PART I

Foundations for Thinking About Sexualities and Communication
The Invention of Heterosexuality

The Debut of the Heterosexual

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RICHARD VON KRAFFT-EBING AND THE MIND DOCTORS

In the United States, in the 1890s, “sexual instinct” was generally identified as a procreative desire of men and women. But that reproductive ideal was beginning to be challenged, quietly but insistently, in practice and theory, by a new different-sex pleasure ethic. According to that radically new standard, the “sexual instinct” referred to men’s and women’s erotic desire for each other, irrespective of its procreative potential. Those two, fundamentally opposed, sexual moralities informed the earliest American definitions of “heterosexuals” and “homosexuals.” Under the old procreative standard, the new term heterosexual did not, at first, always signify the normal and good.

The earliest-known use of the word heterosexual in the United States occurs in an article by Dr. James G. Kiernan, published in a Chicago medical journal in May 1892.1 Heterosexual was not equated there with normal sex, but with perversion—a definitional tradition that lasted in middle-class culture into the 1920s. Kiernan linked heterosexual to one of several “abnormal manifestations of the sexual appetite”—in a list of “sexual perversions proper”—in an article on “Sexual Perversion.” Kiernan’s brief note on depraved heterosexuals attributed their definition (incorrectly, as we’ll see) to Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing of Vienna.

These heterosexuals were associated with a mental condition, “psychical hermaphroditism.” This syndrome assumed that feelings had a biological sex. Heterosexuals experienced so-called male erotic attraction to females and so-called female erotic attraction to males. That is, these heterosexuals periodically

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felt “inclinations to both sexes.” The hetero in these heterosexuals referred not to their interest in a different sex, but to their desire for two different sexes. Feeling desire inappropriate, supposedly, for their sex, these heterosexuals were guilty of what we now think of as gender and erotic deviance.

Heterosexuals were also guilty of reproductive deviance. That is, they betrayed inclinations to “abnormal methods of gratification”—modes of ensuring pleasure without reproducing the species. They also demonstrated “traces of the normal sexual appetite”—a touch of the desire to reproduce.

Dr. Kiernan’s article also included the earliest-known U.S. publication of the word homosexual. The “pure homosexuals” he cited were persons whose “general mental state is that of the opposite sex.” These homosexuals were defined explicitly as gender benders, rebels from proper masculinity and femininity. In contrast, his heterosexuals deviated explicitly from gender, erotic, and procreative norms. In their American debut, the abnormality of heterosexuals appeared to be thrice that of homosexuals.

Though Kiernan’s article employed the new terms heterosexual and homosexual, their meaning was ruled by an old, absolute reproductive ideal. His heterosexual described a mixed person and compound urge—at once sex-differentiated, eros-oriented, and reproductive. In Kiernan’s essay, heterosexuals’ ambivalent procreative desire made them absolutely abnormal. This first exercise in heterosexual definition described an unequivocal pervert.

KRAFFT-EBING’S PSYCHOPATHIA SEXUALIS

The new term hetero-sexual next appeared early in 1893, in the first U.S. publication, in English, of Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study, by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, “Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Vienna.” This book would appear in numerous later U.S. editions, becoming one of the most famous, influential texts on “pathological” sexuality. Its disturbing (and fascinating) examples of a sex called sick began quietly to define a new idea of a sex perceived as healthy.

In this primer, the “pathological sexual instinct” and “contrary sexual instinct” are major terms referring to non-procreative desire. Their opposite, called, simply, “sexual instinct,” is reproductive. But that old procreative norm was no longer as absolute for Krafft-Ebing as it was for Kiernan. Conspicuously absent from the Viennese doctor’s large tome on all varieties of sick sex is any reference to what some other doctors called “conjugal onanism,” or “frauds in the accomplishment of the generative function”—birth control.

In the heat of different-sex lust, declares Krafft-Ebing, men and women are not usually thinking of baby making: “In sexual love the real purpose of the instinct, the propagation of the species, does not enter into consciousness.” An unconscious procreative “purpose” informs his idea of “sexual love.” His sexual instinct is a predisposition with a built-in reproductive aim. That instinct is procreative—whatever the men and women engaged in heterosexual acts are busily desiring. Placing the reproductive aside in the unconscious, Krafft-Ebing created a small, obscure space in which a new pleasure norm began to grow.

Krafft-Ebing’s procreative, sex-differentiated, and erotic “sexual instinct” was present by definition in his term heterosexual—his book introduced that word to many Americans. A hyphen between Krafft-Ebing’s “hetero” and “sexual” newly spliced sex-difference and eroticism to constitute a pleasure defined explicitly by the different sexes of its parties. His heterosexual, unlike Kiernan’s, does not desire two sexes, only one, different, sex.

Krafft-Ebing’s term heterosexual makes no explicit reference to reproduction, though it
always implicitly includes reproductive desire. Always therefore, his hetero-sexual implicitly signifies erotic normality. His twin term, homo-sexual, always signifies a same-sex desire, pathological because non-reproductive.

Contrary to Kiernan’s earlier attribution, Krafft-Ebing consistently uses hetero-sexual to mean normal sex. In contrast, for Kiernan, and some other late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sexologists, a simple reproductive standard was absolute: The hetero-sexuals in Krafft-Ebing’s text appeared guilty of procreative ambiguity, thus of perversion.

These distinctions between sexual terms and definitions are historically important, but complex, and may be difficult for us to grasp. Our own society’s particular, dominant hetero-sexual norm also helps to cloud our minds to other ways of categorizing.

Readers such as Dr. Kiernan might also understand Krafft-Ebing’s hetero-sexuals to be perverts by association. For the word hetero-sexual, though signifying normality, appears often in the Viennese doctor’s book linked with the non-procreative perverse—coupled with “contrary sexual instinct,” “physical hermaphroditism,” “homo-sexuality,” and “fetichism.”

For example, Krafft-Ebing’s first use of “hetero-sexual” occurs in a discussion of several case histories of “hetero- and homo-sexuality” in which “a certain kind of attire becomes a fetich.”9 The hetero-sexual premieres, with the homo-sexual, as clothes fetishist. The second hetero-sexual introduced has a “handkerchief fetich.” Krafft-Ebing quotes a report on “this impulse in hetero-sexual individuals” by Dr. Albert Moll, another influential early sexologist. The Victorian lady’s handkerchief apparently packed an erotic wallop for a number of that era’s men. An intense attraction to ladies’ hankies might, it seems, even temporarily undermine patriarchal power. A “passion for [women’s] handkerchiefs may go so far that the man is entirely under their [women’s] control,” Dr. Moll warns his endangered fellows.

