration of the historical trajectory of the poets' works. For Foucault, confession is a method for individual and societal control over sexuality, and this control leads to a search for collective and individual truth about sexuality. Tennyson and Whitman use their elegiac expression not only to redefine the form, but also to profess their personal, sexualized desires.

The third chapter moves from the discussion of the origins of elegy and the confessional nature of the form of elegy that Tennyson and Whitman employ to consider the idea of writing under surveillance. In order to do so, I posit the Foucauldian idea of the panoptic in order to understand how and why Tennyson and Whitman adapted and evaded nineteenth-century social norms and conventions of heterosexual productivity in order to make poetic language reflect queer desires. The panopticon is the Foucauldian idea of a society which monitors itself for any form of deviance. My research focuses on the literary texts themselves to understand how the poetic language of the two poets signifies love between men, while evading social sanction for articulating that desire. Tennyson incorporates coded language which articulates the concept of family into his poetry in order describe his affection for the lost Hallam. Whitman, in turn, works with poetic forms that lack formal meter to assert his world view of homoeroticism, discuss his own homoerotic desire, and create potential alternatives to traditional male-female led families. This chapter will draw on the theoretical approaches of Judith Butler and Laura Mulvey; Butler frames

the transgression of conventional notions of gender, and Mulvey's idea of observation and gaze in film helps to re-articulate the queer desire in Tennyson's and Whitman's poetry. Both poets evade the disapproval of nineteenth-century societies bent on stamping out perceived deviance and enforcing heteronormative relations between men and women.

My last chapter considers the ideas of physical and emotional homoerotic desire in Tennyson's and Whitman's poetry. In this chapter, I study their agenda of writing about homoerotic desire in their poetry. Tennyson's poetry focuses on the grief of lost homoerotic love; his personal consolation is the prospect of a reunification of that love beyond the earthly Victorian societal values that prohibited the articulation of homoerotic desire. On the other hand, Whitman adopts elegiac poetry not only to sentimentalize lost homoerotic love, but also to demand that this love speak of the desire for an acceptance of homoeroticism in America. The desire for change and personal understanding are the two essential elements of the exploration of homoerotic desire which Tennyson and Whitman undertake. This is not just an expression of sexual desire, but also of an epistemological search for self-definition. This final chapter is an analysis of the relationships between language, the search for knowledge, and identity. In this chapter, I dwell on the theoretical aspects of Julia Kristeva and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In *The Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva argues that literary texts create change in society and that society itself can change and develop new meanings in literary texts and words.

More precisely, I apply Kristeva's arguments about the destabilization of the relationship between the signifier and signified. Tennyson and Whitman destabilized 19th century poetic language to create diction and poetic devices that enable them to establish a coherent vision of their homosexual selves.

To complement Julia Kristeva, I use some of the ideas of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose examination of the search for knowledge and identity around homosexuality both in literature and in society is critical to my research on homoerotic desire in Tennyson's and Whitman's elegiac poetry. This framework enables me look at the speaker's movements towards self-knowledge at the end of *In Memoriam* and in the final poems of Walt Whitman's *Drum Taps*. The two poets move beyond the grave towards art, and particularly poetic art, as a method of divulging homoerotic desire and reflecting a new understanding of homosexual identities. These ideas are buttressed by Sedgwick's notions of homosexual identity, mapped particularly within nineteenth-century homosociality in England and America.

Tennyson's and Whitman's elegiac poetry develops from confession to the evasion of surveillance and ultimately to the communication of knowledge about homoeroticism and their own homosexual selves. By tracing the cultural and historical lineage of the elegy, I intend to demonstrate that the adaptation which Tennyson and Whitman made to this form of poetry enabled them to reveal their personal homoerotic desires and define a form of homoeroticism. Moreover, this

development of the elegiac form creates models of the homoerotic in poetry that were used by poets in the twentieth-century as diverse as Allen Ginsberg and Daryl Hine.

Chapter 1

Communities of Men: The Historical and Biographical Background

In order to understand the elegiac poetry written by Tennyson and Whitman, it is essential to understand the cultural context in which they wrote: the relationship between men in nineteenth-century England and America. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick outlines a continuity between affection and friendship amongst men in England and America during the nineteenth century and argues that "[h]omosocial is a neologism, obviously formed by an analogy with homosexual" (1). Furthermore, she discusses how male friendship or bonding only becomes homosocial because of the fear that heterosexual men have about intimate physical contact with other men (*Between Men* 2). The concept of homosociality places homoerotic affection as a component of homosexual identity. The discourse of desire in Sedgwick's conceptualization is further attuned to the continuum of homosociality and homosexuality. Sedgwick believes that desire is a more appropriate description than love because it is more subject to impulses of societal change (*Between Men* 3). Homosocial desire and homosexual desire are important considerations in framing a historical analysis within Tennyson's and Whitman's cultural contexts, where desire was charged with heteronormativity. These two poets sought a way to define their experiences with other men as a way to explain sexual desire. The use of a homosocial identity to symbolize homoerotic desire enables the poets to evade detection by a society that defined gender roles in literature. This counter discourse[3] directed the two poets' work towards the creation of homoerotic identities out of a homosocial reality.

Tennyson created definitions of homoerotic contact in his poetry, and it is important to situate his work in the nineteenth-century social and historical context. It would be simplistic to place Tennyson with late nineteenth-century English poets,

[3] The idea of "counter-discourse" comes from Michel Foucault's conceptualization of non-confessional modes of discussing sexuality in *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1.

such as Coventry Patmore, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, or even Gerard Manley Hopkins just because they also thematize male-male friendship in their poetry. However, this link breaks from the mid-nineteenth century timeline which I am considering in this thesis. As Richard Dellamora points out, "Tennyson's *In Memoriam* was published shortly before the sexual-aesthetic nexus crystallized in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*" (18). Dellamora argues that the high Victorian sexual aesthetic was produced for consumption first by Whitman, then by Tennyson, and was later developed by the group of aesthetes at Oxford under Pater (16-17). Any reading of Tennyson's poetry on male-male love must examine his college days at Cambridge in order to understand the poet's view of sexuality.

Tennyson initiated his homosocial activities with a circle of university peers, "The Apostles," who "fostered intimacy in ways that might lead to sexual experimentation, even to sexual involvement between members of the same sex" (Dellamora 19). The sense of superiority and closeness of the group allowed them to make friends with each other on both intellectual and sexual levels (Dellamora 19). Many members were confirmed bachelors who never married. George Venables, a group member who had an unrequited affection for fellow disciple Henry Lushington, was listed in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a "spiritual uncle or elder brother" (Dellamora 22) to his fellow Cambridge "Apostles." These close friends expressed their physical desire to each other through letters and physical companionship in order to create a more solid state of lifelong camaraderie.

Tennyson, more anxious than the rest of his friends, wrote about homoerotic desire in a more abstract fashion. In a letter to James Spedding on February 7, 1833, he wrote:

> You should not have written me without telling me somewhat that was interesting to myself (always the first consideration) or that bore some reference to you and yours [. . .] Ironical sidehits at a person under the same roof with myself and filling more than half of the sheet – i.e. not the person – but the sidehits – it looks as though the person in question slept with me and I assure you that we have [a] spare bed and that the bed is not so spare either, but a bed both plump and pulpy and fit for your domeship. (*Letters* 86-7)

The ambiguity in the letter implies that the man in question could be either Spedding or Hallam. Tennyson's attempt to explain his actions and desires did not crystalize until Hallam's death in 1833 due to a brain hemorrhage. It is for this reason that Tennyson's *In Memoriam* must be read, as Alan Sinfeld argues, as "an uneasy relation to the dominant notions of proper manly behaviour" (132). Elegiac poetry served as an acceptable tool for Tennyson to explore his emotional and sexual desires for other men while camouflaging any direct carnality. Tennyson's friendship with Hallam and Spedding did not discount the possibility of the physical embodiment of homoerotic desire. As Hallam wrote in 1829 to an Apostle friend, "I have been a creature of impulse, though the basest passions have roused themselves in the deep caverns of my nature" (qtd. in Dellamora 22). Toward the end of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson talks about "higher" and "lower" love to describe his feelings of inadequacy when compared to Hallam. Although Tennyson and the other members of the group saw affection amongst men as noble and virtuous, sexual desire between men was frowned upon. In *In Memoriam*, Tennyson's speaker states:

> Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
> So far, so near in woe and weal,
> O loved the most, when most I feel
> There is a lower and a higher. (286; 129: 1-4)

For Tennyson, the friendship with Hallam and the group demonstrates the sense of

higher and lower moral and social standing. The poet oftentimes thought himself to be the lower in stature because of his modest family background. The passion and homoerotic desire inherent in the confession of the poet's "basest passions" can be read as a moral judgment or fear of his own physical desires. The speaker of *In Memoriam* grapples with these very complexities in the debate between higher and lower desires or loves.

Hallam investigates the concepts of higher and lower love when he studies homoerotic love as an aspect of Platonic love. He argues that it was the "highest and purest manly love" (qtd. in Dellamora 24). Hallam himself was concerned about the lower forms of sexual desire becoming a part of higher, manly affection. As Dellamora points out, Hallam was trying to distinguish and separate a sense of high and low in manly love to keep it from becoming feminized, homosexualized desire (25). This very act suggests Hallam's desire to justify affection between men as a form of superior love. Hallam would later spurn certain members of the group for revealing their affections to him despite his belief in male-male affection. The basis of the belief structures of "The Apostles" was that a community of men could not only intellectually stimulate, but could also release sexual desire with one another.

The open and frank admission of sexual contact with other men in "The Apostles" was acceptable to the Victorian social order, but only during their youths in college residences at Cambridge. However, this type of disclosure was in fact routine amongst the group of friends. Arthur Buller notes in an unpublished letter to Richard Milnes, who had an unrequited romantic crush on Hallam, that:

> I am with child!! I am often told my dear dicky-bird St-Aubyn – that if he continued his addresses to [sic] violently he would seduce me to state where I should be a burden to my country to my God & to my own belly. Alas! last night, this fatal prediction was fulfilled. (qtd. in Dellamora 30)

Buller alludes to anal sex with another man as a form of pregnancy. He is as direct and forthright as possible, given the fear of censure for homosexual acts in Victorian society, while adding a touch of the bawdy for the intimate friends who formed "the Apostles." Buller, Milnes, Tennyson, and Hallam alluded to their desires and experimentation with other men, at least amongst friends, in order to gain an acknowledgment of the fact that their homosocial community contained homoerotic elements.

