



ULRICHS, KARL HEINRICH (1825–1895)

German scholar. An early theorist and activist for the legal and social rights of homosexual persons, Ulrichs has been called "the grandfather of gay liberation."

Born in Aurich, Hanover, on August 28, 1825, to a pious middle-class family—his father was a civil architect and his mother's family included several Lutheran ministers—Ulrichs studied law at the universities of Göttingen and Berlin (1844–47) and became a junior attorney in the civil service of the Kingdom of Hanover. But as early as 1854, under circumstances not entirely clear, he voluntarily left state service and afterwards earned his living by writing and related activities: he was for several years a free-lance journalist and private secretary of a representative to the German Confederation in Frankfurt am Main.

During his stay in Frankfurt, Ulrichs built on current advances in embryology to develop a theory of homosexuality that he presented in a series of five booklets (1864–65) entitled *Forschungen über das Rätsel der männlichen Liebe* (Researches Into the Riddle of Love Between Men); the series was later extended to twelve booklets, the last appearing in 1879. Assuming that a love drive that was directed toward a man must be feminine, Ulrichs summed up his theory in the Latin phrase *anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa* (a female soul trapped in a male body) and he coined the term "Urning" (**uranian**) for such a person. The theory also applied *mutatis mutandis* to women who love other women.

This so-called **third-sex** theory furnished a scientific explanation for same-sex love drives that showed them to be natural and inborn. It followed that Urnings are neither criminal nor sick. Encouraged by his conclusions, Ulrichs began to intervene in criminal cases and sought to organize Urnings to promote their own welfare. Already in 1865, he drafted a set of bylaws for an "Urning Union" and by the next year he was planning to publish a periodical for Urnings. (He finally realized this plan in 1870, but lack of support allowed only one issue.) This activity was interrupted, however, by the Prussian invasion and annexation of Hanover in 1866. Ulrichs spoke out publicly there against this action and was twice imprisoned.

Exiled from Hanover on his release from prison in 1867, Ulrichs went to Munich to resume his earlier fight. At the meeting of the Congress of German Jurists on August 28, 1867 he pleaded for a resolution urging repeal of all anti-homosexual laws. He was shouted down, but the occasion was historic, for it marked the first time that a self-proclaimed homosexual had publicly spoken out for homosexual rights.

Further efforts by Ulrichs also had little effect; indeed, with the unification of **Germany** following the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71, the harsh Prussian anti-homosexual law was extended to all parts of the county. In despair, Ulrichs migrated to Italy in 1880, to spend his last years in Aquila, where he edited a Latin periodical. He died there on July 14, 1895.

Although Ulrichs gained little support for his theory, he did contribute to

the growing perception in the nineteenth century of the homosexual as a distinct type of person, more frequent in the population than had been thought. (His early estimate that one man in five hundred is homosexual appears low today, but was at first thought to be absurdly high.) But he did not foresee that the Urning would then not be accepted as a natural person, but would be diagnosed by psychiatry as a sick individual. Ironically, it was Richard von Krafft-Ebing, author of the perennial best-seller *Psychopathia Sexualis*, who, while acknowledging that it was Ulrichs' writings that had interested him in the study of homosexuality, went on to lead the movement to treat the condition as a pathology or degeneration. (Krafft-Ebing's views may be seen as a sort of secularization of the degeneration theory based on religious grounds that had been proposed in 1857 by Bénédict-Auguste Morel.) This was the prevailing opinion at the turn of the century, when Magnus Hirschfeld revived Ulrichs' theory and developed it into his own concept of "intermediate types." Ulrichs, however, will probably be best remembered for his courageous fight against the legal, religious, and social condemnation of homosexuality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Hubert Kennedy, *Ulrichs: Life and Works of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Pioneer of the Modern Gay Movement*, Boston: Alyson Publications, 1987.

Hubert Kennedy

UNISEXUAL

This word had its origins in the French terminology of botany, where it was introduced in the form *unisexual* in 1794 to denote plants and flowers having only the organs of one sex (stamens or pistils), as opposed to those which were *bisexual*, having the organs of both sexes. The linguistic innovation was the outcome of a controversy within botany that ended with the definitive finding that the reproduction of plants is sexual and that

they were not invested with asexual innocence, as earlier investigators had believed—hence the innuendo lurking in the expression "the birds, the bees, and the flowers."

The relevance of these terms to human sexual orientation stems from a development of the third decade of the nineteenth century, which saw the beginning of a semantic renovation of the whole field. In 1869 Károly Mária Kertbeny published a pamphlet introducing the adjectives *homosexual*, *doppelsexual*, and *normalsexual*. Kertbeny, who was a professional translator, rejected Karl Heinrich Ulrichs' contemporary baroque coinages of the *uranian* family. Instead, he seems to have used the Latin-French botanical terms as models for his own neologisms. While his coinages might have been forgotten, they were noticed by Gustav Jaeger (d. 1916) and used in a chapter of the second edition of his *Entdeckung der Seele* (Discovery of the Soul) in 1880, where he casually introduced the word *Heterosexualität* in the meaning "sexual intercourse with members of the opposite sex."

The French *bisexual* subsequently took on the secondary meaning of "sexually attracted to members of both sexes," thus shifting from the anatomical sphere to the psychological. All three terms then constituted the triptych *homosexual*; *bisexual*; *heterosexual* which fit perfectly into the international Greek-Latin nomenclature of science, though in point of fact the word *homosexual* was introduced to the general public as a journalistic term at the time of the Harden-Eulenburg affair in Germany (1907-08). In French and English the terms were first used from 1893 onward by such authors as Emile Laurent, Marc-André Raffalovich, and Havelock Ellis.

Yet Raffalovich entitled his book of 1896 *Uranisme et unisexualité*, combining Ulrichs' German coinage with the older French one, which the semantic shift of *bisexual* now gave the meaning "sexual attraction to members of one [and