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Urning: Representing Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and His Legacy through the Mechanism of Theatre

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Urning: Representing Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and His Legacy through the Mechanism of
Theatre

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled “Urning: Representing Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and His Legacy through the Mechanism of Theatre” submitted by Ryan Diller in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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Abstract

The following manuscript and accompanying artist's statement examine the process of developing the play *Urning*. It explores the life and legacy of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs along with the journey to create a play that illuminates them.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Ryan Diller.

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INTRODUCTION

In my final semester of undergraduate studies at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, I found myself in a position I had not been in at any other point during my studies: not tethered to a mainstage theatre production. For the first time, my weeks were not overwhelmed by rehearsals. I had more time than ever to explore paths of inquiry separate from the influence of my professors and theatre directors. That term, I did something I had wanted to do ever since I came to Trinity: attend campus lectures not related to classes.

The first such lecture I attended turned out to be a life-changing experience, the type of which I certainly would not have had if I had chosen to be involved with the campus production of *The Mousetrap*. At that lecture, a scholar named Robert Beachy gave an overview of his new book *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity*. At this lecture, I was surprised to learn that the modern queer movement began in not the 1960s – as typically thought – but the 1860s, far earlier than I could have imagined. I was further struck to learn of the person who began this movement: Karl Heinrich Ulrichs.

When Ulrichs revealed his sexual attraction to men before the Congress of German Jurists, he performed what seems to be history's first public coming out. At this 1867 legal conference in Munich, Ulrichs was shouted down, but his message rang forth in the years that followed. His influence prompted a sexual psychologist named Richard von Krafft-Ebing to research people with homosexual attractions, as the two corresponded over letters. Krafft-Ebing then profiled homosexuality in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which surveyed what he deemed to be sexual pathologies. He eventually became something of an ally for queer rights, penning a defense of homosexuals for a queer-centric journal published by Magnus Hirschfeld, a queer

German-Jewish scientist and activist. Hirschfeld built upon Ulrichs' legacy and founded the first advocacy institute for sexual and gender minorities. By the 1920s, Berlin was a place of relative tolerance for queer people, where queer-centric periodicals were sold at mainstream news vendors and queer social spaces flourished without fear of legal prosecution. This relatively accepting world came crashing down with the rise of the Nazis, but Hirschfeld's queer institute served as the inspiration for the United States' first gay rights organization.

Hearing these stories was an emotionally and intellectually gripping experience for me. I had only recently come to terms with my non-binary identity, and I was not yet out of the closet to more than a couple people. That spring break, I hid out in a bedroom at my grandparents' house, reading through Beachy's *Gay Berlin*. As I read, the seeds for my play *Urning* were planted in me: here, I thought, we had the story of the first person to come out in a public setting (Karl Ulrichs) and the first modern ally (Richard von Krafft-Ebing). My play would be an inspirational tale, the story of a friendship that changed the world. The project being a historical play, I realized that a further research would be necessary. I was about to enter into my master's program at the University of Calgary, and it seemed like an obvious fit to me: I would use my two years in the program to research and write the play.

Almost as soon as I began the play, problems emerged. First, Karl Ulrichs' relative lack of fame meant that although his story immediately captured the attention of those I conversed with, a relative dearth of sources existed regarding his life. Second, I realized quickly that a major task hung over this project: reclaiming Ulrichs' identity from erasure.

The few times Ulrichs was written about in English-speaking North America, he was dubbed a gay man. He, however, never claimed the identity of homosexual for himself. The term was in circulation during his lifetime and he was well aware of it, but he always used the

term Urning to describe himself. His own coinage, he described it as a female soul in a male body. He termed Urnings a third sex. The evidence, as a trans reader, seemed painstakingly clear to me: Ulrichs never identified himself as a gay male in his writings and his identity is very much outside the cisgender framework. The pressure, then, was twofold: 1) to refute conclusively what I see as the century-long misgendering of Karl Ulrichs, and 2) to write characters (Ulrichs included) who represent the queer spectrum as Ulrichs wrote of it.

My original vision of the play's aesthetic came crashing down quickly. I began the play expecting to write a down-to-earth piece for a wide audience, but in reading through the writings of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing, it became abundantly clear to me that it would be impossible to escape fully the academic focus of these two people. Worse still, centering the play solely on these two seemed impossible to me. Quite simply, their relationship existed strictly through letter-writing, and biographical accounts of the two do not contain multitudes of events that lend themselves to traditional dramatic arcs. As my adviser (Clem Martini) repeatedly warned me, watching two people write letters for a whole play would likely not be dramatically compelling and even a scene of pure letter-writing would be a tough sell. And so when I turned in the play's very first outline, I already had created the character of Lina: a person who would represent the Urning's assigned female at birth counterpart (Urningin) and whose life would give dramatic consequences to the concepts Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing discussed.

Throughout the process, I continued to alter the story of the play in response to research. While I initially imagined Krafft-Ebing as a rather soft-spoken individual, I found that he was impassioned and often condemnatory in his writings. In reading a biography of Ulrichs (which I was fortunate to discover existed in the summer between my first and second years of study), I discovered that Krafft-Ebing never cited Ulrichs in his writings, even though he took Ulrichs'

idea that sexuality is inborn and began his research into homosexuality entirely because of Ulrichs' influence. As such, I decided to make Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing's relationship less idealistic. Not only did the choice prove more historically accurate, but it also provided more room for conflict between the characters.

The play's aesthetic is far from what I originally imagined. After all, I cannot say I have written a traditionally structured Hollywood-biopic-type story about two friends intended for everyone. My primary focus, though, has remained the same throughout the process.

My main interest in depicting Ulrichs' story has always been righting the record on the modern queer movement. The movement's roots, quite simply, are not what people typically think they are. Through Ulrichs, we see that coming out as a strategy existed long before the days of Harvey Milk; we see that a crucial scientific theory to justify queerness – that sexuality is inborn – began not with cisgender heterosexual scientists but with a queer activist; we see that gender identity and non-cisgender individuals are as central to the queer movement as sexuality and cisgender queer people; and we see – ultimately – that from the movement's beginning, activists like Ulrichs have managed to find joy and hope despite facing the relentless specter of hatred and desolation. Through Ulrichs' story, I have aimed to demonstrate a more empowering and more inclusive vision of the modern queer movement's foundation. This vision is based not on fantasy but on history.

CHAPTER TWO: KARL HEINRICH ULRICHS – HIS LIFE AND LEGACY

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs was not born into a world where same-gender relations were explicitly illegal. Instead, they became illegal when the land of his birth – the Kingdom of Hannover – was subsumed into the Kingdom of Prussia. But while he was not born into a world where his attractions were illegal, Ulrichs was nevertheless born into one antagonistic towards his disposition. If he saw openly queer people or heard words to describe his sexuality or gender growing up, he never wrote about them.

When he was three and four years old, Ulrichs preferred wearing girls' clothes and found it painful when forced to put on boys' clothes, saying, "No, I want to be a girl" (Kennedy 3). Ulrichs' attraction to men was apparent to him early on: at ten years old, he was in love with a male pupil, and his mother – sensing his difference – would often sigh, "Karl, you are not like other boys!" (Kennedy 4).

Sadly, Ulrichs' first sexual experience was a traumatic one: at fourteen years old, he was sexually abused by his riding instructor. By the time he was 25 in 1851, Ulrichs' writings seem to indicate that he had had consensual sexual experiences with at least one man. When Ulrichs' sexual experiences with men became known to his superiors in 1855, he was all but forced out of his position as a legal clerk. He finally came out to his family in 1862, who were initially resistant.

By 1867, the Kingdom of Hannover had been subsumed into the Kingdom of Prussia, meaning Ulrichs' homeland fell under Prussian anti-sodomy laws (Beachy 3). While Ulrichs had already written in favor of people of his nature beforehand (publishing five books under the pseudonym Numa Numantius from 1864-1865), this new legal reality was a major factor in

prompting Ulrichs to write under his own name and come out before the Congress of German Jurists, who were gathered to discuss how Prussia's latest annexations would fit under the kingdom's laws. Ulrichs barely got into his speech before catcalls and cries of "Crucify!" came from the crowd (Beachy 5). Shouted down, Ulrichs left the stage (though his speech was continued by another person in Latin to appease the crowd's discomfort with the topic). Though Ulrichs' words fell on hostile ears at the conference, the incident gained the attention of the psychologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing.

By then, Krafft-Ebing had already achieved an illustrious career, having served as the director of an insane asylum in Graz and chaired the University of Vienna's Department of Psychology and Neurology (van den Haag 17). When he began corresponding with Ulrichs, he had an ambitious project in mind: comprehensively documenting sexual pathologies in a text intended for courts and medical professionals, a text that would be called *Psychopathia Sexualis*. The text would be the first of its kind and cover pathologies from the relatively harmless and non-prosecutable (ex: velvet fetishes) to the heinous and outlawed (ex: sexual abuse of one's own children).

Ulrichs maintained a long correspondence with Krafft-Ebing, who proved slow to convince: 27 years passed between Ulrichs' outing in front of the Congress of German Jurists and Krafft-Ebing explicitly calling for acceptance of homosexuals. But when Krafft-Ebing finally made the decision to advocate for homosexuals, he proved an outspoken ally. He declared homosexuality an inborn condition in the second edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and he also voiced his support for homosexuals (particularly for the decriminalization of homosexual sexual encounters) in a queer journal. In short, he voiced his advocacy to legal and medical professionals in Latin and to general readers (but especially queer readers) in German. This

allyship and Krafft-Ebing's research on queer people in general can be traced back to Ulrichs' influence. Krafft-Ebing made known in a letter to him the extent to which Ulrichs impacted him, saying, "The study of your writing of love between men interested me in the highest degree" ever since you first "spoke openly about these matters. From that day on...I have devoted my full attention to this phenomenon...it was the knowledge of your writings alone which led to my studies in this highly important field" (Bullough 25).

Krafft-Ebing, however, remained a problematic figure even with his outspoken advocacy. Despite his views on queer identities having been heavily formed by his communications with Ulrichs, he never cited Ulrichs in his writings, even though Krafft-Ebing had lifted Ulrichs' idea that queerness is inborn (Kennedy 245). Still, Ulrichs deeply valued Krafft-Ebing's allyship. He wrote near the end of his life that "I sowed the seeds; all fell on gravel or under thorn bushes. Only one fell on a human heart," with Krafft-Ebing's being the human heart in question (Kennedy 255).

The years leading up to Krafft-Ebing's ally turn had been trying for Ulrichs. He had written extensively but found no inroads in the many spheres of authority he had attempted to appeal to, including the legal, political, scientific, and religious spheres. He struggled to make a living financially; watched an apathetic world disregard the suicides and murders that took queer people; saw his impassioned letters advocating for the release of queer prisoners go ignored; and endured the deterioration of his health. After over a decade of public advocacy, Ulrichs begged his way to Italy in an effort to save his health by means of warm climate, eventually settling in L'Aquila. There, his life was happier. Though his advocacy continued to fall on deaf ears in Prussia, he found stability in Italy and pursued his passions for Latin and poetry.

Ulrichs died in 1895, only a year after Krafft-Ebing's declaration of allyship. His funeral was well attended, including such distinguished figures as the mayor of the city, the president of the council of public attorneys, university professors, the president of the Workers' Society, and the president of the Charitable Institution being among the crowd of mourners (Kennedy 252). He seems to have been deeply loved in L'Aquila.

His mantle was taken up by the German-Jewish scientist Magnus Hirschfeld, "who consciously saw his work as a continuation of that of Ulrichs" (Kennedy 255). Hirschfeld founded the world's first institute for sexual and gender minorities, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee. This institute was the model for the United States' first gay rights organization, which was founded by a German immigrant named Henry Gerber in 1924 (*Chicago Tribune*). Though Ulrichs' name did not become famous in North America, his movement did.

When Ulrichs was born, the idea of the homosexual person had not even been invented yet, with the term homosexual being coined in Ulrichs' lifetime. Today, it is hard to imagine a mainstream academic or legal sphere in Canada not accepting the idea that some men are exclusively attracted to men and some women are exclusively attracted to women. As such, the cultural context of the world Ulrichs operated in makes his efforts all the more incredible.

The world into which Ulrichs was born lumped homosexual acts in with bestiality and pederasty, with no distinctions made among them (Bullough 26). Through the development of the term homosexuality and its popularization by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, homosexual acts began to be distinguished from pederasty and bestiality, acts that do not offer the possibility of consent.

Of course, the grouping of homosexuality with pederasty and bestiality still exists today. In debates leading up to the legalization of same-sex marriage, an oft-repeated argument has been “What’s next? People marrying animals?” And in the rehearsal space for the *Urning* staged reading, the director and multiple cast members (who were queer) expressed gratitude that I quickly established a distinction between homosexuality and pedophilia in the play’s first scene, with the director in particular noting that many of her gay male friends had been looked upon as potential violators of young boys. That said, Ulrichs’ achievement still shines through: homosexual acts in our society are now accepted by most as harmless behaviors, while lumping in homosexuality with bestiality and pedophilia is now considered an act of bigotry rather than a universal, unquestioned practice.

The development and spreading of the terms homosexuality and heterosexuality occurred largely because of Ulrichs. After all, Krafft-Ebing noted to Ulrichs that he only began researching queer identities because of Ulrichs’ influence, and it was Krafft-Ebing who popularized the terms homosexual and heterosexual. The terms were created by Karl-Maria Kertbeny, who first used the words in private correspondence to Ulrichs in 1868 (Bullough 26). Though these terms and the legacy they represent could not exist without Ulrichs, he never used or endorsed these terms, preferring a litany of coinages of his own invention.

Though he never seems to have used the word homosexual to describe himself, Ulrichs’ identity was described as homosexual male in nearly every piece of scholarship I found on him. This reading rests on the flimsy idea that Urning – a term Ulrichs coined and described himself as – is synonymous with homosexual man. This argument is easily debunked looking through Ulrichs’ first two books, *Vindex* and *Inclusa*. In *Inclusa*, he says, “The Urning is not a man, but rather a kind of feminine being when it concerns not only his entire organism, but also his sexual

feelings of love, his entire natural temperament, and his talents” (Ulrichs 36). In *Vindex*, he writes, “I have the beard of a man; my limbs, my body are those of a male. Inside, however, I am and remain a female” (Ulrichs 50). In these two books, Ulrichs and the Urnings he describes seem to have much more in common with heterosexual transgender women than with homosexual cisgender men. Throughout his work, though, he refers to Urnings as being a third sex and calls Urningins (the assigned female at birth counterparts of Urnings) a fourth sex. Moreover, he seems not to have seen Urnings and Urningins as fully women or fully men, making it difficult to claim that Urnings and Urningins would be synonymous with heterosexual transgender women and heterosexual transgender men.

Eventually, though, Ulrichs encountered too many readers who were offended by the notion that all assigned male at birth (AMAB), exclusively male-attracted people are feminine beings. He had initially assumed that all AMAB, exclusively male-attracted people were like him: female on the inside. Responding to information that suggested otherwise, he broke Urnings into two very different categories: Mannlings and Wieblings. Mannlings, as Ulrichs described them, were male-bodied people who were male in all aspects of their being except the direction of their sexual drive (that is, being male-attracted). Wieblings, meanwhile, were Urnings as Ulrichs originally described them: male-bodied people who were totally feminine inside.

Despite making this distinction, the word and identity of homosexual gained traction, and Ulrichs’ coinages were forgotten. This forgetting was accompanied by non-homosexual queer identities beginning to be erased, with Ulrichs’ queer movement quickly transforming into a gay movement. Ulrichs’ successor, Magnus Hirschfeld, may be called inclusive of non-homosexual queer people with his Scientific Humanitarian Committee, where the first gender confirmation

surgeries took place. But while Hirschfeld's organization included bisexual people, homosexual women, and transgender people, Chicago's Society for Human Rights did not. The Society for Human Rights was modeled after the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, but unlike its predecessor, only gay men were included in the group, with bisexual men being explicitly forbidden from the organization (Kepner and Murray 27).

Ulrichs' activism, though, included people who were attracted to both men and women, people we would now call intersex, and – of course – the male-bodied, feminine-spirited Urnings as well as the female-bodied, masculine-spirited Urningins. Why, then, did the movement Ulrichs birthed quickly turn exclusionary, from LGBTQI+ to L and G?

It would be disingenuous to say this narrowing of focus has nothing to do with Ulrichs. After all, when he went before the Congress of German Jurists, he introduced his speech as one focused on those who were sexually drawn to members of the same sex (Beachy 5). Furthermore, he opens his first book, *Vindex*, by assuming the voice of all AMAB, male-attracted people, speaking in this royal we to men who are exclusively female-attracted. He writes: "O! If only for just one moment it were possible for me to plant you into the depths of our being so that you might experience what we experience when we set our eyes upon a maturing young man" (Ulrichs 31). From the beginning of Ulrichs' advocacy, then, his priority is clearly set on normalizing male-bodied on male-bodied love, particularly legitimizing the sexualities of AMAB people who are exclusively attracted to men. In fact, exclusively female-attracted, AFAB people and Uranodionings/Uranodioningins (men who are attracted to both men and women and women who are attracted to both men and women respectively) are not even brought up until Ulrichs' third book, *Vindicta*. Thus, although Ulrichs wrote on behalf of Urningins, Uranodioning(in)s, and hermaphrodites (to use his terms), his primary focus on male-

bodied on male-bodied love can be seen as an antecedent to the gay male-centric model of queerness that dominated the 20th century.

Additionally, this model may be said to emerge partially because Ulrichs' terminologies failed to catch on. The main reason for this failure is perhaps that Ulrichs' terminologies did not encompass the experiences of the queer people he prioritized. There are quite simply more exclusively male-attracted, AMAB people who are cisgender than there are exclusively male-attracted, AMAB people who are trans. As such, it makes sense that homosexual caught on as a word while Urning did not, as the word Urning had the build-in assumption that exclusively male-attracted, AMAB people made up a third sex.

Perhaps even more crucially, though, Richard von Krafft-Ebing rejected Ulrichs' coinages in favor of words like heterosexual and homosexual, meaning that these were the words that spread in the scientific and legal communities.

Part of the reason these words spread instead of Ulrichs' as well may be due to cis het people's difficulty thinking outside the myth of the gender binary. The gender binary is so ingrained in Western thought that even today it is extremely difficult for people to think outside of it. Words like homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual can fit inside the gender binary, implying attraction based on male and female terms. With his concepts of Urnings and Urningins, though, Ulrichs suggested the existence of more than two sexes, often using the existence of intersex people to back up these claims.

Even to a non-binary person like myself, though, it can be difficult to keep track of the logic of the Urning identity, most notably because of the paradox within the identity. Urnings, Ulrichs says, are not attracted to other Urnings, as Urnings are feminine creatures and attracted to masculine men. If all AMAB, exclusively male-attracted people are Urnings, then, who do

Urnings have sex with? Perhaps one might say Uranodionings (men attracted to men and women), but Urnings are not included in Ulrichs' definition of Uranodionings, which is not even introduced until his third book.

Imagine being a reader at Ulrichs' time, one who is homosexual but who has not encountered that word or any like it. Reading that you are an Urning (which feels wrong as you are certain that you are a man and a masculine one at that) would prove dispiriting once you learn that others of your nature are not attracted to you. Even if you keep up with Ulrichs' writings long enough for him to introduce the idea of Mannlings, you may first encounter the term homosexual. With this word, your sexuality is validated; it seems others who share your sexuality would like to have sex with you; and your sense that you are a male is not compromised by the idea that you are a third sex.

It is easy to imagine, then, that abandoning Ulrichs' coinages would have been a boon to cisgender homosexuals. As a non-binary person, though, I believe the loss of Ulrichs' coinages was likely a tragedy for non-cisgender people. While gender identity and intersex people were central to Ulrichs' philosophy of sexuality, 20th century queer culture largely ignored intersex people and at best saw transgender people as an afterthought and at worst demonized them.