While Tennyson's experiences with homoerotic desire in a homosocial environment were subtle and constrained, Whitman's time in New York enabled him to reach out to his male objects of desire. The evasion and subterfuge used by Tennyson and his friends can be contrasted with Whitman's direct expression of a homoerotic life in New York City just prior to the onset of the American Civil War in 1861. However, in the mid-1860s, Whitman openly had sex with other men and was confronted by virulent attacks from the anti-sodomy press. As early as the 1840s, newspapers in New York such as *The Whip,* associated the act of self-pleasuring or masturbation with sodomy (Katz 50). Whitman's poetry was produced within a cultural context that was beginning to view sodomy between men as immoral. The poet began his sexual search by observing the people of New York City who, by the standards of nineteenth-century morality, were considered outcasts. In one of the traditional list poems, "Sleep Chasings," the speaker observes "The wretched features of the ennuyés, the white features of corpses, the livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces of onanists" (426; line 3). The poem

discusses the poet's dream vision of walking the streets of the city at night; the list in this poem stands out because it contains a list of marginalized figures. The significant subtext of this poem is the reference to the "onanists," another word for sodomites. Whitman's reference to the closed world of the self-pleasuring person, presumably male, enables him to describe homoerotic desire and challenge conventional mores. The very fact that Whitman would break with conventional morality and sensibility to include society's undesirables in his poetry illustrates the poet's strong desire to delineate the urban underworld, one that included his homoerotic desire.

The setting of New York in Whitman's imaginary reality is brought forward in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, where Whitman responds to the critics and newspapers that called for a police crackdown on areas where homosexual activities happened. Jonathan Katz points out that the parks around New York City Hall and other locations were gay cruising areas in the 1840s – an internationally known fact at the time. Katz writes that "the existence of certain established New York City meeting places is evidence of an emerging, urban, American sodomite subculture" (54). Whitman faced the moral panic and charges of the press with his statement in poem 24 of the *Calamus* collection: "I hear it was charged against me that I thought to deconstruct institutions; / But really I am neither for nor against institutions" (367; lines 1-2). The poet argues that he does not attempt to deconstruct society nor to tear apart an "institution" like the family or morality. Rather, he portrays himself as an individual seeking fulfillment without any hindrance from society or the police. The question and answer format of the poem alludes to Whitman's journalism – a career from which the poet learned to defend himself while taking on social convention.

To be decisive about his homoerotic desire, Whitman based his beliefs on aspects of popular culture. Six years before Whitman's publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1849, Herman Melville published one of his "boilerplates," *Redburn, or His First Voyage*. The book is noteworthy because of the specific relationship between the hero, Redburn, and his English friend, Harry Bolton. Harry describes his friend, Lord Loverly as "My old Chum" (Melville 222). Robert Martin argues that "chum" is a veiled seafaring term denoting sexual contact between men (*Hero* 40). Melville articulates a vision of sexual contact between men on the high seas, beyond the normal nineteenth-century restrictions against sodomy between men in Britain or America. However, the fact that nineteenth-century English and American societies frowned on the profession of homoerotic desire did not stop the author from making a veiled reference to male homoerotic contacts in his text. Melville wrote at a time when explicit affection between men would have been discouraged by society, and this is exactly the kind of thinking that Whitman wanted to change. Melville's *Redburn* serves as an early exemplar of a homoerotic relationship between two men.

An allusion to homoerotic love or the profession of it comes from Redburn himself at the end of Chapter 44, where he refers to his affection for Harry as having a "heart, loving and true" (Melville 223). He further refers to his heart's desire to "throw itself into the unbounded bosom of some immaculate friend" (Melville 223). Like the subtle allusions to a manly love that Hallam and Tennyson discussed in their college days, Melville attempts to establish a space where male-male desire can be recognized as a higher, divine friendship. However, Redburn still guards this affection, and his failure to seize the moment becomes a testament to Victorian virtue and caution. Martin points out that "[h]uman nature, aided by social convention,

will work against the kind of affection that comes so near to prevailing in *Redburn"* (*Hero* 58). Affection between men is foiled by the fact that it cannot be realized within nineteenth-century American social conventions that rendered sex between men invisible. Whitman's articulation of love between men was influenced by the ideas of homoerotic love contained in *Redburn.*

It was during the horror of the American Civil War that Whitman was able to witness and be part of a community of men where he could openly talk about homoerotic affection. An excellent example of this is contained in an 1879 published journal of a Union cavalryman, John McElroy, who observed an older sailor caring for a very young one. The young wounded sailor was the older one's companion and mate at a prisoner-of-war camp. As McElroy comments, "This old barnacleback was as surly a growler as ever went aloft, but to his 'chicken' he was as tender and thoughtful as a woman" (qtd. in Katz 139). The crucible of war created the opportunity for men to voice their most intimate feelings for each other, in which the requirement for words was replaced by the reality of battle and death in the horror of war.

This horror emboldened Whitman to exhibit his desire for men because of the urgency of the moment. Many of Whitman's soldier friends died or were injured in battle during the war, and this caused the poet a deep sense of loss and grief. The war permitted Whitman to define his desire within the context of martial valour. Katz concludes that the idea of camaraderie took on the sense of friendship developed in battle and through the erotic affection that came from such a crucible of raw human action and emotion (152). This is critical because despite the sadness inherent in the loss and death associated with the war that Whitman witnessed, he could still conjure up that affection years later. The aging poet in 1889, nearly 30

years after the start of the war, writes:

> Comradeship – yes, that's the thing: getting one and one together to make two – getting twos together everywhere to make all: that's the only bond we should accept and that the only freedom we should desire: comradeship, comradeship. (qtd. in Traubel 370-1)

The notion of comradeship tied to homoerotic desire was the core of Whitman's reaction; the poet had moved from homoerotic love in his early poetry to a direct discourse prompted by the reality of the American Civil War. The horror and sadness of the war forced him to find a more traditional format – the elegy – to express his feelings and sentiments about love between men. However, he went on to adapt the elegiac mode into a forum in which the idea of "comradeship" became the overwhelming principle. In his *Calamus* poems, Whitman called love between men "adhesiveness" to describe the close connection between two men who love each other (qtd. in Martin, *Homosexual* 38). In *Drum Taps*, prompted by the loss of innocence and the men whom he helped, the word to describe homoerotic desire was transformed into "comradeship." Whitman took a distinctive stand beyond the strictures which Tennyson faced in Victorian English society to claim a continuity of both homosexual and homosocial relationships between men.

Tennyson formed his approach to describing homoerotic desire between men by his time at Cambridge, where a group of friends constructed a circle of male affection that placed intellectual contact with other men as a higher moral value than sexual contact. Despite this type of value judgment, Tennyson and his friends allude in their letters to sleeping with other men. Whitman, on the contrary, transcribed his homoerotic desire within the urban space where he articulated sodomy. Moreover, it was during the American Civil War that Whitman redefined the relationship between homosocial contact and homoerotic desire. This results in a more aggressive

articulation of homoerotic desire in Whitman's poetry, whereas Tennyson diffuses his description of homoerotic desire based on his early relationships with his friends. However, each poet uses elegiac poetry to confess his own homoerotic desire.

Chapter 2

"The confession I made I resume": Pastoral Elegy and the Confession of Homoerotic Desire

Tennyson's upbringing, education, and cultural experiences prior to Hallam's death and Whitman's life experience in pre-bellum New York and during the American Civil War helped to shape both poets' views on homoerotic desire. Moreover, each poet employs the speakers in their elegiac poetry as a mouthpiece to confess homoerotic desire. In order to chart the historical lineage of Tennyson's and Whitman's use of pastoral and homoerotic elegy, I first look at Virgil's and Milton's direct influences on Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. I will then apply the Foucauldian theoretical construction of the confession of sexuality to my reading of confession in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Whitman's poems in *Drum Taps*.

Tennyson's elegiac poetry, and Whitman's to a lesser degree, are informed in their content by the confessional and pastoral tradition of Virgil's *Eclogues* and Milton's "Lycidas." While Tennyson's English education was directly influenced by Latin poetry and Milton's elegies, Whitman adopts these same Western cultural sources in a more diffused way. Gregory Woods argues that Whitman's more poignant use of the elegy is found in his poems dealing with the death of President Lincoln in 1865 (121). I would argue that Whitman's development of the elegy actually begins with his confessional poetry during the American Civil War (1861-65). The loss which each poet experiences enables them to develop poetry that described both death and desire.

Tennyson's pastoral elegy, which contains an expression of homoerotic desire, adapts the pastoral features of homoerotic elegy that were directly handed down from Virgil. The power of a poetic language written in the first person singular to confess forbidden love, infuses Tennyson's long poem with a vocabulary based on *The Eclogues*. Virgil's homoeroticism was certainly accepted by his contemporary biographer, Suetonius, who in 110 BCE wrote that Virgil "was

especially given to passions for boys, and his special favourites were Cebes and Alexander, whom he called Alexis in the second poem of his 'Bucolics'" (445; lines 9-10). In *The Eclogues*, Virgil employs a pastoral genre to reveal his personal desires, which are played out with a particular force in Eclogue 5 when Mopsus and Menalcas mourn over the loss of their friend Daphnis. In the opening lines, Menalcas states, "Still I will sing you in turn, / Daphnis I will exalt you to the stars; / me, too, Daphnis loved" (39; lines 50-52). Virgil established a tradition of men – a tradition of shepherds who reveal affection for each other and mourn the loss of their beloved men. Woods calls the love dealt with in this type of pastoral elegy "life enhancing," as opposed to dwelling solely on considerations of death and loss (108). Virgil's shepherds, who form the basis of Spenser's *Shepeardes Calendar* and Marlowe's *Ganymede*, communicates love and desire rather than just the sadness of loss. Such sadness is only the first impulse for personal exploration. Tennyson and Whitman adapt the ideas of Virgil's grieving shepherds in order to articulate homoerotic desire beyond the loss of friends. More importantly, Woods points out that the gender of the loved one in the elegiac tradition is not immaterial but central to the poetry itself (109). The centrality of platonic and erotic affection between two men allows for the most profound exploration and elaboration of personal love.

John Milton, in his development of the pastoral elegy to articulate homoerotic desire, figures prominently in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. In "Lycidas," the poet reflects on the death of his friend Edward King by pointing out the unfulfilled potential of his friend. The speaker laments: "For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime" (39; line 8). This is a direct admission of loss, and it directly influenced Tennyson. In line 12, the speaker states, "[h]e must not float upon his watery bier / Unwept, and welter to the parching wind" (39; lines 12-13). The need

to recognize and mourn a lost friend is articulated in one of the first sections of *In Memoriam*, where the speaker comments on the arrival of Hallam's body from Europe: "Far ship, that from Italian shore / Sailest the placid ocean-plains / With my lost Arthur's loved remains" (211; 9:1-3). Here Tennyson's words grow out of Milton's tradition of water as the conveyor and, in a form, the grave of the loved friend.

