Queering Romantic Engagement in the Postal Age

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Chapter 3

“Somehow or other, queer in the extreme”

*Albert Dodd’s Civic Training and Genre-Queer Practices*

This verse though, by the way, to me doth seem / somehow or other, queer in the extreme.

Albert Dodd, “Epistolary” (1836)

Like Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus’s romantic epistolary exchange, Albert Dodd’s rhetorical practices defied the widely taught genre conventions and cultural norms for composing romantic letters and relations. The dominant manual instruction emphasized models in which a learner like Dodd would have addressed a woman and exchanged cautiously timed letters directed toward the heteronormative *telos* of marriage. In contrast, his diary reports he composed romantic epistolary rhetoric addressed to multiple women as well as men, often with urgency and impatience and at no point oriented to the goal of marriage. Thus his rhetorical practices were queer, like Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus’s, in keeping with the first definition offered in my introductory chapter. Yet his practices were also “somehow or another, queer in the extreme” in a second way, insofar as he not only subverted genre conventions and cultural norms for romantic epistolary rhetoric but also transgressed normative distinctions between and among other genres related to the letter (Apr. 1836).

Although Dodd’s romantic letters are not extant, he wrote about his romantic epistolary practices within a commonplace book turned diary as well as a poetry album.¹ In understanding this broader network of multigenre practices as epistolary rhetoric, I am informed by Suzanne B. Spring’s research on early nineteenth-century student writing that crosses multiple genres but operates according to an “epistolary logic,” insofar as “address and exchange are central
aspects” (“Seemingly Uncouth Forms” 633, 638). Dodd developed his multigenre epistolary rhetoric while a college student, first at Washington (now Trinity) College and then at Yale College (now University). I frame Dodd’s extant writing as both multigenre and epistolary: as taking the form of multiple genres other than the letter, yet functioning according to an epistolary logic of address to and exchange with readers. Accounting for Dodd’s multigenre epistolary practices widens my scope to include rhetorical practices for romantic engagement through a variety of genres. In addition, examining Dodd’s education and practices alongside Brown and Primus’s enables consideration of a diverse range of learners. Brown, Primus, and Dodd can be understood as diverse by gender, sexuality, race, class, and educational background. While Brown avidly pursued opportunities for self-education, for instance, there is no indication she had access to formal schooling in rhetoric, much less to a classically modeled rhetorical education for civic engagement. This was precisely the sort of education available to Dodd as a privileged, upper-class white man.

After characterizing his epistolary rhetoric composed while a college student, I analyze how Dodd repurposed his rhetorical education for civic engagement to romantic ends. Dodd’s rhetorical education at Washington and Yale was classically oriented to civic participation through training in public oratory about political questions. Not surprisingly, this education prepared him for a career in law and politics. But Dodd also repurposed this education, transferring his learned rhetorical awareness to develop multigenre epistolary rhetoric for participation in romantic relations. These practices were “genre-queer,” to use Kazim Ali’s term, not merely because Dodd engaged epistolary logics while composing across multiple genres. Such multigenre epistolary practices were not uncommon in the writing of nineteenth-century students. Rather, Dodd’s practices were genre-queer because of how he transferred his learning from civic to romantic domains, transgressed generic lines with a critical awareness that recognized generic distinctions but refused their boundaries, and, perhaps most important, did both in order to compose romantic relations that subverted the norms and conventions taught during the postal age.

Albert Dodd’s Multigenre Epistolary Rhetoric

Albert Dodd shared with Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus a close relationship to Hartford, Connecticut. Twenty-three years before the first of Brown’s extant letters to Primus, sent from Waterbury to Hartford, Dodd inscribed the opening pages of his commonplace book and poetry album “Albert Dodd / Washington College / Hartford, Conn.” (July 26; Jan. 1836). Like Primus, Dodd was from Hartford. He was born in 1818. But, like Brown, he died young. In 1844 he drowned while crossing the Mackinaw River on horseback. Although Dodd never married, Jonathan Katz has suggested that Dodd may have
been romantically involved with his law partner, Jesse W. Fell (31). Dodd’s obituary indicates that Jesse was present at a meeting called when Dodd died. Six months later, Jesse married for the first time, at the “advanced age of thirty-seven” (Katz 31).

Dodd’s obituary also references his studies at Washington and Yale, celebrating that “He was a finished classical scholar, well informed in general literature.” It was while a student at Washington that Dodd started writing in his commonplace book turned diary and in his album of poetry. The commonplace book suggests Dodd began his studies at Washington in 1834 (July 31, 1836). Dodd was later suspended from Washington following what Peter Gay has called “some disagreeable imbroglios with college authorities” (206)—or what Dodd himself termed the “Junior Rebellion” (Feb. 5, 1837). In 1837, after a nearly three-month silence between diary entries, Dodd wrote, “I have left Washington C. now, doubtful forever” (Feb. 2, 1837). He explained, “The causes which led the Faculty to punish me were mostly erroneous, but I own that I deserved what was inflicted, only, of the many dark deeds which were committed, they did not happen to hit upon the right ones, which by I should suffer.” The next day, Dodd continued, “Having expiated the reckless course of the last term by suspension I returned to College again, fully determined to behave tranquilly . . . nor make any more trouble” (Feb. 3, 1837). Determination was not enough, apparently, because another day later Dodd referred to “The affair which has now resulted in my second . . . suspension from College” (Feb. 4, 1837). In these same entries, Dodd also implied that one of the young men he was interested in romantically, John Heath, may have played some role in the suspension. But the precise “causes,” “affair,” or “rebellion” that led to Dodd’s suspension from Washington are unclear.

Dodd quickly resumed his studies at Yale. While the suspension “made a fuss at home” and “was the cause of . . . partial estrangement, on the part of John Heath, from me,” Dodd insisted, “I do not and did not care much for the suspension” (Feb. 2, 3, 1837). Nor did the suspension impede his educational advancement. Less than two weeks after first writing about the suspension, Dodd turned to plans to resume his studies at Yale. He wrote, “Here I am at home spending day after day and week after week in idlene[ss], when I ought to be ‘up and doing.’ If I expect to enter at Yale the next term, I have got much yet to do to gain an easy admission” (Feb. 14, 1837). While Dodd had “much yet to do” before his admission to Yale, this work was accompanied by the play of fantasy. Dodd fantasized about being a student at Yale with another of the young men who interested him romantically; “If he would only go to Yale now, and I too, how I should like it!” (Feb. 26, 1837). Just a few months later, Dodd reported that at least the latter half of his fantasy had come true. He located himself in New
Haven, noting, “Shall apply to be examined tomorrow,” and two days later “got through my examination and am a Junior at . . . Yale” (May 28, 30, 1837). Inside the front cover of his diary, Dodd entered a second inscription: “Albert Dodd / Yale University / New Haven, Conn.” (July 11, 1837). He successfully graduated with the class of 1838 (Catalogue 13).

