

“Glory of Yet Another Kind”:
The Evolution & Politics of First-Wave Queer Activism, 1867-1924

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*“What could you boast about except that you stifled my words, drowned out my voice . . .
But I may enjoy the glory of yet another kind. I raised my voice in free and open protest
against a thousand years of injustice.”*

—Karl Heinrich Ulrichs after being shouted down for protesting
anti-sodomy laws in Munich, 1867¹

Queer* history evokes the familiar American narrative of the Stonewall Uprising and gay liberation. Most people know that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people rose up, like other oppressed minorities in the sixties, with a never-before-seen outpouring of social activism, marches, and protests. Popular historical discourse has led the American public to believe that, before this point, queers were isolated, fractured, and impotent – relegated to the shadows. The postwar era typically is conceived of as the critical turning point during which queerness emerged in public dialogue. This account of queer history depends on a social category only recently invented and invested with political significance. However, Stonewall was not queer history’s first political milestone. Indeed, the modern LGBT movement is just the latest in a series of campaign periods that have spanned a century and a half.

Queer activism dawned with a new lineage of sexual identifiers and an era of sexological exploration in the mid-nineteenth century. German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was first to devise a politicized queer identity founded upon sexological theorization.² He brought this protest into the public sphere the day he outed himself to the five hundred-member Association

¹ Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, *The Riddle of "Man-Manly" Love*, trans. Michael A. Lombardi-Nash (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1994), 269. Originally published 1864-1880. One may note this paper’s reliance on a single translation by Lombardi-Nash – the only English version of Ulrichs’ work available.

* For the purpose of this paper, “queer” is used as an umbrella term that encompasses the changeable identifiers presented in a historical lineage of sexual meaning-making in Western society. As such, “queer” can be taken to mean an identity that is oppositional and/or tangential to normative narratives of male-female sexual and gender dichotomies.

² “Germanness” in the nineteenth century is a contested conception in academic circles; for the sake of simplicity, this paper refers to all individuals born in the states and kingdoms deemed “German territory” as German. For more information about the construction of German national identity, see Stefan Berger, *Inventing the Nation: Germany* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004).

of German Jurists in Munich on August 29, 1867.³ His efforts sparked a first wave of queer political engagement that subsequently permeated the Western hemisphere. The original inception of queer political dialogue in the 1860s has long been ignored in the popular historical narrative. How can this seemingly lost history be reclaimed, brought to center stage, and made common knowledge – a history for everyone? Everyday sexual narratives have played out behind the bedroom door of history, private and concealed. Queer narratives have been doubly obscured, closeted and difficult to liberate from such seclusion. In an attempt to resuscitate historical forms of queer activism and identity, this paper explores a relatively unknown intellectual history of sexual identifiers and their political significance.

Literature Review

This paper builds upon existing historical literature that underscores the contributions made by late nineteenth century sex theorists in their investigation and defense of queer identities. Ulrichs constructed a framework that defined sexuality through early terminology (i.e., sexual identifiers). Subsequent German, English, and American theorists devoted to queer emancipation molded conceptions of sexuality for queer and non-queer audiences alike. This paper seeks to ameliorate scholars' tendencies to conflate these early identities with gayness via presentist applications of meaning. When such differences are touched upon in the literature, they are often glossed over, and their evolution, etymology, and interplay remain uncommon knowledge.

In his seminal essay "Capitalism and Gay Identity," prominent gay historian John D'Emilio writes that with the rise of gay liberation in the late sixties, "gay men and lesbians had no history that we could use to fashion our goals and strategy" and "in building a movement

³ Hubert Kennedy, *Karl Heinrich Ulrichs: Pioneer of the Modern Gay Movement* (Concord: Peremptory Publications, 2005), 112. This work relies heavily upon Kennedy as he is Ulrichs' principal and, arguably, only major biographer.

without a knowledge of our history, we instead invented a mythology.”⁴ In reading backwards our experiences, identifiers have been haphazardly applied to the sexual past. While D’Emilio traces the way capitalism broke down traditional, nuclear, and heterosexual conceptions of the family and gave way to the establishment of the gay community and its culture, his more economically focused argument does not address conceptions of queer sexuality prior to gay identity. Similarly, George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* uniquely focuses on the complex emergence of queer identities in the crucible of New York’s gay culture and community without addressing the impact of European activists.⁵ The queer historical narrative must account for how we have defined queerness over time and how our understanding of queerness has depended upon inconstant identifiers that were ultimately tied to political discourse.

As such, queer historians cannot divorce themselves from the political now for the sake of “objectivity” but, rather, they must embrace the meaning and context these histories hold in the present. Self-conscious awareness of the personal stake many historians have in the queer historical narrative renders “impartiality” moot. Examining the role of sexual identifiers in originating queer politics underscores its importance in the present. Acts of sexual meaning-making (i.e., sexual semiotics) grew with the establishment of the queer political presence. Therefore, this language cannot be dismissed as trivial or divisive but, rather, empowering and unifying – an act of community-building as queers continue to fight, evolve, and encompass different identities. The politics of these ideas and identifiers in action intimates the existence of a queer evolutionary lineage that spans both time and place. Indeed, in *The Straight State*, Margot Canaday postulates that the simultaneous rise of sexological inquiry and American

⁴ John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 101.

⁵ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 47-64.

bureaucracy led to the rigid and regulative categorization of sexuality into the present-day homosexual/heterosexual binary.⁶ Likewise, Jonathan Ned Katz's *The Invention of Heterosexuality* subverts the historiographical "heterosexual gaze" and upends the notion of timeless sexual normativity – demonstrating sexual politics to be perpetually in flux.⁷ Correspondingly, this paper illuminates the dawn of sexual identity politics within the context of queer activism, before the origination of heterosexuality and its subsequent institutionalization.

Each of the aforementioned works alludes to the role of intellectual traditions in shaping cultural and political conceptions of queerness. Thus, their joint perspectives offer a multifocal lens through which one may view the social construction of sexuality and the implications of this historical process. Queerness has been defined variably over time and has been understood through changeable identifiers. As Michel Foucault argued, conceptions of sexuality are framed by power dynamics that claim what constitutes "normal" and "abnormal" sexual experience.⁸ Thus, queerness (or what a given society deems sexually deviant) is a fluid concept and subject to change. In order to accommodate these changes, our sexual identifiers have been derived from multiple, mutable facets of society like science, history, and literature. Consequently, social influences help determine shifts in the language used to describe sexuality – the same language that has both shaped queer peoples' conceptions of self and served to establish a queer political presence. In turn, queerness acts as an effective political barometer because contextual power dynamics signal dominant and subordinate sexualities – groupings that are allotted resources and influence.

⁶ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁷ Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978).

Social stratification also defines sexual discourse through those who hold the power to influence queer semiotics. For example, queer working class cultural enclaves of “sodomites,” “molly-houses,” and “gay bars” had existed in England since the eighteenth century.⁹ However, a queer (but otherwise privileged) group of educated, upper to middle class men sought to assemble a communal identity that they hoped would assert a public political presence (not maintain a closeted subculture). The dawn of queer activism in the Western world featured white male-dominated, class-differentiated dialogues around queer bodies and minds. The era of queer politics treated in this paper is, therefore, designated *first-wave queer activism*. The name recognizes the unprecedented strides taken to oppose persecution and to give name (and, thus, voice) to a nascent queer community. It also alludes to issues of political segregation. While attempting to legitimize and liberate all who were confined within circumscribed boundaries of queerness, the elite homogeneity of prominent first-wave queer voices was analogous to that of first-wave feminists. As such, early queer political narratives contained exclusionary discourse similar to early feminist dialogues.¹⁰

In spearheading a movement to protest queer persecution, first-wave queer activists initiated the construction of sexual identifiers, and were, in turn, influenced by their audience of non-queer sexologists, psychiatrists, lawyers, and the sexually normative public at large. Indeed, gay essentialist historian Rictor Norton has been adamantly attempting to dispel the myth of ‘massive shifts’ in our understanding of queerness. He asserts that historical changes of

⁹ For more information regarding queer working class queer culture, specifically in England, see Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England, 1700-1830* (Hornchurch: Chalford Press, 2006).