Milton uses the idea of the friendship of shepherds to address another aspect of the speaker's relationship to Lycidas:

> Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
> Under the opening eyelids of morn,
> We drove afield, and both together heard
> What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn. (40; lines 24-7)

Woods concludes that Milton "was experiencing real grief for Edward King, and while the poem was expected to perform a necessary task of commemoration after the pastoral model, we can assume it was not Milton's intention to erase King's life by fictionalizing it" (115). Indeed, for Milton, as well as for Tennyson, the poet has to operate within specific conventions to explain the homoerotic nature of friendship as well as the grief shared with those who knew Edward King. However, the only consolation available to Milton was the confession of desire through poetry. Henry Staten relates that grief and sexuality are fused within Milton's poetry and are "linked essentially to morality, that the purest love imaginable might still and necessarily consort with death" (133-4). Furthermore, Woods suggests that the poetry is one of the only methods for Milton to move through the grief to a recognition of the value of the friendship (115). Milton's poetic expression of love for another man is tied to the notion that death could symbolize a pure form of love.

In his poem "Epitaphium Damonis," Milton uses the confessional mode of elegy as a forum in which to pass through grief while reflecting on the loss of a close friend, Charles Diodati. It is noteworthy that Milton wrote a number of elegies, including a second long elegy to his friend in 1639, specifically named for Charles Diodati. The poet writes, "Do you leave me thus, and is your virtue to go without a name / and be merged with the obscure shades" (150; lines 21-22). Here, the poet adopts conventional elements of the pastoral elegy, and in a specific reference to Virgil, he cites Mopsus from Eclogue 5 and Tityrus from Eclogue 1 in an attempt to explore his friendship with Diodati through a model of classical poetry.

The end of the poem also reinforces Milton's desire to acknowledge his love for Diodati while avoiding a rejection by society. This evasion demonstrates how much Tennyson was influenced by Milton's elegies to Diodati. Woods notes that Milton's stress on Diodati's dying a virgin is "proof of purity and therefore, morally superior to heterosexual relations" (116). For Milton, the best kind of homoerotic love is the kind that never engages in carnality. Milton addresses the purity of the affection he had for Diodati when he states:

> Because a rosy blush, and a youth without stain were dear to you,
> Because you never tasted the pleasure of marriage, lo!
> for you are reserved a virgin's honours. (160; lines 212-14)

Here is Milton's final exploration of the aspect of the virgin shepherd near the end of his own reflection on the loss of a friend. The friendship is morally superior because it retains purity and is uncorrupted by mundane influences of carnal desire. Tennyson takes a direct cue from Milton's description of Virgil's masculine affection:

He tasted love with half his mind,
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
Where nighest heaven, who first could fling
This bitter seed among mankind. (261; 91:1-4)

In a direct allusion to death ("bitter seed"), Tennyson's speaker articulates the friendship and comradeship found in Milton's poetry. Because Hallam has never fully consummated his love and life, the friendship becomes more precious for the speaker. Tennyson's longing to enact his love to Hallam is filtered through Milton's idea that homoerotic love should be pure and unsullied by carnality.

Tennyson includes the natural world described by Virgil and Milton in his effort to remember his affection and desire for Hallam. Tennyson employs all the aspects of the pastoral elegy in an episode where the speaker reflects on his friendship and love for Hallam during a visit to his old family estate at Somersby:

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
For underfoot the herb was dry;
And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn

[. . . . . .]

But when the others, one by one,
Withdrew themselves from me and night,
And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fallen leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead (263; 95:1-4, 17-24)

Tennyson's speaker links the natural world to the transcendent world with the movement from the green grass to the leaves of text. The speaker places himself in a pastoral surrounding which echoes the elegiac poetry of Virgil and Milton.

Tennyson's speaker uses the elegy to confess his affection for Hallam, following the mode of confessing homoerotic affection in pastoral poetry that Virgil and Milton establish. Alan Sinfeld indicates that the confessional mode of Tennyson's poetic dialogue allows the poet to "produce Arthur and himself through modes of love writing which have been used before. None of of them 'forbidden,' but often their deployment in this context activates awkward side effects nor does it afford a noticeably inadequate fit" (144). The poetic construction of much of the elegiac mode can be read as an uneasy act of the confession of desire. Foucault argues that the speed of the move to greater transparency and admission in literature was increased in the Victorian period and its "great process of transforming sex into discourse" (*History* 22). Foucault presents the idea of desire as a means to the truth about the sexuality of writers. Tennyson unwittingly writes for a society that is monitoring his every move on the page, and his only approach to homoerotic desire is to confess it. In contrast, Whitman's homoerotic desire became a direct, bold confessional statement of his love and sexuality. Whitman strove to give voice to his yearnings in poetic language.

The search for a confessional language to address yearnings is part of what Foucault comments on when he discusses how confession is transformed from its religious functions into a method to control deviant sexuality: "Western societies have established confession as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" (*History* 58). It should be noted that in the religious shifts at the Lateran Council in 1215, confession was defined as an individual act whose sole purpose was the creation of a truth. As Foucault remarks on the connection between the production of truth and power, "[T]he truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power" (*History* 59). Individual power, as

influenced by external factors, becomes the critical feature of the confessional mode, since society and authority can strip individuals of their roles as contributors to society by jailing, ostracizing, or treating them as subjects or medical patients. It is this confluence of panoptic surveillance and confession which prompts Tennyson and Whitman to explore homoerotic desire while attempting to preserve their roles in society without receiving social sanction for acts of homoerotic desire. This exploration ultimately enables both Tennyson and Whitman to construct a new epistemology of homoerotic desire.

Power and truth became the ultimate goals of Tennyson and Whitman when they apply their elegiac poetry to the search for a truth about sexuality. This use is suggested by Foucault's claim that "a literature ordered according to the infinite task of exacting from the depths of oneself, in between the words, a truth which the very form of confession holds out like a shimmering mirage" (*History* 59). Tennyson's confessions fit into the Foucauldian model because they do not offer a definitive truth, but the forces of sex and sexuality compel individuals to articulate their sexual peculiarity (*History* 61). The power of the individual to cure himself, and the power of the confessor to prescribe the solution are the two aspects of the admission in which erotic desire exists. The reader's role as confessor becomes paramount in the objective to attain truth, just as the writer's role is to seek admission, admonishment, and relief from his feelings about homoerotic desire.

Confession allows the poet to transmit secrets through the sexual manifestation of desire and provide an ordering or resolution of the confessed desires (*History* 63). The provision of ordering desire is fundamental to nineteenth-century society, and particularly Victorian society, as part of the process of constructing societal mores that are geared to the releasing of confidential statements and the

imparting of individual pleasure (*History* 63). The Foucauldian term "imparting" is a vital one, because it denotes wresting a confession of sexual desire from someone and separating desire and sexuality from the internal logic of the body. Confession allows Tennyson and Whitman to articulate desire in a way almost devoid of queer desire or carnal sexuality. Moreover, the confessor takes the extracted information and turns it towards an imposed resolution. Confession is a search for the truth for the speaker in Tennyson's and Whitman's elegies because it does not directly lead to a power of control over desire, but rather, it generates a new epistemology about the poet's nature and sexuality.

Confession as a means of self-understanding permeates Tennyson's elegy. In one of the first 20 poems in *In Memoriam*, the speaker writes: "And I should tell him all my pain, / And how my life had droop'd of late" (214; 14:13-14). This poem centres around the idea that the speaker wakes up from a nightmare only to learn that his friend, comrade, and potential lover, Arthur Hallam, is not dead after all. However, at the same time, this section of the poem also suggests the confessional mode: the dead Hallam becomes the confessor, and the speaker, using the verb "to tell," confesses affection for the dead. In the first sections of the poem, the speaker is desperate to find the right words to articulate his love. Hallam becomes the surrogate confessor for the expression of the confession of amatory feeling.

Amatory feeling for the dead is only one aspect of the confessional mode in Tennyson's poetry. As Hallam's physical presence begins to recede, the speaker turns to the reader to make his desire known through confession. By asking the question "[d]o we indeed desire the dead / Should still be near us at our side?" (51:1-2), the speaker admits to wanting his dead friend at his side. This rhetorical question ensures that the audience knows the speaker's desire for Hallam. The very act of

articulating and naming desire is itself a confessional act; more importantly, the whole nature of confessing desire and affection is marred by the fear of the speaker. The speaker defines his own anxiety and his fear of the loss of love: "See with clear eye some hidden shame / And I be lessen'd in his love?" (235; 51:7-8). Tennyson's vision of Hallam becomes progressively distorted in the speaker's imagination. Tennyson, as the living friend, senses some shame that cannot be disclosed even to the confessor, who in this case is also the reader. At the same time, he fears rejection by his beloved Hallam: the object of his desire. The paranoia associated with the grief that the speaker attempts to assuage turns into despair. The tragedy of death now is mingled with hopelessness and complete abandonment by his friend.

Near the end of *In Memoriam*, the speaker rejects the despair and sense of abandonment, and claims to feel a sense of urgency to make a personal connection to Hallam:

> O wast thou with me, dearest, then
> While I rose up against my doom,
> And yearn'd to burst the folded gloom,
> To bare the eternal heavens again. (282; 122: 1-4)

The celestial Hallam is present in Tennyson's vision. This enables the poet not only to confess the mutual affection that prompts the use of "dearest," but also to assert hope beyond the life-death barriers for a transcendent reunion with his friend. The speaker makes the transition beyond simply confessing his despair towards the fundamental act of uniting his present condition with his ultimate desire for another man.

The speaker in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* redefines confession itself when he admits his love and assesses the complexity of the intellectual and physical barriers that thwart the reunification of the two friends. The speaker takes control of

articulating his desire for Hallam when he professes that "I cannot love thee as I ought, / For love reflects the thing beloved" (235; 52: 1-2). The speaker takes ownership of the love that he felt for Hallam. I use the word "love" because throughout the poem, the speaker moves from simply confessing love in an abstract fashion to taking responsibility for the confession of affection. Without a living partner and friend, the speaker cannot love but must await the far-off divine reunion after his own death. This direct confession of love becomes the source of direct action when the speaker makes his association with homoerotic love explicit: "I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can / The could of Shakespeare love thee more" (241; 61:11-12). For the first time in the poem, the speaker explicitly makes the connection between himself and Shakespeare. The speaker claims, with the perspective of the passage of time, that he can acknowledge his relationship with Hallam. Although Hallam has been transformed into a "Spirit," it does not stop the speaker from stressing his everlasting love. Hallam's death has come to symbolize the possibility of a divine transcendence, where the speaker and Hallam are ultimately reunited and where they can love each other openly and freely beyond the boundaries of conventional morality.

Because Tennyson's speaker realizes the need to confess his desire for Hallam and rationalize his grief with his love, the speaker portrays death as Hallam's lover: "And what I see I left unsaid, / Nor speak it, knowing death has made / His darkness beautiful with thee" (247; 74:10-12). Tennyson's speaker implies that the beauty which he recognizes and feels towards Hallam will be shared with Death. David Shaw explains that Tennyson's motives are "the blended might of natural oppositions, makes powerful contact with something beyond faith, with a vision that speaks to him from the side of death" (*The Lucid Veil* 27). The universalizing and

eternal aspects of death, as well as his homosexual love, and even literature, become intertwined in the speaker's declaration of his homoerotic desire.