Such issues within this culture can be seen in writings on Karl Ulrichs, where he is transformed from a self-described third-sex person who advocated for a wide swath of queer identities into a gay man who founded the gay (not queer) movement.

With *Urning*, then, I had a challenge: to restore Ulrichs' inclusivity and trans resonances while also alluding to the homosexual-centric queer culture that would follow his death.

CHAPTER THREE: RICHARD VON KRAFFT-EBING AS DRAMATIC CHARACTER

Urning was not my first excursion into historically based playwriting. In the year before I entered my program at the University of Calgary, I wrote a play about William Shakespeare, in which his late-life collaborator John Fletcher played a major part. While I thoroughly researched Shakespeare by reading multiple biographies about him and most of his plays, I did very little research on John Fletcher. The reason for this lack of research was simple: the Fletcher of my imagination compelled me more than the Fletcher of history. Fletcher's playwriting bored me, and I determined that his character would be more useful to my play if he were to function more as a foil to Shakespeare than as a character created as accurately as possible from history.

This sort of treatment has ample precedent in theatre, with many plays using history as a platform for the story but then straying from the strictly historical. In his Mark Rothko-focused play *Red*, John Logan provides a foil for Rothko through the fictional character Ken, an assistant who is portrayed in close relationship with the real-life artist. In Mike Poulton's stage adaptation of Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall*, Sir Thomas More is reduced to a dastardly villain in contrast to the heroic Thomas Cromwell. And Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* abounds with deviations from the historical record.

With *Urning*, I initially intended to do something similar to what I had done with my Shakespeare play. I would sculpt Ulrichs as I had done Shakespeare, trying to stay rooted in history as much as I could. With Krafft-Ebing, I would do what I had done with Fletcher: create a foil for Ulrichs. My interest was to illuminate Ulrichs as much as possible, and so my thought with Krafft-Ebing was to construct a personality that would highlight Ulrichs' own perspective

and priorities. As such, I determined that to complement Ulrichs' radical activist character I would make Krafft-Ebing a moderate scientist.

It was the clash of two such people that initially fueled my thoughts on the dynamic between Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. Each disposition – radical and moderate – had positive qualities the other lacked. For the radical, immediate and large-scale action must be taken to address the daily sufferings of oppressed peoples. For the moderate, careful evaluation must be conducted before taking any sort of action. This moderate disposition complements the scientific focus, which is to conduct a thorough investigation before making a conclusion. The radical disposition, meanwhile, suits the activist, whose main concern is achieving justice. By positioning Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing in these two dispositions and occupations, I intended to give the play archetypal resonances beyond the particulars of the relationship I was writing about. Additionally, such a positioning would have great dramatic potential: locked in dramatic conflict, two characters disagree but are both right in some ways; each want something from the other; and they cannot both fully get what they want.

Elements of that dynamic remain in the completed play. When Krafft-Ebing delays expressing support for queer people, Ulrichs sees a massive moral failing: “Every day you let linger, another person like me dies, and a million more suffer.” For a scientist like Krafft-Ebing, though, there comes an expectation that when he makes a judgment, strong scientific evidence motivates his perspective. As Krafft-Ebing's brother-in-law warns him, he must be “unimpeachable” in his evidence. In this example, the clash of values that underscores the activist vs. scientist dynamic remains. But while the clash between Krafft-Ebing's and Ulrichs' occupational values remains in the play, Krafft-Ebing's disposition is far more complicated than

I originally envisioned. The reason for this change is simple: unlike John Fletcher, I found the historical Krafft-Ebing to be more engaging than the one I imagined.

In the first year of writing, I found little that suggested the historical Krafft-Ebing would provide much help to my playwriting ends. I had not found much information on his life outside the context of brief encyclopedic accounts, and this information leaned much more towards the professional than the personal, reading like stilted resumes in their recounting of the places where he studied and worked. If I had followed my sculpting of Krafft-Ebing purely based on these accounts, my Krafft-Ebing would have been superficial, one based on being born in a particular year and attending particular universities. As such, I came away from the first year continuing to believe that imagination should inform the vast majority of my decisions regarding Krafft-Ebing and that I should only rely on history to give me a sense of his career arc and accomplishments.

But a dramatic shift in Krafft-Ebing's character and my approach to it began near the start of my second year. In the drafts up to that point, Krafft-Ebing had been reserved and quite passive, the type who would never raise their voice. The turning point came when my adviser suggested I revise the scene in which Krafft-Ebing first appeared: the trial scene in which a necrophile is being prosecuted. I had not revised this scene since I had first drafted it. The scene as it stood was fairly effective. It was a humorous and relatively fast-paced scene that introduced the audience to Krafft-Ebing's character and occupational success. The reason Krafft-Ebing gave for why the necrophile should not be strictly treated, though, was weak, drawing less on science and more on the idea that rehabilitation is more effective than punishment. It struck me that seeing what Krafft-Ebing had said about necrophilia in *Psychopathia Sexualis* could strengthen this aspect of the scene.

I had not dedicated even a fraction of the time to *Psychopathia Sexualis* that I had given to Ulrichs' writings, but the book had proven helpful to me before. It was in the book's introduction that I gained an important insight into Krafft-Ebing that gave the play a key dramatic element: that Krafft-Ebing would have had to express his medical opinions in a way that satisfied the moral position of mainstream and legal society. In revisiting *Psychopathia Sexualis*, though, I found that I had vastly underestimated the degree of moral indignation Krafft-Ebing expressed when offering his perspectives.

The section of *Psychopathia Sexualis* on necrophilia is four sentences long. In the first two sentences, Krafft-Ebing establishes his utter disgust at necrophilia, calling it "horrible," "monstrous," and "decidedly perverse" (Krafft-Ebing 500). In the third sentence, he shifts from the sort of outright moralizing that may seem out of place in psychology today to expressing an opinion grounded in the existing research: "Unfortunately, in the majority of the cases reported the mental condition was not examined, so that the question whether necrophilia is compatible with mental soundness must remain open" (Krafft-Ebing 500). While the word "unfortunately" keeps Krafft-Ebing in the realm of subjective judgment, the rest of the sentence presents a sound reason for keeping open the question of whether necrophilia is a sign of mental instability. He uses his last sentence, though, to keep himself in sympathetic terms with the mainstream perspective on necrophilia: "But anyone having knowledge of the horrible aberrations of the sexual instinct would not venture, without further consideration, to answer the question in the negative" (Krafft-Ebing 500).

Reading this section while revising the trial scene, I was surprised by the passion with which Krafft-Ebing wrote. The revulsion Krafft-Ebing expressed was out of character for the calm character I had imagined. Moreover, I was struck by the skill of the section keeping the

context of the book's introduction in mind. I had difficulty telling just how much of Krafft-Ebing's revulsion was feigned for the courts, and the structure of the section impressed me. He expressed a controversial perspective – there is no existing evidence that necrophilia is a sign of mental instability – in a manner that suggested his moral disposition was conventional.

I began to envision Krafft-Ebing as proud and confident in his professional abilities; willing and able to consider thoughtfully arguments and narratives from sources his peers would not take seriously; and bold (and at times radical) in his assertions. And unlike John Fletcher, Krafft-Ebing made for engaging reading, with his case studies sometimes reading like compact, character-driven short stories. The material in these case studies seemed to me far more engaging than much of the material I had given Krafft-Ebing in the play both from entertainment and intellectual standpoints. From then on, I determined that while I might depart from history in depicting events from Krafft-Ebing's life, I would endeavor to make his voice in the play similar to his voice as I encountered it in his writings.

This revised approach to Krafft-Ebing made him far more compelling in relationship to Ulrichs. The two bonded much more on an intellectual level now, with admiration being a major component in their relationship. They were almost kindred spirits, sharing an appreciation for classical languages that the world at large lacked. This dynamic, moreover, better honored history than what I had initially penned.

Both Krafft-Ebing and Ulrichs made their admiration for each other known in writing. In his book *Vindicta*, Ulrichs approvingly quotes at length from a “splendid essay” by Krafft-Ebing, and he groups Krafft-Ebing in with “the more noble Dionings” (Ulrichs 124). As stated in chapter one, Krafft-Ebing made known his appreciation for Ulrichs in a letter, in which he said,

“The study of your writing of love between men interested me in the highest degree” ever since you first “spoke openly about these matters. From that day on...I have devoted my full attention to this phenomenon...it was the knowledge of your writings alone which led to my studies in this highly important field” (Bullough 25).

Pure warmth and goodwill between characters, however, cannot create a good play on their own. After all, the root of drama is conflict, and complex relationships – ones marked by love and betrayal – make for good drama. Thus, it was helpful to my dramatic needs that history provided conflict between Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing both on ideological and personal levels. Ulrichs objected to Krafft-Ebing’s aligning of queerness with sickness, asserting that “The ‘Urning’ is healthy in body and spirit, and therefore also of sound mind, as every non-Urning” (Kennedy 245). In addition to noting this ideological difference, Ulrichs complained that Krafft-Ebing had not given him due credit, noting that Krafft-Ebing never mentioned him in *Psychopathia Sexualis* despite his influence on the psychologist (Kennedy 245).

Drawing from these recorded elements, I chose to create two main disaccords in the Ulrichs/Krafft-Ebing relationship: disagreement regarding the nature and types of queernesses and tension related to the question of loyalty. The first element can be seen in the play, for example, in Ulrichs’ preference of the term Urning and Krafft-Ebing’s preference of the term homosexual. I believe the second element to be more personal in nature than the former, and so it was this element that supplied the main difficulty Krafft-Ebing confronts: he wants to do what he believes to be the right thing, but he also wants to preserve his personal and professional lives as they are. Before I came up with this idea for Krafft-Ebing’s central struggle, though, I had a year of drafting behind me, a year of drafting that had come before I had read of Ulrichs’ dissatisfactions with *Psychopathia Sexualis*. In light of this new information and the subsequent

thoughts about depicting Krafft-Ebing I had developed, I planned to revise Krafft-Ebing's storyline in accordance with these elements.

This revising process led me to reconsider the Krafft-Ebing scenes in Act II that involved the character of Bernhard. In my initial drafting, Bernhard was Krafft-Ebing's cousin-in-law who arrived in town to temporarily fill the role of local judge. He was fairly one-dimensional, foolish, and smarmy, and his role did not significantly impact the overall direction of Krafft-Ebing's story. Though the character had these shortcomings, I believed that he could be adjusted to strengthen Krafft-Ebing's arc in an essential way.

All who had read my drafts up to that point had wanted to see a greater role for Bernhard in the play, believing he offered a clear antagonistic force to the advancement of queer rights. I thought the character could demonstrate the blowback Krafft-Ebing could face both in his professional and family lives for openly supporting queer people. Perhaps most importantly, though, he represented what I considered to be one of the key shifts between Act I and Act II I wanted to make: the shift from discovery to – as Wilhelmine puts it – “What now?” In Act I, Krafft-Ebing discovers that queernesses are distinct from the other pathologies he studies and that queer people such as Ulrichs face a terrifying reality. In Act II, he must determine what to do now that he possesses this knowledge. Through Bernhard, I saw a chance to illustrate the high stakes behind this decision. Doing so, though, meant heavily adjusting the character and the circumstances of his arrival into the story.

First, I chose to make Bernhard Krafft-Ebing's brother-in-law instead of his cousin-in-law. The change would give Bernhard greater weight in terms of his significance in Krafft-Ebing's life.

Second, I would create a clear stake for both characters on which their interactions center: the well-being of Krafft-Ebing's wife/Bernhard's sister, with it being uncertain whether she will stay with Bernhard or return home to Krafft-Ebing. In previous drafts, this character had appeared on stage and been rather cruel towards her husband, with the implication being that their marriage was unloving. I realized the relationship would have more dramatic potential, though, if I depicted it as a deeply loving one facing a major threat: Krafft-Ebing's sympathy for queer people and his wife's disturbance at this new element. Additionally, the stakes would be higher if I made Krafft-Ebing's wife essential to his life. This element struck me as believable, as it did not strike me that a 19th century man like Krafft-Ebing would be able to cook nor that he would have a major source of emotional support other than his wife.

Finally, I made Bernhard's character both more affectionate towards Krafft-Ebing and more intimidating. While he had been apathetic (but possibly disdainful) towards Krafft-Ebing in the previous drafts, I determined that introducing him as a deep admirer of his brother-in-law and his work would allow me to depict just how far Krafft-Ebing could drop if he chose to speak out about queer rights. In just one scene, a person who knows and values Krafft-Ebing as much as Bernhard can go from having the highest opinion possible of Krafft-Ebing to considering him a predator whose professional work is apprehensible. Additionally, by replacing Bernhard's foolish quality with a domineering presence, the scene could escalate quicker and higher and suggest Krafft-Ebing may be in danger.

As in the previous draft, Bernhard and Krafft-Ebing came to a disagreement because – through a criminal case – Bernhard hoped to establish same-sex relations as illegal, to which Krafft-Ebing was opposed. Through revision, though, the scene acquired a more dynamic quality, with both characters being changed by the scene's end: Bernhard has lost his trust in

Krafft-Ebing, and Krafft-Ebing has lost his poise. While Krafft-Ebing has been seen up until this point in the show as confident and mostly unfiltered (tempered only by tactfulness) in expressing his views, by the end of the scene Krafft-Ebing appears broken, and Bernhard has total control. Through this revised conflict, I now had a tangible reason for why Krafft-Ebing may delay advocating for queer people so long: his personal well-being is at stake.

I am not entirely sure how the miscarriage element of Krafft-Ebing's story came about. When revising the scene with my new conception of the Krafft-Ebing/Bernhard dynamic in mind, the dialogue got to the point of "Why do you have two kids?", which I had recalled Krafft-Ebing as having during my research. I had not expected this moment of confrontation, but it progressed naturally out of the dialogue. Keeping the writing moving, the characters seemed to speak on their own, and though I had not thought about Krafft-Ebing's wife having a miscarriage until that point, it arrived on the page. I found myself surprised and in tears.

I had experienced a strange moment like this one before. In drafting the final scene of a previous play, a character unexpectedly revealed a traumatic moment from their childhood, which I had not anticipated beforehand and which also left me in tears. It is not something I can entirely quantify or position in formal academic practices, but in allowing myself to stay in characters' voices and let elements that want to appear flow out, I occasionally find myself surprised by what comes onto the page and affected in ways I did not expect. While research and previous planning informed much of my writing with *Urning*, so did spontaneity and pure fictionalizing, as this element of the script reveals.

I gave a great deal of thought, though, as to whether to keep the miscarriage element. It came in the script without previous foreshadowing and quickly in the heat of a moment. I pressed my adviser on his thoughts about the element, and he did not seem to find it

objectionable. In reviewing what I had written, I found that the element gave Krafft-Ebing an emotional hook that he had previously lacked. While Lina and Ulrichs each already had traumas they confronted in Act II, Krafft-Ebing – the third of my three main characters – did not. In reviewing the way he discussed the miscarriage, I found a sincerity and vulnerability that I wanted to put on stage.

But while Ulrichs' traumas were grounded in historical reality, I had no evidence that Krafft-Ebing experienced the trauma that I had attributed to him. I initially did not experience a great deal of concern, though, about whether introducing this element in the play was ethically irresponsible. After all, I had already deviated from history multiple times in writing the play. For example, I had moved the annexation of Hannover by Prussia to after Ulrichs came out publicly rather than before, to allow Ulrichs to face a major setback part-way through Act I; I had given Ulrichs a fictional queer niece enduring suicidal thoughts to make the urgency of his pleas even more personal, as historically these pleas often invoked the high amount of queer people dying by suicide; and, of course, I had a completely fictional story through the characters of Lina and their family. Still, these elements were motivated by my desire to represent dramatically history and my research in a way my depiction of Krafft-Ebing's miscarriage-related trauma was not. I could not help but wonder to some extent whether this element of the script, then, could be a mistake.

While writing this chapter, a theatre peer who had recently completed his artist's statement noted that in mounting his thesis project, his priority was not representing his research but rather creating a good story. While his research certainly informed his production, he said

that he was not an expert on the topic he researched, nor did he purport to be. His expertise, rather, was in creating a play that incorporated elements of his research.

His words resonated with me. While I am relatively well read on Ulrichs and to a lesser extent Krafft-Ebing, my first job as a playwright was to form a compelling story out of their narratives. In doing so, I mixed fact with imagination. I sought to illustrate these characters fairly faithfully to their documented voices and experiences, but as a playwright, I also saw it as my duty to fill in areas where there were gaps that impeded the possibility of a fully formed story.

It seems possible to me that Krafft-Ebing and his wife really did not have more than two children because of the pain they experienced after a miscarriage. It is far more likely, though, that such a thing did not actually happen. However, it seems likely to me that if such a thing did happen, it would not have been told. Like queerness, some things were generally not spoken about openly at various points in history, as they were considered taboo or shameful.

Perhaps Krafft-Ebing is connected to the struggles queer people face through the miscarriage element. Like many queer people, Krafft-Ebing keeps an element of his life hidden out of shame, which does a great deal of harm to his mental well-being. If the mainstream did not make it difficult for Krafft-Ebing to talk about this element of his life, if the mainstream divorced this element from shame and the taboo, Krafft-Ebing would likely have an easier time carrying this part of his life, similar to how the normalizing of queernesses is of incredible help to the psyches of queer people.

But in writing and deciding to keep the Krafft-Ebing miscarriage element, I was not thinking about these things, nor was I drawing from a strong understanding about the history of how miscarriages were perceived and talked about or not talked about historically. Instead, I

kept the element because to me it felt honest, compelling, and believable. Making Krafft-Ebing honest, compelling, and believable was among my key priorities when initially drafting Krafft-Ebing, when I was forming his persona more through my imagination than through historical reality. Even after I decided to build the character's personality and arc primarily in response to historical reality, this priority remained key for me still.

CHAPTER FOUR: BALANCING HISTORY AND IMAGINATION

At the beginning of *Gay Berlin: Birthplace of a Modern Identity* – the book that began my journey writing *Urning* – Robert Beachy describes Karl Ulrichs’ experience before the Congress of German Jurists. He employs a thorough amount of detail, from Ulrichs’ feelings before taking the stand to the structure of the building in which the moment took place. He includes Ulrichs’ precise words and the reactions of the crowd, including the cries of “Crucify!” (Beachy 5). None of these details are drawn from Beachy’s imagination; instead, they represent the records of history, including Ulrichs’ own accounts.

All of the elements that make for a compelling scene were already there: a protagonistic force in Ulrichs; an antagonistic force in the Congress of German Jurists; high stakes; a clear beginning, middle, and end; and a mix of everyday truth and the extraordinary. In this case, my job was simple. History provided compelling material in the shape of a dramatic scene, so little to no deviation from history was required. The Congress of German Jurists scene was the first one I wrote for *Urning*. Never again would the task of balancing history and compelling playwriting be that simple.

As a historically based storyteller, I alter or add to historical details if the change would illuminate key aspects of the larger historical narrative. If the change would distort this narrative, I do not make that change. The character of Wilhelmine falls into the former category since she illuminates the mental health struggles of the queer people Ulrichs knew and the impact their suffering had on Ulrichs. An unethical addition would be if I had made Ulrichs reject the validity of his niece’s attraction to men and women. This addition would contradict Ulrichs’ beliefs as presented in his writings. While I am willing to invent material such as the

Wilhelmine scenes as they stand in *Urning*, I seek to use historical events as much as possible to form the bases of scenes.

Other than the Congress of German Jurists scene, though, I did not find moments in the lives of Ulrichs or Krafft-Ebing as recorded by history that I could easily adapt. In the case of Ulrichs, there were some recorded details that provided seeds for scenes. Ulrichs was confided to at one point by a pedophile; he was sexually abused by his riding instructor; and his funeral was well attended. While history gave me these details, though, it was up to my imagination to flesh these details out into scenes.

