"HERE IS ADHESIVENESS":  
FROM FRIENDSHIP 
TO HOMOSEXUALITY\textsuperscript{1}

RECENT STUDIES OF "HOMOSEXUALITY" HAVE VEERED FROM WHAT HAS been the main line of studies since 1896, the line that stressed the trans-historical, "biological" nature of homosexuality. to stress instead the emergence, in British, European, and North American cultures, of a distinct "homosexual identity" or "homosexual role."\textsuperscript{2} Sexuality, in these newer arguments, never occurs outside specific historical contexts — that is, social, political, and economic structures; the notions of a "sodomite," or a "homosexual," or a "gay" are historical and must be understood in the context from which they emerged.\textsuperscript{3} Social and economic patterns define a "role," and this role is the historian's proper object of study. Along with the emergence of this role, an "identity" also emerges: an act of self-definition by an individual or a group which incorporates same-sex behavior into a complex self-

\textsuperscript{1} For their help as I wrote this paper I thank Herbert Spiers, Bernd Metz, Bert Hansen, Jonathan Ned Katz, Joseph Cady, Madeleine B. Stern, James D. Steakley, and Thomas Martone. For awarding it the first Crompton-Koll Award in Gay Studies, I thank the Gay Caucus for the Modern Languages. The paper is dedicated to Bill Lewis, the strength of whose adhesiveness has long excited my own.


consciousness. Although at least two book-length studies argue that this identity antedates the rise of modern psychology, the more persuasive arguments place its emergence squarely in the context of that development during the Victorian period. "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration," writes Michel Foucault of the impact of Karl Westphal's 1870 article about "the contrary sexual sensations": "The homosexual was now a species." Homosexuality, says Guy Hocquenghem, "is an invention of the western urban way of life in the nineteenth century." Robert K. Martin is yet more pointed: "Prior to Whitman there were homosexual acts but no homosexuals." While these epigrams usefully counter the transhistorical argument, they slight the complexities in the gradual development of the homosexual role.

In this paper I consider one limited development: the contribution made by the science of phrenology, and particularly by men-loving men who were drawn to phrenology, to the emergence of the modern homosexual. Although phrenology was not the only source of this identity, it is important both because of its contributions to mental science early in the nineteenth century and because of its popularization of key ideas later on, particularly in Victorian England and America. As a continuous discourse, it usefully displays the gradual transition of concepts that accompanied the emergence of the homosexual role. Its popularity, especially in the United States, indicates the broad diffusion of these changes. At the beginning of the century, the only discourse for same-sex passionate relationships, outside those of sin or crime, was the Friendship tradition. A moral discourse, its reference was not exclusively same-sex. Friendship could exist between men and women as well as between women and women, or men and men.

5 With the exception of Katz and Martin, the writers listed in notes 2-7 do not even mention phrenology.
The phrenologists grounded this moral, volitional behavior in the brain, which they held to be the organ of the mind.\textsuperscript{10} They gave it a material basis, a congenital origin, and a name: Adhesiveness. Walt Whitman the poet, an ambivalent devotee of phrenology, self-consciously modified the effects of this organ to refer only to same-sex relationships. And Whitman’s writing about “adhesive love,” which he also called “comradeship,” prepared the ground for John Addington Symonds’s late Victorian formulation, with Havelock Ellis, of the modern “homosexual”: a psychological concept which collaborated both with the medicalization of homosexuality and with the rise of a political emancipation movement that would come to be known as “gay liberation.”\textsuperscript{11}

I

Phrenology freely crossed national borders, so my study begins in Vienna and moves through Paris, London, Edinburgh, Boston, and New York before it climaxes in the England of John Addington Symonds and Oscar Wilde. While misleadingly simple, it is chronologically neat to note that Franz Josef Gall’s Vienna lectures, which effectively founded the science of phrenology, occurred in 1796; Whitman’s first published writing about phrenology occurred a half-century later, in 1846; and Ellis published \textit{Sexual Inversion} a half-century after that, in 1896. Gall’s lectures, we may add, were banned by the Austrian government in 1802 and the French in 1824; Whitman’s major poetic engagement of human sexuality, in the 1860 \textit{Leaves of Grass}, provoked great controversy and led to his dismissal from the Department of the Interior; \textit{Sexual Inversion}, charged by Scotland Yard with immorality, was tried and officially suppressed in England.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} The best discussion of this history, although it does not take up specific faculties such as adhesiveness, is in Robert M. Young, \textit{Mind, Brain, and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century: Cerebral Localization and its Biological Context from Gall to Ferrier} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 9-53.

\textsuperscript{11} In addition to the writings of Jeffrey Weeks cited above, see Phyllis Groskurth’s \textit{John Addington Symonds: A Biography} (London: Longmans, 1984), especially chap. 10, and her \textit{Havelock Ellis: A Biography} (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), especially chaps. 11-13.

Although Franz Josef Gall (1758-1828) did not coin the term "phrenology," he was indisputably (as Spurzheim, who did coin it, wrote) "the first author of this new doctrine" (MP, p. 2). The brain, Gall held, is the organ of the mind; its functions are localized; the stronger the particular function, the larger the particular part of the brain which produces it; finally, the shape of the cranium is visibly affected by the size of the underlying brain area. He discovered twenty-seven basic cerebral faculties. In the case of Friendship, Gall's account of its discovery is typically anecdotal.\(^\text{13}\) He begins unassumingly: "I was requested to take, for my collection, a cast of the head of a lady who was, as they told me, the model of friendship." While among acquaintances in Vienna, he took the cast more out of kindness, he said, than in the expectation of making a discovery. But as he examined the woman's head, he "found two great prominences, constituting the segment of a sphere." Having never before seen such prominences, and noting their exceptional symmetry — the brain, he had already discerned, was bilaterally symmetrical — he rigorously questioned her friends and the woman herself. "All united," Gall reports, "in confirming what had been told me, that she had an invincible attachment to her friends."

"The idea occurred to me," he continues, "that the disposition to friendship might also be founded in a particular cerebral organ." This likelihood grew when he noted that the cranial prominences were in the vicinity of two organs he had previously established. The faculties of these two organs — Zügungstrieb, or the instinct of generation, and Kinderlieb, or the love of offspring — seemed analogous to that of Friendship. Their proximity, then, argued for this discovery as well, since each area of the cortex seemed to contain related organs.

Following this anecdote, Gall's argument constitutes the most extended essay on Friendship in the literature of phrenology. In its amplitude and its particular themes, it ranks with the best essays of the European and English Friendship tradition. Its points would often be repeated by later phrenologists. Gall's encomium to Attachment (Anhänglichkeit) could easily have appeared in a non-scientific moral essay: "He, who feels friendship, lives for others. He alone feels happy in a circle of friends; his friend is his greatest good" (Gall, p. 301). Friends are ready to sacrifice for each other if the need arises, but their unhappiness is shared as well as their joys. It can exist between two people, or can pervade a social group. It can cross the lines of social class, or exist among equals. Gall's association of Friendship with both

\(^{13}\) Franz Josef Gall, The Influence of the Brain on the Form of the Head (Boston: Marsh, Capen, and Lyon, 1830), pp. 299-314.

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pairs and groups anticipates Whitman, as does the quality of happiness emerging from these friendships.

Having called Friendship the *summum bonum*, Gall had to confront the institution of marriage, and in doing so he faced Christian orthodoxy as many succeeding materialist phrenologists were to do. Like many of them, he sidestepped confrontation. "Marriage," he allowed, "has been instituted by the Author of all that exists." But in examining the social behavior of animals, he found such a diversity of sexual and pairing relationships that he was reluctant to posit marriage as a fundamental faculty; he suggested that it results rather from the simultaneous action of other faculties, namely the proximate trio of *Anhänglichkeit*, *Zeugungstrieb*, and *Kinderliebe*. Because he did not find marriage existing across species, but did find Attachment to be nearly universal, he posited Friendship as a basic faculty. In so doing he prepared the way for an argument that Friendship, not the family, is the foundation of social continuity. Society does not result from enlightened self-interest and need, or from the instinct of propagation. Gall dismissed those currently debated theories (the former identified by a later phrenologist with Jean Jacques Rousseau) as "abject." History, rather, presents us "with the most noble examples of the devotion of friends, who gave themselves up as hostages for their friends" (Gall, p. 301). The propensity to live in society "is comprehended in the activity of the organ of attachment."