¹⁰ For more background on the intersections of class and gender in the feminist movement's politics, see Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of 'First Wave' Feminism* (Georgia: University of Georgia, 1987). Also note that first-wave American feminists both navigated and avoided intersectional dialogues, having been confronted with more diversity than that of the original context of the queer first wave in Europe, where queer activists were more isolated from the voices of queer people of color.

perception have had “very little to do with queers themselves, and much to do with the education of heterosexuals, who gradually became less naive as sexologists . . . made clear what queers have always known . . . [.]”¹¹ As such, this paper combines the dominant social constructionist approach to queer historiography with aspects of the often-dismissed essentialist perspective. Essentialists argue that queerness is an innate and inborn trait and survey historical forms of same-sex sexuality. Meanwhile, pure social constructionists posit that, in a true sexual “utopia,” queerness would not exist because there would be no sexual norms to restrict behavior and identity. This paper operates under the premise that all societies throughout history have, indeed, maintained their own differentiated sexual norms, and those orientations that did not conform – often same-sex sexualities – constituted a queer class that has been subject to a variety of socially constructed recognitions and (de)legitimizations. Early queer activists forged their own sexual nomenclature for the purpose of codifying a discreet queer political identity.¹²

In turn, the perspective presented by sexual literary scholar Heike Bauer in *English Literary Sexology* is essential to understanding the geographic and temporal transference of these ideas.¹³ In exploring how German sexology suffused England and America, Bauer proposes that one must take into account cross-lingual translations of terminology and, thus, cultural connotation and politicized sexual meanings. Given that Ulrichs, a German lawyer, pioneered first-wave queer activism in the 1860s, how, then, was his work reflected in that of Henry Gerber, a United States Army veteran, who founded the first American queer organization in 1924 – over half a century later?

¹¹ Rictor Norton, "Discourse versus Desire" in *A Critique of Social Constructionism and Postmodern Queer Theory*, last modified 19 June 2008, <http://www.rictornorton.co.uk/social06.htm>.

¹² Norton has also taken much issue with the word ‘construct’ and suggests, instead, ‘consolidate’ and ‘forge’ because they “imply the basic material already exists but can be subjected to shaping and polishing.” Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual* (London: Cassell, 1997), 12.

¹³ Heike Bauer, *English Literary Sexology: Translations of Inversion, 1860-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Third Sex Theory

“We [Urnings] constitute a special sexual class of people, comparable to hermaphrodites, a sex of its own, coordinate as a third sex with that of men and that of women.”
—Ulrichs in the first of his treatises on queer sexuality, entitled *Vindex (Vindicator)*¹⁴

In an effort to codify the queer experience as a collective identity and argue for emancipation through representation as an oppressed group, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs originated a politicized nomenclature for queer sexuality called *third sex theory*. Third sex theory proposed that queer men constituted a sex of their own – their psyches were opposite their designated sex and, thus, responsible for their sexual predilections.¹⁵ A queer man (*Urning*) was of the male sex, but had the female sex drive (oriented towards men). Meanwhile, a “real man” (or non-queer, *Dioning*) was both of the male sex and the male sex drive (oriented towards women).¹⁶

Ulrichs himself identified as an Urning and, in essence, he sought to affirm a traditional notion of a single, opposite-sex sexual desire. Queer, third sex individuals merely embodied the orientation of the “wrong” sex.¹⁷ This idea might be considered an early conflation of what would now be considered transgenderism and homosexuality, in that it represented an attraction to men and masculinity as an inherently feminine attribute. Nevertheless, this claim would be anachronistic. The treatment of one’s sexual orientation as the basis of one’s gender, unlike modern Western society’s notion that gender pairings determine sexual orientation, demonstrates the interchangeability of gender and sexuality across cultures and time.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 36.

¹⁵ Hubert Kennedy, “The ‘Third Sex’ Theory of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 6 (1980): 103.

¹⁶ Katz, *Invention*, 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁸ For more information regarding the social construction of sex and sexuality in Western society, see Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Third sex theory presented same-sex sexual orientation within a normative and, thus, relatable scheme of sexuality (a “complimentary” masculine-feminine dynamic). Ulrichs went further to construct a complex subsystem of gendered identities under the third sex umbrella of Urning. Within this classification, a queer man’s gendered presentation was matched to the object of his attraction. For instance, a *Mannling* was a masculine Urning who was attracted to feminine men and would take the active role in sexual encounters. In turn, a *Weibling* was a feminine Urning who was attracted to masculine men and assumed the passive role. One may note similarities in how gay men label themselves today – tops and bottoms, butch gays and queens, etc. Ulrichs’ terminology also included male bisexuals (*Uranodionings*), whom he categorized as being either *conjunctive* (both romantically and sexually oriented towards men) or *disjunctive* (“heterosexual,” with a romantic orientation towards men).¹⁹ Further, Ulrichs classified “straight-acting” queer men (*Virilised Urnings*), pederasts (*Zwischen-Urnings*), and “men who have sex with men” (*Uraniasters*).

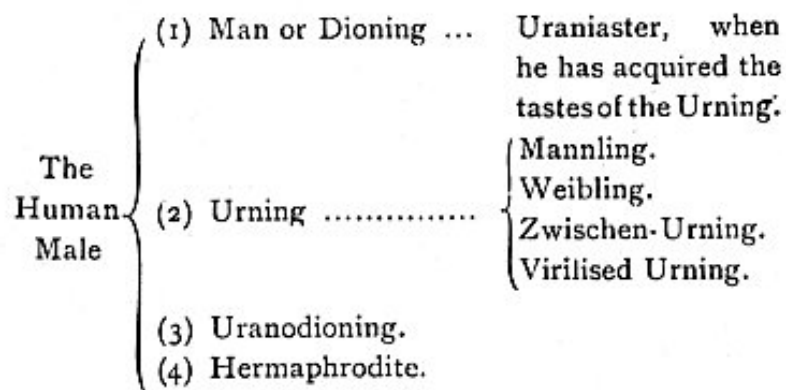


Figure 1. The sexual classification system originated by Ulrichs.²⁰

Ulrichs himself identified as an intermediary between *Mannling* and *Weibling*.²¹ One may find contradiction in such a middle ground identity – a loss of the masculine-feminine “balance”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (London, 1896), 89, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://sacred-texts.com/lgbt/pme/pme10.htm>.

that Ulrichs sought to maintain. Yet, one may recall that third sex theory already embodied the “necessary” male-female pairing (innately female sex drives attracted to biologically male bodies). Additionally, Uranodionings embodied their own combination of the “male” and “female” drives. Having established this sexed dichotomy – and its combinations – Ulrichs went on to represent a diverse variability of gendered behavioral expression through his identity construction. In doing so, he built third sex theory on the foundation of middle-class ideals of sex and sexuality.

Ulrichs contested the rigid restrictions placed on conceptions of sexual difference by presenting them as congruent to, if not the same as, normative frameworks of sexuality. He managed to conform to accepted binaries of sex, gender, and sexuality all the while complicating the singular, non-queer dynamic of male-female couplings. For instance, contrary to the popular notion that the Victorian era was a period of prudishness, historian Karen Lystra notes that mid-to late nineteenth century Western culture was enamored of sexuality – within a rigid framework of propriety.²² Sex as an act of love (not of lust) was held in the highest esteem.²³ Most assuredly, this sense of sexuality was grounded in a middle-class notion of matrimonial domesticity, unity, and procreation – viewed as natural and productive components of non-queer unions. Likewise, Ulrichs’ conformity to the masculine-feminine dynamic attempted to validate queerness by positioning it as something that embodied this romantic and biologically “sanctioned” lifestyle in spirit (if not physically).