I conducted research on Dodd in the Yale University Library’s Manuscripts and Archives, which holds the Albert Dodd Papers. The papers include Dodd’s commonplace book turned diary, his poetry album, and a few letters to family members from his post-Yale years. These materials are rich in their accounts of Dodd’s educational and romantic life while a student at both Yale and Washington. Unfortunately his romantic letters were not saved. However, Dodd did write about his romantic epistolary rhetoric within his diary. Like much nineteenth-century writing about same-sex romantic relations, Dodd’s diary is marked by intriguing absences and moments of self-censorship. There are places where he did not name “things” but instead referred to them with dashes or abbreviations. For example, in an entry about “things that trouble me particularly,” Dodd worried over “that —— which has long troubled me; and also ———. . . . Besides there is M. O. ——— I dare not write even here these things ——— which it is my prayer may soon be settled” (Feb. 5, 1837). There are also places where Dodd or someone else cut pages from the diary. In one of these instances, Dodd pondered his affections for a man and a woman: “it seems the nature of my affection . . . was really the same. . . . Yet one was for a female, the other for”—and it is precisely here that pages are cut from the diary (Feb. 7, 1837). Still, in many other portions of the diary, Dodd’s writing about his romantic relations and epistolary rhetoric remains available for study.

My analysis of Dodd’s romantic epistolary practices and rhetorical education is the first in the fields of rhetoric, communication, and composition. Yet, like that of Brown and Primus, Dodd’s writing has elicited attention from historians of sexuality and nineteenth-century romantic friendship. Katz and Gay, as well as E. Anthony Rotundo, have examined Dodd’s diary in order to account for how his same-sex relations with men constituted friendships romantic and even erotic in nature. Gay, for instance, highlighted a diary entry in which Dodd directly contemplated whether his feelings for Heath suggested more than friendship. Dodd wrote, “It is not friendship merely which I feel for him, or it is friendship of the strongest kind. It is a heart-felt, a manly, a pure, deep, and fervent love” (Feb. 4, 1837). Along similar lines, Rotundo pointed to diary entries in which Dodd admired Anthony Halsey’s physical appearance and described spending the night together, embracing and kissing (7). Dodd wrote, “Often too [Halsey] shared my pillow—or I his, and then how sweet to sleep with him, to hold his beloved form in my embrace, to have his arms about my neck, to imprint upon
“Somehow or other, queer in the extreme”

his face sweet kisses!” (Mar. 27, 1837). Katz considered these and other diary entries and, seeming to echo Karen Hansen on the relationship between Brown and Primus, concluded, “The intensity of Albert’s feelings exceeded romantic friendship by including an erotic element” (32).

While Dodd pursued romantic and erotic relations with men, these relations occurred alongside those with women. Dodd used the phrase “Dear, beloved trio” to refer to not only Heath and Halsey but also Julia Beers. In one of many diary reflections on his affections for both women and men, Dodd wrote, “L-o-v-e, love; what is love? I can’t describe it. All I know is that there are three persons in this world whom I have loved, and those are, Julia, John, & Anthony. Dear, beloved trio” (Mar. 24, 1837). While Dodd may have “loved” just “three persons” up to that point, he would go on to meet and write about romantic relations with Elizabeth Morgan and Jabez Smith. As Rotundo explained, “Albert’s romantic life . . . mixed male and female love objects,” such that “rapturous musings about John Heath mingled freely with love poems to a woman named Julia, and the journal entries which glowed with his passion for Anthony Halsey filled the same volumes as those which expressed his yearning for a beloved young lady named Elizabeth” (8). Katz similarly acknowledged that Dodd experienced “strong attraction to men as well as women” (32).

My work is obviously informed by these histories of sexuality and romantic friendship. But, like in my analysis of Brown and Primus’s romantic epistolary rhetoric, I again take a different approach. As a historian of rhetoric, I focus on Dodd’s rhetorical training and development of genre-queer epistolary rhetoric for composing romantic relations. I thus examine his seemingly private writing about his romantic epistolary rhetoric alongside his school-sponsored writing and accounts of educational experiences. Rather than reading his commonplace book, diary, and poetry album as evidence of the nature of his romantic and erotic feelings, I read the texts as multigenre epistolary rhetoric that was learned and crafted.

To understand how Dodd developed his multigenre epistolary practices, I identify potential relationships between what he learned at Washington and Yale and how he crafted his genre-queer romantic epistolary rhetoric. I study institutional records of instruction at Yale, consulting primary sources including annual catalogues as well as student and professor lecture notes, to piece together the specific features of Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education. I also examine Dodd’s diary account of his educational experiences at Yale and Washington. As Shirley Wilson Logan has emphasized, diaries are important to examine within histories of rhetorical education because learners both write about their “formal instruction” and “record . . . their self-education projects” (30). In this way, diaries may function as “evidence of enacted rhetorical education” (118).
Albert Dodd’s rhetorical education was, on the one hand, classically oriented for civic engagement, designed to prepare privileged men for participation as citizens and leaders. I consider this feature of Dodd’s training first because it is the one most widely emphasized within existing histories of rhetorical education, and he did go on to an expected career in law and politics. On the other hand, Dodd repurposed this training for civic engagement to romantic ends. His repurposing was likely enabled by two other features of his classically broad education: he studied not only treatises and oratory by Greek and Roman rhetors but also Greek and Latin literature; his practice in public oratory involved speaking as well as writing, in that he wrote a great deal as he prepared for debates and exhibitions about political questions. The breadth of Dodd’s rhetorical training across a range of different genres and purposes is significant because, as I later show, this breadth enabled him to transfer his learning from civic to romantic realms in order to develop genre-queer epistolary rhetoric.

**Orientation to Civic Participation**

Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical training was in keeping with Yale’s reputation. As Robert Connors recounts, then-president Jeremiah Day’s “Yale Plan was the touchstone of conservative classical college curricula in the nineteenth century” ("Day, Henry Noble" 161). According to John C. Brereton, the Yale report of 1828 favored classical education in general and classically modeled rhetorical education in particular (5–6). Especially early in the century, when Dodd studied at Yale, its rhetorical training may have come closer to following a classical model than any other institution in the U.S. collegiate system.

First and foremost, Dodd’s rhetorical education was classically modeled in its orientation to civic engagement. Such education had long trained privileged young men for civic participation via the senate, pulpit, or bar. These potential arenas for civic participation were taken up directly as a debate topic assigned by Rev. Chauncey A. Goodrich, the professor of rhetoric and oratory at Yale from 1817 to 1839 (Hoshor). Alongside other educational and political topics, he prompted students to debate “Which affords the greatest field for Oratory: the Pulpit or the Bar?” (Wightman).

Regardless of which side Dodd might have taken when debating this question in college, he later put his own rhetorical education in the service of civic engagement through the bar—as well as the beginnings of a career in politics.

Following his graduation from Yale, Dodd “pursued his legal studies with Hon. Mr. Ellsworth, and was admitted a few years since as an attorney at the Hartford county bar” (“Obituary”). “Determining to settle in the growing West,”
Dodd moved to St. Louis, Missouri, and then to Bloomington, Illinois, where “he opened a law office.” According to *Biographical Notes of Graduates of Yale College*, Dodd “prospered in his profession” there (Dexter 288). Dodd reported the same in a letter from Bloomington to his brother Edward. Dodd wrote, “in the legal line I can safely say I am doing very well” (Mar. 13, 1844).

Also in Bloomington, Dodd “took an active part in politics; and had promising prospects before him” (*Biographical Record* 53). In the same letter to Edward, Dodd went on: “As to my political debut it is not yet made, and I content myself with talking in favor of Van Buren, free trade &c., against Clay, a tariff &c. A number of my friends want me to run for the Legislature, and I should get the nomination” (Mar. 13, 1844). Dodd expressed some hesitation, having “hardly been [in Bloomington] long enough to push forward,” but resolved, “I am not at all concerned that I can do something in that line in the course of time.” Dodd’s lack of concern was warranted: “On the very day of his death, he was nominated by a convention which assembled at Bloomington, as a candidate for the State Legislature” (“Obituary”). Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education prepared him for civic participation in law and politics. His obituary thus characterized him as not only “a finished classical scholar” and “citizen” but also as “an attorney” and “candidate for the State Legislature.”