In the case of Krafft-Ebing, I found even fewer details. To depict scenes from Krafft-Ebing's life, I found I would have to rely almost entirely on my imagination. While representing events from Krafft-Ebing's life on stage meant using my imagination, though, representing his persona on stage meant drawing more from history. Through Krafft-Ebing's writing, I was able to construct a personality that was grounded in history.

Ulrichs' and Krafft-Ebing's writings proved key guides in writing *Urning*, as they helped me to keep their representations grounded in history. At some points in *Urning*, my invented words for the characters are blended with historical quotations. In Ulrichs' frantic letter to Krafft-Ebing at the start of Act II ("They label us infamous..."), I drew from Ulrichs' writing in his book *Inclusa*. Additionally, in Krafft-Ebing's first court scene, I drew from Krafft-Ebing's words on necrophilia in *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Because I employed recorded quotations from Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing, I was forced to maintain voices for Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing that were reflective of their historical voices throughout the play. Doing so was also a way to accomplish what I think is a crucial element of historically based playwriting: to elevate the human aspect of history, particularly by illuminating the psychologies of the people involved in major historical

moments. In situating Ulrichs' words from *Inclusa* within the context of his desperate circumstances, for example, I sought to invoke the danger and fear that were present in his life.

I believe people's emotions are key to their opinions and decisions. Part of what I value in historically based playwriting, then, is the transformation of historical figures from distant to enlivened. But in turning historical facts into three-dimensional characters, at least some speculation is almost always necessary. It would be difficult if not impossible to construct a multi-character play from only exact quotations by historical figures, especially if the play were set before the advent of recording devices. Only once in *Urning* do I have a scene that draws almost entirely from documented words positioned in the exact context they were used, and that is the scene involving the Congress of German Jurists. In all other cases where I drew from Ulrichs' and Krafft-Ebing's words, I was employing at least some degree of recontextualization.

From the beginning of drafting *Urning*, I considered trying to write a piece entirely faithful to history to be an impossible venture. I saw my duty more as imagining the unrecorded, human side of the history I was drawing from. My main interest was the struggles these historical figures dealt with in the pursuit of their goals. This interest was one that lent itself well to playwriting, as the root of traditional dramatic structure is the protagonist pursuing their objective against a force of resistance. For Ulrichs, the resistance was mainly pervasive anti-queer bigotry, particularly anti-queer bigotry rooted in societal power structures. For Krafft-Ebing, a main obstacle was also these bigoted power structures, as his life was situated within these power structures and thus his needs relied on them.

My imagination came into play in determining how these characters dealt with these resistant forces and how these resistances manifested. With Ulrichs, my imagination was informed somewhat by history, as Ulrichs had been imprisoned by Prussian officials for his

activism. With Krafft-Ebing, whose personal life I had little information about, less historically based imagination was required, and with that came the creation of Bernhard.

Lina's plotline probably represents my biggest deviation from purely historical facts. Their invention gives larger resonances to Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing's efforts, showing the significance of what the two are doing. Lina's character also functions as complementary to Ulrichs. They are an Urning and an Urningin; both are literary and preoccupied with words; each struggle with having had their first queer encounter be nonconsensual; and both are highly family-oriented. Lina, however, has significance of their own. Lina's coming out to their family, for me, represented the beginning of the modern queer movement as much as Ulrichs' plotline. With Lina, I wanted to generate a sense of hope and offer a representation of everyday queer people demonstrating a level of bravery akin to Ulrichs'.

My intentions with Lina were also somewhat based on personal interests. Through the character, I could explore consent in a way I could not with Ulrichs as well as connect to 19th century fiction that explored and tested traditional conceptions of gender. They also connected my play to ethnic minorities and immigrants. The character also links the play to a contemporary sensibility more than Ulrichs' story would have on its own. After all, Lina's contraction-laden language is more contemporary than her more formal family's language, and the character is referred to using they/them pronouns in the stage directions, which I did not apply to Ulrichs as there was no evidence of him using gender-neutral pronouns in his lifetime. Through Lina, I believe my intention to examine the roots of the modern queer movement with *Urning* is made clearer.

Ulrichs' life and particularly his coming out before the Congress of German Jurists is seen by some as the beginning of the modern queer movement. I believed that a key part of

writing a play centered on Ulrichs, then, was to illuminate the significance of his life, to depict how his story and those it intersects with speak to the modern queer movement. One reason for writing from this intersection is that it was inevitable that my work would be informed by a contemporary sensibility, whether I intended for it to or not. It made sense to me, then, that I would choose to explore this element intentionally rather than operate under the illusion that I would write a play completely immersed in history. For example, even when I was writing about historically based facts – such as Ulrichs’ trauma around being sexually assaulted – I was using my own experiences and insights into human nature to fill out the history. When I wrote Ulrichs’ father and Lina’s mother, too, I was informed by my own family.

The personal and contemporary elements of *Urning*, though, were most often grounded in some sort of historical element. Ulrichs’ writings on family, for example, were crucial in my decision to portray Ulrichs and Lina in such close relationship to their families. Ulrichs asserted that Urnings felt a strong bond with their mothers, even when their mothers were not accepting, and he also lamented that his nature did not lend itself to him having children. These elements suggested to me Ulrichs deeply valued family, particularly his own. It seemed natural, then, to portray his Urningin counterpart – Lina – as a person of strong family values as well.

But there was also an element to Ulrichs’ writing that suggested family was not enough for Urnings, that Urnings need to explore their queernesses as well. I saw this element as a possible source of conflict and anxiety, and so in my play Ulrichs’ father has difficulty accepting his child’s dangerous activism while Lina – a person very close to their parents – is afraid to assert their queerness to their family but also realizes they must do so.

Personal insights into human nature informed these portrayals, too. My own experiences and observations suggested to me that many parents are afraid for their queer children to assert

their queernesses, believing that the more their child expresses their queerness, the more likely they are to experience violence. I also recalled coming out to my own parents. I was living with them at the time and told them that I was going to the bookstore and that there was a letter for them on the dining table. In this letter, I came out to them and said that when they were ready for me to come home from the bookstore and talk, I would. Though I was and am close to my parents and nothing in our relationship has suggested they would disown me, I still planned what I would do if they rejected me.

These parts of my contemporary experiences seemed to me applicable to my 19th century characters. In drawing from my own emotions and sense of empathy, I can make my characters' struggles less artificial and more impactful. These are not characters experiencing things in the distant past but rather people like us. Their exact circumstances are different, but they are impacted by elements that are not confined to a singular time period. These elements include fear of rejection, longing for acceptance, and being overwhelmed by difficult situations. Characters are not purely defined by their time period or country. These factors are significant, but people do not tend to define themselves solely based on when and where they come from. Ulrichs, furthermore, deviated from society in such an extreme way that to ask constantly "Is this how a 19th century European would act?" when writing the character would have likely been a hindrance, as Ulrichs was out of sync with the norm of his society.

My bar for determining if an element of the play was problematic with regards to time period and setting was simple: if my adviser or one of my peers said a particular element took them out of the world because it felt too contemporary, I adjusted. I would have adjusted, too, if an element of the play was said to seem forced in its attempt to be historical, but I do not recall ever receiving such a note. This unit of measure kept me grounded in the world I was portraying

– a blend of history and my own sensibility – rather than a standard that was not my own (to be either purely historical or contemporary).

Part of my reason, too, for blending the historical and contemporary had to do with who I hoped would work on and connect with the show, namely trans actors. The Urning and Urningin identities already have inherent trans resonances, but I saw it as important to make the connection between these identities and contemporary trans identities explicit. In doing so, I hoped to give trans actors a greater sense of ownership of the story. This priority led to details such as Ulrichs' shift from being called Uncle to being called Aunt and the character of Marlene.

History provided some assistance in this venture. It is well documented that Ulrichs made known his desire to be a girl as a young child. His gender manifested at this early point in his life through his wearing of girls' clothing. Clothing strikes me as a major area of dysphoria for trans people, and it seemed to me that an Urningin like Lina would have been unhappy in Victorian clothing for women such as the corset. These elements contributed to the trans resonances of the play, as did purely imagined elements such as Leah's positioning of Lina in male terms.

I came to realize that elements of the script such as stage directions and the casting breakdown were key areas to express the transness of Lina and Ulrichs. Such parts of the script are not spoken aloud when performed and are thought to be in the playwright's voice. They give clues about how the playwright perceives their characters. As such, I included elements such as a possible actor-to-role gendering at the top of the script, in which I suggested a transfeminine performer for Ulrichs and a transmasculine performer for Lina. The note at the start of the script regarding Ulrichs' gender provides a frame for the artists and producing professionals going into the script.

The most critical element for me, though, was referring to Lina with they/them pronouns throughout the stage directions. Against a series of characters referred to by he/him and she/her, the they/them pronouns make a statement, differentiating Lina from cisgender characters such as their family. The they/them pronouns connect Lina to the contemporary, where non-binary people often go by they/them pronouns.

Before the *Alchemy* script, I had employed they/them pronouns in the stage directions for Lina only once: in the closing scene, in which they held their baby cousin. The pronouns here (and the use of she/her pronouns for Lina up until then) were meant to function as a reveal, situating Lina in contemporary trans pronouns once they have fully come to terms with their queerness.

I changed to they/them pronouns because a trans actor had been cast for the role of Lina. I had intended for a trans actor to play Lina long before this casting happened, but the casting awakened me to how my pronoun usage for Lina throughout the script may affect trans actors involved in productions of *Urning*. In a script filled with she/her stage directions for the character, the they/them moment at the script's end struck me as a quiet note after the loudness of she/her throughout. I believe that all people – trans or otherwise – would be negatively affected by constantly hearing the wrong pronouns being used for them or a character they are portraying. By using they/them pronouns in the stage directions throughout, I could honor Lina's gender from the very start of the play. It would also create less of an excuse for people involved in the show to refer to Lina with she/her pronouns during the process.

By asserting Lina's transness in this manner, I could also draw attention to Ulrichs' transness. Though Ulrichs is referred to by he/him in the script, he is positioned as complementary to Lina, with parallels running between the characters throughout the script. As

such, I believe the transness given to Lina through the stage directions' they/them pronouns rubs off on him, signaling to all those working on the project that these two characters are to be thought of not as a cis male and a cis female, but as an Urning and an Urningin, identities that are part of what contemporary, trans-aware people would consider the trans spectrum.

In short, in navigating between fact and imagined, history and contemporary, my main goal was to give dramatic flesh to the past by drawing on the now. I hold that there is no past tense in live performance, as even plays set in times long ago are given life in the present, the action of their plots being played out in present time. Even when a character is describing things past on stage, the action takes place in the present, as the character is performing the act of remembering in the present.

When one picks up a book, the reader supplies the present action of reading, while the artist's action of writing has already passed. The medium of theatre – unlike prose – inherently cannot present action purely in the past. Prose can go “once upon a time...and then this happened and then this happened.” In theatre, even historically based plays live in immediate emotional stakes, the artist(s) and spectator(s) acting and feeling together in the present.

The contemporary, then, always impacts theatre. Performers and audience members – necessarily alive and in the present – always bring the contemporary with them: the emotions they feel, the issues they face, the news and cultural dialogues of their time, etc. For *Urning* to succeed, then, I had to provide material that would connect to the necessarily present element of theatre by providing history with emotional life. To convince audience members and artists that the real-life figures of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing and the particular struggles their lives were connected to are worthy of their attention, I could not rely solely on historical facts. I had to

ensure that in recounting history, I was tying it to the personal, the emotional, the dynamic – the human.

CHAPTER FIVE: REPRESENTING QUEERNESES

When I conducted an independent study in the fall 2018 term, I interviewed twelve theatre professionals and concluded each interview by asking what trans representation in theatre had the interviewee seen and what trans theatre artists had they encountered or heard about. Of this group, only one of the twelve could identify a trans playwright and only two could name roles from published plays they considered trans.

As an undergraduate theatre minor and graduate theatre student, I never saw a university production or assigned reading list include a single play written by a non-cisgender playwright or include an explicitly non-cisgender character. In nearly six years of reading plays, I have found only one published play by a non-cisgender playwright (Kate Bornstein's *Hidden: A Gender*) and read only one other play featuring an explicitly non-cisgender character (Brad Fraser's *Poor Super Man*). At the time of this writing, I have read 379 published plays in my free time since summer 2013. I pride myself on finding and reading plays by and about underrepresented peoples, but only two of these 379 plays intentionally depict a non-cisgender character. Given this absence of non-cisgender roles and playwrights, I find it crucial to write queer – especially non-cisgender – roles as an openly non-binary playwright.

Many of the choices I made in writing *Urning* – from the fictional characters I created to the discussions had on stage – were directly influenced by my desire to represent Ulrichs' terminologies and connect them to a diverse array of contemporary queer identities and experiences. This goal, for instance, motivated me to portray the bisexual/Uranodioningin Wilhelmine rather than the gay Wilhelm. An early draft featured this homosexual male iteration of Wilhelmine, but I found my show lacked a sympathetic queer cis female character and already

had a gay cis male character in Josiah. As such, changing the character seemed to me a way to add further depth to the show, to introduce another character fitting into Ulrichs' coinages (Uranodioningin), and to connect the play to bisexual struggles and experiences.

My initial impetus for making Ulrichs' nibbling (a gender neutral term substituting for nephew or niece) a gay male was to make a clearer distinction between Urnings and homosexual males. This distinction, however, was achieved through the understanding gap between Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. When Krafft-Ebing asks Ulrichs to tell him his story, Ulrichs makes clear that his gender is non-male and feminine, but Krafft-Ebing continues to call him homosexual, which Ulrichs rejects. This moment illustrates a crucial part of their real-life story: Ulrichs' deviation from the cis binary and Krafft-Ebing's centering of cisgender homosexuality in his conception of queer people.

I sought to illustrate the difference between the two's conceptions of queernesses and its significance through the scene in which Ulrichs outlines his various coinages in a letter to Krafft-Ebing. While Ulrichs' coinages can be characterized as diverse, complicated, and motivated by passion, Krafft-Ebing's preference of the terms homosexual and heterosexual can be seen as limited, simple, and motivated by a desire for easy understanding. The layout of the scene indicates the way history unfolded: Ulrichs' terminologies were immediately rejected by the mainstream, which chose terms that are still embraced today. The consequences are mixed: the terms Krafft-Ebing uses fit much of the world and were able to spread easily due to their straightforward construction, but the rejection of Ulrichs' diverse coinages reflects the erasure of non-homosexual queer identities that has been a major problem since Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing corresponded.

The terminology question, though, interested me most in terms of how it affected my characters on a personal level, and thus with *Urning* I strived to focus more on the struggles of my characters than on issues of theory. When depicting Lina's discovery of the term Urningin, for example, my main interest was in how the word affected her. When one grows up in a world that does not provide terms for one's identity, it can be overwhelming to discover language that suits your being. In my own life, the discovery of the terms non-binary, genderqueer, and genderfluid was a major moment for me. I felt a combination of fear and relief: relief because there were words for genders like mine and people who shared these identities, fear because the terms made me realize just how far outside the cisgender norm I was, which meant I was likely to face harsh resistance and possibly violence for asserting my gender.

Previous writings on Ulrichs have not embraced his terminologies; with *Urning*, I wanted to depict at least one person who embraced Ulrichs' terminologies. This person came in Ulrichs' counterpart, Lina. Just as their genders are complementary, so are the two's stories. Lina's plot in many ways mirrors Ulrichs' life: both of their queernesses puzzle their families but eventually are accepted by them to some degree; each suffers a non-consensual encounter as their first sexual experience; and each has a complicated relationship with their religions. In relation to queer people, these three elements in particular – family, non-consensual encounters, and religion – tend to attract assumptions from cishet people.

Traditionally, openly queer people are generally expected to have negative relationships with their families, especially when their families are religious. Although this experience is reflected in Josiah's character, I also challenge this assumption through Ulrichs and Lina, who are close to their families even if they are often improperly accommodated or misunderstood.

The two, furthermore, are shaped in large part by their religions, even though their religions harm them to some degree as queer people.

For me, though, the key taboo, unsatisfactorily represented aspect of queer experience I wished to portray was sexual assault. Sexual assault has been the nexus for some of the vilest bigotries against queer people. Among these offensive beliefs are the association of queerness with predatory behaviors and the notion that queer people are queer because of traumatic incidents that have happened to them like sexual assault. I addressed each of these beliefs in *Urning*.

In the play's first scene, Wilbur – an abusive, active pedophile attracted to prepubescent girls – recognizes himself in Ulrichs, as the mainstream of his society affiliates Ulrichs' attraction to men with behaviors like pedophilia and bestiality. Part of what makes this stereotype so heinous is that it ties queer survivors of abuse to their abusers. The stereotype sees no distinction between Ulrichs and his abusive riding instructor, and it can prevent queer abuse survivors from speaking honestly about their experiences. If a queer person reports being abused by another queer person, they may be seen as perpetuating stereotypes about their own kind, especially if the abuse was the survivor's first sexual experience. Both Ulrichs and Lina feel the need to emphasize that their queerness predates the violation of their consents, a standard not typically applied to cishet people. When a heterosexual boy is molested by an older woman, for example, most do not assert the male is straight due to the trauma of the experience (or if they were molested by an older man, few would say they turned straight from gay as a result of the trauma). When Ulrichs speaks of his riding instructor and Lina speaks of Leah, each honestly tells a narrative of their traumas as queer people, ones that do not fit in with mainstream respectability politics.

The issues of consent Lina's story brings up still draw debate. In both the classroom and the rehearsal space, there was uncertainty about whether Lina's experience with Leah was a positive or negative one. This reality was to be expected, as all conversations about consent – regardless of degree or how clearly non-consensual the encounter is – continue to court a variety of opinions. It is likely that if I had not offered in the rehearsal space a neutral summary of the events as they occurred in the script, the scenes would not have been performed as intended. To summarize: a shy, 12-year-old child who has never had a romantic experience or very many friends is kissed deeply without permission by a bold, almost-adult that they trust. The almost-adult immediately denies that the event happened. The child – now older – continues to have unwanted flashbacks to the incident, which cause them to tense up, and they state that they sometimes want to scream “Why did you do that?” at the person.

This aspect of Lina's story connects to uncertainties around consent that persists to this day. In working out the scene's meaning to her out loud, one homosexual woman talked about her first kiss, which did not involve affirmative consent on her own part. Afterwards, when she tried to talk to the person about the kiss, the person said, “What are you talking about?” The woman seemed conflicted about the moment. She said she did not consider it assault, but she also seemed to feel there was something wrong about the incident.

But while contemporary resonances interested me with regards to Lina's story, I found myself more interested in what Lina's and Ulrichs' stories tell us about their worlds specifically and the effects of homophobia throughout history more generally. In their world, in which queerness cannot be openly discussed, queer people must keep all their interactions secret, with no ability to speak about them aloud. If a queer person is violated by another queer person, it cannot be talked about, lest the survivor be implicated of being queer or the survivor's queerness

be forever associated with that incident. For someone as shy and inexperienced as Lina, this culture can be disastrous, as their mental wiring requires them to have models of proper behavior and no such models for queer behavior are available to her. Leah, for her part, has little choice but to gaslight Lina after the kiss, lest she be implicated as queer. By considering all queer interactions evil or unspeakable, the world fails people like Lina.

This area is just one example where I sought to represent a queer experience honestly without appeasing mainstream expectations. On the other hand, there were areas in which I sought to accommodate the desires of queer viewers. Particularly, I aimed to provide a story and production as directly relevant as possible to queer people of color and trans audience members.

I had a much easier time connecting the show to transness than I did connecting the show to queer people of color, likely for two main reasons: the first is that I am trans but not a person of color, meaning that while my trans characters come from lived experiences, my characters of color do not; the second is that the source material necessitated writing non-cisgender characters but presented a challenge in including characters of color.

