

"a abnormal
connotation strapped
to it. as neil



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" A man who kissed or embraced an intimate male friend in bed did not worry about homosexual impulses because he did not assume that he had them. In the Victorian language of touch, a kiss or an embrace was a pure gesture of deep affection at least as much as it was an act of sexual expression," says Anthony Rotundo, attempting to define the boundaries between romantic friendship and erotic love, in relation to same gender friendships, in the late nineteenth century (Miller 4). Same gender relationships could exist on a physical level, expressing affection, without bringing up questions of sexual preference. Further, F.

S. Ryman, a gentleman in his twenties, wrote of the very few documents ever discovered from the Victorian age regarding intimate encounters and the emotions attached to them. He has helped give us an idea of what some male relationships were like back then. In his diary, August of 1886, he describes spending the night in his best friends arms with out sexual intentions.

"...Now in all this I am certain there was no sexual sentiment on the part of either of us... I am certain that the thought of the least demonstration of unmanly & abnormal passion would have been as revolting to him as it is & ever has been to me, & yet I do love him & I love to hug & kiss him because of the goodness genius I find in his mind" (Duberman 45). The ability to express love for another male through affection became more questionable short there after as the distinction between romantic and erotic love was less muddy. Until this point, no one got forced into feeling shame because they made it clear that they cared deeply for each other on a close-friendship

level. An intimate or affectionate moment between two males never acquired a homosexual context.

Male friends could kiss each other, lacing friendships with a more profound level of compassion, without the threat of being labeled as a homosexual. Culturally, this type of behavior had no definite wrong or abnormal connotation strapped to it. As Neil Miller describes, " In the 1870s, a concept of homosexual identity—or of gay and lesbian community—was barely articulated" (Miller xvii). In America, the idea of homosexual love was beyond societal understanding. Prior to the introduction of homosexuality people were free to care about each other on levels without the constraints of any insecurity base on a the possibility of getting a label.

While the concept of homosexuality did not exist in the United States, changes were happening in Europe with the issue. Right around the 1870's affectionate relationships between males acquired a label. " It was the sexologists... who were to define same-sex love, to give it a name. The term homosexuality was actually used for the first time in 1869 by Karl Maria Kertbeny, a German-Hungarian campaigner for the abolition of Prussia's laws that criminalized sexual relations between men. Homosexuality was not the only term that the late nineteenth century found to describe sexual relations between persons of the same sex. The term inversion was even more widely used.

And in 1870, the German physician Karl Westphal invented the phrase " contrary sexual feeling," in detailing the history of a young lesbian. These expressions all had a clinical tinge to them. Then there were the more

sympathetic, but no less problematic, terms- the " third sex" and the " intermediate sex" (Miller 13). These terms and phrases had not yet come across the Atlantic to penetrate the English language in American society except for sexual inversion on a moderate level outside of the clinical sphere.

In 1892, however, homosexuality appeared. Prior, the concept of homosexuality was not yet present in the United States. George Chauncey, who has made a thorough study of the medical literature on the subject, persuasively argues, " Sexual inversion, the term used most commonly in the nineteenth century, did not denote the same conceptual phenomenon as homosexuality. ' Sexual inversion' referred to a broad range of deviant gender behavior, of which homosexual desire was only a logical bit indistinct aspect, while ' homosexuality' focused on the narrower issue of sexual object choice" (Halperin 15).

The introduction of homosexuality gave the people something