This reversal of the customary male-female power relationship might not be displeasing to the Victorian woman who found herself—and her hanky—the object of a male fetishist’s interest. Moll quotes such a woman:

“I know a certain gentleman, and when I see him at a distance I only need to draw out my handkerchief so that it peeps out of my pocket, and I am certain that he will follow me as a dog follows its master. Go where I please, this gentleman will follow me. He may be riding in a carriage or engaged in important business, and yet, when he sees my handkerchief he drops everything in order to follow me,—i.e., my handkerchief.”10

In the above examples, the term hetero-sexual signifies a normal different-sex eroticism, though associated closely with fetishism and the nonprocreative perverse. In the following examples, Krafft-Ebing’s normal hetero-sexual is associated, as it most often is, with the “perversion” he calls “homo-sexuality” and “contrary sexual instinct.”

BEFORE HETEROSEXUALITY

Looking Backward

If the word heterosexual did not exist in the United States until 1892, how did Americans talk and think about, and socially organize the sexes’ differences and their sexuality? Did they employ equivalent terms, or wield an altogether different language? Is it possible that, before the debut of the term heterosexual, nineteenth-century Americans arranged sex-differences, eroticism, and reproduction in ways substantially different from the way we do? Dare we imagine that they constituted a qualitatively distinct sexual system—a society not appropriately described by our modern term heterosexual?

From the present, looking back on past eras before the use of the term heterosexual, we can, of course, find well-documented examples
of different-sex erotic acts and emotions. Yet, from the standpoint of those who lived, loved, and lusted in the past, those same acts and emotions may not have referred in any essential way to the same combination of sex and gender difference and eroticism that we call heterosexuality. Ways of ordering the sexes, genders, and sexualities have varied radically. That variation challenges our usual assumption that an unchanging, essential heterosexuality takes qualitatively different historical forms. The word *heterosexual*, I propose, itself signifies one timebound historical form—one historically specific way of organizing the sexes and their pleasures.

**Earthly Love and Heavenly Love**

One example of a nonheterosexual society is ancient Greece, as analyzed by the late French historian Michel Foucault, a discussion that includes his most explicit, extensive comments on heterosexuality.\(^1\)

Foucault repeatedly warns present-day readers of the danger of projecting our heterosexual and homosexual categories on the past. The specific past he refers to is ancient Greece, as represented in those texts that discuss free men’s problematic, pleasurable intimacies with women and with boys.

In a passage appraising a famous speech by Pausanias in Plato’s *Symposium*, Foucault says that one finds there

a theory of two loves, the second of which—Urania, the heavenly love—is directed [by free men] exclusively to boys. But the distinction that is made is not between a heterosexual love and a homosexual love [emphasis added]. Pausanias draws the dividing line between “the love which the baser sort of men feel”—its object is both women and boys, it only looks to the act itself (*to diapratteshai*)—and the more ancient, nobler, and more reasonable love that is drawn to what has the most vigor and intelligence, which obviously can only mean [for free men] the male sex.\(^12\)

Pausanias, Foucault stresses, employed a hierarchical distinction between free men’s lower, *earthly love*, focused on acts, and free men’s higher, *heavenly love*, defined by a feeling for the beauty of boys, a superior object. That distinction between earthly and heavenly love is substantially different from our contrast between heterosexual and homosexual.

Discussing ancient Greek society, Foucault generalizes, “The notion of homosexuality is plainly inadequate as a means of referring to an experience, forms of valuation, and a system of categorization so different from ours.” Our homosexual/heterosexual polarity does not match these ancient Greek men’s views. Our distinction is based on sexed difference and sexuality:

The Greeks did not see love for one’s own sex and love for the other sex as opposites, as two exclusive choices, two radically different types of behavior. The dividing lines did not follow that kind of boundary.\(^13\)

According to Foucault, ancient Greek writers might sometimes recognize that one man’s inclinations usually favored women, another man’s boys. But those emotional tendencies were not embedded within the same social organization of sexed difference and eroticism that gives rise to our own heterosexual/homosexual pair. Neither Greek men’s inclination for women, nor their desire for boys, was any “more likely than the other, and the two could easily coexist in the same individual.”\(^14\)

Were the Greeks bisexual then? Yes, if we mean by this that a Greek [free man] could, simultaneously or in turn, be enamored by a boy or a girl. . . . But if we wish to turn our attention to the way in which they conceived of this dual practice, we need to take note of the fact that they did not recognize two kinds of “desire,” two different or competing “dri ves,” each claiming a share of men’s hearts or appetites. We can talk about their “bisexuality,” thinking of the free choice they allowed themselves between the two sexes, but for them this option was not offered to a dual,
ambivalent, and “bisexual” structure of desire. To their way of thinking what made it possible to desire a man or a woman was simply the appetite that nature had implanted in man’s heart for “beautiful” human beings, whatever their sex... 

We can take a retrospective look at the ancestry of our own society’s sexual terms and organization—their “genealogy,” Foucault calls it. But we should not, he suggests, employ our terms bisexuality, homosexuality, and heterosexuality, in a way to suggest that these were the concepts past subjects used.

Foucault fears his readers' projection on the past of their own society's sexual categories and arrangements because such projections unconsciously and unjustifiably affirm the similarity of present and past. His readers will thereby be prevented from perceiving dissimilarity and change—the historically specific character of ancient prescriptions about free men’s pleasure, and the historically particular social organization of eroticism that gave rise to them.

The French historian’s sexual relativity theory points us to a basic “presentist” bias in readers’ and scholars’ vision of sexualities and pleasures past—that is, we necessarily view them from a particular position in the present.

It’s significant that Foucault thought it necessary to provide even fairly sophisticated, intellectual readers with repeated cautions against anachronistic projections—a well-known historical blunder. His and others’ reiterated warnings against anachronism in sexual history analysis testify not so much to the primitive level of sex history interpreters, or their readers, as to the continuing, enormous power of our present dominant concepts of sexuality. Without realizing it, usually, we are all deeply embedded in a living, institutionalized heterosexual/homosexual distinction.

Maximized Procreation and Sodomitical Sin

For a second example of a society not ordered along heterosexual lines we can turn to a culture nearer home—the New England colonies in the years 1607 to 1740.

In these formative years, the New England organization of the sexes and their erotic activity was dominated by a reproductive imperative. These fragile, undeveloped agriculture economies were desperate to increase their numbers, and their labor force. So the early colonial mode of procreation was structured to optimize the production of New Englanders. The New England settlers married earlier than Old Englanders, and their ordering of maximized reproduction created a colonial birth rate higher than in England or Europe at the time.

This intensive populating was incited by religious exhortations to multiply, and by legal retributions for acts thought to interfere with procreation (such as sodomy, bestiality, and masturbation) or the dominant reproductive order (such as adultery). In early colonial Boston, after confessing to adultery with twelve men, the eighteen-year-old Mary Latham was hanged with one of her lovers. At least two other early new Englanders were hanged for extramarital acts, thereby serving, according to one historian, “as graphic reminders” of the punishment that could befall those “violating the sexual exclusivity” of marriage. Although all the early New England colonies prescribed death for adultery, very few executions actually occurred under these statutes. (Perhaps, since the crime was “one of the most common,” the death penalty would have done more to disrupt the procreative economy than to support it). But more than three hundred women and men found guilty of adultery in early New England were seriously punished with twenty to thirty-nine lashes. (A married man was severely punished only if he committed adultery with a woman pledged or married to another man. An engaged or married woman was considered to have committed adultery whatever the marital status of her partner.)