Because Ulrichs' Urning identity means he is a self-identified third sex person possessing a male body and a female soul, I had a character who would connect to trans experiences before I even started outlining. I was sure to include material in the script that emphasizes Ulrichs' gender, particularly his feminine childhood. It seemed natural to me to include an Urning in the story to illustrate the AFAB counterpart of Ulrichs' Urning identity and to assist in giving Ulrichs' story more dramatic potential, as the actual historical material I had of Ulrichs' life felt lacking in fueling a plot on its own. I also included small trans roles in Marlene and Young Lina, which provide further opportunities for trans actors to play trans roles in the show.

Through the casting of a male-passing, male-identified trans person as Lina and a female-passing non-binary person as Ulrichs, the trans resonances of the *Urning* and *Urningin* identities were further emphasized. In total, three of the show's nine actors were trans. In addition, I was present throughout the process, meaning that of the leadership roles in the show that were present at each rehearsal (director, playwright, and stage manager), one of the three was trans.

Inclusion for trans people was further emphasized by being vigilant about proper pronoun usage in the rehearsal space, both for the people involved in the process and the characters in the script. Lina's they/them pronouns were frequently gotten wrong, but to be a person using they/them pronouns is to hear your pronouns used correctly only rarely, at least in my experience. In the rehearsal space, there was a greater vigilance to these errors than I encounter in the vast majority of spaces.

Although there are no intersex characters in *Urning*, there is some applicability to intersex people in the show through Ulrichs' coinage Zwitter and to the notion of third and fourth sexes Ulrichs employs. In Ulrichs' own writings, he frequently referenced intersex people to support his theories, albeit often by using the word hermaphrodite, a term now widely considered offensive.

Trans and QPOC (queer person of color) inclusion were both emphasized in the show's poster, which features Daniel Quasar's revised rainbow flag. This revision of the more common rainbow flag includes black and brown stripes as well as the colors of the trans flag, to represent QPOC and trans people respectively. I also used the prefatory material of the show to advise strongly against all-White and all-cis casts, stating that it would be problematic for a play about the beginning of the modern queer movement not to include trans actors and actors of color given the erasure problems that historically and currently plague trans people and QPOC.

Nevertheless, I wanted there to be some aspect of the play that connected directly to oppressed ethnic minorities beyond the casting. For that reason, I chose to represent Jewish characters in the play. I was not aware of any sort of major presence of non-Jewish POC in 19th century Germany and Austria, and I believed that I was not prepared to do the research necessary to represent such communities on top of the research I needed to do regarding Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. As such, I felt much more comfortable working with Jewish characters, whose histories in 19th century Germany and Austria I had some awareness of.

Being of German descent, I am also aware that when people think of Germany, many think immediately of the Holocaust. Given this aspect and Ulrichs' strong advocacy against anti-Semitism, it seemed to me imperative to represent Jewish characters in the show. In depicting these characters, I was influenced by contemporary struggles involving people of color. For example, the profiling and police brutality endured by Black Americans informed my writing of Aunt Klara and Uncle Otto's argument regarding the police.

Within the context of the production, the amount of POC involved was certainly lower than I would have liked. Only two of the nine actors were POC, and none of the three main leadership people involved in the show (again, director, playwright, and stage manager) were POC. My director's Jewish roots, though, gave me some reassurance regarding the problematic nature of having a room full of gentiles portraying Jewish experiences. Still, I would have preferred to have more Jewish and POC involvement in the show.

I was also concerned about erasing the non-White queer history and identities that preceded Karl Ulrichs. As such, I made sure to always promote the show as the beginning of the modern queer movement and position Ulrichs' coming out in the context of modern history. In doing so, I hoped to make clear that Ulrichs did not represent the beginning of queerness but

rather the beginning of how queerness is thought of now and how it is advocated for. In conversations, I would reference POC queer identities such as Hijra and two-spirit that predate Ulrichs. I also would emphasize the ethnic minority aspects of Ulrichs' legacy. After all, his successor, the Jewish Magnus Hirschfeld, wrote "one of the first modern studies of racism" and traveled the world with his partner, a Chinese man named Tao Li (Bauer 13). Part of Hirschfeld's legacy is the Society for Human Rights, the United States' first gay rights organization, whose roots were in Hirschfeld's work. This organization was led by a German immigrant and a Black preacher (Kepner and Murray 25).

Still, I cannot deny that if one were to take in *Urning* as their sole piece of queer history, their perception of queer history would be too centered on Europe, regardless of who the cast and leadership team are. For that reason, it is imperative that those who encounter *Urning* also encounter non-European queer stories that predate Ulrichs and POC-centric queer stories that follow Ulrichs.

CONCLUSION

While I now take a great deal of pride in having written *Urning* and believe it to be possibly my strongest playwriting effort, it took a difficult journey to get there.

In the first year of working on *Urning*, maintaining interest in the play involved finding a way to make Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing's conceptual musings lively and accessible rather than stiff and purely academic. This task proved a constant source of revision, particularly around the depiction of letters in the play. The letters first emerged as lengthy monologues. These monologues sounded composed rather than spontaneous. The result was that the letters lacked dramatic charge. Over the course of the year, the letters slowly became more and more conversational. Eventually, most of the letters contracted, with clearer motivations underlying each letter. The letters became more generous, more filled with affection for the recipients. In some cases, the letters achieved a back-and-forth akin to in-person conversations. The overall effect was a shift from staid to lively, with the relationship between Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing achieving a greater depth as a result.

Throughout the second year of working on *Urning*, I found myself struggling to find motivation in continuing to edit the project, primarily due to a loss of passion around the project. I had in the past considered passion to be the main indicator of whether my scripts would succeed or not. The more passion I felt working on a script, the better it would be. As I found myself frequently lacking passion while working on *Urning*, I worried that it would turn out weaker than my previous plays. In the face of this lack of motivation and worry, two factors were crucial to keeping *Urning* on track: the first, working on side projects while writing the script; the second, my adviser's guidance.

For the first, I chose to write a series of one-act plays called *Liberal Arts Ohio*, which built on my pre-thesis play of the same name. The series was a low-stakes venture, in which I did not challenge myself to grow as a writer, writing instead for personal satisfaction. These scripts did not require any research since I wrote them in large part based on memories from my undergraduate years. They also did not require a great deal of revision, as I had no pressure to put them out into the world. Through these plays, I felt the joy that comes with drafting material without much thought, which was a welcome relief from the stress of carefully revising *Urning*. With *Liberal Arts Ohio*, I could reawaken my creative energies when I found myself depleted by *Urning*.

My adviser, meanwhile, ensured that I continued to work on *Urning*. I had considered the play nearly finished by September 2018, but my adviser suggested that there were areas that still needed attendance. He indicated the lack of stakes for Krafft-Ebing in his interactions with his family in Act II, and he noted an aimlessness to the Lina plotline, which became unfocused after Josiah's departure at the end of Act I. These notes persuaded me that there was still crucial work to be done. In response to them, I cut the character of Krafft-Ebing's wife and retooled the dynamic of the Krafft-Ebing/Bernhard scenes. These rewritten scenes offered higher stakes for Krafft-Ebing, whose personal and professional lives were now threatened in the scenes. I also featured Leah's voice throughout the show rather than in just one scene, creating a through line for Lina's struggle that extended beyond Josiah.

Through these revisions, I developed a greater pride in the play than I previously had. I discovered that passion can be engaged not just by topic matter but also by structure. In revising Krafft-Ebing's Act II scenes, I discovered a parallel with Ulrichs' Act II scenes that intrigued me. Each has two scenes in Act II before the monologue-dominated ending of the play. In each

of their first scenes, they are launched into a charged situation with a family member, which requires them to exercise both tact and emotional vulnerability. Each of their second scenes involves them adjusting their lives in reaction to the now mostly resolved crisis, particularly with regards to their relationship to the queer movement. While Ulrichs' advocacy becomes more personal and urgent, though, Krafft-Ebing becomes more reluctant to break from the mainstream. The result was that I found myself more engaged by Act II and thus more proud of the play.

If a lack of passion threatened to stop me from revising *Urning*, fear threatened to keep me from writing what I knew needed to be written. As a survivor of emotional abuse and sexual trauma, I have previously found issues of abuse and consent violation difficult to explore in my writings. With *Urning*, though, the historical material called for me to confront these issues. Ulrichs lived in a world where his sexuality was conflated with abusive behavior, where he was conflated with people like his abuser.

Having had my consent violated by a person I identified with, I found myself empathizing with this dilemma. Throughout my recovery, I have often wondered if I could have violated someone without knowing it. I have been afraid to become intimate with people, lest I be violated again or I unintentionally violate them. This struggle exists in large part because I identify so much with the person who violated me and consider them a good person who did not know what they were doing. I have feared discussing this aspect of my struggle to people, worrying that people will see me as a bad person for having these self-doubts.

In confronting such fears, I believe I may have tapped into what Ulrichs felt about his own trauma. Living in a society that told him he was like the person who abused him, he may have had to deal with fearing himself and to convince himself that he was not the threat society

deemed him to be. This struggle would have been made all the harder by the psychological scars that typically accompany sexual trauma. One study, for example, reports that 94% of women who have been sexually assaulted experience symptoms of PTSD, a disorder I suffer from (Chivers-Wilson).

I cannot say that there was one factor that allowed me to confront my traumas in writing *Urning*. Years of psychological treatment – in the form of both talk therapy and medications – prepared me to do so, but my love for playwriting was also crucial. I believed this play would not reach its full potential if it did not deal in issues of trauma, so I wrote about them. On a personal level, I have benefitted from this decision as well. I have grown less self-conscious after noticing the sympathetic audience response to Ulrichs' and Lina's monologues around trauma, helping me to develop a more positive view of myself.

A key discovery for me, then, has been that one tends to get as much out of playwriting as they are willing to put into it. Had I not addressed my adviser's well-placed notes at the start of year two, I would have remained unsatisfied with this play in comparison to my previous work. Had I not confronted my fears around trauma in writing Ulrichs and Lina, I would not have experienced the positive psychological impacts that the show's performances ultimately gave me.

I have discovered that audiences tend to be more sympathetic than I have previously given them credit for. My past self would never have believed that audiences would sympathize with a person who believes they have the capacity to become an abuser, let alone such a person whose gender goes beyond the cis binary and is encompassed by a word they made up. I was moved, then, to see such a character and their story be so positively received.

Moving forward as a playwright, I believe I will continue to grow more confident in the topic matters and types of characters I write. This belief is justified by my previous playwriting experiences. It was writing a monologue about my mental health struggles that convinced me I could write a play about mental health. The result was my first serious playwriting effort, *Gone*. With the majority of the plays I have written, I have tackled topics I worried about covering before and grown progressively bolder in my topic matters and characters. Even so, *Urning* strikes me as a major turning point in my writing. Like my previous work, it is preoccupied with issues of family, religion, and mental health, but unlike my previous work, it explores issues of transness, consent, and abuse.

I was surprised to witness a noticeable excitement around my play featuring a diverse array of queer identities. As such, I have a hard time imagining my future work not containing trans characters or characters with queer sexualities, especially characters with non-homosexual queer sexualities. I have noticed a great hunger among queer young people for diverse depictions of queernesses through the writing and production of *Urning*. The excitement around Lina's, Ulrichs', and Wilhelmine's queernesses far surpassed the excitement around the cisgender homosexual characters I wrote before coming to the University of Calgary. My shift in representing queernesses can already be seen in my *Liberal Arts Ohio* series, which features a non-binary character and two bi+ characters of color in major roles.

But while I wrote *Urning* with the expectation that it would appeal mainly to young queer people, I was surprised to find that older, cishet people were also positive in their reactions to the show. If I were to theorize a reason for this appeal, I would cite the depiction of family in the show. I have found that the dramatic canon is populated with unhappy, hostile families, families such as O'Neill's Tyrones, Miller's Lomans, and Williams' Wingfields. In contrast, my writing

tends to feature more outwardly loving families. By portraying queer children and their cishet parents in complex but caring relationships, I may have made older, cishet patrons feel more included.

In working on this artist's statement, I have been struck by how changes to content have resulted in shifts in structure and vice versa. With the introduction of Lina to compensate for the content deficiencies of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing, the structure of the play went from singularly focused and chronological to having multiple plotlines shifting in time. With the recurrence of Leah's voice being added for structural reasons, Lina's processing of their trauma became as central to their character for me as their processing of their queerness.

I am also reminded just how much of *Urning* is based on conjecture and outright fictionalizing. These non-historical elements partially exist due to the lack of information available about Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing in English. The first English translation of Ulrichs' books came only in 1994, and if a book-length English-language biography of Krafft-Ebing exists, I could not find it. I hope that *Urning* prompts further interest regarding the lives of these two figures, who spawned the modern queer movement with all its strengths and problems.

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APPENDIX: *URNING*

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs	Male-presenting, 40s
Wilbur	Male-presenting, early 30s
Lina	Female-presenting, teenager
Aunt Klara	Female-presenting, mid 30s
Richard von Krafft-Ebing	Male-presenting, 50s
Prosecutor	Male-presenting, adult
Defense	Male-presenting, adult (younger than Prosecutor)
Judge	Male-presenting, adult
Papa	Male-presenting, 60s-70s
Josiah	Male-presenting, teenager
Father	Male-presenting, 40s
Mother	Female-presenting, late 30s-40s
Uncle Otto	Male-presenting, early 40s
Rabbi Malmud	Male-presenting, adult
Marlene	Female-presenting, adult
Chairman	Male-presenting, adult
Hopler	Male-presenting, late 50s-early 60s
Wilhelmine	Female-presenting, 13
Leah	Female-presenting, almost 18
Young Lina	Female-presenting, almost 13
Bernhard	Male-presenting, 50s
Man	Male-presenting, adult

Casting Breakdown

At least 9N. Please bear in mind that in telling the story of what may well be the beginning of the modern queer movement, it would be highly suspect to have an all-White and/or all-cisgender cast given the erasure problems that plague queer people of color and trans people. Doubling is highly encouraged. Possible casting breakdown with possible actor gendering (none of it is prescriptive by any means, though trans/non-binary actors for Karl and Lina is strongly encouraged):

Karl (Transfeminine)
Lina (Transmasculine)
Richard/Rabbi Malmud/Chairman (Cis male)
Aunt Klara/Leah (Cis female)
Wilhelmine/Defense (Cis female)
Josiah/Young Lina (Transmasculine)
Papa/Uncle Otto/Hopler/Man (Cis male)
Wilbur/Judge/Father/Bernhard (Cis male)
Mother/Prosecutor/Marlene (Transfeminine)

Time

Mid to late 19th century, primarily 1868

Place

Vienna and what we would today call Germany

Regarding Projections

They can be adjusted as needed.

Regarding Casting Karl

Actors do not have to be the gender identity, age, ethnic background, etc. of the character they portray. In the case of Karl Ulrichs, such a thing would almost certainly prove impossible: as of the writing of this note, I'm not sure there are any people self-identifying as Urnings out there. Who knows what he would have identified as in today's terminology – non-binary? Demifemale? Transgender female? But I feel confident saying this: interpreting Karl as a cisgender male is to massively misconstrue the way Karl wrote about himself.

(Act I: Lights up on Karl Ulrichs and Wilbur, a strapping man, mid-conversation. Projection: “Hildesheim, Kingdom of Hannover, 1855”)

WILBUR

And then the young boy said, I see no reason to grow up to be an emperor! To be pope – now *that’s* the one with the power! And so his father asked, “But is this pope one to be admired or reviled?” And the boy said, “Admired, is he not? He is the servant of God!” And at that, his father – being the good Lutheran he is – sent the boy to his room not to finish another bite of his supper! We found out later that young Rudolf had begun a friendship with a Catholic child. Needless to say he is no longer to spend time with that child!

KARL

Because the boy is Catholic?

WILBUR

Of course!

KARL

I am not sure if I would dissuade a child from friendship simply because of the boy’s religion.

WILBUR

You cannot be telling me you would have your child – if you had one – be friends with a papist?

KARL

I see no reason to rule out Roman Catholic friends for my children, though they will always be metaphorical.

WILBUR

You can never see yourself marrying?

KARL

No.

WILBUR

To go a lifetime without the touch of a grown woman does not give you despair?

KARL

Not in the least. You find that strange?

WILBUR

I can perhaps understand.

KARL

But you are married.

WILBUR

And I cannot say her touch has ever given me satisfaction. Does it make you uncomfortable that I say that?

KARL

Oh, no, no!

WILBUR

To speak frankly of sex disturbs some people.

KARL

I appreciate your confidence in me.

WILBUR

You are a tolerant man.

KARL

There is a difference in me that makes me understand the differences of others.

WILBUR

Perhaps my difference is not so different from yours.

KARL

No?

WILBUR

I have sensed it in you. People like us can see that difference in each other, though it often so easily eludes the others, does it not?

KARL

Yes. Yes it does.

WILBUR

And why is it you intend never to have children, Ulrichs?

KARL

I think you know why.

WILBUR

I believe I do.

(Beat)

We are in a discreet place, yes?

KARL

Yes.

WILBUR

Then perhaps it is time to forgo the coded speak.

KARL

Very well.

(They look into each other's eyes. Karl moves to kiss him. With a touch of force, Wilbur stops him. Beat)

WILBUR

I think you have misunderstood.

KARL

Oh god.

WILBUR

Relax.

KARL

It was not what you think. My intention was not to – of course you must know it was not to –

WILBUR

I believe I do know. You are not the first, believe it or not.

KARL

I am not the –

WILBUR

Calm down, Ulrichs. Though it has been a while! When it had happened before I was still a boy.

KARL

What happened?

WILBUR

He tried to kiss me much as you did. And so I beat him silly.

KARL

Oh.

WILBUR

You have no need to worry. I will not do that to you. We are men of the law now. I was fifteen then, and the boy was twelve.

KARL

What happened after – you beat him?

WILBUR

I told him if he told another soul I would kill him, and not a word has been said of it until now I imagine. But I have grown since then. I think I have some sympathy for people like you now.

KARL

I am glad. Not many do.

WILBUR

I have little room to judge.

KARL

How do you mean?

WILBUR

I feel looking at a young female as you do looking at a young male.

KARL

Yes! You understand! It is the same desire, only the direction of it is different!

WILBUR

I suppose. But you do understand what I am saying, yes?

KARL

Of course! When you see a beautiful woman in the prime of life, you feel as I do seeing a beautiful man in the prime of –

WILBUR

And at what age is this prime?

KARL

Well, that is a matter of debate, but I suppose it must at least be –

WILBUR

After puberty?

KARL

I imagine it / would be –

WILBUR

I see you have misunderstood me.

KARL

I do know of a man who said he experienced the touch of one in their twenties while he was fourteen and it was beautiful to him, and he speaks of the experience fondly. Perhaps it is not unnatural for you, then, to prefer young women of fourteen who prefer a man / of your age –

WILBUR

At fourteen they are spoiled. You understand that, Ulrichs. I know you relish the innocent gaze of a boy far before he has reached puberty.

KARL

But I must tell you I do not. No more than you feel that way.

WILBUR

Not towards a small boy, certainly.

(Beat)

I have shocked you?

KARL

No, no! One may face these unbidden thoughts and live with them / I imagine.

(Beat)

WILBUR

You and I live in the same direction. We shall walk together.

KARL

Tonight I must go another way.

WILBUR

You must?

KARL

I have family I must see.

WILBUR

This late?

KARL

We walk with one another to church in the morning.

WILBUR

Ah, religious! Good. You know that people of our nature do not have to be without God.

KARL

...Yes.

WILBUR

Would you have your nephew consort with Mohammedans?

KARL

Pardon?

WILBUR

You cannot have children, of course, but a nephew, say. You could let him be friends with a papist, but a Mohammedan?

KARL

A Muslim child, sure. I should –

WILBUR

A Jew, then? They are more common.

KARL

I should go.

WILBUR

Your benevolence does not extend to the Jews! Of course there must be limits to tolerance!

KARL

I would let him be friends with a Jewish child. It is late –

WILBUR

Perhaps I should walk with you. Strange creatures come out at night.

KARL

I can manage, thank you. Have a good night.

WILBUR

I will see you around the courts! Let us do something again soon.