Writing about homoerotic love comes to its culmination near the end of the poem, where the speaker discusses his connection to love: "Dear Friend, far off, my lost desire, / So far, so near in woe and weal" (286; 129:1-2). Although Tennyson in *In Memoriam* called Hallam "dear," the older Tennyson rejected any claim that he had ever called Hallam "dear" (Craft 53). This seeming rejection of intimacy by Tennyson must be studied in light of the nature of the poet's strong attachment to Hallam. Both the speaker and Hallam moved beyond the requirement to call each other by clichés such as "dear" and could directly communicate their deepest affections to one another. This is supported by the use of the word, "weal," which is a literary reference to "prosperity and good fortune" (OED def. 1). The good fortune referred to by the speaker is his love for Hallam. The connection to the lost Hallam, rather than just vocalizing grief, is a link between happiness and fortune. The speaker professes and confesses his deep love to the reader despite his deep sadness over the loss of Hallam; the speaker is now ready to study the knowledge inherent in the disclosure of homoerotic desire.

Tennyson's confession of despair and desire forms a vivid contrast to Whitman's open confession of homoerotic desire. Both poets adopt the confession mode, which is prompted by the death of dear friends, to tackle the poetic cycle of despair and resignation that comes from their description of homoerotic desire. The realization of the knowledge of self is a key component of Whitman's transformation of elegiac verse to openly mention his own homoerotic desire.

Unlike Tennyson's subtle manifestation of desire, Whitman's confession declaratively articulates homoerotic desire. The speaker in Whitman's poetry desires, even in more reflexive moments as in poem 20 from *Calamus*, to forcefully deploy poetic confession as a means to manifest desire: "Uttering joyous leaves all its life, without a friend, a lover, near, / I know very well I could not" (365; lines 12-13). By repeatedly using commas after the words "lover," "friend," and "near," he piles up words that explicate his desire for contact with a friend or companion. Whitman's free verse describes homoerotic desire in order to engage in a dialogue with the reader. It is also important to notice Whitman's use of the pronoun "I," which signifies the speaker's efforts to demonstrate to the reader the narrative form of his confession of desire. Affection serves as a method to seek a corrective resolution: to seek self-control and knowledge about that desire.

For his part, Whitman solidifies his speaker's amatory desire for a fallen soldier near the end of "Vigil strange I kept on the field one night." The speaker writes, "Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was your death, / faithfully loved you and cared for you, I think we shall surely meet again)" (42; lines 16-17). The poet's meditative language demonstrates love and exhibits his affection. Although the speaker ostensibly communicates honour and grief, this is immediately undercut by his comments in brackets. More importantly, the stress on "cared" and "meet" denotes the type of relationship that will be fully consummated when the speaker himself dies; the ultimate reunification cannot happen until both are dead. However, the reality of grief prompts the direct profession of amatory desire to the reader, despite the sense of utter despair.

Whitman's speaker himself considers the notions of abandonment and embraces the desire uttered in his confession to vocalize those feelings. Whitman makes the confessional journey of a man struck-dumb by death in order to sublimate his homoerotic desire. In poem 9 of the *Calamus*, the speaker laments:

> Is there even one other like me – distracted – his friend, his lover, lost to him?
> Is he too as I am now?
> Does he still rise in the morning dejected, thinking who is lost to him and at night, awaking, thinking who is lost? (355; lines 8-9)

The speaker controls his sense of loss with the first person pronoun to go over in exhaustive detail the times of the day of greatest sorrow. Whitman's use of free verse engages him in an open dialogue with the reader to speak about his desire and loss. His lament as an explicit confession of a dejection results from a "lost" affection; the last word of the poem, "lost," indicates that the speaker is both physically and emotionally adrift because of the broken relationship. The poet takes a more philosophical approach once he is back in love with someone else. In poem 7 of the *Calamus* collection, the speaker points out that "I cannot answer the question of appearances, or that of identity beyond the grave; / But I walk or sit indifferent – I am satisfied, / He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me" (353; lines 11-13). The poet probes the speaker's concerns about physical death and the death of a relationship by using the word "grave." However, the speaker's concerns become secondary to the satisfaction that arises from the love that he feels and experiences with his male companion. For Whitman, the fulfillment of desire can be carried out in a carnal manner.

Whitman did not let the loss of love become permanent and continued to search for ways to satisfy his sexual desires. The poet's search for sexual satisfaction is also a tool to mark the transformation from the despair of desire into

an epistemological exploration through queer desire. In "As I lay with my head in your lap, Camerado," the speaker tells his friend, "The confession I made I resume, what I said to you and the open air I resume, / [. . .] I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death" (19; lines 2, 4). The speaker assumes that the mantle of the first person pronoun to confess his desire to both the reader and the friend demonstrates that self-knowledge can come from that confession. The "words" of line 4 serve as the way to convey the confession of desire and knowledge. Whitman's speaker ends the poem by prefacing his comments on confession as the starting place for his epistemological journey: "Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with me, and still urge you, without the least idea what is our destination" (19; line 10). The poet and speaker experience a significant form of loss of the men they loved during the American Civil War. This poem, which is placed near the end of the *Drum-Taps* poems, is based on a restoration of knowledge about sex and desire at the conclusion of the war. These poems play with the idea of sexuality and the journey of friendship, as demonstrated in the phrase "urged on." The speaker moves from confession as a method to control his own knowledge of sexuality and study the knowledge of the self.

The knowledge of the self begins with the act of confessing desire. Tennyson's speaker in *In Memoriam* proceeds to follow the pastoral elegiac tradition of Virgil and Milton to confess his homoerotic desire for Hallam, and the desire moves from despair to a hope for divine transcendence after death. For Whitman's speaker, the American Civil War affords the opportunity to explore his homoerotic desire and looks towards a politicized movement in which men can openly love each other. Moreover, and much like Tennyson's speaker in *In Memoriam*, Whitman's speakers engage in an address to the audience, which monitors the conduct and

subject-matter of the poet's exploration and desire.

Chapter 3

Surveillance and the Identification of Desire

Just as confession is an important part of the pastoral, particularly in homoerotic elegiac poetry, so is the idea of the reader's surveillance of the poet and the poet's evasion of that monitoring. Tennyson and Whitman adopted elegy as an acceptable method for the articulation of homoeroticism in resistance to nineteenth-century notions of heteronormativity. This normativity, in both England and America, meant that a man was supposed to take a wife, raise a family, and be the head of the family unit. The mourning inherent in the funeral exercise enables the poets to be declarative about their homoerotic desire without arousing suspicion. This use of poetic language allowed them to address issues of gender, as well as the discourse of the scientific "type." In this chapter, I investigate how the poetic language of the two poets enables them to evade the surveillance of society and of the reader. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Walt Whitman's *Drum Taps* deploy language meant to avoid surveillance. These notions develop from Michel Foucault's idea of how society monitors and controls itself. Moreover, I will also examine Laura Mulvey's notions about the importance of visual pleasure and signification and apply them to the strong, visual language that Tennyson and Whitman use to articulate homoerotic desire and evade societal condemnation.

In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault defines the panopticon, an invention of Jeremy Bentham's, as a physical space designed to "provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms" (*Discipline* 204). For Foucault, panoptic surveillance monitors and judges not only all the inmates of the institution, but also the employees. This approach ensures that no one can either escape from the gaze or attempt to break from the rules of the institution. However, this concept must be extended beyond its deployment in the correctional setting that Foucault initially contemplates. Foucault further points out that "the panopticon must be understood

as a generalizable model of functioning, a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of man" (*Discipline* 205). The key to understanding the influence of the monitoring effect is that the power of this institutional model extends not only to the institution, but also to the society as a whole. The nineteenth-century English or American reader might have included the act of reading as a way of monitoring for perceived social perversion or distortion. As a result, Tennyson and Whitman wrote in a climate where poetry was under as much scrutiny as the everyday life of the convict.

This scrutiny forces Tennyson and Whitman to adopt a specific strategy to divulge homoerotic desire without societal sanction. Tennyson's elegy acts most extensively and effectively as a camouflage for the speaker's desire. Christopher Craft points out that " 'In Memoriam' established homosexual desire as always already elegiac, as originally grounded in the destitution of the object, 'In Memoriam' both incites and contains homosexual desire" (53). Even the effort to subsume desire within the poetic language of conventional elegy ensures that the Tennysonian speaker ends up describing and inscribing his affection and homoerotic desire to evade complete rejection by Victorian readers. The speaker invokes the absent Hallam: "I cannot love thee as I ought" (235; 52.1). The very attempt to discuss homoerotic desire seems to cause the speaker to circumscribe his affection when he describes his desire. However, it is this veiled wording that enables the speaker to describe his forbidden homoerotic desire by stating that he "cannot love" Arthur Hallam in the way that he wants.

Wisdom and experience come back to serve as sad reflections for Tennyson's speaker. Tennyson acknowledges the relationship to Hallam without directly discussing it with the reader: "For can I doubt, who knew thee keen, / In intellect,

with force and skill" (277; 113.5-6). This affection is intensely personal, as it almost admits to homoeroticism. Knowing Hallam "keen" implies a language that is sharp or incisive (OED def. 5b). Another definition of "keen" also links it to the feelings which cause acute pain or distress (OED def. 5a). This thought of acute pain through the act of memory is reinforced by the speaker's need to use accurate, exacting language that can reflect the love he feels for Hallam. However, Tennyson's speaker hopes to avoid societal sanction for his homoerotic love to and for Hallam. Linking the exacting words and acute pain together enables the speaker to analyze his desire and the depth of affection without being found out by the reader. Foucault's idea of panoptic surveillance is clearly implicated in Tennyson's texts, which evade both surface detection of homoerotic desire and the attempt to express it with poetic license.

The panoptic power of monitoring society also influences Whitman's war poetry. Whitman, like Tennyson, uses language in order to evade societal sanction while talking about homoerotic desire. The poem "Vigil strange I kept on the field one night" creates similar linguistic confusion: "When you my son and my comrade drop't at my side that day" (42; line 2). From the outset, the speaker implies homoerotic affection without the use of words that actually describe physical intimacy. The poet creates an instability of definitions: the dead man is not only a soldier but also a comrade, and a son. Moreover, it is a man who asserts his affection and sorrow over the loss of another man. This definitional multiplicity creates a familial impression that permits even more instability in the poet's definition: "Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body son of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding)" (42; line 6). By layering the traditional and military words ("comrade," "son") to describe the family atop of one another,

the speaker can mitigate the idea of "kissing" to a final act of grief over the dead body. Vivian Pollak points out that the "ironic layering" of the ideas of brothers, fathers, and lovers within *Drum-Taps* enables the poet and speaker not only to reject traditional notions of fatherhood, but also to be able to transform the elegy to serve as a forum to explain his sexual desire (157). Whitman's elegy provides a profound means of describing desire, and like Tennyson's speaker, who admits to a forbidden love in the most abstract way, Whitman's narrator accepts the idea of the family in order to conceal the articulation of affection between men.