Having established the basic function of the faculty, Gall's essay locates it with care. The organ of Attachment is situated "in the middle of the edge of the parietal bone." "When it is advantageously developed" — as in the woman from Vienna — it "forms two distinct annular prominences." He illustrated this with a diagram of the skull of a man "remarkable for the affection he had for his friends, and who, even in dying, left them proofs of his attachment" (Gall, p. 312). Among his other main points are the assertions that Friendship is especially strong in women and in criminals. He mentioned the possibilities of "excess" attachment and of "minimal" development of the organ. If it is underdeveloped, he claimed, the result is a misanthrope with "a hatred for all commerce with men" (Gall, p. 312). At the other extreme, "An excessive development of the organ of attach-

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ment may predispose to mania” (Gall, p. 309). He quoted, in passing, an example from the alienist Philippe Pinel.

Although Gall felt that the organ’s existence had a “probability almost equal to certainty,” Spurzheim was slow to accept it. Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) popularized, revised, and developed Gall’s views on cerebral localization, expanding Gall’s twenty-seven faculties into thirty-five. For Gall’s staid determinism he substituted an ameliorist bent. Spurzheim’s willingness to see phrenology as a means for eliminating personal and social ills may explain his extraordinary popularity among American intellectuals and moralists in the 1830s. Gall had taken the word Anhänglichkeit from common usage where it had connotations of particularly strong devotion or loyalty as well as a pejorative sense: “given to venery, lustful.” But Spurzheim, bringing phrenology into English, found “very few single words which express my conceptions of the peculiar faculties of the mind.” So he coined a new word based on a Latin synonynm for anhängig. His neologism evoked an image not so much of hanging-on or dependence as of sticking together; it was Adhesiveness. Spurzheim, indeed, was quicker to give the organ a new name than he was to accept its existence. “Our observations are not multiplied enough to enable us to decide positively on this organ,” he wrote in 1815, “yet its seat seems to me more than probable” (Spurzheim, Physiognomical System, p. 372). In 1819 an unsigned publication, probably by Spurzheim, labelled Adhesiveness as still only a “probable” faculty. Gall tried hard to convince his colleague (Gall, p. 306). Spurzheim deplored that Gall “neglected, during a long time, to make further observations on this organ.” But since many facts had been gathered subsequently, he wrote in 1825, “Its seat may now be considered as ascertained” (Spurzheim, Mind, p. 151). Thus, Adhesiveness was firmly established in the phrenological system.

Spurzheim’s account of the faculty followed Gall’s in emphasizing that its expression was not a moral or volitional act, but rather “of an inferior nature, common to man and animals.” Its manifestations

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17 See Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, Deutsches Wörterbuch (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854).


“are too early and too sudden to result from reflection.” He too found it strong in women and criminals, and subject to abuse by being either of “too great energy” (regretting overmuch the loss of a friend) or too weak (which produces anchorites and hermits) (Spurzheim, Mind, p. 151). But Spurzheim modified Gall in several significant ways. Whereas for Gall the faculty’s primary effect was friendship, for Spurzheim it primarily “induces individuals of the same kinds to congregate, and live in society” (MP, p. 161). Here, as with many of his revisions of Gall, he was lifting the faculty to a higher level of abstraction. Gall, he charged, had “erred in adopting powers for individual actions and character, and naming them accordingly” (MP, p. 125). For Spurzheim, Friendship was “only one of the modifications” of the more abstract faculty: “The term adhesiveness has been used hitherto merely in a physical sense,” he wrote, but now it bears “a mental signification” (MP, p. 164).

Another modification was attachment for life, a function Gall had ascribed to love of offspring rather than to Adhesiveness; Spurzheim argued that the sexes often remained together well beyond their love of offspring, and that “Men and women may be attached to each other for life, without the least desire of offspring” (MP, p. 161). What caused the modification? There tended to be no further probing into the link between individual friendship and the broader social phenomenon of which it was a modification. In 1836 when the pathologist F. J. V. Broussais gave a series of lectures on phrenology in Paris, he said, “Perhaps you may ask me how the same organ can represent association, the basis of civilization in general, and friendship.” We just cannot explain it, he answered: “It is impossible to penetrate all the secrets of nature.”

Besides abstracting and modifying Gall’s account of the faculty, Spurzheim began to multiply examples; in doing so, he began a practice that would become routine in subsequent phrenological writing. To exemplify criminal adhesiveness, he wrote in 1825 of “A highway-man, confined in the prison of Lichtenstein, near Vienna,” who “hanged himself, that he might not be forced to betray his accomplices” (Mind, p. 151). By 1833 he added the example of Mary Macinnes, who conveniently demonstrated high adhesiveness both as a woman and a criminal. A man she greatly loved had given her a handkerchief and

82 F. J. V. Broussais, Lectures on Phrenology, delivered in the University of Paris (London: n.p., 1847), p. 628. This is a bound version of the lectures originally published in the Lancet, 2 (24 June-1 September 1836). The original is available as Cours de phrenologie fait a la Faculte de Medicine de Paris (Paris: J. B. Ballière, 1836). Broussais errs in attributing the coinage of the word “Adhesiveness” to Combe instead of Spurzheim.

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half an orange to take to the scaffold; this she did, and apparently died holding them. “She seemed to have forgot eternity,” Spurzheim concludes, “in the ardor of her attachment” (MP, p. 162). In passing, Spurzheim enlarged Gall’s “propensity to live in society” to include the organ’s effects upon nationalism. Adhesiveness, he said, “may be greater in one nation than in another” (Mind, p. 151). Within a decade Scottish phrenologists would take this up vigorously, thus preparing the way for Whitman’s Democratic Vistas, a vision for American democracy based on Adhesiveness.

However impassioned, the writings of Gall and Spurzheim seem mild in tone when compared to the two great bursts of phrenological interest that followed: one in Britain in the 1830s, led by George Combe, and another in America in the following decade, led by Orson S. Fowler. The British phrenologists were learned and professional, the Americans exoteric and self-improving, but the Adhesiveness literature from both countries suggests a great deal about the gradual psychologizing of passionate friendship.

Spurzheim was phrenology’s St. Paul. He crossed the channel with his gospel in 1814; by 1832 when he left England for America, he had provoked in England’s professional and laboring classes alike an enthusiasm for his new science. When enemies emerged to counter him — members of the Royal Academies, churchmen, journalists (particularly from the London Times and the Edinburgh Review) — the ensuing debates entrenched certain phrenological principles even as they undercut others. David de Giustino has attributed the popularity of phrenology among educated people in Victorian Britain to the science’s empirical method and to its “remarkable harmony with existing philosophical attitudes.” By the time schisms racked it from within in the 1850s, it had developed a broadly based respect for ideas that would shape Darwinism, materialism, alienism, and other aspects of Victorian thought — including, as we will see, ideas about the mental basis of same-sex affection.

