



I wondered what happened to the letters. I wondered if they arrived at their destination. If they were received, I wondered what was the nature of their reception. I was told this was a one way correspondence. There was the writer, of course, who felt she had something to say to another. There was the other, naturally, who felt she had no reply to return to the writer. The years passed. Years and years perhaps I imagine fifteen. It should be remembered that Bartleby the scrivener worked in the dead letter section of the post office, dealing with letters without a return address, misdirected letters, blind-read letters, prankish letters; the letters of the dead. Later, a correspondence resumed, with a fictional form. Once published, this was sent to me as a third party for my commentary. Others were included, and at least two were my friends, yet nonetheless I was alone, even lonely, taking the role (it might be considered improper, despite the kind invitation) of a writer in the margins, a book-marker, an annotator. I was not there to quote or to footnote, to follow Milton's teasing comment on the critic Prynne: he always had his wits beside him in the margin so as to be beside his wits in the text. I had to have my wits about me when listening in so to speak, for reading and listening each required a different attention, and I was determined to be attentive reading what was now a public exchange founded on an intimate engagement between people whom I had met only once or twice, and those were on occasions in the past. I would, I said, write in installments, a disciplined daily activity.