



# Friendship's Bonds: Democracy and the Novel in Victorian England

*Richard Dellamora*

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What is the connection between citizenship and friendship in Victorian fiction? Why do Victorian writers use the portrayal of relations between mentor and protégé as a way of meditating on the possibilities of democratic governance? In *Friendship's Bonds*, Richard Dellamora revisits the classical and Victorian dream that a just society would be one governed by friends. In the actual struggle over who should or should not be eligible for the rights of citizenship, however, the ideal of fraternity was troubled by anxieties about the commingling of populations and the possible conversion of male intimacy into sexual anarchy.

Focusing on the writings of Benjamin Disraeli as well as those of his leading political rival, William Gladstone, Dellamora considers how sodomitic intimations inflect debates on the enfranchisement of Jews as well as artisans, women, and the Irish during the period. Examining works as various as Karl Marx's essay on the Jewish Question, Victorian Bible commentaries, and novels by Dickens, George Eliot, Trollope, and Henry James, Dellamora further argues that the novel and other creative arts, such as portraiture and the theater, offered important sites for evoking and shaping the Victorians' imagination and experience of democratic possibilities.

Systematically bringing together discourses on queer identities in Victorian England, Jewish identities in nineteenth-century literary and political culture, and the ways these powerful forms of otherness intersect, *Friendship's Bonds* offers an intriguing analysis of how the dream of a perfect sympathy between friends continually challenged Victorians' capacity to imagine into existence a world not of strangers or enemies but of fellow citizens.

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