Sodomy should be punished by death, declared the Reverend John Rayner, even
though it might not involve the same “degree of sinning against the family and posterity” as some other “capital sins of uncleanness.” William Plaine deserved death for sodomy in England, and for inciting the youth of Guilford, in the New Haven Colony, to “masturbations,” John Winthrop explained. For Plaine’s crimes frustrated the marriage ordinance and hindered “the generation of mankind.”

The death penalty for sodomy prevailing in all the colonies, and the public execution of a few men for this crime, violently signified the profound sinfulness of any eros thought hostile to reproduction. The operative contrast in this society was between fruitfulness and barrenness, not between different-sex and same-sex eroticism.

Women and men were constituted within this mode of procreation as essentially different and unequal. Specifically, the procreative man was constructed as seminal, a seed source. The procreative woman as constituted as seed holder and ripener, a relatively “weaker vessel.” For a man to “waste his seed” in nonprocreative, pleasurable acts was to squander a precious, limited procreative resource, as crucial to community survival as the crops the colonists planted in the earth. Although women were perceived to have “seed,” a woman’s erotic acts with another woman were not apparently thought of as wasting it, or as squandering her seed-ripening ability. So these were lesser violations of the procreative order.

Men and women were, however, regarded as equal in lust. As the Reverend Thomas Shepard sermonized: “Every natural man and woman is born full of sin,” their hearts brimming with “atheism, sodomy, blasphemy, murder, whoredom, adultery, witchcraft, [and] buggery. . . .” As a universal temptation, not a minority impulse, a man’s erotic desire for another man did not constitute him as a particular kind of person, a buggerer or sodomite. Individuals might lust consistently toward one sex or another and be recognized, sometimes, as so lusting. But this society did not give rise to a subject defined essentially by an attraction to a same sex or an appetite for a different sex.

Within the early New England organization of pleasure, carnal desire commonly included the mutual lust of man and woman and the occasional lust of man for man. A dominant colonial figure of speech opposed lust for an earthly “creature” to love for an other-worldly God. In these colonies, erotic desire for members of a same sex was not constructed as deviant because erotic desire for a different sex was not construed as a norm. Even within marriage, no other-sex erotic object was completely legitimate, in and of itself.

In this New England, the human body’s capacity to function as means of earthly pleasure represented a deeply problematic distraction from a heavenly God, a diversion to which men’s and women’s bodies were equally prone. Within New England’s dominant mode of procreation the body’s “private parts” were officially constituted as generative organs, not as hetero pleasure tools.

In a sermon on the “sins of Sodom,” the Reverend Samuel Danforth linked “sodomy” and idleness. Using energy in reproductive acts, an important form of production, kept one from wasting energy in unproductive sin. In contrast, since the first quarter of the twentieth century, our society’s dominant order of different-sex pleasure has encouraged the use of energy in a variety of heteroerotic activities. This stimulation of hetero pleasures completely apart from procreation constructs a heterosexuality increasingly congruent with homosexuality. In early New England, sodomy stood as perverse paradigm of energy wasted in unproductive pleasure.

The reproductive and erotic acts of New England’s women and men were among those productive activities thought of as fundamentally affecting the community’s labor force, its security and survival. In contrast, in the twentieth century, the erotic activity of women and
men was officially located in the realm of private life, in the separate sphere of dating, courtship, romantic love, marriage, domesticity and family. Until Kate Millett and other feminists questioned this ideological separation of the sexual and political spheres, heterosexuality was thought to inhabit a private realm of intimacy distinct from the often alienated public world of work.

In early New England the eroticism of women and men was publicly linked to sodomy and bestiality in a realm of tempting sinful pleasures. Colonial lust was located in an arena of judgments, an avowedly moral universe. Heterosexuality is located, supposedly, in the realm of nature, biology, hormones, and genes—a matter of physiological fact, a truth of the flesh. Only secretly is heterosexuality a value and a norm, a matter of morality and taste, of politics and power.

The “traditional values” of early colonial New England, its ordering of the sexes, their eroticism, and their reproduction, provides a nice, quintessentially American example of a society not dominated by a heterosexual/homosexual distinction.

The Early–Nineteenth-Century Organization of True Love

Nineteenth-century America, from about 1820 to 1850, is a third society not organized according to our heterosexual law. Neither, it turns out, was it the prudish society of stereotype. The evidence offered recently by historians challenges the common notion of nineteenth-century middle-class society as sexually repressed. The rise of the pro-heterosexual principle can’t be explained, then, simply as a sharp break with an antisexual Victorian past. Though recent historians don’t always distinguish adequately between early and late nineteenth-century developments, their analyses can help us understand the social origins of the heterosexual as a historically specific term and relationship.

In early-nineteenth-century America, I’ll argue, the urban middle class was still struggling to distinguish itself from the supposedly decadent upper orders and supposedly sensual lower orders. The middling sort claimed sexual purity as a major distinguishing characteristic. No middle-class sexual ethic then validated different-sex lust apart from men’s and women’s love and reproduction. Only in the late nineteenth century did the middle class achieve the power and stability that freed it to publicly affirm, in the name of nature, its own “heterosexuality.” The making of the middle class and the invention of heterosexuality went hand in hand.21

Ellen Rothman, in her Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America, contests the antisexual Victorian stereotype.22 She analyzes the diaries, love letters, and reminiscences of 350 white, Protestant, middle-class American women and men living in the settled areas of the North who came of courting age between 1770 and 1920. She concludes that courting couples in the early nineteenth century defined “romantic love so that it included sexual attraction but excluded coitus.” That particular courtship custom she names the “invention of petting.”23 This common courting convention, she maintains, allowed the middle class quite a lot of private erotic expression short of intercourse. She stresses: “Couples courting in the 1820s and 1830s were comfortable with a wide range of sexually expressive behavior.”24

In her book Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America, Karen Lystra also marshals lots of sexy verbal intercourse from nineteenth-century love letters, arguing forcefully against the twentieth-century stereotype of the Victorians. She analyzes the intimate letters of one hundred middle-class and upper-class white couples, and sexual-advice literature of the 1830s through the 1890s.25 She demonstrates that, under the powerful legitimizing influence of “love,” middle- and upper-class women and men, in their private behavior and
conversations with each other, affirmed a wide range of erotic feelings and activities—though not usually intercourse before marriage.

Summing up the Victorians’ “approval of sex when associated with love,” Lystra declares, The highest values of individual expression and autonomous self-hood were heaped upon the erotic. Victorians did not denigrate sex; they guarded it.