The mechanism for creating multiple definitions in order to evade societal sanction is part of the social force that allows a poet like Whitman to adjust the rhetoric of love to sublimate his desire in a series of naming exercises which the soldier performs on the battlefield. The exercise of naming, like Tennyson's linguistic evasions, is an effort to yield to the public demand for normalcy because of the ever present quest by Victorian society to eliminate sexual deviance. Tennyson and Whitman impose a form of linguistic discipline on themselves through their acts of evasion. This self-discipline of poetic language is the result of their fear of sanction by society. According to Foucault, panoptic surveillance is a "disciplinary mechanism" (*Discipline* 210), and the panopticon functions "continuously in the very foundation of society, in the subtlest possible way" (*Discipline* 208). Morality and the anxiety of being found to be immoral or transgressive of traditional boundaries becomes the self-reflexive method for excluding the declaration of aberrant sexuality. This self-discipline leads a poet like Tennyson to write about the denial of his sexual self to meet the societal expectations of a moral, family man.

Notwithstanding Tennyson's and Whitman's evasion of societal morality through poetic language, there are some stark contrasts between Tennyson's and Whitman's approaches to discussing homoerotic desire within the panoptic apparatus. At this point, it is necessary to review the way in which Whitman's language transgresses nineteenth-century language barriers in order to directly mention homoerotic desire. Whitman's sadness at the end of the American Civil War afforded him the time to meditate on his homoerotic affection. The speaker in "O Tan Faced Prairie Boy" examines his feelings in a camp scene when he declares, "You came, taciturn, with nothing to give – but we look'd on each other, / When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me" (56; lines 4-5). Whitman's loss enables him to tackle, in a more direct manner, the idea of homoerotic desire. The speaker applies the elegiac form to his grief to undertake this direct expression of affection. The elegiac tradition is present in the use of the phrase, "When lo!". As I mentioned earlier in chapters 1 and 2, the ambiguity of the word "gifts," allows the speaker to open up the potential for a sexual interpretation of the encounter between the soldier and speaker. Whitman's speaker is using language to create potential double meanings that permit the assertion of homoerotic desire through elegy.

Whitman demonstrates that desire reflects the act of the individual and the evasion of social norms. However, the evasion and communication of individual identity are part of the "disciplinary" mechanism in Foucault's discussion of the nature of panoptic observation; discipline is a form of power, and that power comprises an almost limitless set of instruments and techniques for enforcement and exercise (*Discipline* 215). However, by using the form of elegy to both evade and articulate his own homoerotic desire, Whitman is able to resist the influence of a society that is intent on eliminating perceived sexual deviance. In an interview,

Foucault points out that each struggle against, or resistance to, panoptic power is the beginning of a counteroffensive against such resistance (*Power/Knowledge* 163). The complex and dynamic relationship between the power of society and that of the poet is best summed up in Tennyson's acceptance of social constraints in his efforts to avoid societal sanction. Both Tennyson and Whitman broach the subject of homoerotic desire, but they frame their choice of language so as to avoid sanction by society. These poets are still bound within the confines of the society in which they live, and even when they transgress boundaries, the stakes for the society are raised, requiring even stronger professions of normalcy.

In order to articulate desire while conforming to accepted patterns of social normalcy, both Tennyson and Whitman use dramatic and visual language. In examining the dramatic visual language that describes homoerotic desire, it is appropriate to look at a contemporary theorist who explores cinema from a feminist perspective. Laura Mulvey, in her essay "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema," proposes a connection between the role of men and the narrative structure presented in Hollywood cinema: "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like" (20). The idea of assigned roles in cinematic narrative are crucial because the male figure is perceived not only as the breadwinner and head of the family, but also as the force to move the story and control the fantasy of both himself and the viewer (20-1). Tennyson's speaker, under the guise of being watched by the reader, is forced to adopt the patriarchal heteronormativity and to develop the poetry along the lines of understanding that a nineteenth-century Victorian audience would have recognized.

The denial of self within the confines of an ever-observant society forces Tennyson's speaker to adopt the surface of a heterosexual man in order to explain his desire:

> How many a father have I seen,
> A sober man, among his boys,
> Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
> Who wears his manhood hale and green. (236; 53.1-4)

Here the speaker defines himself as a productive, heterosexual father who is now the centre of the family unit. However, the speaker refuses to completely embrace conventional manhood in order to ward off the censors and gasps of the Victorian sitting room. He concludes the stanza with the idea that the father wears his manhood "hale" and "green." The choice of the word "hale" indicates in its verbal form the action of dragging someone forcefully to something (OED def. 1b). Moreover, as a noun, "hale" denotes someone who is free from infirmity, robust, and vigorous (OED def. 3). The speaker sees this paternal figure as someone strong and active – the typical role assigned to a heterosexual man – and sees him being dragged into the act of heterosexual manhood.

Just as Tennyson's speaker attempts to conform to pre-assigned patterns of behaviour, he also destabilizes the notion of social normalcy. The word "green," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, implies the idea of a tender age or being youthful (def. 7), as well as being not fully developed or immature (OED def. 8a). Moreover, the word also implies the act of being full of vitality and life (OED def. 6a). This destabilization allows the speaker to plant questions about whether the manhood is *green* in that it is full of life, or just new and inexperienced, or both. A question must then be raised: how can a man wear his manhood while being both

strong and inexperienced, and at the same time be forcibly dragged to it? Traditional heterosexual fatherhood is not coming easily to the speaker.

The linguistic word play in which Tennyson's speaker engages in order to evade endorsing heterosexual manhood is similar to the method Whitman deploys to articulate his own desires. In "The Dresser," the speaker says, "One turns to me his appealing eyes – (poor boy! I never knew you)" (32; 5:4). In this poem, the idea of gawking is an important aspect of the expression of the speaker's homoerotic desire. He observes the appealing eyes of the dying solider not just as a caregiver but also as a sexual being with desire. The speaker regrets not having been able to know these men, given their visual beauty. This is a sadness over death, but it does not stop Whitman's speaker from inserting a clue about his own homoerotic desire by making reference to the visual stimulus he receives by looking at the soldiers.

Drawing on the Freudian concept of scopophilia, or the pleasure of observation, Mulvey argues that the idea of visual pleasure is part of the voyeuristic nature of the fantasy of movie viewers (16). Moreover, she connects Lacanian ideas of a semiotic signing structure with the visual stimulus the audience of a movie receives, when she points out that it has "no signification, unless attached to an idealisation" (18). Here, Mulvey refers to the Lacanian mirror stage and its abilities to cause the individual not only to create a distinct identity but also to place that identity in relationship to objects of desire (17).[4] Whitman's speaker idealizes the soldiers to achieve a degree of pleasure by looking at them. These sick soldiers are themselves interchangeable, but the circumstances permit the poet to engage in a direct revelation of his homoerotic desire through the viewing act. These desires are

[4] Although Jacques Lacan expresses anxiety about the idea of homosexuality as a permanent feature of the human condition, it is Laura Mulvey's adaptation of his theories that serves to enhance my exploration of homoeroticism in the elegiac poetry of Tennyson and Whitman.

summarized when the speaker dresses another patient and nearly loses the veneer of the caring nurse: "These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my breast a fire, a burning flame)" (33; 10:3). The fire connotes desire, and the hand which connotes care, also touches for passion. In the hospital, Whitman is able to take the veneer of normalcy within a war setting and uncover his homoerotic desire when he watches and touches the soldiers. These actions enable Whitman's speaker to evade societal sanction for homoerotic desire while experiencing it at the same time.

Tennyson and Whitman use language to evade the detection of the outright articulation of homoerotic desire, and that same language enables them to present a degree of conformity to social normalcy in their poetry. The quest for normalcy is also the quest for a redefinition of male gender and masculinity in Tennyson's and Whitman's elegiac poetry. Tennyson, in section 53 of *In Memoriam*, talks about the idea of the "father" whose youth has been wasted. By the time Tennyson wrote section 84, he was projecting his speaker as an uncle to the children that Hallam would never have. The speaker implies that the pressure of a Victorian society promoting heterosexual productivity sublimates desire into the role of a family man. This privileging of particular types of love – the love of the family man and husband, or the camaraderie of soldiers – also occurs at the beginning of Whitman's "Vigil strange I kept on the field one night." Whitman, like Tennyson, attempts to redefine a man's masculinity in society.

The exploration of the role of masculinity in Tennyson's and Whitman's poetry requires an examination of the gender role itself. Tennyson and Whitman adapt gender categories in the elegiac form, by feminizing their speakers, to express their grief and desire. Judith Butler argues that gender is a layering process involving

intricate selection: "if gender is the cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes, then gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way" (10). In the two poets' work, Tennyson and Whitman expose the discontinuity between the path laid down by society to structure gender and the reality of forbidden love that deviates from traditional definitions of heterosexual masculinity. Butler goes on to indicate that the asymmetrical binarisms of male and female and homosexual and heterosexual serve as "cultural configurations of gender which operate as sites for intervention, exposure, and displacement" (42). The poets are prompted initially by the need to act as though they were embracing normal, heterosexual sexuality; they are able to destabilize the boundaries of gender definitions around productive sexuality during the process of exploring their homoerotic identities. In the Butlerian model, the truth about sex and sexuality is produced through the regulatory practices that generate the "matrix of coherent gender norms" (23). However, these very norms or binarisms tend to be adopted by the people supposedly subjected to them (39). Such adaptation to productive sexuality is what Tennyson and Whitman undertake within elegiac poetry.

Tennyson plays with the notions of a rigid form of masculinity and binary categories of gender throughout the course of *In Memoriam*. At the beginning of the poem, he refers to his own tears as "Tears of the widower, when he sees / A late lost form that sleep reveals" (213; 13:1-2). By discussing himself as a widower to Hallam and mentioning tears, he inherently feminizes his actions. In section 60, this same gender-bending tone is taken by the speaker whose "spirit loved and love him yet, / Like some poor girl whose heart is set / On one whose rank exceeds her own" (240; lines 1-3). The assumption of a more effeminate role to elaborate his desire within the context of grief is clear. Tennyson adapts the binarisms of gender or

imposed gender roles in order to give voice to his grief and homoerotic desire within the context of the elegiac form that mentions homoerotic love.