**Broad Study of “Rhetorical” and “Literary” Genres**

Part of how Dodd’s rhetorical education prepared him for this civic participation was through study of orators and rhetorical theorists concerned with legal and political affairs. But in addition to being classically oriented to civic engagement, his rhetorical education was also classically broad in its coverage of a range of genres. While he studied classical Greek and Roman rhetorical treatises, he did so alongside Greek and Latin literature. In other words, his familiarity with multiple genres included both those that are clearly “rhetorical” and those that are, in present-day terms, “literary.”

Certainly Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education paid considerable attention to classical oratory and rhetorical theory. Dodd studied Isocrates, Plato, and Quintilian. Most studied, though, were the Greek orator Demosthenes and the Roman orator Cicero, both statesmen whose rhetorical practice and theory were concerned largely with law and politics. According to Yale’s annual *Catalogue* from the academic year Dodd was admitted, “recitations in the books here specified” included, in the second part of the sophomore year, “Cicero’s Brutus” and “Select Orations of Demosthenes, begun”; in the third part of the sophomore year, “Select Orations of Demosthenes, finished” and “Cicero de Oratore, begun”; and, in the first part of junior year, “Cicero de Oratore, finished” (27–28). As the *Catalogue* indicated, Dodd would have been examined on this reading even though he entered Yale as a junior (25); his diary entries confirm he
did take an examination in order to enter Yale as a junior (May 28, 30, 1837). In addition to this reading for the examination and junior year, “A course of Lectures on the oration of Demosthenes for the crown, [was] delivered to members of the Senior Class” (Catalogue 28). Lecture notes by Professor Goodrich also suggest Dodd was trained in the oratory and rhetorical theory of Demosthenes and Cicero (Goodrich, “Family Papers”).

In keeping with Goodrich’s notes, those taken by another of his students, though predating Dodd, also reference Demosthenes (Wightman).

Nor was such training in classical rhetoric limited to Dodd’s time at Yale. In the “Preface” to the commonplace book he began while a student at Washington, he referenced Lord Chesterfield, who in one letter of advice to his son recommended, “pray read Cicero, *de Oratore*, the best book in the world to finish [an orator]” (July 29, 1836; Chesterfield 134). Just as Dodd’s study of classical oratory and rhetorical theory predated his time at Yale, it stayed with him following graduation. In his own letter of advice to his brother Julius, Dodd wrote a postscript that included “Cicero’s oratory” in a list of “good books to study” (Apr. 12, 1842).

Dodd was thoroughly learned in classical rhetorical theory and oratory, especially that of Cicero and Demosthenes.

Yet, with important implications for how he repurposed his rhetorical training to romantic ends, Dodd’s study of Greek and Roman political speeches and rhetorical theory was not distinct from Greek and Latin language and literature. At Yale, entering freshman were examined on not only Cicero but also “Virgil, Sallust, the Greek Testament, Dalzel’s Collectanea Graeca Minora . . . Andrews and Stodard’s Latin Grammar, Goodrich’s Greek Grammar, Latin Prosody, Writing Latin” (Catalogue 25). In addition to “a Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory,” the faculty included “a Professor of the Latin Language and Literature” and “a Professor of the Greek Language and Literature” (26). Required texts from across the years of instruction included “Folsom’s Livy,” “Adam’s Roman Antiquities,” “Xenophon’s Anabasis,” “Horace,” “Homer’s Iliad,” “The Captivi of Plautus,” “Tacitus,” “Select Tragedies, viz. the Prometheus of Aeschylus; Antigone and Electra of Sophocles; Alcestis of Euripides” (27).

Dodd’s own writing specified the literary sources he encountered during his studies. While he was at Yale, his poetry album cited the *Greek Anthology* as a source for lyric poems and epigrams. These include several attributed to the lyric poet Anacreon. Far from being rhetorically oriented to civic life, most of the poems included are about wine. For example, one translation begins as follows before turning to wine: “Why teach me the laws / And rhetorician’s rules, / And all the profitless / Learning of the schools” (Apr. 1838). Another entry in the poetry album is an epigram about wine and love: “Wine, and the baths, and love of ladies / Leads one quickest down to Hades” (Dec. 1838). During Dodd’s years at Washington, he also entered lyric poems in his album. His album includes
a “Translation from the Aeneid / Book fifth, line 835,” an epic by the Roman poet Virgil (Feb. 1834). Importantly, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, unlike the other poems mentioned, is concerned with politics. While including the tragic love story of Aeneas and Dido, the poem’s emphasis is on the Roman empire, political conflict, and war. Dodd’s poetry album also contains three translations of odes and epistle verses from another Augustan-era lyric poet, Horace: “Translations from Horace / Book 2nd, Ode 16th / To Grosphus,” and “Translations from Horace / Book 4th Ode 7th / To Torquatus” (Apr. 1836). Dodd’s poetry album indicates that his study of classical literature attended to epigrams and lyric poems taking the form of the epic, ode, and epistle. His classically modeled education exposed him to a wide range of texts, including those associated with both rhetoric and poetry. Not surprisingly, then, when Dodd wrote his letter of advice to Julius, his recommended list of “good books to study” included not only “Cicero’s oratory” but also “Virgil” (Apr. 12, 1841). Also not surprisingly, as Dodd developed multigenre rhetorical practices for participating in romantic life, these practices were both epistolary and poetic.

**Practice with Oratory and Writing**

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

At Yale, Dodd’s rhetorical education emphasized declamations, debates, and exhibitions as forms of training for public speaking. The *Catalogue* explained, “The Senior and Junior Classes have forensic Disputations once or twice a week, before their instructors. There are very frequent exercises in Declamation before the Tutors, before the Professor of Oratory, and before the Faculty and Students in the Chapel” (28). The importance of this training in public speaking was further underscored by awards “for declamation in public” (29). Dodd also gained practice with public speaking before becoming a student at Yale. During his period of suspension from Washington, an exhibition preoccupied him nearly as much as his romantic life. In fact, in a diary entry about his affections for women and men, he pondered, “I don’t know what; it may be this Exhibition which most occupies my mind at present” (Feb. 7, 1837). While the rest of this diary entry lends little credence to the possibility that the exhibition most occupied Dodd’s mind, there is no doubt that he thought and wrote of it often, variously referring to it as “W. C. P. Exhibition” and “the Panthenon [sic] Exhibition” (Feb. 5, 13; Mar. 19; Apr. 8, 1837). Perhaps because of his suspension, one entry
mentions needing to get “a final permit of the Faculty” in order to “speak at” the
exhibition (Mar. 19, 1837). In another, Dodd reported that he went “to College to
attend Society,” and he went on to describe a “debate,” which eventually turned
to “the question of putting off the exhibition,” suggesting that his participation
was related to membership in a debating society at Washington (Mar. 4, 1837). In
multiple entries, Dodd recorded that he had gone “to College” to prepare for the
exhibition and intended to complete the exhibition before turning his attention
to other activities, including studying for the Yale entrance examination (Feb. 5,
7, 13; Mar. 4; Apr. 2, 1837).