One may also note that Ulrichs was largely preoccupied with exploring queerness in male bodies and psyches; he himself noted:

²¹ Kennedy, “‘Third Sex’ Theory,” 107.

²² Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 59.

²³ Lystra, *Searching*, 84.

As a footnote, there possibly could be a fourth sex to correspond with the third one, a sex of persons built like females having woman-womanly sexual desire, i.e., having the sexual direction of men . . . Women such as these appear in much smaller numbers than Urnings . . . An inherent masculine trait would be the key to the riddle of their kind of love.²⁴

Ulrichs' treatment of queer women's sexuality as an afterthought (and his claims about their seemingly smaller presence) extends D'Emilio's assertion regarding the greater visibility of queer men in the formation of gay identity in the early twentieth century. Mid- to late nineteenth century gender roles constructed a binary of male publicity and female domesticity. Women were dependent upon social, interpersonal institutions such as family and marriage. Meanwhile, men could carry out an entire life independent of their domestic responsibilities, with more freedom to discover and express non-normative sexuality (even if in secret).²⁵ Thus, queer men had the agency to exit the shadows of non-queer institutions of marriage and family and, eventually, assert a political presence (not just a cultural one as D'Emilio argues).

Moreover, Ulrichs challenged the prevailing ideology that Urnings were "deviant" by choice. In seeking legitimization through science, third sex theory began with the prenatal development of sex characteristics – the indistinguishable anatomy of male and female embryos in the early stages of development. The potential for either sex (or both, as in the case of intersex individuals) to manifest physically led Ulrichs to conclude that there must also be mental manifestations of sex (the male and female sex drives).²⁶ This theory allowed him to not only combat queer persecution on a social level, but with a scientific basis as well. However, the biological determinism that Ulrichs ultimately adopted as his framework proved to be a double-edged sword; the individuals in the scientific community to whom Ulrichs had written in order to garner support pathologized his identities as targetable and "curable." Ulrichs was largely

²⁴ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 81.

²⁵ D'Emilio, "Gay Identity," 105-106.

²⁶ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 49.

belittled and made into a “case study” of perversion, his theories thrown back at him and eventually used against his cause.²⁷

Coming Out of the Closet

Ulrichs resigned from his job as a legal advisor in 1854; biographer Hubert Kennedy postulates that this was the result of blackmail.²⁸ But it was learning of German politician Johann Baptist von Schweitzer’s arrest on a morals charge that spurred Ulrichs to action in the summer of 1862.²⁹ Ulrichs came out as an Urning to his sister Ulrike by June 1862.³⁰ She wrote, urging him to change with the help of God. Ulrichs responded warmly three months later, in September, blaming his delay on how busy he had been. His correspondence and writings in the interim suggest he was beginning to investigate the commonality (and legitimacy) of the queer experience. He addressed her objections, most notably her claim that his inclination was “perverse, unnatural, or sinful.”³¹ He explained that his orientation was only sinful if it was perverse or unnatural, and seeing as it was neither, he could not be condemned. He asked that his letter be circulated to several other family members.³²

Ulrichs’ news should not have come as a complete shock to his family. In November of the same year, he presented an outline of gendered traits to several family members (a precursor to his third sex identifier system). One of his kin wrote in the margin: “I believe I have always noticed such a feminine habit in Karl.”³³ Ulrichs likewise commented on the occurrence of Uranism in certain families, such as his own, referring to a distant cousin whom he had learned

²⁷ Ibid., 69-71.

²⁸ Ibid., 23-24.

²⁹ Ibid., 40.

³⁰ Ibid., 45.

³¹ Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, “Four Letters to His Kinsfolk,” in *Sodomites and Urnings: Homosexual Representations in Classic German Journals*, trans. Michael Lombardi-Nash (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 2006), 47.

³² Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 46.

³³ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 60.

was an Urning.³⁴ Ulrichs even came out to a Dioning peer; his response (rather, his recommendation) was that Ulrichs should have and still could try to change by coupling with a woman. Ulrichs shrewdly pointed out:

Many times Dionings recommend that Urnings take a woman. “Healthy cohabitation,” as they call it. By doing so they express their strong subjective conviction that the [Urning] drive will become [Dioning] . . . It is noteworthy that such experiments are unnecessary for you. Your love is directed toward women without your having attempted to force your sex drives . . .³⁵

One may note the modern parallel – queers being urged to “try” non-queer sexuality before definitively declaring themselves other-than.

Ulrichs sought the company of Urnings and the chronicles of other queer experiences – not just in an effort to legitimize a minority political presence but also in order to come to terms with his own identity. A fellow Urning with whom he shared his third sex theory protested and declared adamantly: “We are men!”³⁶ Ulrichs himself recalled also struggling with the “masculine role society gave” to him and learning to “appreciate [his] feminine side.”³⁷ He conceded that some Urnings were wholly masculine presenting (hence Mannling identity), but that such gendered expression did not validate the Urning’s claim to manhood – “. . . congenital love for the male sex is itself a part of being *female*.”³⁸

The Moment of Truth

Having laid out his complex system of sexual classification, Ulrichs grew emboldened. In his sixth treatise, *Gladius furens (Raging Sword)*, he opened with the charge: “Speak, speak, or be judged!”³⁹ Ulrichs finally began channeling his theories into active engagement. This

³⁴ Ibid., 389.

³⁵ Ibid., 157-158.

³⁶ Ibid., 162.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 259.

imperative is what brought him to the stage of the Grand Hall of the Odeon Theater in Munich on August 29, 1867, urging a room full of strangers to repeal discriminatory legislation that targeted “deviant” sexuality – the German penal code on so-called carnal violations.⁴⁰

Ulrichs waited anxiously as the chairman of the Sixth Congress of German Jurists read his request to speak. Calling for a vote as to whether he should be heard, there was a resounding cry of “Yes!” punctuated by some protest. The assembly of over five hundred jurists, elected representatives, and a Bavarian prince turned their attention to Ulrichs as he approached the speaker’s platform “with breast pounding.”⁴¹ He later recalled:

What gave me the strength . . . was the awareness that at that very moment, the distant gaze of comrades of my nature was fixed on me. Should I return their trust with cowardice? . . . [T]he voice that had warned my predecessor Heinrich Hössli thirty years before . . . resounded in my mind with all its force: “Before my eyes appeared the images of the persecuted and of those already damned who are yet unborn, and I behold the unhappy mothers beside their cradles rocking cursed, innocent children . . .”⁴²

Ulrichs barely got through the introduction of his speech before being interrupted by shocked gasps, howls of disgust, and shouts to cease reading. He resumed again, repeating himself: there exists a class of persons “exposed to an undeserved legal persecution for no other reason than . . . a sexual nature that is the opposite of that which is in general usual . . .”⁴³ The theater audience roared – one side calling to adjourn, the other insisting that Ulrichs continue. At this point, the chairman requested that Ulrichs use Latin in continuing his speech (so as to avoid

⁴⁰ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 92.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴² Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 262.

Heinrich Hössli was a Swiss author whose work *Eros Die Männerliebe der Griechen* (published 1836-1838) surveyed same-sex sexuality in Ancient Greece and was one of the first works to defend love between men. Although Hössli’s efforts were a groundbreaking prelude to queer emancipation, this paper opts to distinguish Ulrichs as the founder of first-wave queer activism because of his engagement with political institutions.

⁴³ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 115.

speaking plainly about the “shameful” sexual nature of his proposal).⁴⁴ Ulrichs set his notes on the chairman’s table and exited.