Whitman manifests a more sexualized desire in "Vigil strange I kept on the field one night," where the comrade and potential father moves from friendship to the profession of love. The speaker states that "Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you dearest comrade – not a tear, not a word" (42; line 13). The love between the two men becomes clear while hyper-masculinized activities, such as war, seem to recede from the tenderness of the moment being described. In this case, the two lovers, one dead and the other alive, are left behind to transgress norms. The transgression of hyper-masculinity, which is heightened by the reality of war, is addressed by Jimmie Killingsworth in his analysis of the nature of the elegiac utterances in "Vigil strange." He indicates that "[t]he intense love expressed just before death and the context of war justify extreme behaviour [. . .] death with its intensity substitutes for sex" (138). War permits and emboldens the speaker to transgress the normative notions of productive sexuality in order to address the explosive emotional reality of love and conflict. The speaker proceeds to define his transgressive sexuality that "(I faithfully loved you and cared for you living – I think we shall surely meet again) (43; line 17). In the core of the elegiac response – within the confines of a death – lies the hope of reunification. However, death also prompts the living lover to assess the transgressive nature of his own desire within the context of the feminized soldier. The continuous destabilization of the categories of the soldier, the lover, and the father allows for a masculine gender and desire to obfuscate the very categories that are designed to restrict alternative or perceived unproductive notions of sexuality.

The adaptations of the masculine/feminine binarisms enable the speakers in Tennyson's and Whitman's poetry to call for the creation of a new elegiac form of typology. The omnipresent nature of gender roles makes it a stable ground on which to examine the very adaptation of gender roles. Butler argues that gender and homosexual acts are copies of a perceived original sexuality: heterosexuality (40-1). By copying, adapting, and exploring sexual desire in poetry, Tennyson and Whitman develop the tools for self-definition, a method which evaded conventional binary labels of normalcy or abnormality.

Tennyson evades definitions and potential societal sanctions by quantifying his existence as a distinct and unique being. Traditionally, sections 54 through 56 of *In Memoriam* have been interpreted as a response to the nature of evolution and its growing acceptance in nineteenth-century England. However, if the Butlerian notion of copying or replicating an existing structure of gender or sexuality is applied, it is easier to see the speaker's effort to develop a coherent vision of "type," which is informed by the writings on evolution in the nineteenth century by scientists such as Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin. Tennyson demonstrates how he is a different form of humanity by making his speaker negotiate the boundaries of gender and sexuality. The speaker navigates these boundaries by asking questions about the evolutionary impact of a type of homoerotic lover. He cannot understand how the destruction of his friend has left him alone in the world as the last person to experience homoerotic desire. The speaker's loneliness causes him to ponder the creation of a specific species of homosexual and to question for whom the type of desire he experiences was created.

Moreover, Tennyson challenges the pathologizing norms of Victorian society by using scientific language to describe the speaker's desire. The discussion of "type" forms a counter discourse to describe the forbidden love. The Foucauldian counter-discourse uses the same repressive language of normalcy and productivity which attempts to classify, control, punish, and cure homosexuality to disclose desire and demand legitimacy (*History* 101). On the surface, when the speaker declares "that nothing walks with aimless feet; / That not one life shall be destroy'd, / Or cast as rubbish to the void (236; 54.5-7), he moves to create an elegiac dialogue about death and evolution in order to construct an identity that can encompass his homoerotic desire. The poet's coded language helps him to describe Hallam as a source of affection despite Nature's failure to save his friend's life: "Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair / Such splendid purpose in his eyes (238; 56. 9-10). Although the speaker refers to Hallam with the words "fair," "eyes," and "purpose," they also allude to the more general notion of man's actions being dignified by beauty and purpose in life. Tennyson's exploration of a "type" helps him to build a taxonomic definition for his actions and love towards Hallam.

The speaker challenges the destruction of men who love other men, when he asks,

> Are God and Nature then at strife
> That nature lends such evil dreams?
> So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life (237; 55.5-8).

The evolutionary and Darwinian scientific type must have influenced Tennyson's conception of himself and his speaker in writing this section. In its transitive form, "type" is an example or specimen (OED def. 2a). "Type" is linked to a plan or structure in the natural world ("type" 8a), as well as someone who exhibits the ideal

qualities of a kind or order (OED def. 7b). Here the destabilization of language permits Tennyson's speaker to show himself to be both an ideal specimen and part of a broader plan in the natural world. This plan seems to have left him alone without a companion who is a similar type. I further contend that he questions the destruction of his companion as an assault on his species of proto-homosexual. Sedgwick indicates that the homosexual or homoerotic expression is not only a reaction to normalizing homophobic forces, but also a reaction to the articulation of a "less stable and identity bound understanding of sexual choice" (*Between Men* 9). The speaker moves beyond simply reacting to the productive Victorian requirement, and negotiates between communicating his own desires and understanding himself as a species. The speaker's concern about being a lonely type of homosexual is articulated when he declares, "I falter where I firmly trod, / And falling with my weight of cares" (237; 55.13-14). The speaker cannot reconcile his living reality of loneliness with the idea that he is such a "type" of man.

Whitman also reiterates a "type" in an indirect fashion. In a poem addressed to the dead President Lincoln, "How solemn, as one by one," in the *Sequel to Drum Taps* published in 1866, the speaker discusses his affection for the President and Civil War leader. The speaker starts with his relationship to Lincoln in the statement: "How solemn the thought of my whispering soul, to each in the ranks, and to you" (22; line 5). The speaker sees himself as being able to peer into the soul of the dead President and recognize an affinity with his own homoeroticism. This is further developed later in the poem, "As I lay my head in your lap, Camerado," where the speaker exclaims: "I am more resolute, because all have denied me, than I could have ever been had they accepted me; / I heed not and have never heeded either experience, cautions, majorities, nor ridicule" (19; lines 7-8). The speaker sees

himself as a "type" of lover and preacher for homoerotic love who stands outside of normativity, and to a certain degree, mainstream society. It is his objective to define himself and his affections, which have adapted the idea of masculinity in the military conflict and addressed the idea of care and desire as outside the norm. These are the first steps towards defining himself as a "type" of homosexual.

In acknowledging the nature of the society in which they lived, a society that monitored deviance, Tennyson and Whitman articulate homoerotic desires through the language of elegy. This language enables a shrouding of words with alternate meanings and ultimately an exploration of a taxonomic or typological definition of their desires. The adaptation of the elegiac form to express homoerotic love, and in particular Whitman's adaptation, enables their elegiac poetry to herald their homoerotic desires and homosexual identity in an explicit fashion. However, this exploration was still conducted within the context of a society that wanted to sustain sexual productivity and heteronormativity. Moreover, by the use of elegiac conventions to articulate homoerotic desire, Tennyson and Whitman evade societal sanction, at the same time reassessing gender and type as it relates to their homoerotic desire. These poetic experiences gave Tennyson and Whitman the tools with which to embark on an epistemological journey to define their own homosexual identity.

Chapter 4

"I will not shut me from my kind": The Epistemological Understanding of Homoerotic Desire

The speakers in Tennyson's and Whitman's elegiac poetry are able to avoid the societal sanction that is constantly looking for signs of deviance. This constant exposure produces what Michel Foucault describes as a panoptic society in which people behave as though they were in a prison. However, Tennyson's and Whitman's speakers are not only able to evade the sanctions that result from this kind of monitoring, they are also able to transgress the moral objection that society places on homoerotic desire by identifying themselves with male-male sexual desire.

Simply ascribing the queer desire to a "type" through elegiac poetry is not the final adaptation of elegiac poetry to the expression of homoerotic desire. Both Tennyson and Whitman are able to craft their poetry in order to define the speakers' homosexual selves within the poetry. The metaphor of the hand is an important component of Tennyson's speaker's struggle to create a homosexual identity because it symbolizes physical contact between men. The ultimate extension of this homosexual self is visualized through a utopian world where the declaration of open homoerotic desire would not result in sanction. Through a close reading of sections of *In Memoriam*, I consider how the metaphors of the grave and the hand enable Tennyson's speaker to complete an epistemological journey to define a homosexual self. The grave is essential to understanding the impact of Hallam's death on the speaker's understanding of his own sexuality. The grave is also important for Whitman's speakers' efforts to acknowledge the impact of losing comrades and lovers on the battlefields of the American Civil War. This chapter also studies the importance of the battlefield in Whitman's elegiac poetry. The political engagement and support for change is played out on the battlefield as a means of creating social change within the context of the signification of homoerotic desire. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's contention that the recognition of a homosexual self leads to an

understanding of how self-definition is created within the destabilization of sexual boundaries is critical to this aspect of my investigation into Tennyson's and Whitman's poetry.

These ideas are also crucially important to the study of Whitman's use of elegy to define his speakers' homoerotic selves in the historical context of the end of the American Civil War and the assassination of President Lincoln. These two events served to crystalize Whitman's commitment to writing openly about homoerotic desire and what he thought its impact could be on America. I discuss the impact and change from the perspective of Julia Kristeva, who argues that a text can create social change in the same manner as it changes the writer's perspective on the subject.

Through the search for knowledge of the self, Tennyson's and Whitman's speakers overcome barriers in language to assert homoerotic desire. The crucial metaphors of the grave and the hand serve as important indicators that enable Tennyson's speaker to understand himself. Whitman employs the end of the war and the death of a president as an opportunity to repeat his explicit claims that love between men could change the world. Within his poetry, Whitman's speakers wanted to embrace an open homosexual existence in the era after the war. The poet's epistemological journey to assert a homosexual identity is completed by his speakers' experiences. These experiences move them towards a utopian world where they can articulate their selves and their desires. In other words, poetic language allows Whitman's speakers to move beyond an attempt to confess affection towards a direct exploration of homoerotic desire and homosexual identity.

Tennyson's speaker begins the most fundamental aspect of his epistemological journey by exploring the idea of the hand. For the speaker, the forbidden relationship and inherent friendship are demonstrated by the physical contact of the hand:

> Dark house by which once more I stand
> Here in the long unlovely street,
> Doors, where my heart used to beat
> So quickly, waiting for a hand,
>
> A hand that can be clasp'd no more. (210; 7:1-5)

The symbolism of the journey through grief begins with the sense of complete desolation over the loss of the love of his friend. The lost love is now emblematized by the hand. However, the cycle of knowledge moves from loss to a sense of redemption in the very act of taking the hand again:

> And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
> And bright the friendship of thine eye;
> And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
> I take the pressure of thine hand. (281; 119:7-10)

Despite the somewhat religious tone of the word "bless" the vision and sense of the hand are there to provide a form of solace for the poet. The "eye" and "I" of friendship look deep into the heart of the speaker while he tries to grasp his friend. Physical and emotional contacts are welded into the speaker's experience and memory of his friend.

Tennyson's memories of Hallam allow the poet to reflect on his grief and friendship through poetry. The very kernel of wisdom that the dead can provide is embodied in section 4, where the speaker attempts to quell the grief that his heart experiences. He boldly states, "Something it is which thou hast lost, / Some pleasure of thine early years" (208; lines 9-10). The speaker recognizes the fundamental

reality of his early life with Hallam and its significance because of his contact with his friend. However, this realization does not completely resolve the need to explicate the desire that he feels. This explication is further developed in a frank admission of his desires when Urania, the muse of heavenly poetry, urges the poet not to be consumed by analyzing the loss: "This faith has many a purer priest, / And many an abler voice than thou" (227; 37:3-4). The speaker is urged not to ruminate on the loss, but to recognize it and move on. In this section of the poem, the speaker's need to recognize the significance of his early life and his amatory relationship to Hallam is crystalized, and the development of the self that emerges from that recognition is articulated.