II

George Combe (1784-1858), a sturdy bourgeois lawyer from Edinburgh, met Spurzheim in 1815. His initial resistance to the German’s lectures soon faded, and he quickly became a leader of British

phrenology. Indeed, after Spurzheim's death in 1832 George Combe was held to be the world's greatest living phrenologist. His *Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects*, published in London and Edinburgh within the month before Gall's death in August 1828, became the basis for orthodox phrenology. Harriet Martineau ranked it in importance alongside *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and the Bible. It also became a runaway best seller (de Giustino, p. 29). In 1835 a popular edition sold 2000 copies in ten days (de Guistino, p. 3). By the end of the century, Angus McLaren has written, "100,000 copies had been sold, whereas Darwin's *Origin of the Species* had reached a level of only 50,000."24

Combe's major contributions to the understanding of Adhesiveness were his highly complex sense of the working of the "organ" — the term he liked to use for the cerebral location of each faculty — and his additions to the iconography. Gall attributed the devotion which the woman of Vienna showed her friends, through whatever material circumstances she passed, solely to the strength of her *Anhänglichkeit*. Although Combe quoted this example in several places without qualification, in the *Constitution* he presented an argument that, if applied, would dismiss Gall's account as too simplistic.25 Adhesiveness, for Combe as for Spurzheim, was one of the "propensities" which humans shared with the lower species. But Combe, the enlightened deist, introduced the notion that these "lower feelings" were, by their constitution, selfish. When Adhesiveness acts alone, he said, "It desires, for its own satisfaction, a friend to love." But for this attachment to serve nobler ends than this selfish one it must be directed "by enlightened intellect and moral sentiment." Continuing his italics, Combe emphasized that the animal faculties in man "must be illumined by knowledge of science and of moral and religious duty." They must be gratified in harmony with the higher faculties, those proper to man. Acting alone they may do ill; if they act in opposition to the higher faculties, evil will inevitably ensue. The Viennese woman, it would follow, must have had other strong organs, such as Benevolence, for Adhesiveness alone would not have produced the effects to which

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25 See, for example, Combe, *A System*, pp. 140-141, and his *Lectures on Phrenology* (New York: S. Colman, 1839), p. 144. His more sophisticated argument that would seem in opposition to Gall is given in *The Constitution of Man* (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1839), pp. 48-54. He expanded, but did not significantly alter, this argument in many later editions.
her friends so lavishly testified. Combe's notion of the faculty's abuse thus differed from that of Gall and Spurzheim; they held it to produce ill effects when too small or too great, whereas Combe found it liable to abuse when acting alone or in opposition to the enlightened faculties.

In a very narrow but important context, however, Combe did introduce to phrenology the notion of excess Adhesiveness as a "disease." As early as 1822 he could write that "When too strong, excessive regret at the loss of a friend, or excessive uneasiness at leaving our country, or the disease called Nostalgia, is the result." The blurring of love of home with loss of friend remained in his subsequent references to this "disease"; it would be 1836 before Robert Macnish would refer to extensive attachment between persons, alone, in the framework of a pathology.

It was Combe's belief in the "doctrine about natural language" that led to his most entertaining additions to the iconography of Adhesiveness (Lectures, p. 146). "Constant friends and lovers," he averred to one of his early critics, were not generally found "drifting down, stern foremost, on the objects of their affections." But there were recognizable signs in the natural language for strong Adhesiveness:

"Look at the pictures of Castor and Pollux, in which the one stands with his arm passed over the shoulder of the other, the two heads touching at a point a little behind and above the ear; or place any two persons, no matter although of the same sex, in both of whom the organs of Adhesiveness are large, in this position, and you will soon discover whether or not this is the natural attitude of attachment." Artists recognized the natural language, Combe said, and he quoted from Gall a Christian example that illustrated it as well as the Classical ones: "In the Madonna au lapin of Raphael, Mary presses this region of her head against the corresponding region of the head of the child." Two children, highly adhesive, "will put their arms around each other's necks, and place their heads together, bringing the organ of Adhesiveness in each into contact with the same organ in the other" (A System, p. 146). Animals, even, because they too have the propensity, may communicate it in similar fashion: "When a dog or cat is under the influence of this faculty, and wants to show great attachment, it will...

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87 George Combe, Letter from George Combe to Francis Jeffrey, Esq. in Answer to His Criticism on Phrenology Contained in No. LXXXVIII of "The Edinburgh Review" (Edinburgh: J. Anderson, Jun., 1836), p. 45.

88 Combe, Lectures, p. 146. He must have intended the Madonna of the Chair or the Madonna of the Fish.

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rub this part of the head against its master's leg" (Lectures, p. 146). The degree of attachment in the cat became controversial among phrenologists. Eventually it was deemed strong.29 Another English writer distinguished among the canines: spaniels, he said, had large attachment, but in greyhounds it was least visible.30

The Edinburgh phrenologists took up George Combe's particular application of Gall's social theory to nationalist politics. Pointing out that women, because of their higher Adhesiveness, were "fonder [than men] of permanent institutions and customs," Sidney Smith called this "a natural tendency to the spirit of Toryism."31 When Adhesiveness and Concentrativeness combined, Smith pointed out, they produced the poetic charms of a Robert Burns or a Thomas Moore; indeed, they were so combined in what he called the "national Scottish head." Scottish ballads in general were often cited as evidence of national Adhesiveness, particularly "John Anderson my Joe" and "Darby and Joan."32

Other writers also continued to extend the list of examples. In a black slave, they found a case which proved that Adhesiveness did not result from education, "nor could it proceed from interested motive."33 Well-known personalities such as Sir Thomas Browne provided signal instances.34 Later in the century, Scottish and English phrenologists were finding examples of the faculty in texts by William Wordsworth: William Cowper; George Gordon, Lord Byron; and Shakespeare (Hamlet has "large adhaesiveness"; Coriolanus), and in the skull of the Prince of Wales.35 The number of "natural language" signs also expanded. For example, eyes glow when the beloved object approaches:

34 See "A Complete System," no. 13, 146; "Adhesiveness of Greenacre," Phrenological Journal and Magazine of Moral Science, 2 (1838), 195 (hereafter PJMMS); Robert Cox, "On the Character and Skull of Sir Thomas Browne," PJMMS, 18 (1845), 45. The analysis was based on Browne's statement, "I hope I do not break the Fifth Commandment, if I conceive I may love my friend before the nearest of my blood, even those to whom I owe the principles of life. I never yet cast a true affection on a woman, but I have loved my friend as I do virtue, my soul, my God."
35 Alexander Dinsley, in A Lecture on Phrenology, as Illustrative of the Moral and Intellectual Capacities of Man (London, 1826), makes the statement about Hamlet (p. 7). He also quotes an unidentified friendship poem (p. 19). The other references are from Ambrose Lewis Vago, Orthodox Phrenology (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1873), pp. 54-55.

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the body leans forward to embrace it; "the mouth is a little open and drawn outwards." A hearty handshake indicates adhesive strength; a weak one, a weak faculty. The head tends to incline "a little backward, and to one side" — no doubt so the organ could easily find its equivalent in another nearby head ("Complete System," no. 14, 158).