Aftermath and Advocacy

The German press remained silent “in the interest of morality.”⁴⁵ Rumors flew about: “My God! The man making that proposal puts himself under the greatest suspicion of being ‘so’ himself!”⁴⁶ Ulrichs shot back: “. . . [P]eople need not be ashamed of their birth . . . just because they have a different nature than you!”⁴⁷ His public display had stirred something in his audience. Members approached him afterwards; curious, they asked, “. . . [W]hat kind of race [is it] that is haunted by such persecutions?”⁴⁸ Some were annoyed that they were being “shielded” from impropriety: “The committee need not patronize us . . . it was unjust that it did not allow the speaker to finish.”⁴⁹ Even a fellow Urning in the crowd, a Bavarian judicial official, privately thanked Ulrichs and told him “. . . how surprised and shaken he was by Ulrichs’ speech.”⁵⁰

After making his public stand, Ulrichs continued stalwartly in his efforts to empower Urnings, writing under his own name (rather than the pseudonym Numa Numantius).⁵¹ He called on labor leaders and pastors alike to join him in a fight against unjust persecution. He wrote to Karl Marx, who, in turn, forwarded his work to Friedrich Engels. Engels responded to Marx on June 22, 1869:

The *Urning* you sent me is a very curious thing. These are extremely unnatural revelations. The paederasts are beginning to count themselves, and discover that they are a power in the state. Only organization was lacking, but according to this source it apparently already exists in secret . . . [I]t is only in Germany that a

⁴⁴ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 265-266.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 117.

⁴⁷ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 268.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 117.

⁵¹ Kennedy, “‘Third Sex’ Theory,” 105.

fellow like this can possibly come forward, convert this smut into theory . . . just wait until the new North German Penal Code recognizes the *droits du cul* [“rights of the asshole”] . . .⁵²

Ulrichs included numerous correspondences in his treatises. One was a letter from a pastor and his son, a reputable physician, in Hanover who were empathetic to the “sad fates” of Urnings and hoped to hear of the results of his efforts. Ulrichs commented that this pastor’s opinions were “truly Christian.”⁵³ Ulrichs sought a reconciliation of Urning identity and Christian doctrine – providing religious substance to his social and scientific arguments. Noting that most would consider it an “irreconcilable battle,” Ulrichs was adamant that the omission of Urning love from scripture must “be filled in by its principles, by the enlivening spirit of Christianity.”⁵⁴ Ulrichs posited that Urning bonds of love were as legitimate as non-queer unions. The lack of a “sanctioning ceremony” notwithstanding, Ulrichs argued:

The bond of love founded on loyalty . . . must have power that substitutes for the impossible marriage . . . This unsanctioned [Urning] bond is equivalent to that nonsanctioned [Dioning] marriage of necessity, which a Dioning and a young woman contract on a desert island, where there is no priest. This marriage of necessity is, according to Protestant teaching, morally justified. The Urning and his beloved find themselves permanently on a desolate island.⁵⁵

Ulrichs foresaw a battle for marriage equality long before it had begun.

Forging the Homo/Hetero Binary

On May 6, 1868, less than a year after Ulrichs had presented his work in a live forum, the itinerant, Austrian-born writer Karl Maria Kertbeny wrote to share his own sexual terminology; Kertbeny had coined the terms *homosexual* (derived from the Greek *homos* for “the same” and

⁵² Andrew Parker, “Unthinking Sex: Marx, Engels, and the Scene of Writing,” in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 32.

⁵³ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 102.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Latin *sexualis*) and *heterosexual*.⁵⁶ Based on Kertbeny's private diaries, he and Ulrichs had been in regular correspondence since June of 1864; Kertbeny referred to Ulrichs by his pseudonym Numa Numantis, as well as "N.N." and "Numa."⁵⁷ Indeed, Ulrichs had shared his draft of by-laws for a proposed "Urning Union" with Kertbeny in September of 1865.⁵⁸ In this work, he had presciently suggested that, among many things, a secret sign should be thought up for Urnings to signal recognition of one another (and, in turn, avoid entrapment).

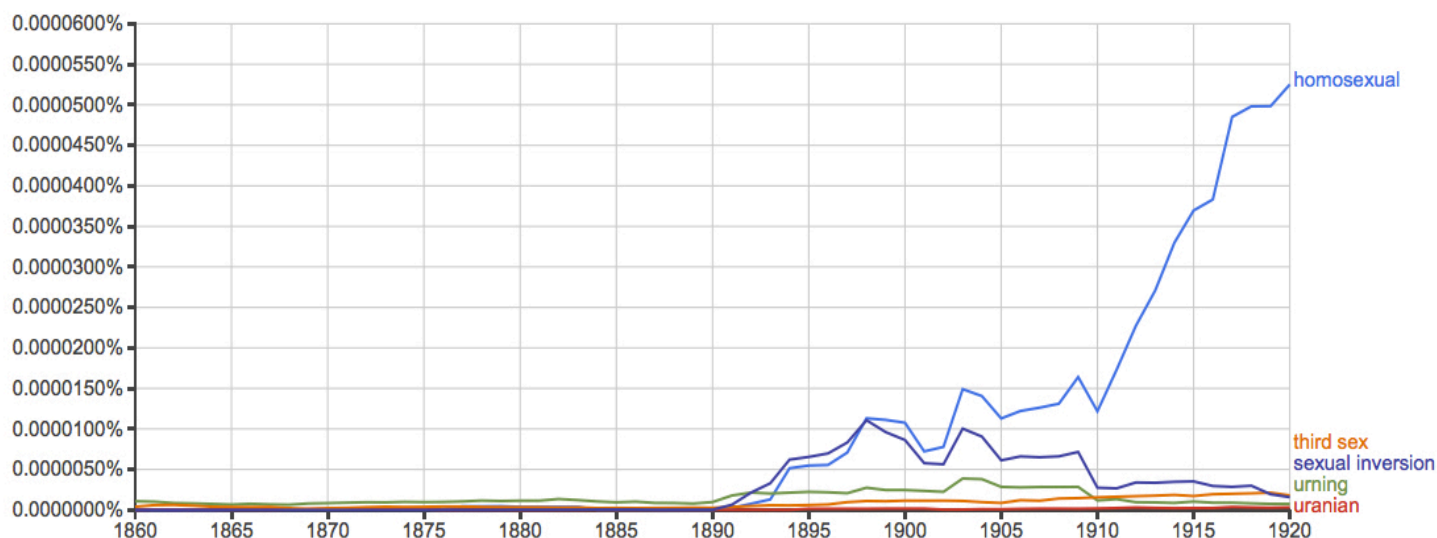


Figure 2. Chart showing the rise and fall of sexual identifiers from 1860 to 1920.⁵⁹

Kertbeny and Ulrichs' May 1868 exchange contained the earliest recorded use of the word homosexual.⁶⁰ This terminology was circulated publically soon afterward via two anonymous pamphlets.⁶¹ The first described Paragraph 143 of the Prussian Penal Code (established in April of 1851) and its retention as Paragraph 152 in the Draft of a Penal Code for

⁵⁶ Katz, *Invention*, 52.

⁵⁷ Judit Takacs, "The Double Life of Kertbeny" (paper presented at the conference "Past and Present of Radical Sexual Politics," University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, October 3-4, 2003), 32.

⁵⁸ Kennedy, *Ulrichs*, 90.

⁵⁹ "Google Books Ngram Viewer," Google, accessed March 11, 2016, <https://goo.gl/IhwC7V>.

⁶⁰ Takacs, "The Double Life," 30.