KARL

Good night.

WILBUR

Good night. Hey!

(Karl stops)

You are tolerant, Ulrichs. That is an honorable thing.

KARL

Thank you. My family really is expecting me.

WILBUR

Of course. Family is the thing that matters most. Wish them well for me!

KARL

I will.

(Karl exits. Wilbur watches him go for a beat. He exits in the other direction)

HOPLER

(Unseen)

The way I see it is this: he confided in you. Perhaps he should not have. We can hope he may not act on his words. You know, you have some good chances ahead of you. I am thinking about placing you in the Adalbert's office. Though he probably does not need the extra hands, it would be a good opportunity for you.

I do wonder why he told you those things to begin with. Did you do something that might have spurred him to speak as he did?

(Blackout)

(End scene)

(In the blackout)

LINA

Ah! Ow ow stop!

AUNT KLARA

Just relax!

LINA

That hurts! Stop!

(Sound of Aunt Klara grunting. Lights up. The tailor shop of Lina's aunt and uncle in Vienna. Lina is having a corset tied onto them by Aunt Klara. Projection: "Vienna, Austria, 1868, A Tailor Shop")

AUNT KLARA

Just breathe.

(Lina breathes heavily)

Stop being melodramatic!

(Klara finishes tying the corset on and looks at Lina in the mirror)

Oh, Lina, you look so beautiful!

(Lina looks in the mirror)

Oh, stop pouting! You should be grateful. I am dressing you in the highest fashion. What do you say?

LINA

Huh?

(Aunt Klara hits Lina moderately)

Ow!

AUNT KLARA

No "huh"! It is undignified. Stand up straight for goodness' sake.

(Lina does so)

Ah! Look how beautiful you are! You will have a husband in no time.

(Notices Lina's expression)

What is it?

LINA

Nothing.

AUNT KLARA

Oh, no. It is never nothing. Come on now. What is it?

The corset is not right, is it?

LINA

No, it isn't –

AUNT KLARA

It could be emphasizing you more. Here, let me adjust –

LINA

No! Aunt Klara – what if I don't want to get married?

AUNT KLARA

Excuse me?

LINA

It's nothing. Don't worry –

AUNT KLARA

Hold on, hold on. Let us talk. Woman to woman.

LINA

Ok. I –

AUNT KLARA

I was nervous myself when I began courting.

LINA

I'm sure, but –

AUNT KLARA

New country, right? And being twenty! So old!

LINA

I mean that's / not really –

AUNT KLARA

But your parents were so kind to me! They said they would take me to the tailor and fix me up right! And I swear, Lina, your uncle –

LINA

Oh gosh –

AUNT KLARA

The way he looked at me! I knew I had him. Now, I know what you are thinking: she grabbed the first man she saw?

LINA

I'm not –

AUNT KLARA

But I always wanted to own a tailor's shop, Lina! And the other men around here, they just did not measure up /

LINA

Aunt Klara, I think I'm ok now.

AUNT KLARA

/ compared to your uncle! Solid, situated, moldable.

LINA

What?

AUNT KLARA

The point is, dear: I get it. It can be scary. But you will come to love the boy who chooses you.

LINA

Who chooses / me?

AUNT KLARA

Well, he must think he did the choosing, you understand?

LINA

...Ok.

AUNT KLARA

Dear: you are a light to this family. And you will be a light to your husband, too. And your children!

LINA

Thanks, Aunt Klara.

AUNT KLARA

Good. Now, dear, I have a beautiful dress / to show you –

LINA

Do I have to wear this corset?

AUNT KLARA

What?

LINA

I mean – it's beautiful, Aunt Klara –

AUNT KLARA

And the problem is?

LINA

But – uh –

AUNT KLARA

Yes?

LINA

Shouldn't someone like me for who I am?

(Beat. Aunt Klara laughs)

What?

AUNT KLARA

Oh! Sorry, sorry, Lina. Yes, of course. But a man needs a nudge in the right direction.

LINA

Huh?

(Aunt Klara raises her hand)

Sorry sorry sorry!

So, are you saying I should –

AUNT KLARA

Absolutely not!

LINA

I wasn't going to say –

AUNT KLARA

Nothing of that sort! Although, when he expresses that interest, that is the crucial moment.

LINA

Oh no.

AUNT KLARA

When you see him undressing you with his eyes /

LINA

Aunt Klara, please.

AUNT KLARA

/ that is when you shame him! Nicely of course! You are shocked! Flattered, yes, yes, but shocked! You are not that kind of girl! But of course if you marry me /

LINA

No more, please –

AUNT KLARA

/ I can – be of some help.

(Beat. Aunt Klara kisses Lina on the top of their head)

I envy what awaits you! Now: let us get that dress!

(Aunt Klara exits)

LEAH

(Unseen)

You are almost a man now.

(Lina tenses up. Aunt Klara reenters)

LINA

Did you say something?

AUNT KLARA

Just that you are a woman now.

LINA

Oh.

(End scene)

(A courtroom in Vienna. On stage are the judge, prosecuting lawyer, defendant's lawyer, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who is on the stand. The defendant is not seen. Projection: "A Viennese Courtroom")

PROSECUTION

State your name for the court please.

RICHARD

Richard von Krafft-Ebing.

PROSECUTION

And your profession.

RICHARD

Clinical psychiatrist and Professor at the University of Vienna, where I am chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology.

PROSECUTION

And your field of research?

RICHARD

Sexual pathologies.

PROSECUTION

Would you please state your qualifications?

RICHARD

I completed my medical degree at Heidelberg University, where I specialized in the study of sexual pathologies; was director of the insane asylum in Graz for nearly a decade; and have been preparing a comprehensive clinical-forensic text to be titled *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which will provide courts with a survey of every sort of sexual pathology, including their possible causes and the legal history of each pathology in Austria and the German states. It will be the first work of its kind.

PROSECUTION

How far are you into this effort?

RICHARD

I have already completed profiling over a hundred legal case studies – and legions more studies regarding non-prosecuted patients. Some of these case studies come from my experiences in this court room, where I have offered expert testimony for – twenty years now.

DEFENSE

But is the witness qualified to comment on this particular case?

(Beat)

JUDGE

Are you serious?

DEFENSE

I am sorry. I should have waited my turn.

JUDGE

By all means, go ahead. Unless the prosecution –

PROSECUTION

I would be delighted.

JUDGE

(To the defense)

Your move.

DEFENSE

Er – sorry what was your name –

RICHARD

Richard von Krafft-Ebing.

DEFENSE

Thank you. Dr. Krafft-Ebing – you clearly have a great deal of general knowledge about different sexual behaviors, but do you have experience with the specific type of behavior my client / has engaged in?

RICHARD

Cases of necrophilia are very familiar to me.

DEFENSE

Sorry what is that?

(Prosecution struggles to stifle a laugh)

RICHARD

That is alright. That paper did come out only a year and a half ago...Necrophilia. It is my coinage. The meaning of the word is in its construction.

DEFENSE

I do not follow.

RICHARD

All you must do is derive from the roots.

(Beat)

Do you need help?

DEFENSE

Sorry – um – philia is love, right?

RICHARD

Love of. So love of necro.
(Beat)
You know necro of course.

DEFENSE

I was always poor at Latin.

RICHARD

Ancient Greek. It comes from one of the most common – every classically trained person has had to translate it many times.
(Beat)

Dead. Love of the dead. Sexual acts on corpses.

DEFENSE

So you are familiar with this sort of behavior?

RICHARD

...Yes.

JUDGE

Prosecution –

PROSECUTION

We have come this far. What if the defense were to get his cross-examination out of the way now?

DEFENSE

That would be splendid! I am quite nervous /

PROSECUTION

No one could tell.

DEFENSE

/ So I would like to get it out of the way. You would do that for me?

PROSECUTION

Absolutely.

JUDGE

I cannot allow / that.

PROSECUTION

It will speed this up.

JUDGE

The defense may proceed.

DEFENSE

Thank you, your honor. Is the witness aware that my client is a respected government clerk with over eight months of experience?

RICHARD

I am now.

DEFENSE

And is the witness also aware that my client is an active member of the *Karlskirche*?

JUDGE

The defense is warned to get somewhere with this.

DEFENSE

Could a man of such religious piety – and a representative of our nation's beloved sovereign – truly be a depraved, diseased, dangerous individual?

RICHARD

Yes.

DEFENSE

You did not take time to consider the question.

RICHARD

The answer is yes.

DEFENSE

Are you sure?

RICHARD

How long have you been practicing law?

DEFENSE

Just under a month.

RICHARD

What is your specialty?

DEFENSE

Property law.

RICHARD

How did you get this case?

DEFENSE

I am passionate about the client's moral character.

PROSECUTION

He is his brother-in-law.

RICHARD

Ah.

JUDGE

Your time is about up, defense.

RICHARD

A moment please, Christoph. Did you happen to pick up any of the city's newspapers the first Sunday of this month?

DEFENSE

No. I find the news depressing.

RICHARD

Well, if you had glanced upon any of those papers' headlines, you would have seen the story of Zedlacher. Zedlacher was a superintendent at Saint Michael's School for Boys. He was widely beloved for his wisdom, warmth, and spiritual example. Among his friends were our bishop and our mayor. Does Zedlacher sound as though he is at least on equal moral standing with your client?

DEFENSE

The court will record my client as being the equal of this Zedlacher.

RICHARD

He molested his oldest daughter for three years and was convicted of incest the start of this month. I provided expert testimony at his trial.

DEFENSE

Oh.

JUDGE

Are you done?

DEFENSE

One more question please.

JUDGE

Be quick.

DEFENSE

So you do have experience in neck-er-philia?

JUDGE

The defense rests.

DEFENSE

Yes, sir.

PROSECUTION

I will be brief, your honor.

JUDGE

Thank you.

PROSECUTION

Richard: is necrophilia indicative of psychopathy?

RICHARD

The act is so heinous that the assumption of psychopathy is under all circumstances justifiable.

PROSECUTION

Why do you say that?

RICHARD

A man's natural disposition must be seriously perverted for him not to be repulsed by death, for life is the desirable state and death disdained by biological necessity. To desire sexual relations with a cadaver is to completely forsake that most essential aspect of all species: the drive to procreate.

PROSECUTION

And so the defendant must be considered psychopathic and thus must be placed in an asylum?

RICHARD

It would be my recommendation he be placed in an asylum.

PROSECUTION

Because he is psychopathic.

RICHARD

Presumably.

JUDGE

You know he needs a yes or a no.

PROSECUTION

Is the defendant unquestionably psychopathic?

RICHARD

Is that really how you intend to ask it?

JUDGE

Answer already, Richard.

RICHARD

The answer is no.

(Beat)

PROSECUTION

Pardon?

RICHARD

There is no scientific proof of necrophilia being a sign of mental unsoundness.

PROSECUTION

But, Richard, you just said the assumption of psychopathy is justified in all cases of necrophilia, yes?

RICHARD

The assumption is justified, yes. Anyone with even a trace of knowledge regarding aberrations of the sexual instinct would not hesitate to say so. But there have been almost no examinations of the mental condition of more than a few necrophiles. It is laughable to suggest there is anywhere close to sufficient evidence to make a scientific link between necrophilia and psychological derangement.

PROSECUTION

I do not understand. What are you / saying –

RICHARD

The field of psychiatry is unequipped at this juncture to make a judgment on whether necrophiles are mentally unsound. This is to my great chagrin and something I intend to rectify.

(Beat)

JUDGE

Does the prosecution rest?

(The prosecuting lawyer can only manage to nod his head)

Does the defense have any remaining questions?

DEFENSE

I am quite happy with things as they stand.

JUDGE

In that case – Richard, you are excused. Thank you.

RICHARD

Any time, Christoph. The wife says hello.

(End scene)

(Karl and his Papa on stage. Papa sits reading a letter. Karl paces.
Projection: “A home in Aurich, Kingdom of Hannover”)

PAPA

This word?

KARL

A new coinage of his. Means um – sexual love of – children.

PAPA

Oh.

KARL

Yes.

(Papa goes back to reading the letter. Beat. He finishes)

KARL

Well?

PAPA

This is exciting!

KARL

Exciting!?

PAPA

Is it not?

KARL

No!

PAPA

Oh.

KARL

It is no less than an insult!

PAPA

I think that may be a little / far.

KARL

He wants to systematically classify people of my nature as pathological!

PAPA

You know how sometimes I need you to put things in terms I can understand?

KARL

Yes?

PAPA

This is one of those times.

KARL

So, essentially, what he wants to do is make a guide for medical, legal, and political professionals, right?

PAPA

Right.

KARL

And in this book he would be outlining all the different types of diseased, dangerous people that exist. So a person who performs – um – sexual acts on animals –

PAPA

There are people who do that?

KARL

Yes.

PAPA

For the love of –

KARL

And he would say, “Oh, people who do that are practicing” –
(Karl takes and consults the letter)
Bestiality! And then he would talk about the cases he has encountered –

PAPA

Cases?

KARL

People who have done that that he has heard of through his practice as a psychologist or in the court of law or through his research.

PAPA

How would he research that...

KARL

So he would say about people like me – “Oh, they are such and such term and this is the crackpot medical justification I have for why these people should be thrown in jail!”

PAPA
Then do not answer his letter.

KARL
Well...

PAPA
What?

KARL
He is quite successful. Everyone in the legal profession knows him. I followed everything he wrote before um – getting debarred.

PAPA
Right.

KARL
So if he is going to write about people like me no matter what, maybe I can at least try to steer him in the right direction.

PAPA
Then write him back.

KARL
But then if I do help him, I may go down as the person who sold out his kind.

PAPA
Then do not write him.

KARL
But the exposure could be quite valuable, and the man is brilliant –

PAPA
Then write him! What do you want me to say?

KARL
What would you do?

PAPA
Well – you have such a wonderful mind.

KARL
Thank you.

PAPA
And he would not be the first person whose mind you changed.

KARL

I never thought I would get you on my side, after all.

PAPA

A parent can never abandon their child!

KARL

Or Mama for that matter.

PAPA

...Right.

(A heavy silence. Karl hugs his father. They break)

KARL

Well – should I give it a try then?

PAPA

I think you would regret not trying. And if I were one of your kind –

KARL

Yes?

PAPA

I would be grateful that you tried to help.

KARL

Ok.

(Papa exits. Beat)

Dear Dr. Krafft-Ebing,

(Richard enters)

I must say your letter comes as a bit of a surprise. I confess that I am reluctant to accept your offer. You see, to people of your disposition, people like me are diseased. I cannot agree. It is natural for me to feel looking at a beautiful young man as you do looking at a beautiful young woman. It disturbs me that you plan to include my experiences amongst those who sexually exploit young children and animals.

RICHARD

Dear Mr. Ulrichs,

Thank you for your letter. I apologize for causing you offense. Perhaps an explanation is due. This work, you see, is a medico-forensic text. As I am sure you can appreciate, I must present my findings in a way that satisfies / the moral standards of the court.

KARL

The moral standards of the court. Of course. I was a legal professional myself. I was debarred for – perhaps you can derive.

RICHARD

Ah. Yes.

KARL

I followed your work quite closely. Your arguments always impressed me.

RICHARD

I appreciate your compliment, and I must say I am quite impressed by your bravery going before the Congress of German Jurists. They can be rather forceful.

KARL

I did not notice.

RICHARD

And I have been impressed with your writings thus far.

KARL

Oh! What have you acquired? I will go ahead and send you my complete works and current drafts of –

RICHARD

Uh I – that will not be necessary. Let us avoid the um – outside eyes. You live in Prussia, yes?

KARL

Hannover!

RICHARD

Oh. Shall you be annexed, do you think?

KARL

That cannot and will not happen here.

RICHARD

Hmm.

(Beat)

KARL

I was interested in your coinages. Bestiality, pedophile...
What will you call my people?

RICHARD

It is still so early in the research. Perhaps we can return to this question later when –

KARL

I know my way around the classical languages, as I am sure you have gathered.

RICHARD

I was thankful you could read my Latin. I had worried about –

KARL

Censors, of course.

Richard: what do you make of people like me? How will you treat us?

RICHARD

It is distressing how rare it is these days to find people adept in the classical languages.

(Karl gives him a look)

For what it is worth, the book will include a vast range of pathologies.

KARL

I am not sure I like / that word.

RICHARD

I have a young male patient who is sexually aroused by velvet. His story will be included.

KARL

That is a pathology to you?

(Richard nods)

Well.

Alright.

I will contact every person I believe could be of assistance to you, though – as I am sure you can understand – many will be reluctant to share their stories. Even anonymously.

RICHARD

I understand. Thank you.

KARL

I will be in touch. Write me any time.

Yours,

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs

RICHARD

Regards,

Richard von Krafft-Ebing

(End scene)

(Lina's home. Lina sits across from Josiah. They are having a courting appointment. Projection: "Lina's home in Vienna." Silence)

JOSIAH

I like your outfit.

LINA

Thanks.

(Silence)

JOSIAH

I uh heard you can read English. Is that true?

LINA

Yes.

JOSIAH

That's really impressive.

LINA

Thanks.

(Silence)

JOSIAH

How do you know English?

LINA

There was an older girl who taught me before her family went to America.

JOSIAH

Oh. Do you miss her?

LINA

I don't really want to talk about it.

JOSIAH

Ok.

(Beat)

So what do you like to read?

LINA

In English?

JOSIAH

Sure.

LINA

Novels mainly. *Jane Eyre*, *Aurora Leigh*, *Sense & Sensibility*. Do you know any of those?

JOSIAH

No.

But that's not saying much. I'm stuck reading good old Moses and the prophets most of the time.

(Lina laughs lightly)

A laugh! He got a laugh!

Sorry. Don't draw attention to it. Got it.

Why do you like those books?

LINA

Well uh –

JOSIAH

Aurora Leigh. Let's do that one.

LINA

Well – I really relate to the main character. She's really bookish, and everyone's always telling her what she can and can't do because she's a woman but she ignores them, and there's this guy who's nice but really pompous, and she just has all these really smart things to say, and – sorry, people don't usually ask me why I like things.

JOSIAH

Don't apologize! It sounds good. Do you know any other languages?

LINA

I'm teaching myself Latin.

JOSIAH

Planning on going Catholic?

LINA

Oh, no. Judaism is bad enough.

FATHER

(Unseen)

And what is that supposed to mean, Lina?

LINA

Sorry, Papa!

JOSIAH

(So Father can't hear)

I'm on your side!

LINA

That doesn't offend you?

JOSIAH

No. I'm going to be the world's worst rabbi.

LINA

You'll be great! Don't say that!

JOSIAH

It's true.

LINA

Well – do you not want to be a rabbi?

JOSIAH

I guess I do. It's always been expected of me. I'll be really good at Hebrew at least.

LINA

I'll teach you some Latin you teach me some Hebrew?

JOSIAH

Deal!

LEAH

(Unseen)

Wow. You might be better than me now.

(Lina tenses up)

JOSIAH

Are you ok?

LINA

Oh, yes. It's nothing. Tell me more about rabbinical school.

(End scene)

(Karl and Richard on stage)

KARL

Dear Dr. Krafft-Ebing,

I hope your research is going smoothly. Expect forthcoming messages from an Urningin in Passau and a Zwitter in Heiligenhafen, who have agreed to help you in your research. It strikes me – and I believe given your special attention to language you will agree – that it is essential for us to discuss some possible coinages for those you and I are speaking of.

(Throughout below, projections show a growing word web attempting to keep up with everything, Richard taking notes as best he can all the while)

You are of course familiar with Urning, a biological male with a female psyche who is attracted to men. Urningin is similar: a biological female with a male psyche who is attracted to women. Then there are Dionings and Dioningins: respectively, masculine men who are attracted to women and feminine women who are attracted to men. Combine the two terms, and you have Uranodionings and Uranodioningins: the first, men who are attracted to both men and women; the second, women who are attracted to both women and men. Zwitters are those who have organs endemic to the two most frequently occurring biological sexes (more bluntly, having both male and female genitalia). And there are further subdivisions I've coined for when we approach this conversation in greater depth.