Exhibitions, debates, and declamations at Washington and Yale served as
practice in public speaking because they took place before audiences. Again, as
Yale’s Catalogue states, declamations were “in public,” and students frequently
spoke before the professor of oratory, before other instructors, tutors, and faculty,
and before fellow students (28–29). Dodd’s diary confirms that he spoke before
audiences. After the Washington exhibition, he concluded that his speaking
“went off well considering. The room was full, with an audience very select. On
the whole, I believe the audience was quite pleased” (Apr. 8, 1837). Of course, no
matter how “select” the audience was, this exhibition functioned as training for
speaking publicly before an audience.

Such rhetorical training prepared Dodd for speaking publicly on questions of
civic import. Certainly he encountered political speeches. For instance, on the
same day he recorded his final preparations for the Washington exhibition, he
remembered, “Last Wednesday went up to the City Hall to listen to Daniel Web-
ster’s speech” (Apr. 2, 1837). Dodd himself also spoke on and debated political
questions. The debate topics Professor Goodrich assigned at Yale are suggested by
the papers of another student of rhetoric. With few exceptions, almost all of the
topics had to do with education or politics (Wightman). Debates on education
included, for instance, “Ought the higher branches to be included in the educa-
tion of ladies?” and “Which is the most beneficial a public or private education?”
Examples of more overtly political topics were “Which is entitled to the most
honor—Columbus for discovering the new world—or Washington for preserv-
ing our Country?”; “Ought the United States to take possession of Cuba?”; and
“Ought free blacks in our country to be allowed the right of suffrage?” Dodd
presumably debated a similar range of educational and political topics, including
questions about what the country’s government and laws should do or support.

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

Also according to Dodd’s diary, much writing was involved in his preparations for the Washington exhibition. In one entry, after remarking that he had “done more [writing] in the past month or two,” he described in detail what exactly he had written: “Besides letters and this diary, I have scribbled a poem of 200 lines, for the Panthenon Exhibition, together with one or two smaller pieces in the rhyming line on various occasions. Then I finished a philosophical Colloquy which Gillett [probably another student] began, though I did more than three fourths of the whole, for the same exhibition, and now I have finished my comedy of about 45 pages letter paper. On the whole the goose quill has lately become more habituated to my hand, and writing has seemed to come more readily than in a long time before” (Feb. 14, 1837). By Dodd’s own account, preparing for an exhibition involved much writing, including writing across a range of genres. The exhibition functioned as training for public speaking in particular, as well as for writing “more readily” in general.

As I have detailed, Dodd’s rhetorical education was classically modeled: it was oriented to civic engagement through law and politics, included study of classical oratory and rhetorical theory, and provided training in public speaking on political questions. At the same time, his rhetorical education was classically broad: he studied Greek and Roman rhetoric alongside Greek and Latin language and literature and practiced oratory alongside writing. So even as his rhetorical education emphasized public discourse for participation in civic life, this education was broad in its exposure to multiple genres—for rhetoric and poetry, oratory and writing—with a range of purposes.

It was likely this exposure to and practice with multiple genres and purposes that enabled Dodd to repurpose his rhetorical education through “transfer” from civic to romantic domains. Studies of transfer emphasize that clear, one-to-one transfer of skills from one situation to another is difficult to capture in research and unlikely to occur within student writing (Brent, “Crossing Boundaries” 562). But what does transfer are “dispositions” or “habits of mind,” such as “rhetorical thinking” (Bereiter ctd. in Brent, “Crossing Boundaries” 563). The disposition that facilitates transfer involves “general rhetorical knowledge,” “wide-ranging and flexible” rhetorical thinking, and “rhetorical awareness” (Brent, “Transfer, Transformation, and Rhetorical Knowledge” 411;
“Crossing Boundaries” 565). Dodd developed such flexible rhetorical thinking and awareness through his classically modeled and broad rhetorical training, and he transferred this awareness from civic to romantic domains of rhetorical participation.27

**Genre-Queer Practices for Romantic Engagement**

Dodd repurposed his broad training to develop four queer rhetorical practices for participating in romantic relations. Having encountered examples of same-sex attraction and homoerotic relations in classical texts, he wrote about them as a strategy for composing rhetorics to compare and deliberate about his nonnormative romantic epistolary relations with men and women. He also transferred his flexible rhetorical awareness in order to make a generic shift from composing a school-sponsored commonplace book to writing a diary. This generic shift enabled further rhetorical invention, as he wrote about romantic epistolary exchanges and even practiced direct epistolary address within his diary. Finally, he experimented in the diary as well as a poetry album with forms of romantic address and exchange that were simultaneously epistolary and poetic. He developed these multigenre practices with awareness of his moves between generic categories. Such moves are “genre-queer” in that, even as Dodd recognized generic distinctions, he resisted the normative boundaries that might limit practices of and related to epistolary rhetoric (Ali 36). It is in these ways that his multigenre epistolary rhetoric was “somehow or other, queer in the extreme” (Apr. 1836).

**Composing Self-Rhetorics on Literary Representations of Same-Sex Erotic Relations**

My analysis of the relationship between Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education and his queer practices begins in a predictable place, with his writing about representations of same-sex erotic relations. The homoerotic undercurrents throughout classical education, rhetoric, and literature are well established.28 It comes as no surprise, then, that Dodd read, translated, and wrote about texts that include representations of same-sex relations. Recall, for instance, some of his references discussed already. Depending on the specific texts Dodd had in mind when making these references, he may have found homoerotic representations in works as varied as those by Demosthenes and Virgil as well as the Greek Anthology.29 Most relevant to Dodd’s romantic epistolary rhetoric addressed to young men and women, however, was his writing about the Greek myth of Zeus and Ganymede. This myth first appeared in Greek literature in Homer’s Iliad, which was required reading for Yale students (Catalogue 27). By “the beginning of the thirteenth century,” Byrne Fone has explained, Ganymede “had become the eponymous symbol for homosexual love,” and “later readers generally interpreted the story to be a founding myth of male love” (16, 107).
Dodd’s reference to this myth of male love appears in “The disgrace of Hebe & preferment of Ganymede,” a rhymed verse in his poetry album (Dec. 1837). In Dodd’s verse, Jove “had a dinner / . . . all of the gods, male and female, present were,” and “The radiant Hebe, all blooming in beauty, / Was flying about, performing her duty / As cupbearer.” Although “accustomed was she to the business . . . she hit / her foot against Mercury’s wand.” As she “fell,” “her robes” opened, and “those parts were exhibited / To show which by modesty’s law is prohibited.” Jove, “vex’d at this breach of decorum . . . sent her away in disgrace,” and “Ganymede he sent for, to serve in her place. / Which station forever he afterword had, / Though to cut Hebe out so in fact was too bad.” In this rendition of the myth of Zeus and Ganymede, Dodd located a story about the replacement of Hebe by Ganymede, about her “disgrace” and his “preferment.”

It is noteworthy that this myth even offers an example of same-sex erotic relations, which certainly were not modeled within nineteenth-century letter-writing manuals. Of greater significance, though, is how Dodd may have drawn on the story about the “preferment of Ganymede” over Hebe in order to understand his own affections for men and women. The story in Dodd’s verse not only references the early myth but also bears thematic resemblance to Hebe and Ganymede, a poem from the Middle Ages that “is an example of an extensive debate literature that argued the merits of desire for boys and that for women” (Fone 107). In Dodd’s diary, he certainly debated with himself about the relationship between his affections for young men and for young women.