In 1843, an essay in the People's Phrenological Journal imported from the Friendship tradition an example that, along with Castor and Pollux, would endure in the Adhesiveness tradition:

The strength of this feeling in women is most beautifully touched upon by the royal bard of Israel, to indicate the strength of his affection for his brother Jonathan, on hearing of his death: "Distress is on me because of thee, my brother Jonathan: thou wast exceeding delightful to me: wonderful thy affection to me. — above the love of women." 30

Another writer introduced a third great male pair from the Friendship tradition, Damon and Pythias. 31 Yet another evolved a fourth familiar pair — but this time, for a change, they were female: Ruth and Naomi. "The most absurd and romantic attachments are frequently formed by young women to each other," Frederick Bridges wrote, "and sometimes by young men, based upon an unnatural excitement of Adhesiveness." 32

Although, following Gall, the phrenologists attributed Adhesiveness especially to women, the male writers (and I know of no female phrenologists writing in the first half of the century) drew few examples from women's actual experience. Indeed, they clearly argued from a sentimental image — not from the actual lives of women. Adhesiveness, it was said, would lead boys to become attached to their pets, but was far stronger in the attachment that little girls showed to their dolls. 33 At least one feminist objected, and another male phrenologist replied: "Mary Wolstoncroft [sic] denies that girls have, by nature, a greater fondness for dolls than boys, ascribing the difference to education; but she is clearly mistaken, inasmuch as the organ on which the love of young depends, is decidedly larger in the

31 His statement that David's "beautiful elegy over Saul and Jonathan is a fine illustration of Adhesiveness" suggests the intersection of phrenology with the permitted expression of male-male affection in the elegiac mode (Goyder, My Battle for Life, p. 366). See Joseph Cady, unpublished essay, "Drum-Taps and Nineteenth-Century Male Homosexual Literature."
32 Frederick Bridges, Phrenology Made Practical and Popularly Explained (London: Philips, 1861), pp. 85-86.
female head than in the male." 40 The sexism of the discourse of sentimentality — women "generally act more from feeling than reflection" — led to a paternalistic protectiveness over "this loveliest trait in the female character." 41

The same sentimentalism that attributed greater Adhesiveness to women also attributed greater abuse of the faculty to them, as the comment by Frederick Bridges indicated. Another writer invoked female hysteria: "The excitement of this faculty has been supposed to be in some way connected with the hysterical feeling, so common with nervous females." Under the excitement of Adhesiveness, even "men at times have hysterics" ("Complete System," no. 13. 145). With the one exception of Robert Macnish, none of the writers dealt clearly with female-female attachments; when they mentioned a woman's strong devotion to her friends, "friends" almost always meant "her brothers, her husband, her father," or, as in the Macinnis case, her male lover. When Bridges referred to Ruth, quoting the "Entreat me not to leave thee" plea, he failed to note that it was spoken to a woman (Bridges, Phrenology, p. 85).

After Gall and Spurzheim, phrenology’s commitment to empiricism weakened. In the early 1840s, however, the English mesmerist Spencer T. Hall demonstrated the location and effects of Adhesiveness by submitting to a kind of fully awake mesmerism at the hands of a guileless young man named William Holbrook. Holbrook knew nothing of phrenology, yet when he moved his finger over Hall’s head, Hall experienced a series of sensations that confirmed that science’s localizations. When Holbrook pressed his finger near the area on the skull that the charts indicated for Adhesiveness, Hall "saw and wished to shake hands with one friend alone." But when Holbrook moved his finger a small distance, establishing a fuller contact with the organ, Hall reported that "I suddenly became aware, as it seemed, of the presence of all the friends I have ever known." 42

40 Robert Macnish, An Introduction to Phrenology (Glasgow: J. Symington and Co., 1837), p. 48. (Hereafter cited as Introduction.)

41 "A Complete System of Phrenology," People’s Phrenological Journal. 1, no. 12 (1843), 134. See also Bridges, Phrenology, p. 84; and C. Donovan, A Handbook of Phrenology (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), p. 23. "As to women, the woman without plenty of posterior lobe is not of the right sort. She may be a lady, but a true woman she is not."

42 Spencer T. Hall, Memmeric Experiences (London: H. Balliere, 1845), p. 81. This excerpt appeared in PJMMS, 19 (1846), 78. See also the account of another mesmerist in the same journal, "Interesting Memmeric-phenological Case of a Young Lady," 16 (1843), 246-251; when this mesmerist’s hand, touching the head of his fifteen-year-old subject, "trembled on Adhesiveness," her attraction to him "was not merely mesmeric — it became inconveniently adhesive." She followed him around the room, "even mounting upon an ottoman after him," and her attraction would not subside until he touched her in the areas of Combativeness.

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At least two of the Europeans who contributed substantially to defining Adhesiveness were men who in later ages might well have been "homosexual" or "gay": Spurzheim himself, and the Scottish phrenologist second only to George Combe in influence though surpassing him in intellectual daring, Robert Macnish.

Spurzheim did not marry until he was well past forty. Until that time he spent his life in close companionship with other men, including fellow scientists. From 1804, when he finished his medical studies in Vienna at the age of twenty-eight, until 1813, he and Gall, eighteen years his senior, were "constantly together" in Vienna, Germany, Switzerland, and finally Paris.43 (This extended close companionship may have been the motivation for the American phrenologist Orson S. Fowler's rating of Gall's own Adhesiveness as "well-developed.")44 In Paris, Spurzheim was very close to a man ten years younger than himself, the astronomer and physicist François Arago (1786-1853).

Arago was one of an emotionally devoted circle that included Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac and Alexander von Humboldt; between 1809 and 1811 he shared a room with von Humboldt, and was said to have been "the central passion, the key nexus" in von Humboldt's life.45 We know little about the relationship between Spurzheim and Arago, and only a little more about Spurzheim's marriage. But within two months of his death, F. M. de Moscati, a new convert to phrenology, declared in London that Spurzheim "showed, if not an aversion, at least a sort of indifference for the fair sex."46 Later, Spurzheim's friend and

43 Nahum Capen, Reminiscences of Dr. Spurzheim and George Combe, and a Review of the Science of Phrenology (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), p. 89. Capen says that Spurzheim married Mademoiselle Perier in 1818, when he was forty-two, but other reports have him marrying a widow in 1824 at forty-eight.

44 Orson Squire Fowler, American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany, 2 (October 1838-September 1840), 11. (Hereafter APJ&M.)


The information that they shared a room comes from Roger Hahn's entry on Arago in the Dictionary of Scientific Biography. Arago's "Eulogy on Gay-Lussac" includes several remarks about his friend's life drawn from "the profound friendship which bound me to Gay-Lussac for more than forty years." Arago's account of the first meeting of Gay-Lussac and von Humboldt concludes: "Such was the origin of an attachment that was never interrupted, and that soon bore the happiest fruits" (my stress). He testifies to Gay-Lussac's long and happy marriage and also to his "unchangeable devotion to his friends": "Gay-Lussac gave himself up enthusiastically to the honest inspirations of his soul, when necessary, even at his own risk and peril, to battle an intrigue or defend a friend" (D. F. J. Arago, "Eulogy on Gay-Lussac," Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington [1877], pp. 138-172).

46 Marquis [F. M. de] Moscati, "Biographical Paper on the Character and Phrenological Organization of Dr. Spurzheim," Lancet, 489 (12 January 1833), 496. Moscati completely discounts the possibility of any erotic interest in Spurzheim's marriage to the "French widow lady," long of his acquaintance, whose lithographic drawings had illustrated his publications. Professor John Elliottson, President of the London Phrenological Society, concurred with Moscati's judgement that Spurzheim's amasiveness was small; interestingly, Moscati seems Spurzheim's adhesiveness as only

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biographer Andrew Carmichael replied to this charge with a testimony to his “fervent and cordial adherence to those who were worthy of his friendship or love” (my stress): “I had many occasions to witness his value for women, and the pleasure he derived from their conversation and society; and thus I also witnessed — that the pleasure was reciprocal.”

According to Spurzheim’s other biographer, his Boston publisher Nahum Capen, the friendship between Arago and Spurzheim was “mutual.” Spurzheim left France in 1813; Arago himself had married in 1811. Two decades later, in August 1832, Spurzheim came to New York, lectured to huge and enthusiastic audiences there and in New England, and, weakened by his strenuous lecture schedule, contracted the cholera that was epidemic at the time. He died in Boston on 10 November, and a mark of his United States reception during these three months is that his funeral procession was headed by the president of Harvard. Despite their many years of separation, Spurzheim’s death weighed heavily upon Arago. “He was a most devoted friend and admirer of Spurzheim,” reports Capen, “I can never forget his manifestations of affection for the departed philosopher.” Arago sought the full details of Spurzheim’s illness and death “with dropping tears and trembling voice — indicating deep motions of affection too touching and exciting to be described by the pen” (Capen, Reminiscences, p. 48).