⁶¹ Nikolai Endres, "Kertbeny, Károly Mária (1824-1882)," *gbtq Encyclopedia*, accessed March 3, 2016, http://www.gbqtarchive.com/ssh/kertbeny_km_S.pdf.

the North German Confederation. The second criticized “The General Harmfulness” of Paragraph 143 and its “Necessary Cancellation” as Paragraph 152.⁶² In an open letter to the Royal Prussian Minister of Justice, Kertbeny argued that the anti-sodomy laws of Prussia and Germany led to blackmail, extortion, and suicide. The law itself could dictate a prison sentence of ten years for queer men found guilty of “immoral” sexual activity.⁶³

Kertbeny recalled that, in his adolescence, a close friend had been blackmailed over his sexuality and had subsequently committed suicide. He claimed that it was this tragedy that drove him “to take issue with every injustice.”⁶⁴ Kertbeny himself publically identified as a “normally sexed individual.”⁶⁵ However, many queer historians question whether Kertbeny was really the first “ally” to the queer proto-community. In Kertbeny’s diaries, he often admired “beautiful boys,” while rarely mentioning women.⁶⁶ He self-censored, crossing and blotting out some words – most often in descriptions with homoerotic implications, for instance: “Great fear that my neighbor, a lieutenant, noticed my morning games” and “It is a very dangerous situation, because you can hear everything from one room to the other.”⁶⁷

Ulrichs and Kertbeny had much in common, but they disagreed over strategies for queer emancipation. While Ulrichs continued to seek validation through sexological frameworks, Kertbeny did not care whether queerness (or any sexual orientation for that matter) was innate. Kertbeny viewed queer activism as a simple matter of extending privacy rights. In the same May 6 letter, Kertbeny wrote Ulrichs:

⁶² Takacs, “Double Life,” 29.

⁶³ Elena Mancini, *Magnus Hirschfeld and the Quest for Sexual Freedom: A History of the First International Sexual Freedom Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), ix.

⁶⁴ Jean-Claude Féray and Manfred Herzer, “Homosexual Studies and Politics in the late 19th Century: Karl Maria Kertbeny,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 19 (1990): 27.

⁶⁵ Féray and Herzer, “Studies and Politics,” 26.

⁶⁶ Takacs, “Double Life,” 33.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* (dated November 7, 1866); *Ibid.*, 34. (dated November 1, 1866)

. . . [W]e should convince our opponents that exactly according to their legal notions they do not have anything to do with this inclination, let it be innate or voluntary, because the state does not have the right to intervene in what is happening between two consenting people aged over 14, excluding publicity, not hurting the rights of any third party . . .⁶⁸

Kertbeny's disinterest in biological determinism proved to be one of many grand ironies that posthumously punctuated his life's work. Indeed, it was Kertbeny's homosexual who became the semiotic poster child of anti-queer medical professionals and pro-queer sexologists alike.

Kertbeny's delineation of sexual identifiers was reliant upon his use of the term *Normalsexualität* (or "normal sexuality"). In a break with value judgments founded on social norms, Kertbeny viewed sexual normality as something determined by the majority.⁶⁹ As such, heterosexuality was "normal" only so long as it manifested in a greater number of the population. Ironically, however, Kertbeny honed in on the heterosexual majority's "unfettered capacity for degeneracy."⁷⁰ Heterosexual promiscuity and libido – which he viewed as much greater than that of homosexuals and masturbators – was what made them more likely to engage in pedophilia, necrophilia, and sadomasochism.⁷¹ Kertbeny's claims, like those of Ulrichs, were founded upon Victorian-era sensibilities; however, Ulrichs had accommodated the traditional male-female dichotomy. Kertbeny impugned the heterosexual disposition on the basis of sexual propriety – what could be deemed respectable and, indeed, normative. By implying that heterosexuals themselves were corrupt and depraved, he argued for queer emancipation by subverting the definition of queerness itself. Nevertheless, Kertbeny's homo/hetero personae would be reversed in time.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

⁶⁹ Katz, *Invention*, 52-53.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 53.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Psycho Sex: The Pathologization of Queerness

The term homosexual gradually gained wider circulation. In 1880, one of Kertbeny's texts was included in a popular-science book by German naturalist Gustav Jäger, *Discovery of the Soul*, which proposed the existence of pheromones and sexual chemistry.⁷² Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing began using the term 'homosexuality' in the fourth edition of his foundational work *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1889.⁷³ Indeed, Ulrichs had introduced Krafft-Ebing to third sex theory twenty years prior, having sent his first pamphlets to the psychiatrist while he was interning at the University of Vienna.⁷⁴ Krafft-Ebing had written Ulrichs:

“The research in your writings on love between men has interested me in a high degree. . . . From that day on when you sent me your writings, I have given my full attention to the phenomenon. . . . It was the knowledge of your writings alone, which gave rise to my research in this highly important field.”⁷⁵

Krafft-Ebing's genial overture gave off the pretense of good faith and alliance, but the relationship eventually soured. While Krafft-Ebing would fight alongside Ulrichs and other queer activists to repeal anti-sodomy legislation, he did so for very different reasons. As a result, he created an ideology that would come back to haunt the next generation of queer activists.

Krafft-Ebing received “unsolicited letters, confessions, and autobiographical statements” from queer men who had heard of his studies.⁷⁶ His mailbox became an unlikely confessional. One correspondent wrote him: “In the interest of science I will not avoid indecency in providing you with the most exact autobiography . . . with the greatest possible objectivity.”⁷⁷ Queer men from all levels of society sought solace in the belief that science would usher in a new era of

⁷² Endres, “Kertbeny.”

⁷³ Robert Deam Tobin, *Peripheral Desires: The German Discovery of Sex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 17.

⁷⁴ Robert Beachy, “The German Invention of Homosexuality,” *The Journal of Modern History* 82 (2010): 816.

⁷⁵ Beachy, “German Invention.”

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 816.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 818.

legitimization and social acceptance. Another man wrote: “The puzzle of our existence can only be solved or at least illuminated by unprejudiced, thinking men of science.”⁷⁸ This statement proved to be grimly ironic.

Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing had parted company by 1879 over the latter’s insistence that queerness was a psychological illness.⁷⁹ With that in mind, Ulrichs was quick to point out that his “. . . scientific opponents [were] doctors of the insane,” and their so-called surveys of queerness were, in fact, limited to their patients treated in asylums.⁸⁰ Many queer individuals were, indeed, falsely committed to mental institutions, but the psychiatrist’s sample was still biased. Nevertheless, Krafft-Ebing steadfastly maintained that procreation was the sole purpose of sexual desire and, thus, queerness was a perversion of the sex drive.⁸¹ Krafft-Ebing did feel, however, that anti-sodomy laws did more harm than good. Sympathetic to the queer men who wrote to him, he saw that the legislation forced them into impossible situations of secrecy and susceptibility to blackmail and, thus, prevented them from getting the “help” he believed they so desperately needed. Such individuals ought not have been held criminally liable for their “illnesses.”

Krafft-Ebing compiled Ulrichs’ work and his patients’ stories as case studies of “pathological sexual instinct” in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886).⁸² For Krafft-Ebing, no one was safe from “inversion” – a term that co-opted Ulrichs’ idea of a redirected sex drive while erasing his assertion of a separate third sex. Queer men were cast as “perverted” male forms (homosexuals), instead of entities unto themselves (a third sex). He claimed that queer

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Hubert Kennedy, “Research and Commentaries on Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 42 (2001): 167.

⁸⁰ Kennedy, “Research and Commentaries,” 167.

⁸¹ Katz, *Invention*, 21-22.

⁸² Katz, *Invention*, 21.

predilections were aroused by nature and nurture alike – be it “unwholesome [sexual] curiosity,” “burdened heredity” (i.e., the “queer gene”), masturbation, or sex-segregated environments.⁸³ Still, *Psychopathia* provided an unlikely glimmer of hope to which queers were drawn; one man even wrote: “my heart has grown lighter.”⁸⁴ In combination with Ulrichs’ own writings, Krafft-Ebing’s work gave queer men the words and the forum to declare themselves as part of a larger community. For better or for worse, they were no longer alone. Shortly before his death in 1902, Krafft-Ebing finally did admit that some queers were not sick.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, in 1895 Ulrichs had gone to his grave denouncing the psychosexual tainting of queerness; he never got the satisfaction of hearing Krafft-Ebing’s concession.⁸⁶

Ulrichs’ ideas reached a non-German audience through Krafft-Ebing’s work.