In characterizing Dodd’s writing as a debate with himself, I have in mind Kimberly Harrison’s concept of “self-rhetorics.” Self-rhetorics include “self-persuasion,” which is “evidenced and carried out by the self-talk” used in diaries, yet “aim[ed] toward rhetorical performance” (Rhetoric of Rebel Women 15–16). In this way, diarists may act as what Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca have called “self-deliberators”: those who “serve as their own audiences, arguing for a particular understanding of their experiences in the same way that they might with another person” (ctd. in Logan 34). Self-rhetorics include such self-deliberation but, again, are “directed” not only “to the internal audience of the self” but also “to external audiences,” insofar as writers use the diary addressed to the self to prepare for addresses to others (7). In Dodd’s case, he composed self-rhetorics in his diary to deliberate over how to understand his feelings for men and women as well as to prepare for the performances of his rhetorical self within epistolary rhetoric directed outward to audiences.

Dodd’s deliberations drew on basic rhetorical strategies of comparison and definition. For example, in the diary entry that is most widely cited by historians, he had written, “it seems the nature of my affection for A. H. and J. F. H. was really the same as that which I had for Julia. Yet one was for a female, the other
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for . . .” (Feb. 7, 1837). Here someone cut pages from the diary, but, as Katz has noted, “Obviously, ‘a male’ completed the thought. . . . Albert was struck by the similarity of his ‘affection’ for men and for women” (28). Dodd did point to the similarity—“it seems the nature of my affection . . . was really the same”—but what seems to have “struck” him, I would say, is that such affection was the same even though “one was for a female, the other for. . . .”34 In another entry comparing further his feelings for men and women, Dodd asked, “what is love?” He responded with the already mentioned declaration of his “Dear, beloved trio”—Heath, Halsey, and Beers—the “three persons in this world whom I have loved” (Mar. 24, 1837). Just days before, however, Dodd had described his love for Halsey as greater than that for Heath. Dodd wrote that Halsey “lately seems to have occupied my thoughts more than J. H. and I feel as if I loved him more ardently and intensely than John. I do perhaps; but both are very dear to me” (Mar. 21, 1837). In this moment of ranking, Beers received no mention. Rather than defining what love is, Dodd admitted that he could not “describe it” and wrote instead to compare his feelings.

It is in light of how he debated his affections and even the possibility of preferring Halsey to the other members of the beloved trio that Dodd’s entry of “The disgrace of Hebe & preferment of Ganymede” takes on rhetorical significance. As Katz has explained, “Considering Albert’s cutting out Julia for John, Anthony, and Jabez, the poem shows him employing ancient Greek myth, and the iconic, man-loving Ganymede to help him comprehend his own shifting, ambivalent attractions” (31). Dodd “began to use his knowledge of ancient affectionate and sexual life to come to terms with his own,” Katz continued, and this was “a common strategy of . . . upper-class, college-educated white men” during the early nineteenth century. I similarly understand Dodd’s engagement with classical texts and their representations of same-sex affection. He referenced the Greek myth of Zeus and Ganymede, which suggests possibilities for same-sex relations that, occurring alongside relations with women, show some preference for men.35 In this way, Dodd repurposed his classically modeled rhetorical education to romantic ends. Having studied a broad range of classical texts, he encountered homoerotic representations of same-sex relations. He engaged with these representations in order to compose self-rhetorics, through which he compared his feelings for the men and women to whom he addressed romantic epistolary rhetoric.

Shifting Genres from Commonplace Book to Diary

In addition to representations of same-sex relations, Dodd’s classically modeled rhetorical education exposed him to rhetorical practices in multiple genres for a range of purposes. In the second practice I consider, Dodd transferred his learned genre awareness and disposition to “rhetorical thinking” in order to transgress
boundaries among the commonplace book, diary, and romantic epistolary rhetoric (Brent, “Crossing Boundaries” 563). Dodd purposefully shifted from composing a school-sponsored commonplace book to a semiprivate diary. This change in genre was significant because, as I consider next, the shift enabled Dodd’s writing about romantic epistolary rhetoric.

Dodd was encouraged to keep a commonplace book as part of his education. In keeping with how this book has been categorized by Yale archivists, historians of sexuality and romantic friendship treat the book simply as a diary. Yet Dodd’s initial intention to compose not a diary but a commonplace book is clearly marked. One of the pages just inside the front cover is inscribed, “My / Original / Common Place Book.” As Dodd outlined in his “Preface” to the commonplace book, a professor at Washington suggested the practice of commonplacing, which Dodd eventually took up as a project of self-education in order to improve his writing: “It has seemed to me, reflecting oft and deeply on the necessity of acquiring a proficiency in composition, that the end would be best attained by spending a small portion of each day, if possible, in writing down my thoughts, currente calamo, freely and at random, on any subject which may arise in my mind. This plan was recommended to our Class by Proff. H. some time ago, and though, until now, by me rejected, yet it is not too late now to attempt to profit by the suggestion” (July 29, 1836).

Commonplace books such as Dodd’s played an important role in Western rhetorical education that may be traced from Aristotle to Quintilian and throughout medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment education. As Susan Miller has described, commonplace books were first conceived of as “repositories for rhetoric’s common topics” (22). Especially by the nineteenth century, though, commonplace books included not only “the copied quotations that first defined their purpose” but also “notes, self- and school-sponsored essays, journals, correspondence, speeches, legal documents, school exercises, and many other familiar forms” (35). Commonplace books functioned as a practice space to prepare students for discursive participation in more public forums.36

In keeping with this rhetorical tradition, Dodd’s commonplace book consists primarily of what seem like self- and school-sponsored essays. In spite of his stated aim to compose currente calamo, offhand and without premeditation, he “confined himself” in early entries “in the somewhat stilted way of someone following formulas” (Gay 206). There are five dated entries following Dodd’s “Preface” and prior to his generic shift.37 In all, he maintained his commonplace book for just over three months, with one of the entries about his inattention to the book. Then, after complete inattention over the course of almost four months, Dodd made his generic shift from the commonplace book to a diary.

Whereas Dodd started his commonplace book at the suggestion of a professor, it was reading the diary of one of his romantic interests, Heath, that “gave [Dodd]
the notion” to turn the book into a diary (Feb. 2, 1837). This generic shift, like his initial purpose, is clearly marked. After the last commonplace book entry, he drew a line, left the rest of the page blank, and entered a new inscription: “Diary.” Such a shift within the same book was not uncommon. Citing Dodd’s diary as one example, Ronald Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray have traced the complex ways people “recognized [the] distinct form and purpose” of different genres, yet “in practice . . . often merged formats, so that a diary, for example, could easily morph into a scrapbook, or a scrapbook into a commonplace book” (“Is It a Diary?” 106, 102). As Zboray and Zboray asserted, “the very moment these documents shift form or genre is often ripe with significance” (103). The moment of Dodd’s generic shift was indeed significant to his genre-queer epistolary rhetoric.

Dodd’s generic shift from a commonplace book to a diary was significant because, in writing meta-commentary about the shift, he demonstrated the sort of “rhetorical thinking” and awareness of genre that he had learned—a rhetorical awareness that guided his subsequent multigenre epistolary practices. In addition to marking his shift from commonplace book to diary with blank pages and distinct genre-based titles, he described the shift in the first entry following the new title page. With characteristic self-admonishment for laziness, Dodd began, “The plan which I had laid out for this book, in my preface, seems not to have been followed very closely or faithfully and the reason is sheer neglect and laziness on my part. I am perfectly ashamed of myself, for the last date here is months ago. I might have filled this by the present time if I had done as I ought, and I will strive after this—but I won’t make any rash promises; it will be better to scribble along when convenient, and, by the way, it appears to me that it might be better that this volume should rather partake of the nature of a Diary, than to be followed out exactly after the manner which I first proposed to myself” (Feb. 2, 1837). Dodd’s account, in spite of his use of the passive voice, shows him making a purposeful decision about switching from a commonplace book to a diary. He acknowledged the possibility of returning to his earlier proposal with greater determination and discipline. But rather than promising to do so, he decided to “scribble along when convenient.” He recognized that his decision constituted a shift in genre: away from the commonplace book he “proposed” in his “Preface,” toward “a Diary.”