RICHARD

(Writing)

Homosexual: person attracted to people of the same sex.

Heterosexual: person attracted to people of the opposite sex.

KARL

I eagerly await your thoughts on this strange task of definitions we approach.

Hoping all is well in Vienna,
Karl Heinrich Ulrichs

(The lights dim on them)

HOPLER

(Unseen)

Keep alert of this fellow. He is a person of immense intelligence and drive, but his stability concerns me. He holds grudges when he perceives he has been wronged. His trust is a delicate thing, but when he believes in another's intentions, his loyalty is remarkable.

(End scene)

(Lina's home. Lina is in the sitting area with Josiah. Lina's mother, Lina's father, Uncle Otto, and Aunt Klara play cards in the kitchen, just adjacent to the sitting area)

LINA

It is not!

JOSIAH

Hear me out: to be a girl is to be free.

LINA

Not even close.

JOSIAH

To wear dresses, to live the idyllic family life –

LINA

To squeeze into corsets, to push out babies –

FATHER

(Not even looking up from his cards)

Be appropriate, Lina.

LINA

Sorry.

JOSIAH

To love –

(Pause)

LINA

To love?

JOSIAH

Unrestrained.

Towards family of course.

Without the expectation of distance.

Imposed by manhood.

LINA

Oh.

(Beat)

JOSIAH

I'm afraid I should be going.

FATHER

So soon!

AUNT KLARA

Do stay!

JOSIAH

I really must –

FATHER

Some more strudel, eh? Why leave so soon when –

JOSIAH

My parents are probably worried –

AUNT KLARA

Nonsense! It's so early, you can stay a little –

MOTHER

Oh, enough! Leave the boy alone. It was so lovely to see you again, Josiah.

JOSIAH

Thank you, Mrs. Metzger.

AUNT KLARA

Always such a pleasure to have you, Josiah.

JOSIAH

It's mine, really –

FATHER

So polite, this one!

JOSIAH

Uh, thank you, Mr. Metzger.

FATHER

Call me Issac! Please!

JOSIAH

Thank you – Issac.

(To Lina)

I'll, uh –

See you soon?
LINA

(Beat)

...Yes.
JOSIAH

Great.
LINA

(To family)
Uh – thank you so much for your hospitality.
JOSIAH

(The family [save for Uncle Otto] talks over each other with cordial expressions: “Our pleasure!” “You are welcome any time!” “My house is as good as yours!” “Give your parents our greetings!” etc. Josiah exits)

Shalom, kid.
UNCLE OTTO

Did you hear what he said? Love!
FATHER

Do not curse it, Issac. Oh, but it is so wonderful!
AUNT KLARA

He seems good, but can we just calm down –
MOTHER

Seems? He is a real mensch, I tell you.
FATHER

He is the answer to our prayers!
AUNT KLARA

Let us not get ahead of ourselves now.
MOTHER

To think: a rabbi in the family.
FATHER

Not very manly, though.
UNCLE OTTO

FATHER

Eh?

UNCLE OTTO

Bit of an odd sort.

FATHER

How do you mean?

UNCLE OTTO

Not to ruffle any feathers; he is a good kid, alright?

MOTHER

It is nothing, Issac.

FATHER

No, no. You say he is not manly, but you say he is good. Which is he?

UNCLE OTTO

He is a good match for Lina, that is all.

FATHER

A good match for Lina!

MOTHER

Issac, please.

FATHER

No! You come to my house, you insult my future son-in-law –

LINA

Papa!

FATHER

– I want to know! What do you mean not manly?

UNCLE OTTO

He is the one who said he wanted to be a girl!

FATHER

He did not say that.

UNCLE OTTO

It was something like that.

FATHER

What? He is a sensitive sort. Loves family. That is nice.

UNCLE OTTO

I did not say he was not nice.

FATHER

You said he was not manly!

LINA

Who cares? Is that so bad?

UNCLE OTTO

See? Good match: they are both a little odd.

FATHER

You are calling my daughter odd!?

AUNT KLARA

We should go. Now.

UNCLE OTTO

Oh, ah – good night then, everyone.

MOTHER

Good night, Klara, Otto.

LINA

Good night, Aunt Klara. Good night, Uncle Otto.

UNCLE OTTO

Good night, Lina. Issac –

(He extends his hand to Issac. Issac is uninterested, but his wife nudges him. He shakes his hand)

FATHER

Good night now.

UNCLE OTTO

No offense meant.

FATHER

Good night.

(Aunt Klara and Uncle Otto exit. For a time, Klara can be heard yelling at Otto in Yiddish. Otto attempts to calm her down. Silence)

FATHER

The nerve of that man!

MOTHER

It is ok, Issac.

FATHER

Ok!? Who does he think he is, coming into my house and being insulting!?

LINA

It's ok, Papa.

FATHER

It is not, Lina! It is my duty to stand up for you! I know Josiah is a softer sort, but when you marry, you must ensure he does the same.

MOTHER

If they marry.

FATHER

Right, of course.

No use staying up stewing. I am going to bed.

(Father goes to Lina and hugs them. They kiss him on the cheek)

Good night, little one.

LINA

Good night, Papa.

MOTHER

I will be in soon.

FATHER

Very well, very well.

(He exits. Mother sits next to Lina)

LINA

That was – interesting.

MOTHER

Yes.

(Beat)

LINA

I like him.

MOTHER

You do?

LINA

Yes.

MOTHER

Lina, that is wonderful!

LINA

He has a kind heart.

MOTHER

He does. Do not listen to what your uncle says.

LINA

Well, he is not wrong. There is something soft to him.

MOTHER

Is that bad?

LINA

No. Not at all.

MOTHER

Good.

(Mother kisses Lina on the top of their head)

Good night, dear. Do not stay up reading too late.

LINA

Good night, Mama.

(Mother exits)

LEAH

(Unseen)

Were there any words that confused you this week? No?

(Lina stiffens)

(End scene)

(Richard on stage)

RICHARD

Dear Mr. Ulrichs,

Thank you for your letter. The terminology question is of course key to me, and I very much appreciate your – ah – colorful contributions. Given my scientific focus, the classical languages are proving key to me as well. I believe, however, that some simplifying, shall we say, is warranted.

I've received a helpful suggestion from one of the people you have generously put me in contact with (Kertbeny I believe was his name). He used the terms heterosexual and homosexual, for attraction to the opposite sex and attraction to the same sex respectively. I rather like the practicality of these terms. More to the point, perhaps?

It is always a privilege to hear your developed perspective.

Regards,
Richard von Krafft-Ebing

(End scene)

(Papa and Karl mid-conversation in Papa's home. Projection: "Aurich, Kingdom of Hannover")

PAPA

And when were you going to tell me?

KARL

I am not sure. When it was ready perhaps.

PAPA

It looks ready to me!

(Beat)

You cannot do this.

KARL

I have to.

PAPA

Karl, please.

KARL

I have a responsibility to others like me. It is my duty to –

PAPA

You have a responsibility to yourself first! You are asking to be stoned if you publish this!

KARL

I am asking for nothing but justice!

PAPA

You are not thinking right! If you could talk these things out then maybe –

KARL

I talk about them all the time! You just never listen!

PAPA

I do! I try.

KARL

I have to publish this!

PAPA

Karl, you do not understand what will happen. The Prussians will take all of the issues away, and then they will / arrest you, and then –

KARL

I have to do something!

PAPA

Yes, something, but not this! These are not your countrymen!

KARL

I know that!

PAPA

These are not a civilized people. They will do things to you in prison that you cannot take.

KARL

I have confidence in my strength.

PAPA

Karl – you must understand – when they imprison you, they will not let you have contact with the people you write to. They need you. You cannot just –

KARL

I cannot save them through that!!! In delaying real action, I have damned many already! Believe me, Papa, I have tried and tried and tried but so many saw no hope before. Now, that their love is truly, officially illegal? I have lost correspondents from Magdeburg, Frankfurt, and Mainz already to suicide – more will die at the hands of murderers emboldened by the Prussians' hate – I cannot save my kind on my own when the laws of an empire stand against me! Bold action must be taken!

PAPA

Karl, I just think – there is something not right in your head. I know you cannot see it now, but if you could just step back and separate this one thing from –

KARL

I have an obligation to take action.

PAPA

But if that action is hopeless – then you have an obligation to / yourself to –

KARL

It is done. The issues are sent to Berlin and will come out in two weeks.

(Beat)

PAPA

You have distributors?

KARL

Only a couple stands, but yes.

PAPA

They cannot credit you as Numa Numantius?

KARL

That name is over. It ended at the Congress of German Jurists. You had to understand that.

PAPA

Those were lawyers. Those were civilized people /

KARL

/ They are anything but civilized.

PAPA

You are exposing yourself to all possible harm. Why?

KARL

You have to know by now.

(Beat)

PAPA

I just cannot under –

KARL

Papa –

PAPA

(Going)

I need to be alone.

KARL

Papa, come back!

(Papa exits)

(Projection: A magazine cover: “*Prometheus*, Issue I, February 1868
A new journal on man-manly relations, published by Karl Heinrich
Ulrichs of Hannover, may She be freed again”)

(Projection: “*Prometheus*, Issue II” – then, after a delay – “canceled”)

HOPLER

(Unseen)

Regarding my former assistant, all I have left to say is that I am deeply disappointed in the way things have unfolded.

(End scene)

(Lina's home. Another meeting with Josiah. Aunt Klara is in the kitchen keeping herself occupied. Projection: "Vienna")

LINA

Latin lesson #1: declensions. Declensions change the endings of words to indicate their relations to surrounding words. Like German, Latin uses declensions. So by looking at word form, you can tell if a word is singular or plural; the subject or the direct object; male, female, neutral – with me so far?

(Projection: The words male, female, and neutral stacked on top of one another)

JOSIAH

I think so.

LINA

So a noun can fall under five possible declensions in Latin. We're starting with the first one.

(All five declension charts – in super small print – projected)

JOSIAH

When do we start learning words?

LINA

We'll learn a few as we're declining, but we'll focus on declensions first – mostly because that's how I learned.

JOSIAH

Ok.

(Projection zooms in on first declension chart)

LINA

So the first declension only has feminine words, which luckily for you means you only have to memorize one set of endings to start with. Other declension paradigms in Latin tend to have at least two genders of words, meaning you have to learn different sets of endings for each gender.

AUNT KLARA

Oy, just overhearing this makes my head ache.

LINA

Sorry, Aunt Klara.

(Projection: "Genders of words determine their endings in Latin")

JOSIAH

And how do you know a word is first declension to begin with?

LINA

Familiarity with the language.

JOSIAH

Which we're learning now.

LINA

Yes.

Oh, and there are a few masculine words that fall under the first declension – like poet –

(Projection: Photo of Walt Whitman)

– and sailor –

(Projection: Erotic photo of gay sailors, preferably old-timey and black-and-white)

– but they're declined the same as the other feminine words in the declension. Isn't that interesting?

AUNT KLARA

I love you, Lina, but you sure find some strange things interesting.

(A knock on the door, quickly followed by Uncle Otto letting himself in)

UNCLE OTTO

Klara, I need you at the shop now.

AUNT KLARA

Just barge in, eh?

UNCLE OTTO

That Kessler woman came in and insisted that you come right away to help her.

AUNT KLARA

She was not supposed to be in until tomorrow!

UNCLE OTTO

You try telling her that!

AUNT KLARA

Can you not take care of it?

UNCLE OTTO

She wants you. You know how she gossips when she does not get her way.

AUNT KLARA

What about these two?

UNCLE OTTO

Issac is coming to look after them.

AUNT KLARA

How long will they be left alone?

UNCLE OTTO

Oh, who knows?

AUNT KLARA

My. If I did not think they were such good kids –

(To Lina and Josiah)

Now you two can behave yourself, correct?

LINA

Yes, Aunt Klara.

AUNT KLARA

Josiah?

JOSIAH

Yes, ma'am.

AUNT KLARA

Now, remember: Lina, your father is coming, but you will be alone for a while.

LINA

Yes, Aunt Klara.

AUNT KLARA

Alone.

LINA

I understand.

AUNT KLARA

For a while.

UNCLE OTTO

Klara –

AUNT KLARA

And now if you will excuse me, duty calls.

(Aunt Klara and Uncle Otto exit)

JOSIAH

Your family is, um, interesting.

LINA

That's one way to put it.

(Beat)

JOSIAH

Are they very traditional?

LINA

It is complicated.

JOSIAH

Ah. Should we, um, learn some more Latin?

LINA

Josiah –

Do you want to kiss me?

JOSIAH

Huh?

LINA

I want to know what it is like.

JOSIAH

Your father could be here any moment.

LINA

We do not have to do anything else. Just that. Please?

JOSIAH

I – I don't know if that's a good idea.

LINA

Oh.

JOSIAH

I just think it would be better to wait –

LINA
Ok. I'm sorry. I'm not like that, I swear –

JOSIAH
I'd never think that – you are one of the kindest –

LINA
Do you like me?

JOSIAH
I –

LINA
Oh my gosh. I'm such an idiot, I –

JOSIAH
It's ok.

LINA
Scheiße.

(Beat. Josiah kisses Lina. They break)

JOSIAH
Lina?
Lina, are you alright?
Please, say something.
(Lina seems to have shut down)
Maybe we can learn some Latin?

(Father enters)

FATHER
Hello, Josiah!

JOSIAH
Ah uh hello, sir.

FATHER
Nothing funny before I got here?

JOSIAH
Oh uh no, no. I should go.

FATHER

You will stay for dinner of course.

JOSIAH

I am afraid not. I really must see Rabbi Malmud.

FATHER

Oh?

JOSIAH

I have to talk to him about some business.

FATHER

Ah! Excellent!

JOSIAH

Nothing exciting I assure you.

FATHER

Oh no of course not.

JOSIAH

I – uh – goodbye, sir.

FATHER

Goodbye, my son.

JOSIAH

Goodbye, Lina.

(No answer. Josiah exits)

FATHER

Nice boy, huh?

Leaves you speechless, flustered.

That is good. That is love.

(He exits. Lina alone. Beat)

YOUNG LINA

(Unseen)

What was that?

LEAH

(Unseen)

What are you talking about?

(End scene)

(Projection: “Congress of German Jurists, Munich, 1867”)

(An undercurrent of chattering amongst a crowd, a crowd made up of middle-aged and old men, distinguished members of the Congress of German Jurists, gathered for a conference. A stage with a podium before them. Just removed from the crowd in the backstage, there is Karl, who has just begun to enter his middle age. His heart races. A beat. He makes his decision. Karl takes the podium)

KARL

Good evening. My name is Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, and I am a former legal adviser for the district court of Hildesheim in the Kingdom of Hannover. I come before you to propose a revision to the current penal law. The change will damn a continuing flood of suicides taking persons of a certain group. I am one of them; I am an Urning, and I am sexually attracted to men.

(Silence)

I wish to appeal to your cold, naked intellect with / cold, naked, subtle reasoning. Intellect and subtle reasoning are a common ground for you and me.

FROM THE CROWD

Stop!

(Loud expressions of outrage come from the crowd)

KARL

If you wish, I will surrender the floor –

(Some scattered, but audible, pleas to let the speaker continue come from the crowd. Begrudging silence)

KARL

I speak for a class of persons who endure legal persecution only because of their sexual nature, which is opposite of what is usual and which nature has planted in them.

(The crowd erupts. Pandemonium. Insults are shouted. “Crucify!” soon becomes the dominant cry of the crowd. Karl quickly leaves the podium)

(Blackout)

(End scene)

(Lights up. Richard alone on stage)

RICHARD

Dear Mr. Ulrichs,

I thought you might like to know great progress has been made since we were last in contact. It seems to me now that inverted sexuality occurs as often in women as in men. Strangely, I have seen multiple cases now in which these women had normal childhoods and did not fully awaken to their homosexual desires until puberty.

I did not receive a response to my last letter from you. Perhaps with the Prussians taking interest in Hannover, you have decided to err on the side of caution?

Or perhaps I caused you offense? My apologies if this is the case.

Regards,

Richard von Krafft-Ebing

(Lina's home. Lina's mother sits knitting. Lina is reading *Aurora Leigh*. Lina's father enters, shaken. Projection: "Vienna, 1868")

LINA

Hi, Papa.

MOTHER

Hello, Issac.

(She goes to him, sees his state)

What's wrong?

FATHER

Lina, go to your room please.

LINA

Papa, what is it?

FATHER

Please.

(They exit)

FATHER

Josiah has gone missing.

MOTHER

What?

FATHER

He left the synagogue after his studies with Rabbi Malmud and no one has seen him since. I closed the deli early to look for him with the others, but there is not a trace of him anywhere. His parents suspect he is gone for good.

MOTHER

He has got to be somewhere!

FATHER

We have looked everywhere –

MOTHER

Everywhere! How can you have looked everywhere –

FATHER

Luise, please –

MOTHER

We have to go. We have to find him –

FATHER

Luise, just –

MOTHER

Think what Lina –

LINA

(Offstage)

He's gone?

(They enter)

Is he really –

FATHER

Yes, Lina, but we will find him.

LINA

Do you really think –

FATHER

I know we will.

RICHARD

Dear Mr. Ulrichs,

Thinking of you now that Hannover has been incorporated into the Prussian Empire. A crackdown to me seems eminent. Exercise discretion.

Regards,
Richard von Krafft-Ebing

LINA

How did it go?

FATHER

The police always make me nervous. Still, the Austrian ones are far superior to the Germans.

LINA

Do you think they will help?

FATHER

We will see. I had so little to give them I do not see how I could have been any help. They did ask me if Josiah had shown any signs of – had behaved in any way abnormally or seemed somehow different from usual in the days leading to his disappearance. Lina, did you notice anything of the sort?

(Silence)

It could help them.

LINA

No. Nothing.

RICHARD

Dear Karl,

I hear you have been released from prison. It has been so long since I have last had word from you. How are you? If you would no longer like to stay in touch, I understand, but please: if you are well, let me know so I may be at ease.

Yours,
Richard

(Lina's mother, father, aunt, and uncle play cards in the kitchen area)

UNCLE OTTO

So it is done?

FATHER

There has been no trace of him, so they are ending their search. The case is still open, but unless new evidence comes in, they will not actively investigate.

MOTHER

Not that they put in much of a search in the first place.

UNCLE OTTO

There is only so much you can do in these cases.

AUNT KLARA

Hmph.

(Silence)

MOTHER

What is it, Klara?

AUNT KLARA

Nothing.

UNCLE OTTO

So will you have Lina see other boys?

MOTHER (Simultaneously)

Not now.

FATHER (Simultaneously)

Eventually.

MOTHER

She needs time.

FATHER

I agree, but at some point, we will have to move forward.

(Silence)

AUNT KLARA

Goyim will be goyim, and pigs will be pigs.

UNCLE OTTO

I do not much like that word, Klara.

AUNT KLARA

Then run tell the Emperor.

UNCLE OTTO

You – very well. Insult our people’s greatest friend.

AUNT KLARA

“Our people” – that is rich coming from you. You would forsake your own before saying a bad word about the police.

UNCLE OTTO

They are doing their job! You are German; you do not know this country like I do –

AUNT KLARA

I know plenty, and I refuse to love a nation that sees us a lesser race!!!

MOTHER

Klara, be quiet! Lina can hear you.

AUNT KLARA

Let her hear it!!! Let her hear what they think of us. When the goyim look at us – whether in / Germany or Austria –

UNCLE OTTO

Maybe if people like you did not feel the need to shove it in their faces, they would leave us alone!

AUNT KLARA

I see.

Maybe if Josiah had looked less Jewish, he would be with us.

Well, I can tell you this: unless we are dead, we are too Jewish for them.

(A knock on the door. It is Rabbi Malmud)

RABBI MALMUD

Good evening.

FATHER

Rabbi, it is good to see you.

RABBI MALMUD

Is this a bad time?