She emphasizes, “Sex had a place of honor and prominence in Victorian culture.” She reiterates: “Victorians reveled in the physicality of sex when they believed that the flesh was an expression of the spirit.” The idea of eroticism as “a romantically inspired religious experience, a sacrament of love” was, she says, “perhaps the most culturally significant meaning attached to Victorian sexuality.” Her sex-positive view of the Victorians is also borne out, she claims, by research in more than fifty nineteenth-century advice books. Mainstream advisers of that day, she claims, encouraged an active eroticism as an expression of love.

For a small group of sexual enthusiasts, the radicals of their day, true love was a free love. Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America describes free lovers daringly justifying erotic expression even outside of marriage. Free lovers challenged the respectable idea that legal matrimony was necessary to license the erotic intercourse of the sexes. Free love, free lovers argued—not the church, not the state—freely legitimated conjugal unions. Archromantics that they were, however, free lovers did not advocate eros unaccompanied by love. Just as this era’s mainstream strongly condemned sensuality detached from legal matrimony and love, so its free lovers condemned sensuality detached from romance.

Steven Seidman, a historically oriented sociologist, qualifies somewhat the revisionist historians’ view of nineteenth-century eroticism. A note in his own study, Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830-1980, rejects Lystra’s argument that the eroticism of Victorian women and men was unambiguously legitimated as symbol of love. Although “all” nineteenth-century sexual advisors, Seidman admits, acknowledged the beneficial role of sex in marriage, love was construed as essentially spiritual. Sex, at best, symbolized a spiritual union or functioned as a spiritual act. In none of these discourses...was eroticism ever framed as essential to the meaning of intimacy or as a basis of love [emphasis added].

Lystra’s stress on the Victorians’ active appreciation of eroticism is, he thinks, “grossly overstated.”

Certainly, an eroticism needing to be sanctified by love was originally unhallowed. Among middle-class Victorians, “sensuality” was a dirty word. Lystra occasionally admits this: “Sex was wholeheartedly approved as an act of love and wholeheartedly condemned by the Victorian mainstream when bodily pleasures were not privileged acts of self-disclosure”—that is, when erotic pleasure was not the expression of love. Lust not sanctified by love, she concedes here, was utterly condemned. Her interpretation of nineteenth-century sensuality as legitimizing by love does dispel the usual stereotype, though she constructs a counter-myth of erotic Victorians.

In his own book, Seidman usefully stresses the historically specific character of the heterosexual/homosexual opposition. During most of the nineteenth century, he says, “the term heterosexuality and what we today take as its natural antithesis, homosexuality, were absent” from discourses on gender and eroticism. The heterosexual and homosexual were not thought of “as mutually exclusive categories of desire, identity and love.” Only in the early twentieth century did “the concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality” emerge “as the master categories of a sexual regime that defined the individual’s sexual and
personal identity and normatively regulated intimate desire and behavior.”

As noted, the revisionist historians of nineteenth-century American sexuality typically fail to distinguish carefully between early and late developments. A closer look at early-nineteenth-century society clarifies its difference from that late-nineteenth-century order which gave rise to the heterosexual category.

The early nineteenth century prescribed particular ideals of manhood and womanhood, founding a cult of the true man and true woman. The “Cult of True Womanhood” is said by historian Barbara Welter to mandate “purity”—meaning asexuality—for respectable, middle-class women. More recent historians contest this interpretation of “purity.” Karen Lystra, for example, quotes numbers of letters in which women’s and men’s erotic expression is referred to as “pure” by association—that is, by lust’s link with “love.” Purifying lust was, in fact, an important function of the middle-class true-love ideal. In this view, the special purity claimed for this era’s true women referred not to asexuality but to middle-class women’s better control than men over their carnal impulses, often conceived of as weaker than men’s. True men, thought to live closer to carnality, and in less control of it, ideally aspired to the same rational regulation of concupiscence as did respectable true women.

The ideal of true men and true women was closely linked to another term, “true love,” used repeatedly in this era. Holding strictly to true love was an important way in which the middle class distinguished itself from the allegedly promiscuous upper class and animalistic lower class. Those lust-ridden lower classes included a supposedly vicious foreign element (often Irish, Italian, and Asian) and a supposedly sensual dark-skinned racial group shipped to America from Africa as slaves.

True love was a hierarchical system, topped by an intense spiritual feeling powerful enough to justify marriage, reproduction, and an otherwise unhallowed sensuality. The reigning sexual standard distinguished, not between different- and same-sex eroticism, but between true love and false love—a feeling not sufficiently deep, permanent, and serious enough to justify the usual sensuous courtship practices, or the usual well-nigh immutable marriage.

Given the powerful legitimating influence of true love, many of the letter writers quoted by Lystra, Rothman, and the other revisionists spend much energy trying to prove the truthness of their love. Assuring one’s beloved of love’s truth was, in fact, a major function of these letters.

In this era, the human body was thought of as directly constituting the true man and true woman, and their feelings. No distinction was made between biologically given sex and socially constructed masculinity and femininity. Under true love’s dominion, the human body was perceived as means of love’s expression. Under the early-nineteenth-century rule of reproduction (as in early New England), penis and vagina were means of procreation—“generative organs”—not pleasure parts. Only after marriage could they mesh as love parts.

Human energy, thought of as a closed and severely limited system subject to exhaustion, was to be used in work, in producing children, and in sustaining love and family, not wasted on unproductive, libidinous pleasures.

The location of love’s labors, the site of engendering and procreating and feeling, was the sacred sanctum of early-nineteenth-century true love, the home of the true man and true woman. This temple of pure, spiritual love was threatened from within by the monster masturbator, that archetypal early Victorian cult figure of illicit-because-loveless, non-procreative lust.

The home front was threatened from without by the female prostitute, another archetypal figure of lust divorced from love. (Men who slept with men for money do not seem to have been common, stock figures of the early-nineteenth-century middle-class imagination, probably because there weren’t many
of them, and they weren’t thought of as a major threat to the love of men and women). Only rarely was reference made to those other illicit erotic figures, the “sodomite” and “sapphist” (unlike the later “homosexual,” these were persons with no “heterosexual” opposite, terms with no antonyms). State sodomy laws defined a particular, obscure act, referred to in a limited legalese, not a common criminal, medical, or psychological type of person, not a personal, self-defined “identity” and, until the nineteenth century’s end, not a particular sexual group.

Because the early–nineteenth-century middle-class mind was not commonly focused on dreams of legitimate different-sex pleasures, neither was it haunted by nightmares of perverted same-sex satisfactions. The sexual pervert did not emerge as an obsession of society’s newborn, fledgling normal sexuals until the nineteenth century’s last decades. Though the early–nineteenth-century middle-class might be worried by erotic thoughts unhitched from love, this group was not yet preoccupied by an ideal of an essential, normal, different-sex sexuality.