But Arago’s excited affection — both words from phrenological discourse — best demonstrated itself at his own death twenty-one years after Spurzheim’s. “Knowing that the skull of his dear friend had been preserved” — Spurzheim’s bequest to science — Arago provided “that his own skull should be preserved in a similar manner, and sent to Boston, to be placed by the side of that of Spurzheim.” His will was faithfully executed, and his skull was indeed “placed by the side of that of his dear friend — and there it will sacredly remain in obedience to the commands of unalterable affection. What a monument,” Capen

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moderate, and this as cooperating with his “want of amative propensities” to explain his indifference to women. Moncrieff’s chief source of information about Spurzheim’s life was an unsigned memoir of him in the Athenaeum, 270 (29 December 1832), 843-844. which pointed out that his wife “left no children.”

The Marquis’s testimonial to phrenology upon his conversion to the science appeared in the Lancet, 489 (10 November 1832), 213-215. as “History and Conversion of an Anti-phrenologist.” Two years later, Elliotson exposed him as an exaggerator, guilty of misrepresentation, and not even a marquis (London Medical Gazette, 14, 1834).

47 Andrew Carmichael, A Memoir of the Life and Philosophy of Spurzheim (Boston: Marsh, Capen, and Lyon, 1833), p. 34.


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concludes, "to be preserved in the honor of science" (Capen, *Reminiscences*, p. 48).

Spurzheim's Adhesiveness did not produce the passionate writing about the faculty that it did in the case of his younger Scottish contemporary Robert Macnish (1802-1837). In his *Introduction to Phrenology*, what distinguished Macnish most strikingly from his colleagues was his fascination with both the intensity and the possible abuses of the faculty. "When very strong, it gives ardent strength of attachment and warmth of friendship" (Macnish, *Introduction*, p. 52). His careful language repays close attention. Adhesiveness, he wrote, did not constitute love; at least, "not strictly speaking," for "love, in the legitimate sense of the word, is a compound of Amativeness and Adhesiveness." After thus leaving open the possibility of an illegitimate love, Macnish spelled out examples of the legitimate kind — listing "the love which the lover bears to his mistress" before that of "the husband to his young wife" as if to narrow the range even of what illegitimate would be. Logic — especially in Edinburgh, the Athens of the North — might have led him next to list the kinds of illegitimate love; but instead, Macnish wrote: "The attachment of a parent to his child, or of a brother to his sister, is not, in reality, love, but strong Adhesiveness — powerfully aided, in the former case, by Philoprogenitiveness." Would strong Adhesiveness also result in passionate same-sex love? Macnish made here no such assertion, but in his discussion of Amativeness six pages earlier he had said, "Women with small Amativeness and large Adhesiveness prefer the society of their own sex to that of men." Granting that, he quickly moved into a male-centered view of lesbians, as if to protect his insight by demeaning his subject: to men, he added, "their manners seem passionless and frigid; and even when gifted with beauty, they are felt by the opposite sex to be far less interesting than women to whom nature has granted fewer charms of person but a different cerebral conformation" (Macnish, *Introduction*, p. 46). Beneath the conventional male attitude, which may have been more self-protecting than actually believed by Macnish, the point was clear: same-sex passions resulted from high Adhesiveness and low Amativeness (which involved exclusively opposite-sex relationships).

After avoiding the possibility of male-male "illegitimate" love, Macnish proceeded to address it in his answer to a familiar phrenological question; along the way, he managed to double the length of the inherited list of great male pairs: "Is this faculty more energetic in men or women? Generally in the latter; although in men
there are not wanting instances of the most violent attachments, even
towards their own sex.” His logic suggested that there were instances of
violent attachment in men towards the opposite sex, yet he bypassed
the possibility completely, listing only same-sex examples:
Such is represented to have been the case with Pylades and Orestes, and with Damon and
Pythias, whose attachment to each other (the result of excessive Adhesiveness) defied even
death itself. What beautiful pictures of friendship between men, have been drawn by
Homer, by Virgil, and by the sacred writers, in the instances of Achilles and Patroclus, of
Nisus and Euryalus, and of Jonathan and David.
(Macnish, Introduction, pp. 52-54).

With that statement Macnish not only brought male-male passion into
the sphere of Adhesiveness, he managed to use the official pejorative
language about them (“excessive”) alongside a eulogistic language
(“what beautiful pictures”). A similar rhetorical strategy operated in
his discussion of the “abuse” of Adhesiveness; he passed the conven-
tional negative judgement with a few conventional phrases, but his
selection and balance of details suggested a quiet admiration of strong
Adhesiveness:
Is it subject to abuse? Very frequently it is so. Young women, and sometimes young men,
are apt to form absurd and romantic attachments to each other, which, however, being
based upon an unnatural state of excitement in the organ of Adhesiveness, necessarily ter-
minate so soon as the excitement ends; and thus, unless there are eminent moral qualities
to insure permanence, the feeling is seldom of long duration. When a coldness once takes
place, mutual antipathy often follows, and the quondam friends become bitter enemies.
People labouring under the strong influence of this organ, are often incapable of per-
ceiving any thing like a blemish in their friends. They clothe them with the attributes of
perfection, and employ the most extravagant terms of praise when speaking of them to
others.
(Macnish, Introduction, pp. 53-54).

This small anatomy of a love affair is followed by a brief homage to the
Scottish application of the faculty: “Clanship, when improperly
directed, and attachment to worthless characters, are abuses of the
faculty” (Macnish, Introduction, p. 54).

Unlike Spurzheim, Macnish did not marry: “I have never yet
thought of entering on that holy state,” he dryly explained to D. M.
Moir (himself a married man with two children), “but on the contrary
am growing old in single blessedness.”\footnote{D. M. Moir, The Modern Pythagorean: A Series of Tales, Essays, and Sketches by the Late Robert
Macnish, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1839), I, 374. Vol. I is entitled The Life of
Dr. Macnish.}

In a letter to Moir, he indi-
cated his own tendency towards same-sex love, describing at length a
“very beautiful and interesting boy, Giulio Regudi” (Moir, I, 271). His
extraordinary attention to same-sex passionate love also emerged in a
peculiar notice he published in 1836. Broussais’s Paris lectures were
published in translation by the Lancet between June and September of

\footnote{D. M. Moir, The Modern Pythagorean: A Series of Tales, Essays, and Sketches by the Late Robert
Macnish, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1839), I, 374. Vol. I is entitled The Life of
Dr. Macnish.}

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that year, including the discussion of Adhesiveness I noted above. In the issue following this discussion, without explanation as to how it came to be there, and without the context of other commentaries on or additions to Broussais, appeared the following note from “Dr. Macnish”:

ADHESIVENESS. — I knew two gentlemen whose attachment to each other was so excessive, as to amount to a disease. When the one visited the other, they slept in the same bed, sat constantly alongside of each other at table, spoke in affectionate whispers, and were, in short, miserable when separated. The strength of their attachment was shown, by the uneasiness, amounting to jealousy, with which the one surveyed any thing approaching to tenderness and kindness, which the other might show to a third party.80

The portrait of this male couple shows a quality of attention that is at odds with the easy pronouncement of “disease” at the beginning, or the conventional conclusion: “This violent excitement of adhesiveness continued for some years, but gradually exhausted itself, or at least abated to something like a natural or healthy feeling. Such attachments are, however, much more common among females than among the other sex.” We note the appearance here of the word “disease,” which carries what heretofore has largely been labelled “unnatural” specifically into the realm of sickness. It was a passage that would occur with increasing frequency as Friendship evolved, in the course of the century, through Adhesiveness and into the ambivalently pathological category of “homosexuality.”

There is no indication that Walt Whitman knew Macnish’s writings. His primary contact with the phrenological tradition, as is well known, was with the Americans associated with “Fowlers and Wells,” the “phrenological cabinet” that distributed the first Leaves and later hired Whitman as writer for their publication Life Illustrated.81 Whitman’s association and break with the Fowler firm has been well accounted for; we should here examine the Americans’ version of the Adhesive faculty.