In writing meta-commentary about his decision to make this shift, Dodd demonstrated the sort of flexible and rhetorically oriented genre awareness developed through his classically broad training in a range of genres. He also demonstrated his learned rhetorical awareness of how a shift in genre involves a shift in purposes for writing. This same awareness would guide Dodd’s subsequent practices. Rather than shifting from the commonplace book to the diary in a way that maintained clear distinctions between those two genres, his move to compose a diary gave way to still other genre-queer practices.
Dodd’s third genre-queer practice involved writing in his diary about romantic epistolary address and exchange. To some extent, he wrote about romantic epistolary rhetoric in keeping with the conventional purpose of the diary genre: “to record daily events” (Zboray and Zboray, “Is It a Diary?” 102). For instance, he reported on trips to the post office, letters sent, and letters received (June 16, 1837). He wrote about romantic epistolary exchanges with Beers, Halsey, Heath, Morgan, and Smith. Particularly in the case of this romantic epistolary rhetoric, Dodd described delight at those letters received and anxiously awaited others. In the span of just one month, he wrote, “Yesterday I received a welcome letter from John H. which I have been anxiously looking for. . . . Why don’t my dear Tony answer my letter? I do long to hear from him again”; then, “Expect letters from . . . Heath . . . & Halsey. Why don’t they write!”; and finally, “got a letter from Anthony, a very long and interesting one. . . . What a good fine hearted dear fellow Anthony is! I love him beyond all expression” (Mar. 21; Apr. 16, 17, 1837). Here Dodd’s use of the diary to record the sending and receiving letters was generically conventional. Yet this record is indispensable in the absence of extant romantic correspondence, because it identifies with whom Dodd exchanged his romantic letters. Dodd’s record is also suggestive of how his romantic epistolary rhetoric defied generic conventions by addressing multiple suitors, women and men, at the same time.

More inventive than Dodd’s diary writing about letter writing, though, was his genre-queer practice of using the diary to do, or enact, romantic epistolary rhetoric. His diary functioned as a site of rhetorical invention in that he used it to develop and enact romantic epistolary practices of address. Operating according to an epistolary logic, he experimented with composing direct epistolary address in his diary in order to address Heath in ways he reported not daring to through actual letters. Dodd’s diary suggests that, while he was open about the intensity of his feelings when writing to Halsey and Smith, his letters to Heath were more guarded. Consider, for instance, the diary entry in which Dodd explored his love for Heath, contemplating how it “is not friendship merely. . . . It is a heart-felt, a manly, a pure, deep, and fervent love” (Feb. 4, 1837). Dodd hoped he would see Heath again and then shifted to direct address: “shall I never see him again? O that I could! ‘John, dear John, I love you, indeed I love you. But you are not here, you cannot hear me confess this too [sic] you, a confession which perhaps you would care not for.’” Dodd did more than write about his love for Heath; he declared this love by using the rhetorical figure of apostrophe to compose second-person address with the salutation-like “dear.” Dodd further distinguished this romantic epistolary address from the rest of the diary entry by
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using quotation marks. He also wrote with rhetorical awareness of Heath's inability to “hear” his epistolary confession of feelings, because it was made within the genre of the diary.

In the rest of this diary entry, Dodd returned to an account of events and described further his feelings for Heath, referring to Heath in the third person. In the final sentence, Dodd hoped “that we may meet again” but concluded, “in the meantime, we can write to each other and thus renew that intercourse which has been so inconspicuously broken off.” It is not just that Heath could not “hear” Dodd’s confession, for Heath would not read it either. While Dodd wrote to Heath, he did not use epistolary address to declare his romantic feelings within letters he intended to exchange with Heath. Instead, he used his diary to practice the epistolary address he would not compose in actual letters. His awareness here of the relationship between different genres and their audiences was learned through his formal rhetorical education and further developed through his diary writing about romantic epistolary rhetoric.

Nor was this use of the diary to compose epistolary address an isolated instance. In another entry, Dodd reflected on “the beloved form” of Heath, imagining him “in my presence” (Feb. 19, 1837). Shifting to direct address, Dodd asked, “Shall I never see you again dear John?” He lamented that, when they were in Heath’s room together, talking “freely,” “I ought to have told him of my deep and burning affection for him. . . . John I love you much, do you love me?” Of course Dodd expected no answer because he wrote aware that, regardless of how he might address Heath through the genre of the diary, he did not and would not do so through conversation or letters: “I never did tell John this, and perhaps it is all for the best; but John, here, in my private volume, whose pages shall be surveyed by no eyes, here in the receptacle of my passing thoughts, here do I repeat my secret avowal of deep, devoted attachment; my friend, companion . . . sole inhabitant of my heart” (Feb. 19, 1837). While Dodd did not expect Heath to read the direct address and declarations of love, he used apostrophe and the multigenre practice of composing epistolary address within a private diary in order to say to Heath what he could not bring himself to say otherwise. But, however clear Dodd’s awareness was about the diary as a “private” genre for making “secret” avowals, the limits of the diary’s guaranteed privacy are also clear. Here two more pages were cut from the diary (though not necessarily by Dodd), and the remaining pages are publicly available to present-day researchers. Still, in his genre-queer practice, Dodd composed romantic epistolary address to Heath not within letters but within what he intended to be a private diary.

It is possible Dodd also used the diary to practice and prepare for romantic epistolary address that did find its way into letters. He certainly used the diary to address other romantic interests, such as Halsey, with whom Dodd seems to have been more open about his feelings. In the entry about his “Dear, beloved trio,”
Dodd declared his “love” for Halsey in the third person. Dodd then turned to a second-person, epistolary-like address, with “Tony, How I long to see you, to embrace you, to press you to my bosom, my own dear Tony!” (Mar. 24, 1837). A few days later, Dodd again turned from writing about to writing to Halsey: “Dear, dearest Anthony! Thou are mine own friend, my most beloved of all! To see thee again! What rapture it would be, thou sweet, lovely, dear, beloved, beautiful, adored Anthony!” (Mar. 27, 1837). Of course, this extant romantic address is in Dodd’s diary, but in this case the diary may have functioned much like a school-sponsored commonplace book, as a practice ground for more “public” writing, for composing address in actual epistolary rhetoric. In the same entry, Dodd referred to his ongoing epistolary exchange with Halsey: “I must write to him soon in answer to his last letter.” Moreover, in Dodd’s diary writing about Halsey, unlike that about Heath, there is no indication Dodd held back in expressing his feelings. This romantic epistolary address that he composed in his commonplace book turned diary may have found its way into his answer to Halsey’s letter.

Dodd’s genre-queer practice of composing romantic epistolary address within a diary emerged from his school-sponsored commonplace book. He started with the commonplace book genre, typical to classically modeled rhetorical training and recommended within his formal education. Then, informed by his learned rhetorical awareness of genre, purpose, and audience, he transferred this training to make an intentional shift from a commonplace book to a diary. Having made this shift, he operated according to an “epistolary logic,” using the diary to write about romantic epistolary rhetoric and even to enact romantic epistolary address (Spring, “Seemingly Uncouth Forms” 638).