In early–nineteenth-century America no universal eros was thought to constitute the fundamental nucleus of all passionate intimacies. In this pre-Freudian world, love did not imply eros. So respectable Victorian women and men referred often and explicitly to their “passionate” feelings with little thought that those intense emotions were a close relation of sensuality. Proper middle-class women might often speak of their intense “passion” for each other without feeling compromised by eroticism. Unlike post-Freudian passion, early–nineteenth-century passion inhabited a universe separate and distinct from the hot-house world of sensuality.

Given the early–nineteenth-century distinction between the moral character of passionate love and the immoral character of sensual lust, intense, passion-filled romantic friendships could flourish erotically between members of the same sex without great fear that they bordered on the sodomitical or sapphic. Those terms’ rare use suggests the lack of any public link between sensuality and same-sex passion. Same-sex romantic friendships might even enjoy an uncomplicated existence unknown to many different-sex relations—haunted as these might be by the very gender difference that constituted the sexes as opposite—therefore as potential love and marriage objects for each other, therefore as potential sensual partners. “Until the 1880s,” say the historians of American sexuality, John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, most same-sex “romantic friendships were thought to be devoid of sexual content.” The “modern terms homosexuality and heterosexuality do not apply to an era that had not yet articulated these distinctions.”

Spiritual love and passion inhabited an abode far from the earthly, earthy home of sexuality. True love was enacted legitimately only within marriage, the legal mode of proper procreation. Intercourse, as sign of love’s “consummation,” held a special, deep significance. The intercourse of penis and vagina, men and women commonly agreed, was the one move they could not make before marriage and still remain respectable. Refraining from intercourse was the final test of the true man’s manliness, his status as genteel, Christian gentleman.

The early–nineteenth-century middle-class fixation on penis-vagina coitus implied that numerous pleasurable acts not involving the “penetration” of this specific female part by this specific male part were not thought of as prohibited, or even as “sexual.” Quite a lot of erotic activity then passed as permissible in a love relationship precisely because it wasn’t “intercourse.”

This cult of intercourse was formulated most clearly by the more restrictionist ideologists of sex, as discussed by Lystra: the promoters of a procreative ethic. But they were waging a losing battle. The number of “legitimate” births per middle-class family shows a
continuous sharp decline during the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century the old true-love standard was giving way to a new, different-sex erotic ideal termed normal and heterosexual. A close look at that late-nineteenth-century era suggests how it came to terms.

The Late–Nineteenth-Century Construction of Sexual Instinct

Each of the revisionist historians of nineteenth-century sexuality presents one or several memorable examples of lust-loving, male-female couples. The most enthusiastic sensualists they offer typically date to the late nineteenth century, though often serving generalizations about “Victorian” sexuality or “nineteenth-century” eroticism.

One of Ellen Rothman’s featured couples is Lester Ward and Lizzie Vought. In 1860, in Myersburg, Pennsylvania, the nineteen-year-old Lester (later, a well-known sociologist) began keeping a diary of his and Lizzie’s courtship. This record suggests that Lizzie was as active in the couple’s sexual explorations as her diarist boyfriend.

In 1861, when Lester and “the girl” (as he called her) were often separated, his diary indicates that Lizzie made sure that, when they could, the two got together in private. After a Saturday spent with the girl and friends, Lester stayed on to spend “a happy night” with Lizzie:

Closely held in loving arms we lay, embraced, and kissed all night (not going to bed until five in the morning). We have never acted in such a way before. All that we did I shall not tell here, but it was all very sweet and loving and nothing infamous.

Lester’s “I shall not tell here,” his refusal to put into words all of the couple’s erotic doings, and his defensive “nothing infamous,” are telling. Even this easygoing enthusiast of bodily love evidently felt the judgmental power of a strict standard of sexual propriety.

Six months later the still-courting couple first “tasted the joys of love and happiness which only belong to a married life.” The phrasing suggests that their initial coupling was perceived as breaking a well-known intercourse ban.

About a year later, in 1862, Lester and Lizzie married. Lester Ward’s diary, says Rothman, suggests that this couple experienced little emotional conflict over their sexual explorations, even their atypical premarital intercourse.

In 1860, the same year that Lester Ward began his diary, an eloquent, embattled exponent of the new male-female lustiness, Walt Whitman, was publishing his third edition of Leaves of Grass. That year’s version first included a section, “Children of Adam,” publicly evoking and promoting the procreational-erotic intercourse of men and women. As a pioneering sex radical, Whitman broke with the early-nineteenth-century idea that women’s passion for motherhood included no eros. Whitman’s poems publicly proclaimed women’s lusty, enthusiastic participation with men in the act of conceiving robust babies. Another of Whitman’s new sections, “Calamus,” vividly detailed acts of erotic communion between men.

As research by Michael Lynch stresses, Whitman borrowed terms from his day’s pop psychologists, the phrenologists, naming and evoking hot “amative” relations between men and women, and sizzling “adhesive” intimacies between men. In the perspective of heterosexual history, Whitman’s titling of these amative and adhesive intimacies was an attempt to position male-female and male-male eroticsisms together as a “natural,” “healthy” division of human erotic responses. (Along with most other writers of the time, Whitman almost completely ignored eros between women—a powerful indication of
phallic rule: erotic acts not involving a penis were insignificant.) Though now perhaps better known as man-lover, Whitman is also a late-Victorian trailblazer of a publicly silenced, often vilified lust between the sexes.54

Historian Peter Gay’s first two hefty volumes on The Bourgeois Experience in nineteenth-century Western Europe and the U.S. constitute a mammoth defense—980 pages of text and notes—of the middle class, its Education of the Senses and its Tender Passion (as these volumes are subtitled). Gay sets out to restore the Victorian middle class’s erotic reputation, so often characterized as “repressed” or “hypocritical.”

Personalizing Gay’s presentation of the Victorians as ardent champions of eros (even sex athletes) is his discussion of the “Erotic Record” documenting the 1877 courtship, later marriage and enthusiastic adultery of Mabel Loomis and David Todd. The story of Mabel and her men is, significantly, a late–nineteenth-century tale, though Gay doesn’t emphasize this point.

This end-of-the-century story includes Mabel’s thirteen-year, graphically detailed, doubly adulterous affair with Austin Dickinson (Emily’s married brother) in Amherst, the outwardly staid, inwardly steaming New England college town.55 Peter Gay employs the tale of Mabel and David and Austin to counter the typecasting of Victorians as prudes. Like other revisionists, he insists that the nineteenth-century middle class was secretly sexual, though publicly prudish.56

Evidence offered by Gay and the other revisionists suggests that, as the nineteenth century went on, the private pleasure practices of the middle class were diverging more and more from the public ideal of true love. By the end of the century, as the middle class secured its social place, its members felt less need to distinguish their class’s sexual purity from the eroticism of the rich and the sensuality of the poor, the colored, and the foreign.57 In the late nineteenth century, as the white Protestant middle class pursued its earthly happiness, its attitude toward work shifted in favor of pleasurable consumption. By century’s end the ideal of true love conflicted more and more with middle-class sensuous activity. Lust was bustin’ out all over.