Psychopathia was first translated into English by American psychiatrist Charles Gilbert Chaddock in 1892, five years after its original publication in German. However, this translation was largely uncirculated.⁸⁷ Englishman F. J. Rebman’s translation in 1899 was more widely available, having been published in Britain and better circulated.⁸⁸ As Bauer insightfully puts it, “. . . the [English] translation of *Psychopathia Sexualis* reveals differences between translated text and original which makes tangible the cultural influences that impacted on the *scientia sexualis* [sexual science].”⁸⁹ The semantics of sex embedded in the text were not merely translated word-for-word. Rebman, like all translators, layered his own interpretations and

⁸³ Chris Brickell, “Sexology, the Homo/Hetero Binary, and the Complexities of Male Sexual History,” *Sexualities* 9 (2006): 431.

⁸⁴ Beachy, “German Invention,” 817.

⁸⁵ Kennedy, “Research and Commentaries,” 167.

⁸⁶ Beachy, “German Invention,” 818.

⁸⁷ Bauer, *Literary Sexology*, 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

understandings onto the work in a manner revealing not just his own sociocultural context, but also the understanding his translation would foster for his English-speaking audience.

For example, Krafft-Ebing discussed the “primitive” man’s desire for an “individual of the opposite sex, fulfilling a kind of sexual selection.”⁹⁰ Rebman re-termed this drive an “instinctive selection of the fittest,” evoking a Darwinian sense of sexuality that played on contemporary ideas of scientific racism.⁹¹ The switch from “sexual selection” to “selection of the fittest” implicitly signified a lack of robust and “healthy” sexual appetite for queers and, thus, a newly racialized queer degeneracy and inferiority. In combination with Victorian nationalist anxieties, effeminacy and weakness of the sex drive seemed to endanger domesticity domestically and domination abroad. Concurrently, the very public trials of Oscar Wilde brought up speculation about homosexual decadence under public examination and spectacle.⁹² Within this milieu, Krafft-Ebing’s application of the homo/hetero binary – and its literary transference to the English world by Rebman – implicitly established an intellectual tradition of homosexual pathology and heterosexual primacy. Sexual hegemony was firmly entrenched in gendered Eurocentricity and imperial identity politics. Kertbeny’s homosexual became irrevocably attached to the connotation of a clinical sexual disposition in need of amelioration (or extermination). The heterosexual, meanwhile, was elevated from his original status as a flighty sex maniac to a model of masculine mastery.

German sexologist Albert Moll succeeded Krafft-Ebing in 1891 with his work *Contrary Sexual Feeling*.⁹³ Though inspired by Ulrichs’ work on behalf of queer emancipation, the two men are often credited as the pre-Freudian harbingers of sexual modernity. Historian Harry

⁹⁰ Ibid., 35-36.

⁹¹ Ibid., 36.

⁹² Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man’s World* (London: Routledge, 1991), 82.

⁹³ Endres, “Kertbeny.”

Oosterhuis comments that while the medicalization of sexuality placed rigid conceptions around experiences that had yet to be labeled, it was also “a reaction against traditional . . . Victorian prohibitions and, as such, an ideology of sexual liberation.”⁹⁴ In essence, sexologists acted the gatekeepers who legitimized queer meaning while layering on their own biases. Like those of Krafft-Ebing, Moll’s published case histories gave queer men a medium through which to find both self-expression and communal solidarity.⁹⁵ The silence that Ulrichs had broken was answered in full. Testimony – upon the backdrop of “respectable” medical science – was a potent tool that transported queers out of an era of secrecy, silence, and suppression.

“Love of the Impossible”: Sexology Romanticized

“We do not have your sympathy. On the contrary, unbridled antipathy burns inside you against us, and you are not even capable of having the slightest idea of the magical power or divine splendor of our love.”

—Ulrichs’ introduction to *Vindex (Vindicator)*⁹⁶

Simultaneously, in the 1880s, a queer activist camp seeking validation through spirituality and political ideology, not just sexology, had sprung up. A conceptual composite of Krafft-Ebing and Ulrichs’ work had reached a small English audience invested in the queer cause. One member of this faction was English poet John Addington Symonds. Though married with children, much of his writing was inspired by queer affairs. He called queer romance “l’amour de l’impossible [love of the impossible].”⁹⁷ Spurred by the queer eroticism in the work of American poet Walt Whitman, Symonds had turned to prose and published *A Problem in Greek Ethics* in

⁹⁴ Harry Oosterhuis, “Sexual Modernity in the Works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,” *Medical History* 56 (2012): 140.

⁹⁵ Oosterhuis, “Sexual Modernity,” 152.

⁹⁶ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 31.

⁹⁷ John Addington Symonds, *Animi Figura* (London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1882), 36.

1883.⁹⁸ Much like Ulrichs' literary predecessor, Heinrich Hössli, Symonds drew on a history of queer antiquity for validation – which acted as an unlikely bridge between Ulrichs' Christian theological defense and English elites' romanticized notion of (pagan) Greek culture. Yet, Symonds' literary background gave him a distinct perspective on the contested sex theories of his time. Continuing this work, he authored *A Problem in Modern Ethics* in 1891.⁹⁹

Modern Ethics offered a unique union of historicized and sexological bases for queer emancipation. In revitalizing Ulrichs' third sex theory, he confronted the “vulgar errors” perpetuated by Krafft-Ebing and his bloc.¹⁰⁰ Symonds simultaneously shaped a “literary-philosophical mode of English sexological investigation.”¹⁰¹ He argued for both the innateness and spiritual significance of the *Uranian* identity (an English translation of Uring):

To speak of Walt Whitman at all in connection with Ulrichs and sexual inversion seems paradoxical . . . Yet no man in the modern world has expressed so strong a conviction that "manly attachment," "athletic love," "the high towering love of comrades," is a main factor in human life, a virtue upon which society will have to rest, and a passion equal in its permanence and intensity to sexual affection.¹⁰²

Arguing on a political front, as well, Symonds evoked France's Napoleonic Code, which had done away with anti-sodomy legislation and allowed adults to “dispose as they like of their own persons.”¹⁰³ In turn, he pointed out that “London, in spite of [its] penal legislation, [was] no less notorious for abnormal vice than Paris.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, armed with a historical survey of queerness, various modern theories as to its cause, and suggested amendments to legislation, Symonds established a new queer intellectual tradition – a blend of sex theory, philosophy, and politics.

⁹⁸ Byrne R. S. Fone, “Inventing Themselves: Imagining ‘Homosexuals’ in English Fiction and Theory,” in *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Byrne R. S. Fone (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 302.

⁹⁹ Fone, “Inventing Themselves,” 303.

¹⁰⁰ Fone, “Inventing Themselves,” 302.

¹⁰¹ Bauer, *Literary Sexology*, 61.

¹⁰² Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 115.

¹⁰³ Symonds, *Modern Ethics*, 133.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Although on the surface Uranian simply seemed to be an English translation of Urning, the term soon came to embody its own meanings. Ulrichs had derived Urning and Dioning from the dual origination stories of Aphrodite – the goddess of love. She was either born of Uranus and symbolic of manly love, or born of Dione and symbolic of womanly love.¹⁰⁵ But the English Uranian identity was consciously aware of its origination in Ancient Greek philosophy. Well versed in the classics, Uranian activists conjured a vision for a sexual-spiritual utopia based on ‘Greek love.’ Their vision was founded upon “. . . male companionship or intimate friendship . . . democracy and a natural aristocracy of virtue, which they applied to the concerns of their own society and era.”¹⁰⁶ Essential to the ideal relationship was an asymmetry of age and/or class – a dynamic that proved to be politically symbolic.