Mixing Epistolary and Poetic Address and Exchange

Dodd also enacted romantic epistolary rhetoric through poetic forms. Enabled by his broad training in a range of genres, he developed a fourth genre-queer practice of composing romantic epistolary address and exchange that crossed the generic lines that separated letters, poetry, and epistle verse. The genres Dodd encountered through his classically broad education included lyric poetry in the form of the ode, as previously discussed, as well as the epistle verse. Epistle verses are, quite simply, poems of direct address that read as letters. The two most influential strands within the Western epistle verse tradition are those following Ovid, more known for verses that take up questions of romance and love, and Horace, for those that take up questions of morality and philosophy (France 516–21). Descriptions in Yale’s Catalogue suggest that Dodd studied the epistle verses of Horace, who was listed as required reading throughout the curriculum (27). The influence of Horace is also evident in Dodd’s poetry album (Apr. 1836). Yet, even as evidence suggests he studied Horace rather than Ovid, Dodd drew on what he learned about epistle verse to compose specifically romantic address.
In addition to writing in his diary about composing romantic epistolary rhetoric, Dodd recounted addressing and exchanging what he called the “poetique.” French for the adjectives “poetic” and “poetical,” the term “poetique” was used by Dodd as a noun, seemingly to mean writing with a close relationship to the romantic letter genre. He claimed on multiple occasions to write a poetique to the young men he was interested in romantically. In one of these diary entries, Dodd mentioned the poetique alongside other genres he encountered and practiced through his classically modeled rhetorical education. After remarking that he had a “debate” to write, Dodd continued, “I have also to write a ‘poetique’ to John Heath, besides numerous other epistles” (June 18, 1837). When Dodd later reported on having written the poetique, he seemed to make a greater distinction between it and other epistolary rhetoric: “I have got a letter from Jabe Smith. Have written a ‘poetique’ to J. Heath, a letter home for money, and one to the Tailor for a coat before the fourth of July” [June 27, 1837]. Dodd represented the poetique as a form of writing that, even if not the same as a letter, operated according to an “epistolary logic”: he addressed the poetique to other men and exchanged it with them as one would a romantic letter (Spring, “Seemingly Uncouth Forms” 638).

Dodd’s poetry album includes romantic poems also framed by an epistolary logic of address. In keeping with the epistle verse tradition, poems such as “To Elizabeth” are titled with a direct address (June 1838). Others, though not titled with direct address, address Dodd’s romantic interests by name. Within one of many entries simply titled “Stanzas,” the speaker begins, “To Love!” (June 1835). But the poem soon addresses the woman of Dodd’s “Dear, beloved trio,” Beers, with language characteristic of his diary entries about love: “to be beloved, / what rapture to the soul it gives! / . . . / sincerely, deeply, ardently, with pure affection . . . / . . . / Yes Julia I do love thee.” In the concluding stanza, Dodd wrote, “I adore thee; I confess / the sincere feelings of my heart,” even “though my words my thoughts express” not “with Sapphic art” (June 1835). In poems like these, Dodd declared his feelings in ways that blurred generic lines between poetic and epistolary address. The poems betrayed his awareness of both generic overlap and generic distinction. He saw a relationship between the letter and poetry, but he recognized that his own “words,” his attempt at romantic address both epistolary and poetic, was not exactly “Sapphic art” (June 1835).

Somewhat ironically given Dodd’s reference to Sappho, the celebrated Greek poet of same-sex love, his extant poems that are framed by an epistolary logic generally appear to have addressed women readers. But these poems are queer in other ways, in that they transgress generic boundaries between epistolary rhetoric and poetry. Most queer is the poem “Epistolary,” which Dodd himself characterized as “queer in the extreme” (Apr. 1836). Like the “Stanzas,” “Epistolary” is framed by an epistolary logic of address, not through direct address in the title.
but internally; Dodd began its ninth stanza, “And dearest Julia.” Beyond this epistolary address, and in spite of its normatively opposite-sex construction, the poem is indeed queer. In this poem, rather than simply writing in keeping with the epistle verse tradition, Dodd used meta-commentary and the rhetorical figure of digression to call attention to what he found “queer”—and what I characterize as “genre-queer”—about his multigenre practice.

Dodd’s learned and transferable genre awareness is evident throughout this poem, as he highlighted the generic tensions in what he called an “epistolary rhyme”: tensions between the conventions for epistolary rhetoric and those for rhyming verse. His title for the poem, “Epistolary,” obviously emphasizes epistolary rhetoric, whereas the writing itself is located within his poetry album and, consisting of twelve numbered stanzas of eight lines each, clearly takes the form of a poem. He began in keeping with the conventions for letters, by locating himself in time and place, and then, in the next line, made a move characteristic of the piece, by calling attention to what he had just done: “At Greenvale, Hartford, in Connecticut, / This nineteenth day, of April . . . eight- / teen hundred thirty six . . . / . . . / . . . is the date. / Both as to . . . time / And place, of this epistolary rhyme.” Also characteristically, Dodd’s meta-commentary included a digressive parenthetical. He interrupted the provision of location and date, noting that he wanted “(a rhyme . . . in that third line, but / . . . cannot find a good one).” This parenthetical underscores the requirements of epistolary rhetoric—location and date—and those of poetic verse—rhyming lines.

Dodd used the figure of digression to highlight tensions regarding other conventions for content, representing the requirements of verse as interrupting those of the letter. He began the second stanza, “But stop: that verse, before I farther go, / If you have no particular objection, / Requires as it doth seem to me, although / ’Tis right enough, a little circumspection.” After offering this circumspection, he explicitly called it a “digression.” In the ninth stanza, he returned from his poetic digression to direct address, writing, “And dearest Julia now I turn to thee, / Since this long preface I am safely through.” Dodd devoted the rest of the poem to content conventional for romantic letters. The speaker asks Beers how she is, what news she has, and how her family, cat, and dog are. As the piece begins to close, Dodd promised to write again “another day,” and he requested, “in the mean time I do hope and pray / that I from you a letter may receive, / relief to my anxiety to give.”

Finally, Dodd did close with another direct epistolary address and even a form of signature: “Julia, now farewell! / . . . / . . . / . . . / . . . I now have got / unto the end . . . / . . . I am ever yours, A. D.” Yet again, Dodd used meta-commentary to emphasize the strangeness of his generic experiment. It is after declaring he has come to “the end” but before the signature that he interrupted
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with “which seemeth odd to me.” And it is just before this final stanza that he remarked, “This verse though, by the way, to me doth seem / somehow or other, queer in the extreme.” Throughout this romantic epistolary rhyme, Dodd drew on the epistle verse traditions he had encountered through his classically broad education in rhetoric and literature. With a flexible rhetorical knowledge from broad educational experiences with a range of genres, he transferred what he had learned in order to compose multigenre romantic address to Beers that was queerly epistolary and poetic—that was genre-queer in its refusal to become “stuck in a sense of separation between genres, as in gender binaries” (Ali 36).