Peter Gay mentions Mabel Loomis Todd’s need “to find expressive equivalents for her erotic emotions, manifested by her diary keeping.”58 That need of Mabel’s was, I think, typical of her class. In the late nineteenth century, Mabel’s personal letters and diaries provided a private place for putting into words and justifying—literally, coming to terms with—middle-class practices which could not be talked of publicly without censure. Like Mabel, the late–nineteenth-century middle class needed to name and justify the private erotic practices that were growing more prevalent, and more open, by century’s end. That class’s special interest would find expression in the proclamation of a universal heterosexuality. The invention of heterosexuality publicly named, scientifically normalized, and ethically justified the middle-class practice of different-sex pleasure.59

Coming to Terms

The heterosexual and homosexual did not appear out of the blue in 1892. Those two sex-differentiated, erotic categories were in the making from the 1860s to the end of the century. In late–nineteenth-century Germany, England, France, and Italy, and in America, our modern, historically specific idea of the heterosexual began to be constructed; the experience of a proper, middle-class, different-sex lust began to be publicly named and documented.

In the initial strand of the heterosexual category’s history we may be surprised to discover the prominent part played by early theorists and defenders of same-sex love. In 1862 in Germany, one of these pioneers, the writer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, began to produce
new sexual names and theories defending the love of the man who loved men, the *Uranier* (or “Urning”). The Urning’s opposite, the true man (the man who loved women), he called a *Dionäer* (or “Dioning”). His theory later included the *Urninde*, the woman “with a masculine love-drive”—his phrase for the woman with male feelings—that is, the woman who loved women.

The Urning’s erotic desire for a true man, Ulrichs argued, was as natural as the “Dioning-love” of true man and true woman. His Dioning and Urning are the foreparents of the heterosexual and homosexual. Starting in 1864, Ulrichs presented his theories in twelve books with the collective title *Researches on the Riddle of Love Between Men*, written and printed at his own expense.60

In Ulrichs’s eroticized update of the early Victorian true man, the real man possessed a male body and a male sex-love for women. The Urning was a true man with the feelings of a true woman. The Urning possessed a male body and the female’s sex-love for men.

As we’ve seen, the Victorian concept of the “true” mechanically linked biology with psychology. Feelings were thought of as female or male in exactly the same sense as penis or clitoris: anatomy equaled psychology, sex physiology determined the sex of feelings. Sex-love for a female was a male feeling, sex-love for a male was a female feeling. A female sex-love could inhabit a male body, a male sex-love could inhabit a female body.

According to this theory there existed only one sexual desire, focused on the other sex. (In today’s terms, there was only one different-sex “sexual orientation,” not two distinct “heterosexual” and “homosexual” desires.) Within this conceptual system, a (male) Urning felt a woman’s erotic love for men, a (female) Urninde experienced a man’s attraction to women. In each case, the desire for a different-sex was felt by a person of the “wrong” sex. Their desire was therefore “contrary” to the one, normative “sexual instinct.” Ulrichs accepted this one-instinct idea, but argued that the emotions of Urnings were biologically inborn, therefore natural for them, and so their acts should not be punished by any law against “unnatural fornication.”

In a letter to Ulrichs on May 6, 1868, another early sex-law reformer, the writer Karl Maria Kertbeny, is first known to have privately used four new terms he had coined: “Monosexual; Homosexual; Heterosexual; und Heterogenit”—the debut of homosexual and heterosexual, and two now forgotten terms.61 Though Kertbeny’s letter did not define his foursome, his other writings indicate that “Monosexual” refers to masturbation, practiced by both sexes. “Heterogenit” refers to erotic acts of human beings with animals. “Homosexual” refers to erotic acts performed by men with men and women with women. And “Heterosexual” refers to erotic acts of men and women, as did another of his new terms, “Normalsexualität,” normal sexuality.

Heterosexuality and normal sexuality he defined as the innate form of sexual satisfaction of the majority of the population. That emphasis on numbers as the foundation of the normal marks a historic break with the old qualitative, procreative standard.

But Kertbeny’s heterosexual, and his normal sexual, are by no means normative. Both the heterosexual and normal sexual are characterized by their “unfettered capacity for degeneracy”—he who coins the terms loads the dice.62 The sex “drive” of normal sexuals is said to be stronger than that of masturbators, bestialists, or homosexuals, and this explains normal sexuals’ laxity, license, and “unfetteredness.” Kertbeny’s heterosexual men and women participate with each other in so-called natural [procreative] as well as unnatural [nonprocreative] coitus. They are also capable of giving themselves over to same-sex excesses. Additionally, normally-sexed individuals are no less likely to engage in self-defilement [masturbation] if there is insufficient opportunity to satisfy one’s sex
drive. And they are equally likely to assault male but especially female minors...; to indulge in incest; to engage in bestiality...; and even to behave depravedly with corpses if their moral self-control does not control their lust. And it is only amongst the normally-sexed that the special breed of so-called “bleeders” occurs, those who, thirsting for blood, can only satisfy their passion by wounding and torturing.

Kertbeny’s heterosexuals and normal sexuals are certainly no paragons of virtue. Considering psychiatrists’ later cooptation of the term heterosexual to affirm the superiority of different-sex eroticism, Kertbeny’s coinage of homosexual in the service of homosexual emancipation is one of sex history’s grand ironies.

Kertbeny first publicly used his new term homosexuality in the fall of 1869, in an anonymous leaflet against the adoption of the “unnatural fornication” law throughout a united Germany. The public proclamation of the homosexual’s existence preceded the public unveiling of the heterosexual. The first public use of Kertbeny’s word heterosexual occurred in Germany in 1880, in a published defense of homosexuality, in a book by a zoologist on The Discovery of the Soul. Heterosexual next made four public appearances in 1889, all in the fourth German edition of Krafft-Ebing’s Psychopathia Sexualis. Via Krafft-Ebing, heterosexual passed in three years into English, as I’ve noted, first reaching America in 1892. That year, Dr. Kiernan’s article on “Sexual Perversion” spoke of Krafft-Ebing’s “heterosexuals,” associating them with nonprocreative perversion.

Influenced, partly, by Ulrich’s years of public agitation for sodomy-law reform and the rights of Urnings, in 1869 psychiatrists began to play their own distinct role in the public naming and theorizing of sexual normality and abnormality. Although medical-legal articles on sexual crime appeared in the 1850s, only at the end of the 1860s did medical professionals begin to assert a new proprietary claim to a special expertise on sex-difference and eroticism, and begin to name the object of their concern. A mini-history of the psychiatric labeling of “abnormal sexuality” suggests how these doctors’ explicit specifying of “sexual perversion” furthered their implicit theorizing of “normal sexuality.”

In August 1869, a German medical journal published an article by Dr. K.F.O. Westphal that first named an emotion he called “Die conträre Sexualempfindung” (“contrary sexual feeling”). That emotion was “contrary” to the proper, procreative “sexual feeling” of men and women. Westphal’s contrary sexual feeling was the first, and became one of the best known, contenders in the late-nineteenth-century name-that-perversion contest.