The solid foundation that the speaker lays to understand his grief requires the wisdom of the dead to aid in the search for a community of men who desire men. Christopher Craft explains the nature of this exploration for knowledge in the poem. Craft argues that the intensity of Tennyson's affection is part of a search for community, as Tennyson's poem "refuses to complete the work of mourning, the work of normal, and normalizing, substitution" (70). Beyond the panoptic observation of society and its requirements for productive sexuality, Tennyson's speaker is intent on continuing to be his own "type" of homosexual lovers. Desire still motivates the poet's work, and allows the poet to explore his fundamental passion for Hallam as one of the tools for understanding himself as a man with homoerotic desires (Craft 70-1).

These desires are met at the scene of the grave, where the speaker moves from the act of burial to an expression of desire and self. In section 21, the speaker sings to Hallam in the grave, where he manifests his forbidden desire for Hallam (218; line 1). In section 51, the speaker states: "I wrong the grave with fears untrue" (235; line

9). The speaker recognizes that his life cannot be spent mourning the loss of Hallam, while acknowledging such love, and his search for knowledge forces him to move away from the grave and to express himself in writing. In section 52, he addresses his growing knowledge by pointing out that "I cannot love thee as I ought, / For love reflects the thing beloved" (235; lines 1-2). Despite this inability, his knowledge empowers him to acknowledge his own unique affection and to speak the unspeakable. Such love allows him to find a sense of peace that enables him to reconcile himself with the living world and recognize his own homosexual nature. Near the end of the poem, the speaker writes explicitly about the transformation from the grave to the knowledge of the self:

> If thou wert with me, and the grave
> Divide us not, be with me now,
> And enter in at breast and brow,
> Till all my blood, a fuller wave,
>
> Be quiken'd with a livelier breath. (282; 122:9-13)

The grave is no longer an insurmountable barrier, either to a written discussion of the speaker's homoerotic desire or to his desire for Hallam. The grave symbolizes a kind of bed in which the speaker's imagination can allow for a "fuller wave" of desire to take over his mind. The speaker now engages in a frank consideration of homoerotic love in which he articulates the wisdom of his sorrow.

The movement from the grave to poetic wisdom enables the speaker to see through the wrappings of his dreams where to construct a queer utopia. The speaker's desires are reawakened when he realizes that the potential reunification with Hallam will occur:

> And love will last as pure and whole
> As when he loved me here in Time,
> And at the spiritual prime
> Reawaken with the dawning soul. (231; 43:13-16)

The death of the speaker's friend has delayed the consummation of desire and homoerotic affection. However, that desire will be enacted when the two are reunited after Tennyson's death. This passage implies that the soul of each friend will meld with the other. To this end, the speaker writes in section 103, "And which, tho' veiled, was known to me, / The shape of him I loved, and loved / for ever (270; lines 13-14). The veiling does not hinder the speaker's ability to understand both his own homoerotic desire and the knowledge of his own homosexuality. When he travels with the muses to meet Arthur, the speaker indicates that they see that "The man we loved was there on deck" (271; 103:41). Tennyson, as a poet, has abandoned all pretense to belonging to the world of the family man and productive heterosexuality. In the dream, he aligns himself with his "type" of homoerotic love. This stark articulation is accompanied by a frenzied outpouring of the affection that the poet has for his ghost-lover: "Up the side I went, / And fell in silence on his neck" (271; 103:43-4). The speaker falls on, and into, his friend in order to achieve a connection to his profound love. In the same section, Hallam and the speaker invite the muses to come aboard the ship and enter into the speaker's spirit (271; 103:50-3). The grave becomes internalized in the dream, which permits the speaker to embrace his homoerotic desire and voice it in art as represented by the muses. Jeff Nunokawa points out that Tennyson's poetry can expand outward to multiple homoerotic meanings within the Victorian aesthetic above and beyond purely sexual meanings (39). Tennyson's speaker mentions his love, not exclusively in terms of carnal desire, within an economy of desires related

to culture, art, and even friendship. This transcendence from the grave to aesthetic poetic language is a utopian vision in which the poet's desire can be clearly articulated in art: the speaker's ultimate ideal in *In Memoriam.*

In order for the speaker to complete the epistemological search which leads him to the transcendent or utopian ideal of homoerotic expression, he takes on the roles of both student and teacher. This is a twist on the traditional Platonic idea of the student and teacher as lovers because Tennyson takes on both roles within *In Memoriam*. One of the speaker's teachers is a figure called "the spirit of true love" who tells him,

> So fret not, like an idle girl,
> That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.
> Abide; thy wealth is gather'd in,
> When time hath sunder'd shell from pearl. (236; 52:13-16)

The "wealth" clearly alludes to the act of writing, which is the speaker's method of exhibiting his transgressive love. By asking the poet to move away from idle speculation, the spirit wants the speaker to become both teacher and student in his exploration of homoerotic desire, echoed in Sedgwick's concept regarding the recognition of the self in terms of sexuality (*Epistemology* 73). The speaker binds his search for knowledge of the self to his artistic declaration of his sexuality.

Furthermore, the speaker's desire to embrace a transcendent or utopian world to voice his desire without fear is a development of his attempt to adapt the traditional roles and ideas of sexuality and gender. Sedgwick points out that there is a universalizing possibility of homoerotic desire where a flow between traditionally defined genders and sexuality exists (*Epistemology* 87). This is an accurate assessment of the speaker's transgressive notions of gender and sexuality that he uses in order to establish a new, utopian ideal of individual homosexuality. It is

evident that the speaker constructs his queer utopia to speak about an unspeakable love:

> My love involves the love before
> My love is vaster passion now;
> Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou
> I seem to love thee more and more. (287; 130:13-16)

Tennyson's knowledge of his transgressive love combines spirituality and creativity in the assertion of his homosexual self and his desires.

The poet articulates his great defense of a homosexual identity in section 93, where the speaker discusses the spiritual and divine nature of the dead Hallam. The speaker concludes by stating,

> Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
> The wish too strong for words to name,
> That in this blindness of the frame
> My ghost may feel that thine is near. (262; 93:13-16)

Not only does the speaker move beyond the grave, but he is also moving into it to achieve a spiritual reunification with his lost love and friend. The combination of intimate words such as "descend," "touch," "hear," and "feel" help to build up the sense that the loss is not permanent and that a sort of living reunification can be achieved both in and out of the grave.

This passage is not Tennyson's definitive and final word on his homosexual identity and the acting out of homoerotic desire. The speaker in section 108 concludes that the poetry of loss will become the call to action to love again:

> I will not shut me from my kind,
> And lest I stiffen into stone,
> I will not eat my heart alone,
> Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:
>
> What profit lies in barren faith. (272; 109:1-5)

In this stanza, the speaker turns the sense of loneliness and lack of touch into a development of the idea of "type." The word "kind" refers to the homosexual "type" in sections 55 and 56 of the poem. Here, the speaker adopts what Julia Kristeva classifies as "metalanguage," which eliminates negativity, in this case grief and sorrow (93). The poet's language describes death, love, and survival as well as destruction of the self. Through his choice of language, the speaker opens himself to the prospect that his identity as a homosexual man can intersect with identities of other men who have similar desires. The speaker contends that, although other forms of love might not have the same magical or mystical quality as that which he had for Hallam, there is a chance to love another man again.

The contention that Tennyson could love another man or that he loved Hallam is an attempt to explore homosexuality by writers in a period before the term homosexuality was invented. My interpretation is somewhat unconventional in that most critics attempt to dismiss the presence of homosexuality within the biography of the poet. It could be argued that all poets writing before 1869 were therefore heterosexual (Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 52). This is a facile interpretation because the exploration of love between men by a male poet prior to 1869 is also about the creation of homosexual discourse. Moreover, the speaker in *In Memoriam* develops sexuality through grief in order to assert his homosexual identity. Furthermore, the poet creates an identity based on homoerotic desire and articulates that to the reader to enable the communication of his homoerotic desire and his evasion of societal sanction.

The development of homosexual self-identification is closely aligned with the social change that is enacted by the the writing of the text. Kristeva argues that "the text is a practice that could be compared to political revolution: the one brings about

in the subject what the other introduces into society" (17). The type of change that Whitman and Tennyson sought to bring to their readers is that social change is enacted by the process of writing poetry. Moreover, Kristeva moves to point out that sacrifice is an expenditure of semiotic violence and that this violence is the process for destabilizing not only language but also the ideas that language presents (79). Both Tennyson and Whitman examine homoeroticism with a language that expresses homoerotic desire and ultimately seeks homosexual identification.

Equally important in terms of the impact of language is the idea that Tennyson and Whitman reject part of the accepted social norms prevalent in nineteenth-century society. Kristeva points out that "[r]ejection generates the signifier and the desire adjoining it as a defense against the death that rejection brings" (172). Tennyson's ability to move beyond the loss of Hallam permits him to clearly articulate his homoerotic desire and identity as a homosexual self. In doing so, he rejects a culture of silence about homoerotic love to create for himself a new identity through language. This rejection is formed by the experience of the self that is inserted into the "essential economy of the text" (Kristeva 197). Kristeva's notions about the rejection of an existing norm which causes the destabilization of ideas in language can be applied to *In Memoriam* (203). Within Tennyson's poem the speaker rejects existing norms in order to create personal and social change. For Tennyson and Whitman, grappling with the implications of the practice of destabilization, evasion, and ultimately change to existing nineteenth-century societal norms formed the most significant challenge in the development of a homosexual self.

These norms are adapted and changed by the text which, broader than just the page, includes all forms of cultural experience. Ultimately, the text encompasses the complete transformation of the elegy that Tennyson and Whitman adapted. Kristeva

further remarks that "[t]here is no limit to what can be said in the text" (209) because the text responds to the societal expectations of community and practice (210).

This is worth noting because practice effects social change at the very moments when the language and social practice of society are farthest apart (211). The idea of practice is about reading and writing to create social change. This is a critical feature of the content which Tennyson and Whitman examine within their poetry. For Tennyson, the act of confessing his desire, evading societal sanction and ultimately defining and creating a homosexual self can be done only in the context of a society where the text was designed to present heteronormativity and ends by dislodging open a discussion of homoerotic love.

Whitman takes the crisis of the American Civil War to effect a change in the discourse on American sexuality and morality. Whitman, like Tennyson, creates a homosexual identity through which to explicate homoerotic desire. However, this is accomplished through his effort to bridge the gaps in social practice of an America at war and to consider the idea of a homoerotic love The poet forms his homosexual identity in the face of a society that would have disapproved of male-male love in the intensity of war. The war brought thousands of men, many of whom Whitman befriended and loved, to the Washington D.C. area. Moreover, the expression of his desire and affection within his poetry was informed by the love he received from the soldiers whom he helped.