AUNT KLARA

No. A man like you is always welcome here.

(Silence)

RABBI MALMUD

I apologize for intruding. I merely wanted to give Lina this siddur. I thought it may offer her some relief during this difficult time.

(He produces a prayer book)

MOTHER

That is very kind. Thank you.

FATHER

(Calling for them)

Lina?

(Lina enters)

The rabbi has a gift for you.

RABBI MALMUD

(Giving them the book)

Perhaps this will be of some comfort.

LINA

Thank you.

(Lina takes the book. They open it. A note falls out)

RABBI MALMUD

Oh, ah – that is for you. Some words of counsel. Perhaps best read alone. Go on then.

LINA

Ok.

(Lina goes to their room. Lina reads the note)

(End scene)

(Karl alone on stage)

KARL

Dear Richard,

It has been a while, has it not?

Things have gotten bad. I have been staying with my father since my release from prison. I would not like to talk about what happened there. I hope you understand.

My books are banned now. Confiscations seem eminent. I worry about what is to come for my readers.

My troubles are far from over. I worry for my father.

But there is no turning back now.

Keep alert: the cruel specter may yet descend upon Austria.

Yours,

Karl

(End scene)

(Lina stands on a corner of a seedy part of Vienna. They look nervously about. Marlene enters)

MARLENE

You lost, dear?

LINA

Oh, no. Just waiting for someone.

MARLENE

Would you like some company until they come?

LINA

Yes, please.

(Marlene stands with them. Marlene lights a cigarette)

I never imagined I'd be here.

MARLENE

People like us never do.

LINA

People like us?

MARLENE

People. In general.

LINA

Oh.

(Beat)

MARLENE

Are you sure you have the right place?

LINA

I got this note.

(Lina gives it to Marlene. She reads it)

MARLENE

Oh.

LINA

What?

MARLENE

You have the right place alright.

(Beat. Lina looks at her)

LINA

Are you a man?

It's just – you look kind of –

MARLENE

Excuse me, I need to / go.

LINA

No, wait –

JOSIAH

(From offstage)

Lina? Is that you?

(Josiah enters)

JOSIAH

Marlene? What are you doing here?

MARLENE

This young person was standing here. Seemed nervous. So I have been keeping them company.

JOSIAH

I didn't realize she would be so early.

LINA

I'm sorry. I didn't recognize the place you wrote, so I thought I'd leave early to find it. I didn't know I'd get here so quickly. Josiah, what are you doing here?

MARLENE

I should go.

(She puts her hand on Josiah's shoulder)

Be kind to them.

(She exits)

LINA

Do you know that person?

JOSIAH

She's a friend.

She...

LINA

I'm surprised you came.

JOSIAH

Why did you leave?

LINA

I had no choice. There's nothing there for me anymore.

JOSIAH

What about me?

LINA

Why do you think I wrote to you?

JOSIAH

I can't run away, Josiah. I can't leave my family.

LINA

You thought I wanted to elope?

JOSIAH

(Beat)

I don't feel that way. I can't feel that way.

LINA

Oh.

JOSIAH

You must understand that.

LINA

I'm sorry the kiss was no good. I can do better next time.

JOSIAH

That isn't the issue.

LINA

That kind of stuff is hard for me, but I can do / better –

JOSIAH

Lina, I don't want that.
I don't think you do either.

(Beat)

LINA

Your friend – are there others like her?

JOSIAH

Yes. But they don't do what she does. She's going to get herself killed.

LINA

Is there a way to be like her – and be happy – without doing that?

JOSIAH

For her, no.

(Beat)

LINA

I thought maybe we could've helped each other.

JOSIAH

Neither of us would have been happy.

LINA

I'm not happy anyways.

JOSIAH

Then come with me. We can help each other in a different way.

LINA

I can't leave my parents. I'm sorry.

JOSIAH

You think they'd love you if they knew?

LINA

I have to hope so.

JOSIAH

I had thought mine would, too, but I was wrong.
I hope it's different for you.

LINA

Will you leave Vienna, then?

JOSIAH

I think I have to.

LINA

Where will you go?

JOSIAH

I don't know.
I'm glad I met you.

LINA

Maybe it would have been better if we never met. It could have made it easier to pretend.

JOSIAH

I will never do that more than I have to ever again. I hope one day you'll get there, too.
(Josiah hugs them. He produces a book)
I wanted to give you something before I go.

LINA

Josiah, no, I can't have people keep giving me books and then leaving.

JOSIAH

Just take this one. Trust me.

(The book's cover is projected: *Vindex & Inclusa* – Numa Numantius)

(Blackout)

(End scene)

(In the blackout, the moments after Karl left the stage at the Congress of German Jurists)

CROWD

Crucify! Crucify!

CHAIRMAN

Enough! The speech was approved in advance and it will be delivered in its entirety!

(Some support from the crowd, but mostly boos)

Nevertheless – for the sake of modesty – I request the speaker to use Latin in continuing. Does the speaker agree?

(Karl has left)

The speaker has yielded the stand. Would another man care to continue the speech in Latin? No? Then I will. I ask the secretary for the speech as it was submitted to us in writing.

(Lights up. Karl outside the assembly hall alone. Beat. Just as he is about to leave, the source of the voice from the first scene enters. He is Karl's former boss, Hopler. Projection: "Congress of German Jurists, 1867")

HOPLER

Ulrichs.

KARL

Mr. Hopler.

HOPLER

Before one leaves a party, he really ought to say hello to the one who got him in the door.

(Karl begins to go)

HOPLER

Your dismissal was not my doing, you know.

KARL

You said nothing in my defense.

HOPLER

You think anything I could have said would have helped you?

KARL

Perhaps not, but you stand guilty all the same.

HOPLER

You were and are the greatest of my disappointments, Ulrichs. Few students surpassed your intelligence, and your idealism is unmatched. It pained me to realize that the latter was a detriment.

How did you get here?

KARL

There are some sympathetic to my kind in your ranks.

HOPLER

No. How did you *get* here?

KARL

Some fellow Urnings paid my way. They rarely open their wallets, but they seemed to think this moment could be momentous for our kind.

HOPLER

I would say it was. It was a reaction worthy of the old Nazarene. You know He died in the end, yes?

KARL

But He was brought back.

HOPLER

Never proven.

Why does He appeal to you so? He died penniless, and His followers fail to understand His wisdom. Is that the legacy you want?

KARL

You have never understood me or my values. I doubt I can convince you now.

(Beat. Hopler reaches for his wallet)

HOPLER

Do you take money from benefactors you dislike?

KARL

I do not want your pity.

HOPLER

This is not pity; this is a purchase. Send your works to my office. Same address. Well? Will you take the money or not?

(Karl takes the money)

KARL

Thank you.

(Karl begins to exit)

HOPLER

Ulrichs.

You remember Wilbur, of course.

I had thought we were all troubled in some way, but it is clear to me now that that was something else.

You heard he was convicted, yes?

(Karl nods)

If I believed in your God, I would seek atonement.

KARL

Just accept His grace. That is all He wants.

HOPLER

Stop trying to save me, Ulrichs.

(Beat)

Now get out of here.

(Karl exits. Beat of Hopler alone. He reenters the Congress)

(End Act I)

(Act II: In the blackout)

KARL

No.
Please.
I'm begging you.
Stop!
No!
NO!!!

PAPA

Karl!

(Lights up. Papa holding his panic-stricken child. Projection: "Aurich, now part of Prussia. 1868, one month after Karl's release from prison")

KARL

Papa. Papa.

PAPA

It was a dream. I am here.

(Beat)

KARL

I miss Mama. I miss her so much.

PAPA

I know.

(Beat)

KARL

I need to stay up for a while.

PAPA

Ok. Do you need to be alone?

KARL

Yes. Please.

PAPA

Alright. You will call me if you need me?

KARL

Yes, Papa.

(Papa hugs Karl)

PAPA

Do not hesitate to call.

KARL

I will not.

(Papa heads back to his bedroom. He exits. Beat. Karl goes to his desk. He lights a candle. He pulls out his papers. He sits and thinks. He writes)

KARL

Dear Richard,

They label us infamous, they exclude us from their company, they make criminal investigations of us and inflict criminal punishments on us, they throw us in jail, they rob us of our existence, they force us out of one city after another, they allow us no resting place to recover from the persecutions, they hunt us like wild animals. In truth, it would seem as if everyone were against us.

(A knock on the door. Beat. Karl grabs a weapon – probably a gun or a knife. He goes to the door. More knocking)

KARL

Who is there?

WILHELMINE

Open up already! Uncle Karl, it's me!

KARL

Wilhelmine?

(Karl opens the door. Wilhelmine – a thirteen-year-old girl – enters and throws her arms around Karl)

KARL

What are you doing here!? Is everything alright?

WILHELMINE

Aren't you glad to see me? It's been so long.

KARL

We need to get you home. Your mother –

WILHELMINE

(Motioning to Karl's weapon)

What's that?

KARL

That – is nothing.

WILHELMINE

You shouldn't have that. You could hurt yourself.

KARL

You need not worry about –

WILHELMINE

Uncle: promise me you won't hurt yourself.

KARL

I won't.

WILHELMINE

No. Look me in the eye.

(Karl does)

Promise?

KARL

I promise. Now, let us get you home.

WILHELMINE

I'm not going home.

KARL

Yes. You are.

WILHELMINE

I need to be here.

KARL

Why?

WILHELMINE

Please. Just let me stay here for the night.

KARL

What has happened to you?

WILHELMINE

I don't want to talk about that now.

KARL

I cannot help you if you do not tell me.

(Silence)

Wilhelmine, please.

(Silence)

Ok. We can talk about it tomorrow. Go get some rest.

WILHELMINE

I can't.

KARL

Why?

WILHELMINE

I'm scared.

(Beat)

KARL

You can stay up with me.

WILHELMINE

Thank you.

(Long beat)

Uncle Karl –

KARL

Yes?

WILHELMINE

...Why do I never see you?

I see all my other uncles, but I saw you twice when I was little and then never again. Why?

KARL

I lead a busy life. Legal work takes up a lot of time.

WILHELMINE

You lost your license four years ago.

(Beat)

KARL

Yes. But I have been even busier since then. Fighting for Hannover's independence.

(Beat)

WILHELMINE

I know.

(Beat)

I read your books.

(Beat)

KARL

How?

WILHELMINE

Mom has them. And she's bad at hiding things.

KARL

Were you caught?

WILHELMINE

Yeah.

(Beat)

KARL

Are you –

WILHELMINE

I don't know.

I keep thinking I like both. So which am I?

KARL

You are a Uranodioningin.

WILHELMINE

Huh?

KARL

You are – you like boys and girls.

WILHELMINE

Ok.

(Beat)

Urano –

KARL

Dioningin.

Dio – WILHELMINE

Nin – KARL

Dionin – WILHELMINE

Gin – KARL

Dioningin. Uranodioningin. WILHELMINE

Yes. KARL

(Beat)

I'm a freak. WILHELMINE

No. KARL

I am. WILHELMINE

(Beat)

KARL
Listen to me: you are not a freak. No matter how much they tell you that, you must remember you are not. You are never, ever to let them convince you of that. You will have to fight that battle in your head, and it will never fully end, but it will get easier and easier. You are exactly who you are supposed to be, and you are loved. You always will be, even after I have passed on. You are a blessing, and I have never felt more proud of someone than I do now.

(They embrace. Long beat)

Can you get that out of here? WILHELMINE

Huh? KARL

(Wilhelmine motions to the weapon)

Of course.

(Karl takes the weapon and goes off. Long beat of Wilhelmine alone.
Karl reenters)

KARL

It is gone.

WILHELMINE

You're better at hiding things than Mom?

KARL

I know a thing or two about hiding.

(Beat)

She really cannot hide things, can she?

(Wilhelmine shakes her head)

Some things never change.

(Beat)

WILHELMINE

Don't leave me alone.

KARL

I will not. We can talk all night if need be. Or just sit here.

WILHELMINE

Ok.

(Long silence)

Why do you make your books so boring?

(End scene)

(Lina sits reading *Aurora Leigh* in their bedroom. After a spell, they close their eyes, remembering. Projection: “Lina’s home”)

LEAH

(Unseen)

Were there any words that confused you this week? No?

(Blue light on Leah – a Jewish woman on the cusp of 18 – sitting at a table. Young Lina, who is two days shy of 13, sits in the chair across from her. Young Lina has a copy of *Aurora Leigh*)

LEAH

Impressive. You might be better than me now.

YOUNG LINA

You’re a good teacher.

LEAH

Thank you.

(Beat)

YOUNG LINA

I’m really going to miss you.

LEAH

Not as much as I am going to miss you.
Do not cry. Please do not start crying I am begging you.

YOUNG LINA

I’m trying so hard. I promise I am.

(Beat)

I’ve never had a best friend. So I guess this is how it works. I guess we just lose people.

LEAH

I am sorry.

(Beat)

YOUNG LINA

Don’t get sick on the dumb boat.

LEAH

I will do what I can.
I have one more for you.

(Leah gives Young Lina a copy of *The Scarlet Letter*)

Something American for once seems appropriate.

YOUNG LINA

Thank you. What's this one about?

LEAH

A young woman who is marked as bad, and no matter what she does, everyone still hates her.

YOUNG LINA

Does it have a happy ending?

LEAH

You will have to find out. Consider it a birthday present.

YOUNG LINA

Thank you.

(Beat. Young Lina goes to her. A moment. Young Lina suddenly hugs Leah hard. Leah hugs back)

LEAH

You're almost a man now.

YOUNG LINA

Huh?

LEAH

Almost thirteen.

YOUNG LINA

Oh. Right.

LEAH

Responsible for all the commandments soon. If you were a boy.

YOUNG LINA

Yeah.

LEAH

Mmm.

(Beat. Leah takes Young Lina's face in her hands. Leah kisses them. A knock on the door. The blue light cuts out rapidly)

MOTHER

(Offstage)

Lina, can I come in?

(Mother enters)

Can we talk for a minute?

LINA

Yeah, yeah, sure.

(Mother takes a seat next to them. Beat)

MOTHER

How are you?

LINA

Uh, good.

MOTHER

You have been distant lately.

LINA

A lot on my mind.

MOTHER

I understand.

(Beat)

I was engaged before your father, you know.

His name was Thomas, and he was a Christian.

(Beat)

I was 14. My family did not approve of course. They said if we married, they would have nothing to do with me. I did not care. I loved him, and that was the most important thing. Then the revolutions came, and he said he had a duty to fight for the future of Germany. I begged him not to go. What impact would one more foot soldier have in the overall scheme of things? His duty was to me. But he did not see it that way: the lives of millions of future Germans mattered more than the life of one person. "Even more than me?" I asked him. "Even more than you."

The year after he died, I could find no point in going on. My family could not understand. They kept trying to match me off, saying that would solve everything. I did not believe them. But on a whim I gave your father a chance. He was nothing like Thomas. He was practical; he laughed loudly; he had no interest in things that did not directly affect him.

He told me about his plans to come to Austria. He had an uncle there, he said, who could take him into his deli, and advance him if he worked hard. The Jews have a home in Vienna, he would say. That was a place to raise a family.

When you are young, you think you are the only thing that matters, that you know it all. But the day you were born, I was born, too. You will never love anyone as much as your own child. Not your parent, not your husband, not anyone or anything.

When you were little, you asked me if I would love you no matter what. Do you remember? If I lied, would you still love me? Of course I would. If I stole? Yes. Even if I killed? Even then. No matter what, I would always be by your side.

The day you were born, it all clicked: this is what life is about. This is all that matters.

I do not want you to miss out on that.

LINA

Klara and Otto don't have kids.

MOTHER

Aunt Klara is pregnant, Lina. You are going to have a cousin.

(Beat)

I cannot force you to do anything you do not want to do, but your father and I have investigated other potential matches. We think you should give them a try.

LINA

Do you ever think about Thomas?

MOTHER

Of course. You will always remember Josiah, dear, but life continues.

(Mother begins to go)

Give it some thought, and then tell your father and me what you want to do.

(Mother exits and shuts the door behind her. Lina takes out their copy of *The Scarlet Letter* and looks at it. Blue light comes up on Leah and Young Lina, near the end of the kiss. The kiss ends. Leah looks into Young Lina's eyes. Leah begins to go)

YOUNG LINA

What was that?

(Leah stops)

LEAH

What are you talking about?

(Leah exits. Blue light fades. Lina chucks their copy of *The Scarlet Letter* under the bed. Beat. They pull out another book from under their bed. They are careful to make sure their surroundings are safe. They begin to read. Karl appears)

KARL

It is a noteworthy fact that Urnings often maintain a truly moving and lifelong love for their mothers. However, mothers can no longer console an adult Urning who is lonely, and no longer satisfy their need of comfort. For this, they need a masculine comrade, I mean to say, a lover.

(Lina closes the book, buries their face)

KARL

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, that is, having the sexual direction of men: not an Urning, but an Urningin.

(Beat)

LINA

Dear Mr. Ulrichs...

(End scene)

(Richard's home. A knock at the door. Richard answers. It's Bernhard.
Projection: "Richard's home in Vienna")

BERNHARD

Hello, Richard.

RICHARD

Come in, please.

(Bernhard does)

May I offer you a drink?

BERNHARD

No, thank you.

RICHARD

Some bread?

BERNHARD

Bread?

RICHARD

I have a loaf. I can cut you some.

BERNHARD

I am not usually offered bread when I visit people's homes...

RICHARD

I apologize. I am not used to playing host.

BERNHARD

Of course. Sorry. Why bread?

RICHARD

It is good for meals. The baker is close by. And the restaurants are far too expensive.

BERNHARD

You spent the last two days surviving on bread and pastries?

RICHARD

That would be exaggerating –

BERNHARD

Have you had a real meal since she left?

RICHARD

I am sure many poor folks would be happy to have what I have had in the last few days.

BERNHARD

You are a doctor and a scholar, not a street urchin. Could you not have dined with one of your colleague's families?

RICHARD

I did not want to impose.

BERNHARD

You would rather go hungry than risk being impolite?

RICHARD

I suppose that is one way to put it.

(Beat)

BERNHARD

She makes me so angry.

RICHARD

Oh, no, it is not her fault –

BERNHARD

Do not excuse her! It is not right!

RICHARD

She had her reasons.

BERNHARD

She gives no consideration! She comes to my house – no warning mind you – and says she is unhappy. Unhappy! Marie-Luise, I tell her, you cannot just abandon your husband – that is not done! That is not fair. It is shameful!

RICHARD

It has only been a couple days.

BERNHARD

And you! Left here alone! Nothing to eat but a baker's scraps. She does not think, Richard! She has always been selfish! She has never bothered to consider the impact her actions / can have on –

RICHARD

She is still my wife, and I would ask you not to speak ill of her.

BERNHARD

Sorry. There it is. The most vile part of it all. You of all people – she abandons you.

RICHARD

Not abandon. Do not say that. She will come back. Will she not?

BERNHARD

Of course she will. She is not without morals.

RICHARD

Oh. Good. I have been – I have been so adrift without her. I – I will be better, Bern. I promise.

BERNHARD

I am not sure such a thing is possible.

RICHARD

Will she be back tomorrow then?

BERNHARD

Perhaps not that soon.

RICHARD

Oh. But she is returning soon. Yes?

BERNHARD

Yes, yes. Of course.

RICHARD

Then when / will she –

BERNHARD

Soon. I promise. But you have to help me. You see – she has a condition for coming back. Nonsense, I know, but she is obstinate.

RICHARD

And that is?

BERNHARD

She said I need to be able to look her in the eye and say I am comfortable with your research.

RICHARD

That it all?

BERNHARD

Yes. I do not understand. She has always enjoyed hearing your sordid tales. She claims there is something different about the way you talk about some set of perverts now. The name of them escapes me.

RICHARD

What do you need from me?

BERNHARD

Just tell me about your research, so if she presses me, I will have some sort of idea what I am talking about.