In 1871, an anonymous review of Westphal’s essay in the London Journal of Mental Science first translated the German contrary sexual feeling into English as “inverted sexual proclivity.” That urge inverted the proper, procreative “sexual proclivity” of men and women.

In 1878, an article in an Italian medical review, by a Dr. Tamassia, first used the phrase “inversione sessuale.” Translated into English, “sexual inversion” became a second prominent contender in the fin de siècle aberration-labeling sweepstakes.

In 1897, the medically trained Havelock Ellis first used “sexual inversion” in a publicly printed English work. As liberal sex reformer, Ellis tried to appropriate medical terms and concepts for the cause of sexual expression.

Before the invention of “heterosexuality,” the term “contrary sexual feeling” presupposed the existence of a non-contrary “sexual feeling,” the term “sexual inversion” presupposed a noninverted sexual desire. From the start of this medicalizing, “contrary” and “inverted” sexuality were problematized, “sexual feeling” was taken for granted. This inaugurated a hundred-year tradition in which the abnormal and the homosexual were posed as riddle, the normal and heterosexual were assumed.
Chapter 1: The Invention of Heterosexuality

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the new term heterosexual moved into the world, sometimes linked with nonprocreative “perversion,” sometimes with “normal,” procreative, different-sex eroticism. The theorizing of Sigmund Freud played an influential role in stabilizing, publicizing, and normalizing the new heterosexual ideal.

NOTES

1. Dr. James G. Kiernan, “Responsibility in Sexual Perversion,” Chicago Medical Recorder 3 (May 1892), 185–210; “Read before the Chicago Medical Society, March 7, 1892,” but it’s difficult to imagine him reading his footnote on Krafft-Ebing. Kiernan’s note on 197–98 cites Krafft-Ebing’s classifications in Psychopathia Sexualis, “Chaddock’s translation” (no date). The U.S. publication in 1893 of C. G. Chaddock’s translation of Krafft-Ebing’s Psychopathia Sexualis followed Kiernan’s article (see note 4 below). So there’s some confusion about the exact source of Kiernan’s brief note on Krafft-Ebing’s terms “hetero-sexual” and “homo-sexual.” Perhaps Kiernan saw a prepublication version of Chaddock’s translation. It’s also possible that Kiernan had seen some earlier article by Krafft-Ebing or the English translation by F. J. Rebman of the 10th German edition of Krafft-Ebing’s Psychopathia Sexualis, published in London in 1889 (I have not inspected that edition). Kiernan seems to have based his brief gloss on Krafft-Ebing’s definition of the heterosexual and homosexual on a superficial reading of pages 222–23 of the 1893 edition of Chaddock’s translation of Psychopathia Sexualis, paragraphs numbered 1–4.

2. Mental hermaphrodites experienced, sometimes, the “wrong” feelings for their biological sex; their erotic desire was improperly inverted. A moral judgment founded the ostensibly objective, scientific concept of psychical hermaphroditism.

Kiernan’s idea of “physical hermaphroditism” is not exactly the same as the attraction we now label “bisexual,” referring as we do to the sex of the subject and the two different sexes to which he or she is attracted. Psychical hermaphroditism referred to mental gender, while our bisexuality refers to the sex of a sex partner. Mental hermaphroditism might lead to both sexes as erotic partners, but the term laid the cause in the mental gender of the subject (like the concept of inversion).

Our bisexuality does not involve any necessary link to mental gender. I am grateful to Lisa Duggan for this clarification.

3. But heterosexuals’ appearance of triple the abnormality of homosexuals was deceiving. For Kiernan, the gender deviance of homosexuals implied that they were also, simultaneously, rebels from a procreative norm and an erotic norm. But it’s significant that Kiernan explicitly stresses homosexuals’ gender rebellion, not their erotic or reproductive deviancy. George Chauncey, Jr., discusses the late-nineteenth-century stress on gender inversion in “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviancy,” Salmagundi 56–59 (Fall-Winter 1983), 114–46.


This book’s year of publication is confused, because its copyright page and its preface are dated 1892, while its title page lists the year of publication as 1893. The National Union Catalogue of Pre-1956 Publications says this edition was first published in 1892, and the first citation of “hetero-sexual” listed in the Oxford English Dictionary (1976 Supplement, p. 85) is to this edition of Krafft-Ebing, attributed to 1892. That year is incorrect. Although it was evidently prepared by November 1892, the date of its preface, it was not officially published until 1893.


Krafft-Ebing’s focus, as a psychiatrist, on disturbed mental states contrasts with the earlier nineteenth-century focus of neurologists on disturbed brains. I thank Lisa Duggan for this comment.

In this text the doctor’s descriptions of sex sickness and sex health replaced the old, overtly moral judgments about bad sex and good sex, introducing the modern medical model of sexuality to numbers of Americans.


Krafft-Ebing 9.

Krafft-Ebing 169.

Krafft-Ebing 174.


Foucault, The Use of Pleasure II, 188–89.

Foucault, The Use of Pleasure II, 187.

Foucault, The Use of Pleasure II, 188.

This historian suggests that we may legitimately use our own society’s term and concept “bisexuality” (or, implicitly, “homosexuality” or “heterosexuality”) when we want to translate and describe for ourselves, in our terms; the emotions of individuals apart from their particular historical structure, their concepts, and their language (Foucault, The Use of Pleasure II, 188).

The first volume of Foucault’s History of Sexuality was first published in France in 1976, and the second and third volumes in 1984.


Katz, G/LA 31.

The term “Sodomite” was used in these colonies, but it referred directly to persons from Sodom and their whole array of sins, not to a person defined essentially by the act of sodomy. My interpretation of the uses of the term “Sodomite” in these colonies differs with the analysis of Michael Warner in his “New English Sodom.”

On the making of the American middle class, for starters see: Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County,
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23. Rothman 54.


26. Lystra 85.

27. Lystra 85.

28. Lystra 84.

29. Lystra 59.

30. Lystra 101–02, 113, 117, 118.


32. Rothman’s, Lystra’s, D’Emilio and Freedman’s, and Peter Gay’s work (discussed later) point to the absence in the nineteenth-century U.S. of any public ideology that naturalized, medicalized, and justified different-sex eroticism in and of itself, apart from different-sex love. A normal, official, medically modeled, physiological heterosexuality had not yet been declared.


34. Seidman 208–09.

35. Lystra 84.

36. Lystra never adequately explores this nasty underside of nineteenth-century true love—the idea (and the strong feeling) that sensuality divorced from true love was deeply, fundamentally problematic. Because Lystra separates her chapters on sexuality from her chapters on the tensions experienced by couples in love, her couples appear to enjoy eros without suffering any substantial, prolonged anguish, guilt, shame, or conflict about their erotic feelings or activities. A few pages by Lystra on tensions in the sexual relations of women and men fail to balance her stress on couples’ ability to unambiguously justify sexual expression by love (see 69–76). In contrast, Rothman suggests throughout her book that the task of vindicating an otherwise unjustified carnal lust did cause deep anxiety about love’s sufficiency and intense consternation about love’s faltering (see Rothman 52–53, 130, 135–37, 230, 233–41).