A large part of Whitman's nursing work in the army hospitals to care for the dead and dying allowed him to make new acquaintances with soldiers from around the country, among them Lewis Brown, who in November of 1863 addressed him as "My dear Walter" (qtd. in Shively 120). Most of Brown's letters are accounts of recovery and difficulty in the hospital: "Concerning myself I am about old fassion

[sic], my leg mends slowly [. . .]" (qtd. in Shively 121). There is a slow, meditative tone to these letters from soldiers with limited literacy. However, the soldier's affection comes through clearly. In an 1864 letter, Alonzo Bush calls Whitman "Friend Walt" (qtd. in Shively 130). The replies from the poet himself were often a revelation of the poet's affection for the soldiers. In a letter dated November 8, 1863, Whitman saluted Lewis Brown with "Dear son & comrade, & all my dear comrades in the hospital" (175); these opening statements reveal the close relationship between Whitman and those whom he contacted and attempted to save by reading poetry and passing on a few positive words. The wartime brotherhood served as a forum for the poet to study his own desire and to profess what homoerotic affection between men could produce: national salvation

These lessons were imbued into the soldiers whom Whitman helped; many of the soldiers were deeply affected by the letters even after the end of the war. Byron Sutherland, a Pennsylvanian soldier, writes in 1870 to Whitman, "with your duties and carer [sic] you had forgoten [sic] the bright memories that I so tenderly cherish [. . .]" (qtd. in Shively 201). The affection which Whitman inspires in his soldier-friends is apparent in the letter, where the young soldier, now grown into a husband and father, notes "[t]hat the world isnt [sic] quite so fair or beautiful as it seemed then [. . .] I have written so much of myself simply because you asked me of myself" (qtd. in Shively 201). The poet's wisdom resonates in the act of writing and thinking. For Sutherland, Whitman is the embodiment of the American brotherhood, whether it is homoerotic or homosocial. Whitman's response, written nearly two years later on September 2, 1873, starts with "Dear soldier boy" (238). Although the time gap between the letter and the reply is significant, it does not denote a lack of affection. Whitman knew how to exhibit his everlasting affection to Sutherland, as

he indicates at the end of the letter that, "I have not forgotten you, my loving soldier boy, & and never shall" (238). Just as two brothers might grow apart as they grow older, Sutherland did not need Whitman as urgently as he did during his time in the army hospital. For Sutherland, the most important aspect of Whitman was the memory of his experiences with the poet. Here, the poet recognizes the completed affinity, and for Whitman, the soldier always remains a "soldier-boy." For Whitman's soldier-friends, the process of love and exploration on the written page is a kind of gift that is taken well beyond the realms of the battlefield and hospital.

For Whitman, the gift is also poisoned by the loss of a dear friend when the President of the United States was assassinated. The open call for sexual equality was most visible in the elegiac poetry that Whitman wrote at the time of President Lincoln's assassination. The long poem "When Lilac last in the door-yard bloom'd" is one of the rare instances when Whitman's speaker combines real events with his own desires to contemplate his own being as a homosexual self. In section 9 of the poem the speaker concludes, "But a moment I linger – for the lustrous star had detain'd me; / The star, my comrade, departing, holds and detains me" (6; 9:5). The speaker sees Lincoln as the sinking star in death, and it is this star that still holds a romantic fascination. In the next section, referred as "him I love" (6; 10:1,3,7), the dead President embodies the projection of the speaker's homoerotic desire and his vision of what a perfect American man might have been.

There is a similar voice of panic in "Spirit whose work in done," in which the speaker, like Tennyson's, almost falls into the grave to realize his desire. The speaker concludes the poem by saying, "Touch my mouth, ere you depart – press my lips close! / Leave me your pulses of rage! bequeath them to me! fill me with currents convulsive" (14; lines 14-5). The poet gets sexual satisfaction from the urge

to have a necrophilic kiss from the dead and the attempt to pull the "currents convulsive" from his friend. The goal is a reunification now, almost immediately after death, of the two perceived lovers. The poet's speaker cannot contemplate the potential loss that might ensue.

Whitman's poetic journey beyond the battlefield and hospital is symbolized by his writing at the end of the *Drum Taps* and *Sequel to Drum Taps*, which were finalized and published in the last year of the Civil War. Whitman follows much the same fashion as Tennyson, who moves beyond the grave by evading the traditional definitions of masculinity in order to discuss homoerotic desire. This movement is a transgression of social norms which confirms the speaker's homosexual identity. This is best represented by the poem "Hymn of the Dead Soldiers," that did not survive future publication of *Leaves of Grass*. In the poem, the speaker links directly love and the carnage on the battle field: "Dearest comrades! all now is over; But love is not over – and what love, O comrades; Perfume from battlefields rising – up from foetor arising (60; line 8). Here the speaker links the smell of the battlefield, "foetor," with the odour of love. The fumes of love remind and prompt the poet to express his homosexuality and homoerotic desire. This sense of timelessness in the journey of homoerotic exploration is the subject of the last line of "Hymn," where the speaker asks his readers and fellow soldiers to "[g]ive me exhaustless – make me a fountain, That I exhale love from me wherever I go, For the sake of all dead soldiers" (60; line 11). The memory of soldiers and patients, just as it was in the hospital, instigates the speaker to proclaim his version of homoerotic love in the time after the war.

However, the war's influences on Whitman's speaker's open articulation of homosexuality and homoerotic desire are salient. In an approach remarkably similar to Tennyson's communing with deities to influence his move beyond the grave, Whitman is inspired to proclaim homoerotic desire from Dame Nature in the poem "Pensive on her dead gazing, I heard the mother of all," where the dead give off a sweet aroma (71; line 16) and the ground will absorb the "young men's beautiful bodies" (71: line 10). The dead are an open source for both Tennyson and Whitman to analyze homoerotic desire. The beauty of the men described is directly linked to the idea that they were objects of desire when they were living and in death.

Furthermore, the speaker of the poems in *Sequel to Drum Taps*, published in 1866, moves beyond the grave to describe the potential for the expression of his own homosexual and homoerotic desires. In the short poem, "Race of Veterans," the speaker concludes the poem with the phrase "Race of passion and the storm" (12; line 5). The poet's own voice is enough to suggest the importance of articulating desire and fashioning a life based on homosexual fulfillment. The experience of the soldiers is based on passion and the tumult that moves beyond nineteenth-century heteronormative demands. The speaker's desire to wage a continuous battle after the war challenges social mores articulated in "As I lay my head in your lap, Camerado." In this poem, the speaker brings forward the evasion of societal sanction, the confession of desire, and ultimately, the homosexual scenario in America. To the unnamed soldier, he indicates that, "For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws , to unsettle them" (19: line 6). The poet's goal seems to be to create a poetic world to accommodate acceptable queer desire. He concludes the poem by urging on his fellow soldier to stay with him to fight this new battle: "whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd and defeated" (19; line 12). The

speaker is willing to proclaim his desires and experience them in his life. However, it must be a life that moves beyond visions and grief to achieve respect and equality in sexual desire.

Tennyson and Whitman move through the challenges of confessing desire to evading sanction with their own poetic rhetoric. Each poet confronts the metaphors of the grave in order to transform his loss to the embrace of homoerotic physical contact. In addition, Tennyson employs the metaphor of the hand to symbolize his lost love and a reestablishment of physical contact. Whitman's idea of the battlefield comes to symbolize physical contact which creates homoerotic bonding. From the transgression of social norms, they then proceed to tackle the tough question of asserting a homosexual identity. The two poets move from a confrontation with the grave and the yearning for physical contact with other men towards the declaration of the broader social meanings and of their homoerotic desires. For Tennyson, the challenge to create a world that accepts and tolerates homoerotic love ends with a utopian dream vision of the future. However, Whitman establishes the parameters within which homoerotic desire can be turned into a poetic forum to effect social changes. Both these epistemological journeys end with a call for change: personal for Tennyson and social for Whitman.

Conclusion

Tennyson and Whitman negotiated their grief and loss through elegiac poetry to define their homosexual identities. This transformation enabled the speakers in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Whitman's American Civil War poetry to evade and transgress existing social norms. At the conclusion of poem 45 in *Calamus*, Walt Whitman tells his readers to expect his ongoing presence: "Fancying how happy you were, if I could be with you, and become your lover; / Be it as if I were with you. Be not too certain but I am now with you" (378; 45:7-8). Whitman concludes the cycle of poems, in which he explores homoerotic desire and publicly proclaims that desire, with a call to future friends, readers, and lovers to think of him as omnipresent. At the end of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson expresses his more personal sexual desire,

> With faith that comes from self-control,
> The truths that never can be proved
> Until we close with all we loved,
> And all we flow from, soul in soul (287; 131:9-12).

Tennyson's speaker does not conclude that he will be with readers in the time to come, but does indicate that homoerotic affection will be reunited after death.

There exist a number of challenges in future research on questions of homoerotic desire in Tennyson's and Whitman's poetry. The first is to look beyond the early, elegiac works written by each poet. As each poet became more recognized, he moved away from the emotionally and erotically charged verse that described homoerotic desire. That both Tennyson and Whitman became the Poet Laureates of their respective countries may shed much light on the radical departure from controversial topics in their later poetry. It is vital to know whether the poets considered homoerotic desire as a failure or whether they articulated a new found caution on controversial topics. The fact that elegy almost disappears as a type of poetry written by Tennyson and Whitman may also point to their reticence to

discuss homoerotic desire.

Within my research I contrast the nature of Tennyson's more staid and personal exploration of homoerotic desire with Whitman's public proclamation of homoerotic desire and his homosexual identity. It would be useful to develop the ideas contained in chapter 1 on the biographical and historical contexts of the two poets. This new examination might look at how the social and political climate in England and America in the mid-nineteenth century influenced the work of the two poets. Furthermore, this research might look at the direct implications of society's view of homosexuality and homoerotic desire in the nineteenth century for Tennyson's and Whitman's loves and poetry.

Both Tennyson and Whitman created definitions of homoerotic love in the nineteenth century through the use of elegiac poetry in order to ground their lives within a culture of male friendship. Each poet's elegiac poetry can be analyzed with the help of the Foucauldian concepts of confession and panoptic surveillance. I have studied Tennyson's and Whitman's descriptions of homoerotic love in a society which did not tolerate or accept the premise that two men might openly love each other.

However, the Foucauldian modes of analysis cannot completely comprehend the description of homoerotic desire by Tennyson and Whitman in the period prior to the creation of a terminology for homosexuality. What is important to the theoretical framework required to analyze homoerotic desire in their elegiac love poetry is the social change that was effected by the poetry itself. The Kristevan concept that social change and change in language can be brought about by the text of poetry is critical to my discussion of the personal and social changes wrought by Tennyson and Whitman. Tennyson brought about this sort of change by offering

himself to the reader of *In Memoriam* as a homosexual lover seeking to continue his love despite the loss and grief. On the other hand, Whitman brings the reader to recognize and engage with him in an ongoing battle to effect a change in America: a change that would enable a man to openly love another man in the public sphere.

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