English poet Edward Carpenter, also inspired by Whitman, created numerous treatises that explored the political import of the newfound Uranian identity. In his 1908 work *The Intermediate Sex*, Carpenter wove in elements of his socialist agenda to evoke a sense of boundary crossing. The original third sex had become an *intermediate* sex, blurring the dichotomous lines that Ulrichs had sought to maintain. Carpenter elevated Uranian ideology to a transcendent level through *The Intermediate Sex*:

Eros is a great leveler. Perhaps the true Democracy rests, more firmly than anywhere else, on a sentiment which easily passes the bounds of class and caste, and unites in the closest affection the most estranged ranks of society . . . very permanent alliances grow up in this way [and] have a decided influence on social institutions, customs, and political tendencies.¹⁰⁷

In Carpenter’s view, queerness was not just an identity struggling to find political validation; queerness was an intrinsically political identity – a potent subversion of the oppressive

¹⁰⁵ Kennedy, “‘Third Sex’ Theory,” 106.

¹⁰⁶ D. H. Mader, “The Greek Mirror: The Uranians and Their Use of Greece,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 49 (2005): 377-378.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* (London: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912), 107.

hierarchies that had deigned to silence it. Through his work, he echoed the radical proclamation of Ulrichs, almost half a century prior: “Give me where to stand: And I will turn your system of persecution upside down.”¹⁰⁸ All this time, queer activists had been fighting institutions that their own existence threatened to destroy. In this way, the state of being queer – queerness itself – was its own weapon.

If Carpenter was the political compatriot of Symonds, then English sexologist Havelock Ellis was the scientific. The three men were in constant correspondence with one another; Symonds and Carpenter’s queer camaraderie and mutual reservations over Ellis’ clinical demeanor did not prevent them from collaborating with him.¹⁰⁹ Ellis co-authored the work *Sexual Inversion* with Symonds – originally published in German in 1896 because of English publishing restrictions (resultant of the Wilde trial).¹¹⁰ The work was a distinctly objective study of queer sexuality – a union of Ellis’ scientific analysis and Symonds’ cultural-historical survey. Ellis himself had formulated a distinction between “inversion” and “homosexuality,” shying away from Ulrichs’ third sex theory because it was not as grounded in scientific canon. He held that inversion was a sexual orientation “innately turned toward individuals of the same sex;” meanwhile, homosexuality was a kind of umbrella term for “all sexual attractions between persons of the same sex,” including situational same-sex sex acts (e.g., in the contexts of prison or war).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ulrichs, *Riddle*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Bauer, *Literary Sexology*, 56.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume II: Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1918).

Yet Ellis had opened *Sexual Inversion* complaining about homosexual being a “barbarously hybrid word” – a fusion of Greek and Latin roots.¹¹² Ellis offered up “homogenic” instead, a term Carpenter had previously used in his 1894 essay *Homogenic Love and Its Place in a Free Society*.¹¹³ “Homogenic” opted to keep its Greek prefix and find a suffix to match – hinting at the Uranians’ love of all things Greek. Paradoxically, Carpenter (who, like Ellis, recoiled at the “bastard” terminology) had taken Ulrichs’ third sex theory and transformed it “[t]hrough notions of ‘shades’ of gender and sexual ‘half-breeds’ . . .” to embody the Uranian “intermediate sex.”¹¹⁴ While avoiding “impure” and, thus, delegitimizing etymological connotations, Carpenter appropriated the language of race (and scientific racism) to evoke a more tangible sense of physicality – mixed bodies. Queer corporeality was tactile; it was readily measurable, and could act as a new means of validation. Another queer theorist-cum-activist soon followed in Carpenter’s wake.

Revitalizing Public Engagement

An iteration of the same penal code that Ulrichs and Kertbeny had fought so hard to dismantle still remained in Germany – Paragraph 175.¹¹⁵ In 1897, Magnus Hirschfeld, a Jewish German sexologist, co-founded The Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Berlin to protest Paragraph 175. The Committee was the first queer advocacy organization in recorded history. As historian Nancy Ordover notes, “scientific analysis went hand in hand with legal and social

¹¹² Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1901), 1.

¹¹³ Edward Carpenter, *Homogenic Love* manuscript, 1894, MS 60, from Sheffield Archives & Local Studies, accessed March 6, 2016,

http://www.gender.amdigital.co.uk.libproxy.temple.edu/Documents/Details/Homogenic_Love.

¹¹⁴ Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 33.

¹¹⁵ Mancini, *Hirschfeld and the Quest*, 66.

redress of sexual minorities.”¹¹⁶ The Committee’s motto – “Through Science To Justice” – exemplified the notion that scientific investigation of queerness and public education would eradicate stigma and discrimination.¹¹⁷ Hirschfeld was committed to renewing sexology’s role in legitimizing queer identity on a macro scale. He lifted sexual science out of its dispassionate armchair, and thrust it back into its original role in the queer emancipation movement.

Hirschfeld also continued the reassessment and revision of Ulrichs’ third sex theory that the English Uranians had begun. Like Carpenter, Hirschfeld adopted third sex theory and focused on intermediary physicality – intersex bodies as a means of validating the supposedly “intersexed” psyche of queer sexuality. However, Hirschfeld took Ulrichs’ three sexes – male, female, and third sex – and removed their boundaries to reveal a gradation. In doing so, he demonstrated that the social construction of sex obscured something fundamental; beyond the solitary sexual *intermediary* that Carpenter postulated, Hirschfeld asserted the presence of multiple sexual *intermediaries*.¹¹⁸ In *Yearbooks For Sexual Intermediaries* – a twenty thousand-page anthology compiled between 1899 and 1923 – Hirschfeld argued that between male and female were an infinite number of sexed combinations. In what may now seem like an appropriation of modern intersex theory, Hirschfeld viewed all queer identities – not just intersex people, but cross-dressers and homosexuals as well – as the collective link between the two predominating sexes.¹¹⁹

This theory did not sit well with all of the co-founders of The Committee, especially militant homosexual supremacist Adolf Brand. Brand had been shaping his own brand of first-

¹¹⁶ Nancy Ordovery, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 122.

¹¹⁷ Mancini, *Hirschfeld and the Quest*, 30.

¹¹⁸ J. Edgar Bauer, “Sexuality and its nuances: On Magnus Hirschfeld’s sexual ethnology and China’s sapiential heritage,” *Anthropological Notebooks* 17 (2011): 6-7.

¹¹⁹ “Magnus Hirschfeld,” Magnus Hirschfeld National Foundation, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://mh-stiftung.de/en/biographies/magnus-hirschfeld/>.

wave queer activism – one grounded in racist, antifeminist, German nationalistic rhetoric (an unexpectedly queer forerunner of Nazism). He published a collaborative journal (*The Self-Owner*) in 1896 – the first known queer periodical in the world.¹²⁰ Brand and his femmephobic compatriots opposed both the third sex and sexual intermediary models out of distaste for the way in which they implicitly feminized homosexuality.¹²¹ Yet, in an ironic parallel to the Uranians’ enchantment with queer antiquity, Brand’s camp viewed homosexuality as “a manifestation of virility masculinized through romantic friendships between men, or, after the Greek model, between older and younger men in which sexual activity could also play a legitimate part.”¹²² Due to these irreconcilable differences in approach, Brand and sexologist Benedict Friedlander eventually seceded from The Committee and founded their own organization Society of Self-Owners in 1903.¹²³

Despite setbacks, Hirschfeld pushed political reform while redirecting efforts towards a long-term, public educational campaign that addressed issues of queer identity, sex education, contraception, and abortion through a sexological lens. He was dubbed “the Einstein of Sex” in popular parlance.¹²⁴ In 1919, Hirschfeld founded the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin; it served as a clinic, research center, and sexological archive, while offering a veritable cornucopia of resources to the public – “marriage and career counseling, VD testing and treatment, family

¹²⁰ Fone, “Vaterlandslosen,” in *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Byrne R. S. Fone (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 440.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ “Guide to the German Gay Liberation Material”, Collection Number 7663, from Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University Library, 2003, accessed March 7, 2016, <http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/RMM07663.html>.