III

Orson Squire Fowler (1809-1887) took up phrenology with great enthusiasm upon hearing Spurzheim’s lectures in 1832 while still a stu-

80 Lancet. 2 (6 August 1836), 633.

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dent at Amherst College. In 1838, the year of Combe’s American lecture tour (which achieved much the same popularity as Spurzheim’s had), Fowler founded his *American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*. Two years later he published an “Elemental Phrenology” with an account of Adhesiveness that he and his associates would repeat, with little variation, for years to come:

*Adhesiveness.* Friendship; sociability; fondness for society; susceptibility of forming attachments; inclination to love, and desire to be loved; propensity to associate together in families and neighborhoods. Adapted to man’s capability of aiding and receiving assistance from his fellows, and to mutual happiness, by means of reciprocal affection. *Abuses:* too great fondness for company, indiscriminately; grieving excessively at the loss of friends, etc. 99

These are, of course, little more than notes taken loosely from the European writers, slightly Americanized (“neighborhood” rather than “clan”), and set down as a self-instruction manual.

For Fowler, self-knowledge was primarily useful for self-improvement. It was Fowler and his associates who devised and spread widely over mid-century America the familiar drawing of a head in profile with small iconographic drawings on it, as if from a tattooist gone mad on a noggin. The adhesive “bump” — popular phrenology was now reviving a very naive version of the cranioscopy that, since Gall, most phrenologists had forsaken — was indicated by two young women holding hands, their heads tilted together so that, presumably, their adhesive organs were as close as possible. I have found only one such sketch, from the Fowler establishment late in the century, showing two men to represent Adhesiveness; their arms are linked in a distinct male friendship pose.

Even when Fowler treated Adhesiveness at length — as he did in journal articles in 1845, 1847-48, and in 1854 — he was strong on repetitious rhetoric and weak on analysis. Fowler emphasized gregariousness and sociability, or “brotherly love” which “will hurl every existing evil from its throne, and establish the institutions of society on the foundations of man’s primitive constitution” (Fowler, *APJM*, 9 [1847], 118). Fowler, indeed, managed to return phrenology to a moral realm. He based very little of his sermonizing on exact observation or intellectual debate. Combe and Macnish had suggested that an extreme excitation of Adhesiveness might be a “disease,” but Fowler the moralist saw the “abuse” of the faculty as leading it to work “evil

(1) The adhesiveness illustration, showing two hatted men strolling together, is numbered three (from The Phrenological Journal, c. 1886).
commensurate with its good" in the form of "improper associations" for which he offered a male-male example:

The author once saw a young man who was rendered perfectly distracted by a sudden breach of friendship, or a supposed friend turning traitor. A break between him and his spouse could not have afflicted him more severely. In such cases the faculty requires constraint. (APJM, 9 [1847], 119).

His recipe for willed restraint placed him at a considerable distance from Gall, Spurzheim, and Combe: "Break up all association, all connection, all interchange of all ideas and feelings with them. Exchange no letters, reciprocate no looks — no thoughts" (APJM, 9 [1847], 119).

Fowler and other Americans added a few examples to the Adhesiveness iconography. Along with the positive instances in Hamlet and Coriolanus, they offered Mark Antony, whose oration over Caesar's body stated, "He was my friend, faithful and just to me"; and as a negative example, there was Iago with his "small" Adhesiveness: "He made tools of others, not confederates or confidants; and as he was a stranger to the emotion of friendship, so he did not possess a friend" (Fowler, APJM, 3 [1841], 454-455). The European criminals who showed strong Adhesiveness were joined by Peter Robinson, an American one; to the Scottish poets, the Americans added a friendship verse by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (APJM, 19 [April 1854], 86). One P. Graham, in 1873, cited Ruth as an example of the strong Adhesiveness in women, though like Frederick Bridges much earlier he failed to mention the gender or name of Naomi.

In the United States, women were ready to take up the possibilities of phrenology, in large, it appears, because of Fowler's reformist version of the doctrine which was best known to them. Spurzheim had remarked that "excepting Christianity, Phrenology will do more to elevate woman than any other system has ever done. It gives her a participation in the labors of Mind" (Stern, p. 13). Fowler's sister-in-law Lydia Fowler became the second accredited woman physician in the United States, and the first woman professor on a medical faculty; she was closely involved with phrenology for many years (Stern, pp. 156-158). Reformers such as Eliza Farnham and her

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53 See APJM, 19 (April 1854), 87.
54 Fowler, APJM, 3 (1841), 454-455.
intimate friend Georgiana Bruce Kirby built various feminist reforms on the foundation of Fowlerian phrenology. (Lorenzo Fowler, who had read Whitman’s head, also read Farnham’s and discovered that “Friendship is very strong, but love is platonic. The head is masculine.”96 The extent to which women-loving women identified themselves as adhesive is as yet unclear, as is the extent to which others so identified them, but in at least one instance a Massachusetts woman in 1840 wrote to another referring to the Adhesiveness “of which you might lend me occasionally from your abundance.”97

It appears that just before mid-century European phrenology was moving towards the medicalization of same-sex relationships, which had been a potential ever since Gall had described excessive Adhesiveness as a “mania.” Combe, likewise, had suggested that insanity might be the result of the too great development of a particular organ without the redemptive development of others; or, the too small development of an organ. His pathologist brother, Andrew Combe, went yet further, as we will see below. Robert Macnish’s use of the word “disease,” the lectures by the pathologist Broussais, and the rapid translation of those lectures into English for publication in the Lancet amid articles on venereal disease, puerperal fever, and the like — all these suggest the increasing tendency to classify same-sex passion under the medical model. Beyond the scope of this study, but an important subject in need of investigation, is the line of transmission in German thought from Anhänglichkeit to the medical model as it appeared in the 1869 article by Karoly Benkert and the Westphal article a year later; the former coined the word “Homosexualität” in his argument against extending Prussia’s anti-sodomy law to the newly unified German federation, while the latter established the subject distinctly as a medical concern. But both articles emerged from a context of political

96 Stern, Heads and Headlines, p. 40. See also Madeleine B. Stern, “Two Letters from the Sophisticates of Santa Cruz,” Book Club of California Quarterly Newsletter, 33 (Summer 1968), 51-62.

97 See Katz, Gay American History, p. 495. Luella J. B. Case’s desirable “superabundance” interestingly redeems the mainline phrenologists’ undesirable “excess.” The three major recent studies of nineteenth-century friendship among women in America do not include references to adhesiveness, but do suggest two important cognates to my own study: they give considerable evidence for the extensive rituals and networks of female-female friendship which are so often mentioned and so seldom understood in detail by the male phrenologists; and they suggest the magnitude of the changes (the “fall,” in Nancy Sahl’s questionable metaphor) that occurred in friendships with the rise of the psychiatric and medical communities as arbiters of “normal” behavior. See Carrol Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” Signs, 1 (Autumn 1975), 1-30; Blanche Wiener Cook, “Female Support Networks and Political Activism: Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman,” Chrysalis, no. 3 (1977), 43-61; and Nancy Sahl, “Smashing: Women’s Relationships Before the Fall,” Chrysalis, no. 8 (1979), 17-27.
and legal debates about homosexuality, establishing an ambivalence that remains.\textsuperscript{56}

At the same time that medicalization was developing, Americans were making phrenology the basis for a wide range of social and political reforms. Education, prison administration, diet, personal hygiene — wherever the impulse to improve, it was likely to have links with Fowlerian phrenology. It was from this context, not the medical-forensic one, that Walt Whitman would develop a reform vision based on the faculty of Adhesiveness. Edward Hungerford has demonstrated the extraordinary impact that the science had upon Whitman.\textsuperscript{50} Lorenzo Fowler's reading of the thirty-year-old's head had demonstrated that it had immense potential; this, says Hungerford, "was to inspire, or at least to corroborate with the authenticity of science, an altering conception of himself." Between that reading and the first Leaves six years later, "Whitman underwent a psychic transformation. The imitative hack-writer, sentimental and jejune, became the firm and bold prophet of a rich and new life. He became convinced of himself, sure, authentic" (Hungerford, p. 366).