(Beat)

You do not have to worry, Richard. I will not judge. Nothing disturbs me anymore.

RICHARD

Well – I am preparing the book of sexual pathologies –

BERNHARD

Ah, yes. Honorable project. It will be of much use to us in the courtrooms.

RICHARD

Yes. Though not all of the cases described will warrant prosecution.

BERNHARD

Very well.

RICHARD

And I have included some new terminology and categories. Sadism, masochism –

BERNHARD

Yes, you have always enjoyed coining new words. No, that is enough. You are still you, she is still she. Is there a specific pathology she does not enjoy hearing about?

RICHARD

I believe so.

BERNHARD

Then do not talk to her about that. She will be home soon. I am terribly sorry about all of this. She embarrasses me sometimes, but she is my sister.

RICHARD

I will make this right, Bern. I promise.

BERNHARD

I am sure you will. Oh! May I talk to you about a case before I go?

RICHARD

Certainly.

BERNHARD

It is an unusual one, quite disturbing, really. A man solicited the services of a young prostitute, and after the fact, the prostitute blackmailed him. Now, the john acquiesced for a while, but eventually he got fed up and said enough is enough. In short, they are both in custody.

RICHARD

Nothing atypical there. It seems you will have an easy case.

BERNHARD

Ah, but I have not told you the kicker: the prostitute is a male. I am representing him.

RICHARD

How did he get the money?

BERNHARD

It is not my business to ask. Now, when they arrested the john, he screamed something rather ridiculous. He yelled that he was a – what was that word? – an urginin and that they could not arrest him, for he was simply practicing his nature.

RICHARD

Hm.

BERNHARD

Strange, is it not? But here is where it grows most disturbing: I had my assistant do some research, and it turns out there is no law against a man having carnal relations with another man. Very well. Some crimes are so unimaginable we are incapable of foreseeing them and writing the proper laws. But surely justice will still be served, yes? And should a precedent be established here, we may prevent such acts from continuing. I know it is unlikely, but have you come across such an incident before?

RICHARD

Many times, yes. My research has been quite – focused on that lately.

BERNHARD

That is excellent to hear. I feel pity for the boy. He is a man technically, but still quite young. A long stint in jail seems unnecessary. Surely he must have learned his lesson having had that repulsive behavior done to him. The john, though, must receive his due punishment, urginin or not – whatever that may mean.

RICHARD

Urning.

BERNHARD

Pardon?

RICHARD

I believe he would call himself an Urning.

BERNHARD

Yes that sounds right.

RICHARD

I have had long correspondences with many. For research.

BERNHARD

Oh. That is understandable, though I imagine quite upsetting for you.

RICHARD

Hm.

BERNHARD

So: may I count on your expertise? To stick up for someone brutalized in such a heinous way?

RICHARD

I wonder if you might be going about this case the wrong way. If I take the stand and say what the john did was wrong, would not that mean your client participated in that wrongdoing as well?

BERNHARD

I do not understand. He did not do anything. The man was the one doing the doing to him. One was aggressor, the other victim.

RICHARD

Then this would be a rape case.

BERNHARD

My client prostituted himself. I could never get a rape charge. That is why I need you. You know about people like this john. I want him charged for using a man like he is a woman.

RICHARD

I do know people like him, but I also know about people like your client. There are those who want relations in that way.

BERNHARD

Surely not! He expressed such grief to me. He said once was enough for him.

RICHARD

I doubt that very much.

BERNHARD

Are you saying you will not testify?

RICHARD

I am saying that the best tact here would be to play defense. Your client will already face time for prostitution and extortion. It would not be advisable to invent a new charge for him.

BERNHARD

But he cannot have enjoyed that. Who could? Our bodies are not made for that.

RICHARD

Get him a plea deal. Clean him up, have him apologize. I can take the stand and talk about how common these things are. He will not have to go away long if he behaves himself in court.

BERNHARD

Why are you not disturbed? You have a grandson! You are letting someone go who would do horrible things to a young boy!

RICHARD

Bern, I know about these people now. If he is an Urning, he is only interested in grown men, not young boys.

BERNHARD

You would allow someone who would take advantage of you, then, to walk free?

RICHARD

They are no more likely to take advantage of you or me than we are to take advantage of a young woman.

(Beat)

BERNHARD

Why do you only have two kids?

RICHARD

What?

BERNHARD

Answer me.

RICHARD

Bern, you are being ridiculous.

BERNHARD

You will answer me.

RICHARD

You cannot believe that I am one of them. You are far too intelligent / for that –

BERNHARD

Do not avoid my question, Richard. You are making me very angry.

RICHARD

We did not want any more.

BERNHARD

Oh, no, she always said she wanted many. Did you not think she was beautiful? Did you not want to touch her? Was she so repulsive to you?

RICHARD

Of course I thought she was beautiful!

BERNHARD

Then why!?

RICHARD

I cannot tell you.

BERNHARD

You will!

RICHARD

It is a private matter!

BERNHARD

That settles it.

(Bernhard moves quickly to leave)

RICHARD

Bern – do not go – please – I am not – how could you think –

BERNHARD

You will not see her again! Do not come to my house! Do you hear me? Do not –

RICHARD

She had a miscarriage! We were so ashamed. We could not go through that again. Please, Bern, do not take her away. I need her – I cannot live without her; please.

(Beat)

BERNHARD

I will ask her. If what you say is true, I will come back. If not, you will stay away.

(Bernhard exits)

(End scene)

(Lina alone)

LINA

Dear Mr. Ulrichs,

My name is Lina, and I am an Urningin from Vienna.

(Beat)

Um...

(End scene)

(Morning at the home of Karl's father. Karl still up, Wilhelmine asleep on the floor)

KARL

Wilhelmine? Wilhelmine?

WILHELMINE

Mmm?

KARL

It is morning. You can sleep longer if you want.

WILHELMINE

No that's ok.

(She gets up. Silence)

What now?

KARL

Well – I can talk to your parents. Though I do not know if it would help your cause.

WILHELMINE

It would. Mom misses you.

KARL

She does?

WILHELMINE

She does. I can tell.

(Beat)

KARL

We should talk about staying safe. It is a hard world out there.

WILHELMINE

Wouldn't Lesson 1 be "Don't tell the whole world?"

KARL

Ouch.

WILHELMINE

Sorry.

KARL

You are right. Given my experience, I would not advise anyone to do similarly, though that may be the only way this all changes.

WILHELMINE

Yeah.

KARL

But – the thing I am more concerned about is – should you want to – love – um –

WILHELMINE

I already have, Uncle Karl.

KARL

Oh. Did anyone find out? Was she your own age? Did she – make you?

WILHELMINE

No. It was great.

KARL

That is all I need to know.

(Papa enters. He yawns)

PAPA

Another day, another mark, eh?

WILHELMINE

Good morning, Grampop.

PAPA

Who is that? She looks like trouble.

WILHELMINE

Oh, brother.

PAPA

Get on over here, trouble!

(Wilhelmine goes and embraces her grandfather)

WILHELMINE

How have you been feeling?

PAPA

Cannot complain. Well, you always can complain, but what good would that do? How about I make us some breakfast?

KARL

You do not have / to –

PAPA

Nonsense! Start the day off right.

(Papa exits)

WILHELMINE

Do you think he heard us talking / about –

KARL

It does not matter. He understands.

WILHELMINE

Oh.

How has he been? Really?

KARL

As good as can be hoped.

(End scene)

(Lina alone)

LINA

You can write about me if anything I say is at all interesting, just please change my name please.
Uh – thank you for – I was wondering if you could help me – understand –

(End scene)

(Richard's home. He is alone. A knock at the door. He answers. It is Bernhard)

BERNHARD

May I come in?

(Richard motions for him to come in. They sit. Beat)

RICHARD

So she told you?

BERNHARD

Through many tears, but yes.
Why did you not tell us?

RICHARD

It was too painful. She felt like she had failed.

(Beat)

He would have been a boy; I felt it. I talk to him, when I do not know what to do. I ask him how he is. If I am doing the right thing. Do I make you proud? Will I see you one day? Sometimes, I feel as though my chest fills with his warmth, as if he talks to me. I do not know if it is him. It sounds like me, the calmer, smarter me. But I hold on to it. I want him to be real.

(A silence)

BERNHARD

At any rate, she assured me you are not an Urning.
Your work seems to be making an impression on her. She wonders if one day she will think like you do. I truly hope she does not.
Do not talk to her about that for a while. Let this all cool off.

(Beat)

What will you say about them?

RICHARD

I do not know. I think that their desire is diseased –

BERNHARD

Well, at least you admit that.

RICHARD

– but I think maybe it is not so harmful. I do not think we should be prosecuting them.

(Beat)

BERNHARD

You are going to get a summons soon. Ignore it. I will have it revoked.

RICHARD

Bern, please –

BERNHARD

Do not fight me on this. I do not want you ruining your reputation.

RICHARD

What will happen to them?

BERNHARD

I will clean up my boy, get him a good deal.

RICHARD

And the john?

BERNHARD

He will serve time, that is certain. Not as long as he deserves, but I do not imagine the other inmates will take kindly to him, so there is that.

RICHARD

That is wrong.

BERNHARD

I do not know if I trust your judgment on right or wrong anymore.

RICHARD

If you talked to these people like I have –

BERNHARD

Yes?

RICHARD

You may very well struggle like I do.

BERNHARD

I should help her get ready. You could use a real meal.

RICHARD

Thank you. For bringing her home again.

BERNHARD

Richard – if you are right, that these people are not what common knowledge says they are, you had better be absolutely certain. Because if you are not unimpeachable in your evidence – well –

(Bernhard exits)

RICHARD

Dear Karl...

(Beat)

I hope you are well. The question of people like you has weighed heavily on my mind as of late. Perhaps I can be helping people like you in a discreet way. If you know of any of your kind near Vienna and they are interested in receiving counseling, please direct them to me. Tell them not to worry about payment. That is no object. Only the discreetness is the thing.

Yours,
Richard

(Karl appears)

KARL

Well, Richard, if you are serious about your offer, I have one you really ought to see.

(End scene)

(Lina on stage)

LINA

Dear Mr. Ulrichs,

My name is Lina, and I am an Urningin from Vienna. And you can write about me if anything I say is at all interesting, just please change my name please.

Um –

I know people probably write you all the time and say how much you mean to them, but you have helped me more than you can know. I want you to know that what you do means so much, and though they're not exactly fun, your books mean more to me than anything I've ever read.

I would not know there are people like me out there if it was not for you.

Thank you.

I'm Jewish, and an only child. I've been alone my whole life. I didn't really have friends as a child, not anything meaningful. I couldn't relate to any of the girls.

When I was 12, I met this woman.

And she was so beautiful. And kind. And she gave me books. And then I'm about to turn thirteen and she's leaving. And she says:

You're almost a man now.

What did she mean?

Did she know?

Because after that she –

Kisses me.

And then she left and since then I've just been trying to – understand –

I don't –

Is that how this works?

And I don't want you to think that's the only reason I feel the way I do, I've always felt like this, but since then there's been this – I just want to scream at her sometimes – why? Why did you do that?

...

I found out about you from this boy I knew. He left home – it may not have been his choice. He gave me your book, and I just don't know – if it's worth losing my family to be me.

Um.

My parents want me to get married. They just want me to have someone after they go. Because they're all I've got, and they know that, and after them, I'm just – by myself. But I can't do it, and – I can't – I just –

I have to tell them, I can't lie to them, it's just – I'm not like that.

...

I want for them to see – this is me, this –

...

I'm going to tell them, and then I'll never get to meet my cousin, and I won't get to see any of them again, and I'll have to just –

Oh gosh.

Um.

Write back please?

You're amazing.

Yours,
Lina

(Lina falls out of the scene. Karl and Richard appear)

KARL

So I was wondering if you could be of help with that.
Ever regret your line of work, Richard? Just wish you had adopted a trade, never went to the city?

RICHARD

Not before...but lately, perhaps, yes.
I have received a lot of letters from people like you, Karl.
I do not understand it.
How are you folks so hopeful, so alive?
I would like to hear your story. You have led me to many, but I have never heard yours.

KARL

You have read my work –

RICHARD

That is not the same. From you, Karl. I want to hear it from you. Have you always been a homosexual?

(Beat)

KARL

I have never been a man, and I have never been a woman. My body is male, my inside is female.

RICHARD

But you are a homosexual –

KARL

Please. I just need to speak.

They always knew I was different, perhaps before I did. My teachers, my schoolmates, my family –

My mother would say, “It is alright. Someday you will be a man.”

But I dressed like a girl when I was young, and I only played with girls. Even when that ceased I remained –

...

I created a person named Numa Numantius, who was all. The full being. I kept this person apart from me, but they were always present.

(Projection: “Karl’s first writings on people like him.” Followed by a slide of the book cover from earlier: *Vindex & Inclusa* – Numa Numantius)

RICHARD

When did you first have relations with a man?

KARL

Um –

There was – a man who –

RICHARD

Breathe.

KARL

Be here now be here now be here now be here now.

(Beat)

I was thirteen. My riding instructor – did things to me I did not understand.

(Richard nods)

It became tied with that. I began to think I was like that. I did not want to be like that. So I kept it in.

But then there was Peter.

...

He was kind.

He held my hand in the garden, but I would not get close to him. I had fought it so long, and I could feel myself giving in, wanting to give in. He touched my cheek and said,

If I could make you see yourself for who you truly are,
You would never ask why I adore you.

And so I loved him.

RICHARD

Did anyone find out?

KARL

No. I would not tell my family until many years later. That was difficult.

...

My mother died last year.

...

I feel a space in me where she used to be.

Urnings are close to their mothers, even if they do not accept –

...

She accepted near the end. And then God took her from me.

...

I wondered for so long if He hates us, if that is why He gave us a nature that cannot yield children.

But I know now that He does. He loves us, and He longs for our freedom.

...

But every day that passes, another person like me dies, because they think God hates them –

Because people like you think God hates us.

But I know He does not.

...

It's wrong, Richard.

You know it is.

People with knowledge must make it known.

...

Richard?

You must tell them.

...

RICHARD

(To himself)

The protectors of justice should not shun knowledge, but rather they should conform to it.

KARL

Yes.

Laws and rights must comply with the results of research.

Remember?

You once said the judicial murders, the witch hunt trials, the persecutions are over, but you know now they are not.

RICHARD

Let us celebrate the present, blessed by the spirit of humanity, dedicated to correcting the past mistakes /

KARL

We do not belong in your book. / Write about us alone /

RICHARD

/ grounded in sober research; which seeks to establish the laws of human thoughts, desires, and emotions, /

KARL

/ You could be the leader / the first of your kind to fight beside us – a name to be remembered forever –

RICHARD

/ whether in healthy or diseased states, and which turns the results gained therefrom into a standard for the evaluation of human behavior.

(Beat)

KARL

Well – what do you say?

(Richard exits. Beat)

Dear Richard,

I am gladdened by your latest article, in which you rightly say that the present must be dedicated to correcting past mistakes. I am encouraged, too, by our correspondence of late. I feel you are now truly beginning to understand us. Surely this all means you will be endorsing our cause soon. I look forward to your next article. Please remember: every day you linger, another person like me dies, and a million more suffer.

Yours,
Karl

(Beat. Projection: “Four months later”)

Dear Richard,

I am surprised to see you have still made no statement on behalf of Urnings and all those who are not Dionings or Dioningins. It is my hope that you are saving such a statement for your book. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any point in these final stages. I would be happy to provide any final clarifications.

Yours,
Karl

(Beat. Projection: “Two months later.” Then, a book cover: *Psychopathia Sexualis*, by Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing)

Dear Dr. Krafft-Ebing,

I have read your book. You have somehow managed to both denigrate my kind and steal from my perspective, an impressive feat. When we corresponded, you covered up your disdain so well. I see now that when I talked to you of love, you heard nothing but disease. It may interest you to know that disease is consuming my life. You probably think this is a punishment from God. My doctor begs me to stop working towards the cause, but I will not: you have given me even more reason to fight.

Signed,
Karl Heinrich Ulrichs

(Beat. "Fourteen years later")

Dear Richard,

You respond to these letters now and again, so it may be said you are one of my few friends. It is customary for friends to tell one another when they have experienced a loss, as you have done over these last few years. I thought I would tell you, then, that I have laid my father to rest. I thank God he lasted as long as he did. He has been my light through these dark years of struggle.

My health has taken a turn for the worse in these difficult times.

My doctor believes only warm weather can save me now. I told him I am out of money, and that begging my way to Italy would surely kill me. He says that it is worth the risk, that I have no chance of surviving the coming winter here. So I am off. No money, no father. If I make it there alive, I will write to you with my new address. If not: please, Richard. You are the last hope for my cause. I cannot bear to think the movement dies with me.

Yours,
Karl

(Beat)

RICHARD

To Karl Heinrich Ulrichs
L'Aquila, Italy
September 21, 1894

(Projection: A book cover: *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 1894 Revised Edition,
by Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing)

KARL

A note is attached, but only one thing is written on it: a page number. I breathe in – and I flip to it.

RICHARD

In conclusion, homosexuality is a sick, mostly hereditary degenerative condition –

KARL

The usual fare –

RICHARD

Read on.

(Beat)

Homosexuality cannot be said to be a sign of pathology. The primary cause of homosexuality seems to be biological, with its beginnings in the womb. The prosecution of biological differentiations is unwise, as such differentiations come about through no fault of one's own. Moreover, the actions of homosexuals between each other – when practiced with respect for the other party – seem rarely to cause harm. Therefore, the prosecution of homosexual acts is unadvisable.

KARL

Born this way – that was my idea. My name is nowhere in the book. Still, I suspect these words will ring out for our advancement more than anything under my name. A few months later, Richard passes on. But he sends one last thing: his defense of my kind, this time in a journal, written not in Latin, but in German. I read the issue cover to cover. It is an impressive effort, centered wholly on my kind, edited by someone named Magnus Hirschfeld.

(Projection: Image of Magnus Hirschfeld's face, with the following underneath: "Magnus Hirschfeld; German Jewish scientist and activist; 14 May 1868 – 14 May 1935")

He has started an institute to advocate for gender and sexual minorities, the first of its kind. I can feel it: he will far eclipse Richard and improve upon my efforts in every way. A peace comes over me.

(Projection: "Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, 1825-1895, Exile and Pauper")

(Wilhelmine enters. Karl remains on stage)

WILHELMINE

When he dies, Magnus gives us money to go to the funeral. He says he owes his life to Karl. A lot of us do, I say.

I bring my husband and our kids. Our marriage is good. He's like me – a Uranodioning – though he prefers the term bisexual.

I worry we will be the only ones at the funeral, but then –

Half the town shows up. There are workers, students from the university, officials – I have never seen anything like it.

(A man in black enters)

MAN

You are his niece, of course.

WILHELMINE

Yes.

MAN

That fire of his burns in your eyes. He spoke of you often.

(Beat)

WILHELMINE

(To her children)

Kids, I want you to meet someone really special.

MAN

Oh, uh –

WILHELMINE

I want them to know.

(Beat)

MAN

Your aunt and I loved each other very much.

He spent his life fighting so that we could all love each other for who we are. You may never have met him, but know that no matter where you go, his love will always be with you.

(The man approaches Karl. He looks into Karl's eyes. They kiss. They have a last moment together. The man exits)

(Lights fade on all except a spot on Karl)

KARL

It finally comes to me: pride. I am proud to have dealt the initial blow, to have lived as I did.

(Projection: A historical image of Karl Ulrichs. Fades into black screen. Blackout)

(The theater illuminates in a flood of images of queer persons living and dead. Queer persons across a wide span of ages, complexions, ethnicities, nationalities, abilities, gender identities, sexes, orientations, and all those other census signifiers from all corners of the globe. These slowly fade, and the sound of someone singing a lullaby is heard. The lights come up dimly on the singing person: Lina, who is holding their baby cousin in their arms)

LINA

Sleep, cousin. I know not yet what you will be, but no matter what I will love you as you are.

(End play)