¹²⁴ Bauer, “Sexuality and its nuances,” 13.

planning and sex education programs, and psychiatric therapy.”¹²⁵ Queer men could consult the Institute’s legal department when arrested under Paragraph 175.¹²⁶

The Institute even ventured into early cinematic production as a means of disseminating information. It funded the first queer film – *Different From the Others* – in 1919, starring Conrad Veidt (later of *Casablanca* fame).¹²⁷ A dramatic story of love, blackmail, and suicide, the movie portrayed the struggles queer men under Paragraph 175. The film featured Hirschfeld as himself, assuaging the concerns of a queer man’s family and lecturing about sexual intermediaries. The film was screened on May 14 at a Berlin theater, but soon was banned in other German cities.¹²⁸ Hirschfeld hosted a special screening at the Institute for government ministers and high-ranking civil servants, but by 1920, the government had suppressed the film completely.¹²⁹

New Century, New Frontiers

Ulrichs’ vision not only survived the turn of the century, but also expanded – crossing borders and spanning languages. The early twentieth century finally saw the transference of first-wave queer activism to the United States. Similar to the work of English Uranians Symonds and Carpenter, American writer Edward Prime-Stevenson published *The Intersexes: A History of Similosexualism as a Problem in Social Life* in 1908 under the pseudonym Xavier Mayne.¹³⁰ More a historical and literary overview than a work pushing any of its own unique theories, Prime-Stevenson synthesized his comprehensive knowledge of the sexological studies carried

¹²⁵ Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 125.

¹²⁶ Miller, *Out of the Past*, 125.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ James Wilper, “Translation and the Construction of a ‘Uranian’ Identity: Edward Prime-Stevenson’s [Xavier Mayne’s] *The Intersexes* (1908),” in *Sexology and Translation: Cultural and Scientific Encounters across the Modern World*, ed. Heike Bauer (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), 216.

out by first-wave queer activists all the way back to Ulrichs. *The Intersexes* acted as a compilation of queer defense from a scientific, legal, historical, literary, and personal perspective – in essence, it provided a compendium of all first-wave efforts and a touchstone for the lay reader. Indeed, queer scholar Margaret Breen describes Prime-Stevenson’s work as “a mediating text” between the everyday audience and sexological research.¹³¹

The Intersexes was scientifically and academically unexceptional – save Prime-Stevenson’s unique use of the term *similisexualism*, which conveniently avoided tensions over “bastard” etymology (as *simili* was derived from the Latin for “like” and Latin *sexualis*). Politically and socially speaking, however, *The Intersexes* opened a gateway into the queer semiotic traditions established by European activists. Prime-Stevenson lamented the intellectual elitism of other activists’ publications – “too much from and for exclusively a professional-psychiatric standpoint.”¹³² Despite a first run of only 125 copies of *The Intersexes*, he endeavored to “spread the good word.”¹³³ He sent copies to the most important European and American libraries, including the Library of the British Museum and Hirschfeld’s Institute.¹³⁴ By drawing on a queer lineage of sexology and historiography, Prime-Stevenson revitalized an accessible Uranian identity, one no longer confined in the inner intellectual circles of first-wave activists. In attempting to bridge academic and popular literature, he provided a means for everyday queer people to identify something seemingly nameless within themselves and, in turn, to become part of a much larger community.

Indeed, the twentieth century brought with it a new form of collective organizing for queer activists – something that signaled the close of the first wave. Ulrichs had christened the

¹³¹ Margaret Breen, “Homosexual Identity, Translation, and Prime-Stevenson’s *Imre* and *The Intersexes*,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14 (2012), 5.

¹³² Wilper, “Translation and the Construction,” 219.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

queer political community with third sex theory. His activism had inspired a multitude of new identifiers, perspectives, and strategies that consolidated with the close of the nineteenth century. These theoretical frameworks distinguished the first wave. Everyday queers – laymen who had no specialization in politics, science, or literature – were inspired by the intellectual traditions established by first-wave activists. These individuals began a grassroots movement – gathering themselves collectively under queer identifiers established by the first wave to usher in a second wave of queer activism.

The second wave lethargically emerged as early aspirations went unrealized and initial attempts at organization were short-lived. For example, the *Monthly Report* of Hirschfeld’s Committee published an account of Carl Schlegel, a German American pastor who visited to Germany in August of 1903 with a keen interest in organizing “his [U]ranian colleagues” and founding “a subcommittee [of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee] in New York.”¹³⁵ However, in 1907, a New Orleans newspaper subsequently reported that Schlegel was dismissed from his church for writing about and publicly defending “grossly immoral” views.¹³⁶ A decade later, another German American, writer and veteran Henry Gerber, returned from working as an Army printer in Rhineland (Western Germany) inspired by the work of Hirschfeld’s Committee.¹³⁷ He founded the Society for Human Rights in 1924 – the first queer American organization.¹³⁸ Although Gerber was arrested the following year along with other members and

¹³⁵ “Carl Schelgel Proposes to Organize Uranians in the U.S.: August 1903,” OutHistory, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/schlegel/contents>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Miller, *Out of the Past*, 333.

¹³⁸ Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Meridian, 1992), 385-88.

the group disbanded, the Society provided the impetus for subsequent second-wave activism, including the founding of the Mattachine Society and the homophile movement of the 1950s.¹³⁹

Conclusion

The dawn of first-wave queer activism ultimately arose from a tangled cross-section of queer historical legacy, public knowledge, and socially constructed meaning. The origination of third sex theory within the context of queer activism – before the rise of heterosexuality as an institutionalized identity – suggests the evolutionary nature of sexual understanding. As historian Graham Robb puts it, “The Grand Hall at Munich in 1867 stands at the junction of what seemed to be the two main roads to freedom: the public assertion of rights and their theoretical defense.”¹⁴⁰ Ulrichs set the stage for both early sexual theory and political activism and, as such, must be dually viewed as an innovator in theory and as a political force. The very act of Ulrichs’ research, publication, correspondence, and attempts at legal defense both affirmed and belied the expectation that idea and action were relegated to separate spheres of influence. Rather, they were stratified and intersecting domains of advocacy and community-building. Ulrichs traveled through “respectable” channels to institutionalize (and, thus, validate) queer meaning and identity to pave the way for emancipation of an invisible minority. His life’s work conjured a complex legacy for later iterations of sexual politics. Ulrichs established pioneering alliances with medical professionals that helped to usher in an entirely new field of sexual science – a potentially self-defeating ideology with which the next generation of queer activists had to contend.

¹³⁹ For more information regarding the dawn of second-wave queer activism, specifically with the founding of the Mattachine Society, please refer to James Thomas Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation* (Binghamton: Harrington Park Press, 2006).

¹⁴⁰ Graham Robb, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 182.

Queer history has been inextricably tied to queer politics – evolving sexual identifiers and the social facets they sought to engage. By forging new nomenclatures to codify queer identity in terms palatable to a non-queer audience, early activists sought to change public perception through semiotics, science, history, and literature – a practice that remains. These lost histories of excoriation, exclusion, persecution, and protest bring the queer past out of the shadows to help frame and further our understanding of queerness in the present. We must engage the losses that the queer historical narrative has suffered at the hands of non-queers – suppression and silence that continues to erode the foundations of queer activism in the present. If queer historians view the political now as part of a lineage spanning a century and a half, we will be better able to position the contested formulation of new sexual and gender identifiers in its communal contexts. Thus, queer history can become an affirmation of queer agency and ancestry.

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