A number of the faculties counted in Whitman's transformation, but none so much as the one which has been least understood: Adhesiveness. The 1855 and 1856 editions of Leaves were rich with images of urban male-male touching, emotional passion, sexual passion. But the language for describing this range of experience was inadequate. What would the word be? It had to admit the bodily experience of male-male love, but it might also create or make possible new developments in that experience. Whitman was well aware of the partial words that already existed, such as those in the religious or moral discourses which condemned same-sex love as sinful. But he was actively seeking a mode of expression — both to represent male-male sexual activity and to encourage its potential — that was legally and socially prudent.

Prudence, or Cautiousness, was another faculty which Lorenzo Fowler found large in Whitman's well-developed head. As Hungerford has shown, Whitman redefined the word from the prudence of "respectability" to that "suitable for immortality," a drastic redefinition. "The prudence of the greatest poet," he wrote, "answers at least the craving and glut of the soul" (Hungerford, pp. 377-379). In choosing a word

\textsuperscript{56} On Karl Westphal and Karoly Benkert, see James D. Steakley, The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany (New York: Arno, 1975), pp. 9-12; on Westphal, see Foucault, The History of Sexuality, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{50} Edward Hungerford, "Walt Whitman and His Chart of Bumps," American Literature, 2 (1931), 366.

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for same-sex passionate love, Whitman would be prudent in both senses. The breakthrough came in the 1856 edition, in the curious abrupt questionings of the “Poem of the Road”:

Where is he that tears off the husks for you and me?
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me?

Do you know what it is, as you pass, to be loved by strangers?
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?⁶⁰

From the midst of these questions about how to name an experience that anticipates what urban gay men today call “cruising,” Whitman finds, and marks for his own adaptation, the phrenological word: “Here is adhesiveness — it is not previously fashioned — it is apropos.”

The discovery here was not the word itself; Whitman had known it for over a decade. As we have seen, the word was indeed “previously fashioned”: from Gall and Spurzheim down through Combe and Fowler. What was not previously fashioned, clearly, was the particular meaning Whitman wanted it to have: an exclusive reference to same-sex love. This restriction constitutes Whitman’s initial adaptation of the term.⁶¹

Just as clearly, the term was “apropos.” It had a wide range of positive connotations; it related to the social program which Whitman was beginning to develop; it encapsulated the pre-psychology Friendship tradition. It had been applied — in the context of its “abuse,” most often — to strong same-sex passions. But whereas the phrenological tradition had spoken of opposite-sex as well as of same-sex friendships, Whitman was ready to restrict the term. When in Democratic Vistas he came to elaborate his social vision based on his adaptation of the term, he would speak as the phrenologists had not spoken of “the adhesive love, at least rivalling the amative love.”⁶²

This construction merits special attention, for it marks an important shift. “Amativeness,” from Gall’s Zeugungstrieb through Fowler’s, was the faculty of the “instinct of generation” or the “sexual instinct.” Sexuality was understood, without being questioned, to involve only “the opposite sex,” and all the phrenologists treated it so.

⁶⁰ Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860), 320. The fullest discussion of Whitman’s developed notions of Adhesiveness may be found in Martin, The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry, pp. 33-47.

⁶¹ My sharpest disagreement with Hungerford, then, is over his protective claim that Whitman meant by the term nothing that the phrenologists did not mean. See Hungerford, p. 383.

Adhesiveness, as we have seen, was a related faculty; so was Philoprogenitiveness; but neither of these resulted from the sexual instinct. Most of the descriptions of extremely strong same-sex passion appear in the literature as abuses of Adhesiveness, but it could also appear as an abuse of Amativeness, as George Combe’s medical brother Andrew wrote in his Observations on Mental Derangement:

If an individual . . . becomes conspicuous for unusual impetuosity of desire, gross obscenity, and contempt of decency; or shows an unwonted and unfounded aversion to the society of the opposite sex, or rushes headlong into the indulgence of morbid and unnatural appetites, — these constitute so many symptoms of an unhealthy condition of mind, all bearing reference to [Amativeness]. Adhesiveness, which constitutes the bond of social and domestic life, is the fountain of another variety of mental symptoms.42

By no means, then, did Adhesiveness and Amativeness involve the same polarity as do the later terms homosexuality and heterosexuality. For the phrenologists, Amativeness was opposite-sex but could be abused into same-sex activity; Adhesiveness was possible between the sexes, but was most often described in same-sex examples. Whitman’s restriction of Adhesiveness to male-male relationships opened the way for an understanding of same-sex expression of a sexual instinct that was polar to an opposite-sex expression of it: but the instinct could be expressed either way. (One of its names from late in the century was eros; one of the names for its ability to include both expressions was bisexuality.) Whitman’s male-male Adhesive love was alone able to “rival” male-female Amative love.

The potential had been present in the phrenological tradition, and we have noted that the most developed precursor of Whitman’s revision was Robert Macnish in his reference to the “women with small Amativeness and large Adhesiveness” who preferred the company of other women to that of men. But for the most part, the phrenologists did not make the two faculties complementary opposites. This is best demonstrated by a comparison of the psychometric scale so widely used by the Fowlers with that used by Alfred Kinsey in 1948. For the Fowlers, who rated each faculty’s size on a scale of 1 (too small) to 7 (overly large), with the intervening graduations being the desirable ones, a large Amativeness in no way required a small Adhesiveness or vice versa. But Macnish’s formulation and Whitman’s reformulation of Adhesiveness were closer to Kinsey’s scale where one extreme represented total heterosexual activity and the other total homosexual activity. For Kinsey, any increase in the one required a decrease in the other. Lorenzo Fowler’s 1849 assignment of a six (high) to Whitman


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both in Adhesiveness and Amativeness would have been meaningless in Kinsey's paradigm. Kinsey's polarized expression of a single basic instinct grew directly from the notions of "heterosexuality" and "homosexuality" as they emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century. And Kinsey's concept has determined as many of the limitations of our century's discourse about sexuality as Fowler's did in the nineteenth century.44

Whitman's stress was not on determining an individual's degree of Adhesiveness as opposed to Amativeness, as we may be tempted to think if we do not grant the historical relativism of the Kinsey scale. Nor was he concerned with the congenitility of Adhesiveness, as the European phrenologists and psychologists from the 1860s on would be. Whitman was more eager to set Adhesiveness — the manly love of comrades — over against Amativeness — marriage and the family — as a basis of social organization. Whereas Spurzheim, Arago, and Moir felt marriage personally necessary, Macnish and Whitman did not, and like Macnish, Whitman was called upon to explain his choice. We are justified to see in this choice a key factor in the emergence of the modern homosexual role: the social pattern of choosing same-sex companionship rather than an opposite-sex spouse as a basis for personal life.45 In similar fashion, pre-homosexuality "homosexuals" entered the family structure by having children, but in the newly emerging role, the "homosexual" would not be defined as a parent. Indeed, "homosexual father" and "lesbian mother" would come to be seen as self-contradictions. The "homosexual" male, in his modern role, might well borrow for his comrades the names of "father" or "brother" or "son" — as Whitman did in calling Peter Doyle and his other comrades "son."46 Whitman's attempt, in his famous 1891 letter to Symonds, to disclaim his homosexuality by claiming to have sired

44 See Paul Robinson, The Modernization of Sex (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), chap. 2. Robinson emphasizes that the graduated scale "was a hopelessly mechanical contrivance, which sought to promote a system of classification that bore little relation to reality" (p. 74). This charge could also be laid against the gradations in the Fowler scale. He also correctly points out Kinsey's stress on behavior rather than sexual identity — "There were no homosexual persons, but only homosexual acts" (p. 57) — in a way that neatly undoes just what Robert K. Martin said that Whitman did. But I think that Robinson underestimates the impact of Kinsey's polarity, which has a popularity far greater than these other aspects of the scale; it suggests that the more one behaves homosexually, the less one behaves heterosexually. This polarity is, as I hope I have shown, foreign to the phrenologists.