All four of Dodd’s genre-queer practices repurposed his rhetorical education. This formal training prepared him for civic engagement in keeping with classically modelled rhetorical education as well as nineteenth-century expectations for privileged white men. Although he met these expectations by pursuing a career in law and politics, he queered cultural norms in other ways. His diary suggests that his romantic epistolary rhetoric was queer in its defiance of the genre conventions widely taught by nineteenth-century manual culture. Moreover, his multigenre epistolary practices queerly transgressed generic lines. Dodd’s commonplace book, diary, and poetry album were not only multigenre but genre-queer: he crossed generic lines with a rhetorical awareness that refused closure for generic distinctions, and he did so to compose nonnormative romantic relations with men and women. In transferring what he had learned at Washington and Yale, Dodd also crossed normative lines between romantic and civic life: he transferred what he had learned through his rhetorical education for civic engagement to develop his rhetorical practices for romantic engagement.

Rhetorically Situating Letters within Networks of Related Genres

This analysis of Albert Dodd’s rhetorical education and genre-queer practices, like that of Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus’s romantic epistolary rhetoric, holds implications for interdisciplinary histories of sexuality. In addition to the proposition that we read romantic letters as crafted and learned epistolary rhetoric, my queer history of rhetorical education suggests another way to nuance interpretations of letters, through greater attention to their significance within networks of other related genres. The need for such attention is clear within scholarly interpretations of Dodd’s multigenre epistolary practices. Like histories of nineteenth-century romantic friendship between women, histories of romantic friendship between men examine their letters to consider whether their romantic relations involved erotic and sexual contact, as well as to determine the degree to which the relations were accepted socially. These same two questions were pursued by Peter Gay, Jonathan Katz, and E. Anthony Rotundo as they drew on Dodd’s diary, commonplace book, poetry album, and familial letters.
as evidence of his romantic feelings and relations. But here I consider Dodd’s multigenre epistolary rhetoric in relation to a third point of interpretive debate—whether romantic relations between men were limited to youth.

Rotundo has argued that what distinguished romantic friendships between men, otherwise similar to those between women, was confinement to one phase of life, the period of youth between boyhood and manhood. In a study of multiple friendships between young men, Rotundo characterized youth as a key feature of relationships that, by definition, served “the needs of young men at a perilous time of transition” (21). But in the case of Dodd, Rotundo came to this conclusion on the basis of his interpretation of Dodd’s diary and letters and without consideration of the rhetorical complexities of related genres. Here I examine how Rotundo, along with Gay and Katz, has read Dodd’s writing as evidence of whether his romantic relations with men continued after graduation from Yale. I show how their approaches to interpreting Dodd’s writing may be complicated by reading it as rhetorically situated in relation to multiple genres.

Rotundo’s assertion that Dodd’s romantic relations with men were limited to his youth is based on a comparison between Dodd’s diary writing about his romantic relations with men while a college student and his few extant letters to family members during his postcollege years. Contrasting Dodd’s diary and letters, Rotundo asserted that Dodd’s “correspondence grew impersonal and showed no indication of the romantic passions he had experienced just a few years before” (17). This interpretation fits with Rotundo’s broader observation across instances of romantic friendship between men, that such relationships were confined to youth. Yet Rotundo’s conclusion seems to rely on a reading of secondary rather than primary materials. Instead of citing the primary materials as examined through archival research, he accounted for them through citation of Gay’s research (7, 23 n. 26). Gay speculated that Dodd’s participation in romantic relations with men may have ceased following his graduation from Yale in 1838. According to Gay, “It seems probable . . . —we cannot be sure—that [Dodd’s] masculinity triumphed over his homosexual appetites” (211). To support this hypothesis, Gay drew on Dodd’s epistolary rhetoric addressed to family following graduation. Just three letters are available: one to his brother Julius in 1841, one to his mother in 1843, and another to his brother Edward in 1844. As Gay rightly noted, Dodd wrote nothing of his romantic life in these letters, and his advice to Edward emphasized control and emotional “self-mastery” (211). It is by contrasting this epistolary rhetoric with Dodd’s diary that Gay supports his proposal, that Dodd’s masculinity “triumphed over” his homosexual desires, “just as his programmatic even temper overcame his intermittent depressions” (211).

In speculating that Dodd later overcame the “homosexual appetites” of his college years and especially in basing this suggestion on a comparison between Dodd’s diary and his later letters, Gay showed less rhetorical awareness of genre
than Dodd himself learned through his formal rhetorical education at Washington and Yale. In Gay’s triumph hypothesis—as well as Rotundo’s repetition of it—both historians seem to have ignored the differences and relationships between the genres of the diary and the letter, as well as between the subgenres of the romantic letter and the familial letter. Certainly we can expect that Dodd would write much more about his romantic life in a diary than he would in epistolary rhetoric addressed to family members. And certainly we can expect that Dodd’s letters to family, especially his letter of advice to a brother, would demonstrate greater emotional control than is evident in his relatively private diary, particularly given that the letter is dated more than five years after the last diary entry (Mar. 13, 1844; Oct. 14, 1837). In other words, Dodd’s letters did not “grow impersonal” about his romantic life; all of his extant letters to family were more impersonal than his diary on that particular subject. While Dodd probably experienced growth between 1837 and 1844 in any number of ways, the most significant differences between his diary and his letters to family are generic differences. These generic differences across the primary materials available do not disprove Gay’s hypothesis. But nor do they support any claim that Dodd may have “triumphed” over his romantic and erotic attractions to men.

Katz’s very different interpretation of the primary materials underscores that the question of whether Dodd’s romantic relations with men were confined to his youth is a matter of speculation, which cannot be resolved through readings of his extant writing. In contrast with Gay, Katz wrote, “That Albert perhaps found the reciprocal love he sought is hinted at in his later history” (31). Katz recited the familiar account of Dodd’s post-Yale years but added that Dodd “became a law partner of the bachelor Jesse W. Fell” (31). Here Katz cited his sources from extended research about Fell, claiming that, the year Dodd died, Fell “personally carried Albert’s private papers (including, apparently, his diary) to Albert’s father in the East” (31, 354–45 n. 11). Katz’s suggestion about what “perhaps” transpired between Dodd and Fell makes clear, particularly in contrast with the hypothesis of Gay and Rotundo, how inconclusive the primary materials are with respect to Dodd’s postcollege romantic relations.

While I raise questions about Gay’s and Rotundo’s interpretations of Dodd’s extant epistolary rhetoric, I want to emphasize that my own research would have been impossible were it not for their and Katz’s prior work. Nor is it my intention to offer an alternative argument about whether Dodd’s romantic relations with men were confined to his youth. Rather, I mean to show how interpreting Dodd’s multigenre epistolary rhetoric may be approached differently. Specifically, I urge that we rhetorically situate letters within a broader network of genres and subgenres. Dodd developed rhetorical awareness of genre through his formal education at Washington and Yale, and he drew on this awareness in developing multigenre and genre-queer practices for composing romantic epistolary
rhetoric. As historians interpret his writing, attention must be paid to his learned rhetorical awareness and to the complexity of his practices between and across different genres and subgenres. In this way, both rhetorical studies of genre and histories of rhetorical education have much to offer histories of romance and sexuality through rhetorically attuned frameworks for further historicizing the texts of intimate life. How might we read such texts within the context of not only genre-specific instruction but also networks of other related genres?

The multigenre epistolary rhetoric left behind by Dodd offers a rare glimpse into his rhetorical thinking and generic practices across civic and romantic domains. Even as his formal rhetorical education for civic engagement seemed to enable his epistolary practices for romantic engagement, Dodd repurposed this training to queer ends, defying normative genre conventions for epistolary rhetoric as well as the normative objectives of civic instruction. In this sense, his rhetorical practices, like those of Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus, may be read as a “queer art of failure” (Halberstam, *Queer Art*). I gesture next toward still other implications of queer failure for future histories of rhetorical education for romantic engagement.