37. Seidman 22–23.

38. Seidman 8.

39. Seidman 189. But, then, Seidman uses the heterosexual term as if it did have a functional, operative life in mid-nineteenth-century society (see 22–23).

40. Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966), 151–74; Welter’s analysis is extended here to include True Men and True Love.

41. True women and men were distinguished from false women and men, called by a variety of derogatory names. Those who failed to live up to true woman’s and true man’s character and calling, or who deviated from these strict sex standards, were castigated as false-sexed creatures. For criticizing the traditional female role, Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Wright, and Harriet Martineau were condemned by a minister in 1838 as “only semi-women, mental hermaphrodites” (see Katz, *G/LA*, 140). In 1852 the *New York Herald* referred to “mannish women,” and a Mr. Mandeville referred to women activists as a “hybrid species, half man and half woman, belonging to neither sex.” The following year the *Herald* referred to “unsexed women,” and such epithets were hurled at feminists and other nonconforming women and men well into the twentieth century (see Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud, Volume I, Education of the Senses* [NY: Oxford University Press, 1984], 190, 191).

42. For the middle class’s relation to the working class, see D’Emilio and Freedman, xvi, 46, 57, 130, 142, 152, 167, 183–84. Also see Seidman, 59–60, 117–18.

43. The term “true love” simultaneously asserted love’s *existence* and love’s *value*. True love and false love signified an essential contrast between an authentic and unauthentic affection. True love made no reference to any distinction between different-sex and same-sex eroticism.

44. Seidman 23, 37; D’Emilio and Freedman 68–69, 71, 72.

45. D’Emilio and Freeman 130–38. The term “male prostitute” seems to have referred in the nineteenth century to the man who employed women
prostitutes, not specifically and only to the man who prostituted himself to men for money. I am grateful to Timothy Gilfoyle for this information.


47. “Passionlessness” is one historian’s confused and confusing name for the emotions that nineteenth-century women and men referred to constantly as “passion”—and honored for their depth and intensity. See Nancy F. Cott, “Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790–1850,” *Signs* 4 (1978), 219–36.

48. D’Emilio and Freedman 121.


50. Rothman 120–22, 128.


52. Rothman 129.


54. Michael Lynch, “Here is Adhesiveness: From Friendship to Homosexuality,” *Victorian Studies* 29:1 (Autumn 1985), 67–96. Although Whitman never refers to erotic acts between women, he had apparently heard of a problematic intimacy between women which he compared to his own tense relationships with Peter Doyle and Fred Vaughan. See Edward F. Grier, ed., *Walt Whitman, Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, II (NY: New York University Press, 1984), 890, n. 77. The reference is to Jenny Bullard, of New Ipswich, New Hampshire, described as “handsome, bountiful, generous, cordial, strong, careless, laughing, large, regardless of dress or personal appearance and [who] appreciates and likes Leaves of Grass.” Bullard is said to have lived with two women and never to have married.

55. Although Gay doesn’t mention Emily Dickinson’s letters to Sue Gilbert, these document Emily’s own earlier, intense, passionate relationship with the female friend who was to become her brother Austin’s unhappy wife. See Lillian Faderman, “Emily Dickinson’s Letters to Sue Gilbert,” *Massachusetts Review* 18:2 (Summer 1977), 197–225.

56. Gay 89.


58. Gay 77.

59. My understanding of the historical specifics of normalization is modeled on Foucault’s analytical investigations.


61. The original German text of Kertbeny’s letter to Ulrichs of May 6, 1868, is printed in facsimile and in typed transcription with a brief introduction in German and a bibliography by Manfred Herzer in the periodical *Capri: Zeitschrift für*
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schnüre Geschichte 1 (1987), 25–35. I am grateful to Herzer for sending me a copy and to Michael Lombardi-Nash for translating this letter for me and for sending me copies of his translation of works by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs; and to Paul Nash for sponsoring those copies. Copies of these and other translations may be bought from Urania Manuscripts, 6858 Arthur Court, Jacksonville, FL 32211. Kertbeny and his work are discussed in Manfred Herzer, “Kertbeny and the Nameless Love,” and Jean-Claude Féray and Manfred Herzer, “Homosexual Studies and Politics in the Nineteenth Century: Karl Maria Kertbeny,” trans. by Glen w. Peppel, Journal of Homosexuality 19:1 (1990), 23–47. The meaning of Kertbeny’s terms is also discussed in Manfred Herzer to Katz, April 16, 1989. I stress my gratitude for the letters and wonderful research of Manfred Herzer. I am also indebted to the pioneering work of John Lauritsen and David Thorstad on the history of the homosexual emancipation movement in nineteenth-century Germany—see their pamphlet The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935) (NY: Times Change Press, 1974)—and to James D. Steakley’s The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany (NY: Arno Press, 1975).

62. Féray and Herzer 34–35.
63. Féray and Herzer 36.
64. Féray and Herzer 25, 34–35.
65. Féray and Herzer 25; and Herzer to Katz, April 16, 1989.
67. See my discussion of Kiernan’s article in Chapter 2 of The Invention of Heterosexuality.
70. Ellis, Sexual Inversion, 3.
71. In 1879, Dr. Allen w. Hagenbach’s American medical journal discussion of masturbation first referred to the case of an effeminate young man with a “morbid” attraction to persons of his own sex (though that attraction was not yet given a proper name; see Vern Bullough, “Homosexuality and the Secret Sin in Nineteenth Century America,” Journal of the History of Medicine 28 [1973], 143–54). The first British medical journal article on the subject of same-sex attraction was published in 1881 (though the subject was German, the doctor Viennese). In 1883, the sexual emancipationist John Addington Symonds used “sexual inversion” in his privately printed publication, A Problem in Greek Ethics (see Ellis, Sexual Inversion, 3).
72. Ellis, Sexual Inversion, 3.
Discussion Questions

1. According to Katz, when was the word *heterosexual* first used in the United States? What did *heterosexual* and *homosexual* mean, according to Kiernan?

2. How did Krafft-Ebing’s use of the term *hetero-sexual* differ from Kiernan’s?

3. Why is Karl Heinrich Ulrichs referred to as a pioneer in the study of sexuality?

4. What are some of the different ways people organized human sexuality prior to what Katz discusses as the “invention of heterosexuality”?

5. What did you learn from this reading? Which, if any, assumptions of yours does it challenge?

6. If the word *heterosexual* were not in the dictionary, what difference might that make in how you live your life?

7. How has the terminology we use in talking about sexuality changed since the period of time Katz reviewed? Do you believe that the labels we use to talk about sexuality and sexual identities will continue to evolve?