45 For a general social-historical background, see "Where Gay People Come From," Barry Adam, Christopher Street, 6 (May 1982), 50-53.

46 Jonathan Katz has wryly speculated that Whitman's six "children" were actually the younger males he had loved and tended to address as "sons" (Gay American History, pp. 628-629 n. 32). It is interesting to note that the phrenologists are silent on homosexual pedophilia and to recall the importance of this kind of relationship to Whitman, both in his early story "The Child and the Profligate" and in his later personal relationships.
children is a classic moment for the meeting of two concepts. Whitman's life and letter assumed genetic fathering to be incommensurable with the new same-sex role he had done so much to articulate; but he was writing the letter, as he well knew, to a man whose life, if not his thought, was of an older style which did not hold fatherhood and homosexuality to be contradictory. Whitman was trying to disprove his homosexuality by claiming paternity in an argument to a homosexual who had a wife and four children.

The role Whitman articulated involved the belief that the core of social organization is not the unequal bond of heterosexual marriage, but the potentially equal one of same-sex comradeship. Whitman could now celebrate the equalizing effects of his version of Adhesiveness, developing it as a vision for social reform in Democratic Vistas (1871) based not on marriage but on comradeship. This development is related to his celebration, exceptional for its day, of strong, independent women.\(^6^7\) It links both his early enthusiasm for the promiscuous excitement of Manhattan and his later more or less serial monogamy with his hopes for the future of American democracy.

Whitman's Vistas immediately provoked an enthusiastic response in England. In February 1872 John Addington Symonds wrote to him from Bristol: "For many years I have been attempting to express in verse some of the forms of what in a note to Democratic Vistas (also in a blade of Calamus) you call 'adhesiveness.'"\(^6^8\) The English classicist had turned to "Greece, Rome, the medieval and the modern world" in his own studies of "passionate friendship," he told Whitman. During the following year he completed his essay A Problem in Greek Ethics, the first learned survey of what Symonds alternately called "inversion," "homosexuality," and "paiderastia" in classical Greece. He did not publish the essay until 1883, and then only in a private edition of ten copies (Grosskurth, Symonds, p. 272). In 1891 he printed — again, privately — A Problem in Modern Ethics. During the two decades since Democratic Vistas he had read avidly the new wave of German writing about homosexuality, from the legal pamphlets of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs to the psychological studies of Karl Westphal, Albert Moll, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and others. His transhistoricism led him to blend adhesiveness, paiderastia, uranism, and other concepts into the single one of sexual inversion or homosexuality. Such a blurring relied on an unquestioned assumption that

\(^6^7\) Harold Aspin, unpublished paper, "Walt Whitman, Feminist."

would not have been possible before the phrenologists had grounded friendship in the mental structure of the personality. Inversion was an aspect of personality and, at least in some cases, was congenital.

In the early 1890s, Symonds collaborated with Havelock Ellis, England's first and greatest sexologist, on the volume *Sexual Inversion* that examined this new concept and documented it for full public scrutiny. Ellis and Symonds (whose name was removed from the book by his literary executor) linked their theories to those of the German psychologists, not to phrenology, which since the 1850s had been in intellectual disrepute. Besides, Britain had in this period produced no major contribution to the psychology of sex. Symonds and Ellis did not focus on customs or acts so much as on persons. The homosexual, they wrote, "is most usually a person of average general health," who is usually "the subject of a congenital predisposing abnormality" which makes it "difficult or impossible for him to feel sexual attraction to the opposite sex, and easy to feel sexual attraction to his own sex" (*Sexual Inversion*, p. 140). This notion has often been cited for its scientific openness or tolerance, but it needs to be cited for its novelty. By defining not acts but persons, Symonds and Ellis extended the phrenologists' constituent faculty into a personality type, with, of course, the help of Whitman’s redefinition of adhesiveness to include only same-sex feelings.

Their retrospect on Symonds's American hero-poet was uneasy when it came to categorizing Whitman: "It remains somewhat difficult to classify him from the sexual point of view, but we can scarcely fail to recognize the presence of the homosexual instinct, however latent and unconscious" (*Sexual Inversion*, p. 21). Their uneasiness resulted from the imprecise meshing of concepts. Neither Whitman, who had died five years earlier, nor the phrenologists knew the word "homosexuality" and the medical-political ambivalence it assumed. But their Adhesiveness had prepared the way, as Symonds's 1872 letter to Whitman had acknowledged.

What happened to Adhesiveness after homosexuality? In 1870 Whitman could write to Charles Warren Stoddard that "I do not of course object to your emotional and adhesive nature, and the outlet thereof, but warmly approve them." But in the three remaining decades of the century, those few serious phrenologists who remained increasingly emphasized the dangers associated with the faculty.

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VICTORIAN STUDIES

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Twelve years before the Oscar Wilde trials, the London phrenologist Stackpool E. O'Dell stressed the injurious effects of the "excessive desire for friends" fully as much as he did "the best ties that can bind men together." The Wilde trials indeed focussed on the corruption of friendship, though not in terms of "excess." It was Wilde's familiarity with younger men of disreputable backgrounds that enraged the prosecution. Despite the playwright's evocation of David and Jonathan in his speech explaining "the love that dare not speak its name," the Old Bailey sessions focussed on acts, not psychology. Neither "homosexuality" nor "inversion" were invoked, by either side. The one attempt to label Wilde's personality was, for 1895, so archaic and awkward that it betrayed the Marquess of Queensbury into misspelling it "somdomite." Sensationalized by the English press, the trials contributed greatly to public moralizing but only indirectly to the emergence of the modern homosexual identity: for years after the trial, Wilde would be taken as the model of the Victorian homosexual. As early as 1900, his case could be discussed with reference to "inversion, perversion, and the question of sex variation," with no awareness of conceptual solecism.

Wilde was out of prison when another English writer published, in the Phrenological Journal now edited by Orson Fowler's younger sister Charlotte Wells, a two-part article that stressed, as never before in that long-lived journal, the excesses of Friendship. The moralistic language of the article suggests that the popular memory of Wilde was more significant in its analysis than was the medicalization of Adhesiveness now underway in the writings of Krafft-Ebing, Symonds, and Ellis. "Excessive Friendship," the author declared, "has brought disgrace and ruin upon many an otherwise good character. It causes its possessor to seek company simply for the sake of being in it, whereby their time is wasted and they become a natural prey to the dishonest, tricky, unscrupulous, and vicious, who may take advantage of and link them into all sorts of obligatory concerns ruinous to their pockets and their morals." Thus phrenology, whose chief contribution to the development of science had been the attempts to establish a physical

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72 Emma Goldman used these terms while arguing with Dr. Eugene Schmidt about Wilde (Katz, Gay American History, p. 376).

basis for the moral faculties, abandoned physiology for bourgeois morality.

But in the work of Symonds and Ellis, and that of the continental psychologists from which they drew, the medicalization of same-sex friendship continued and accelerated. (Symonds addressed each of his Problem essays, "especially to medical psychologists and Jurists.") So did the growth of the early homosexual rights movement. Whitman may have denounced Symonds's "morbid inferences" in 1891, but his own earlier fashioning of Adhesiveness had followed Franz Josef Gall's almost casual insight: "The idea occurred to me that the disposition to friendship might also be founded in a particular cerebral organ."

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