Slum or Arcadia? Hungary as "Other Space" in *Imre* by Edward Prime-Stevenson

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The objective of the paper is to explore whether the groundbreaking novelette *Imre: A Memorandum* (1906) by Edward Prime-Stevenson (1858-1942), an American émigré and once-famous music critic, fits the queer urban imaginary of its contemporaries and how the author's motivation and choice of setting contributed to the hopeful prospects of the protagonists. The almost forgotten novella is a milestone in Anglo-Saxon gay literature. It is regarded as the first novel with a happy ending that deals with homosexuality openly and probably is the first which its author called a "homosexual" work of literature. The story is set in the capital of Hungary, where the Englishman Oswald and the young Hungarian soldier Imre meet and fall in love with each other as they unmask themselves step by step. While it is not difficult to recognize that they are in Budapest, the city is called Szent-Istvánhely in the novelette, and the reader can trace their path in the city from time to time. Despite the fact that critics have demonstrated that homosexuality was seen as a particularly urban vice in nineteenth-century Europe and hence paid considerable attention to the city in *Imre*'s contemporaries, they did not address Prime-Stevenson's choice of Szent-Istvánhely in depth. After the introduction to the cultural historical context and the novelette I argue that this fictional capital of Hungary works as a Foucauldian heterotopia in *Imre*.

Homosexuality as a particularly urban vice

Although the "age of transition" brought numerous new opportunities to cruise for male love in London, the authorities had started drawing the gay map of the city much earlier. Matt Cook in *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* mentions a criminal investigation from the eighteenth century to prove this point. In 1726, William Brown was arrested as a person of interest in Moorfields (Cook 9). It was not a denunciation that helped the detectives. The police could make the arrest due to one key aspect of the investigation: they knew when and, more importantly, where they could find Brown in Moorfields. From this point on, some areas became suspicious. In the nineteenth century, the authorities had reason to believe that they had to keep an eye on the area of, for instance, St. Paul's, Bishopsgate, Finsbury Square, Turnagain Lane, Hyde Park, Green Park, Piccadilly, Soho, Covent Garden, and the Strand (13).

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There are two reasons for the map becoming denser. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of the metropolis throughout Europe. By 1813, London's population had doubled to approximately 1,250 thousand inhabitants. The growing city and population density allowed both inhabitants and visitors to mingle anonymously. The rapid infrastructural developments of the city provided easy access to the West End to the consumers' delight, which, at the same time, made it possible to escape the police much quicker if necessary. Restaurants, theatres, certain streets and parks, bus, tram, and train stations and their public lavatories had become popular cruising areas. By the end of the century many recreational sites, such as baths, swimming pools, and sports establishments, appeared where gay men could admire the (often naked) physical beauty of another in a homosocial environment. Moreover, regardless of social class, gay men could meet in music halls and certain university establishments.

Upchurch and Cocks both agree that molly-house raids ended with the White Swan case in the 1810s and existing court proceedings show that the nineteenth century saw an increasing number of individual cases in court from the 1820s. While the police were reluctant to act on offenders, the new Metropolitan Police offered new opportunities for policing the city and drawing the gay map of London. Due to the increasing number of police arrests, gay men found refuge in private houses to satisfy their desires. However, the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act authorized the police to act in the private sphere as well. As a result, the police arrested gay men of various social standing in the Cleveland Street Scandal in 1890. Similarly, Alfred Taylor was convicted in 1895 for organizing orgies for men in darkened, perfumed rooms in his house. Cocks argues that the Criminal Law Amendment Act "did not enlarge the scope of the law any further" (30) and "did not revolutionize the law"; however, "[t]he criminal law, then, was employed most frequently at a local level" (31). The 1898 Vagrancy Law Amendment Act affirmed the power of the police in the public sphere as it broadened the scope of arrests. The case of Alan Horton is a good example. He was not caught while committing a sexual crime but for entering a public lavatory with a wiggle in his hip. Cook emphasizes, "[t]he police did not arrest because sexual acts had actually been committed but on the basis of judgment they had made about the propensity of an individual to commit them" (44), and, of course, the location where the arrest was made was also an important circumstance.

It is in this London where *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain* (1881) is set. Written anonymously, it is the recollection of a Mary-Ann, a male prostitute, Jack Saul regarding his episodic sexual encounters. Wolfram Setz emphasizes,

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this pornographic work is "an important cultural and historical document" (xix) and, with reference to relevant monographs by Hyde, Kaplan, and Cohen, he concludes that "[h]owever fantasmatic the elaboration, the landscape is recognizably late Victorian London" (xx). Moreover, the queer players are recognizable in the landscape: "'the Mary-Ann's' of London . . . were often to be seen sauntering in the neighborhood of Regent Street or the Haymarket, on fine afternoons and evenings" (8-9). Based on the statement by Charles Hirsch, Setz claims that Oscar Wilde read the novel (vii). The protagonist of his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890, 1891) in Cook's analysis takes routes in the city very similar to Jack's.

While it is debatable whether Dorian's tracks were influenced by *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain* or the gay map of London, which was well known to those interested, his cruising from the West to the East End is important for two reasons. Firstly, the "established social roles and dynamics . . . might be disrupted within the city and amongst specifically urban players . . . [the protagonists] are differentiated from the other characters by being principally identified with the city and homosexual activity rather than with a particular class" (Cook 21). Secondly, the East End must have been attractive to those who wished to experiment a little:

> [E]lites . . . tended to romanticize and exoticize [the slums] as sites of spectacular brutality and sexual degradation to which they were compulsively drawn. Slums were anarchic, distant outposts of the empire peopled by violent and primitive races; but they were also conveniently close, only a short stroll from the Bank of England and St. Paul's. . . . The metropolitan slums provided well-to-do philanthropic men and women with an actual and imagined location where, with the approval of society, they could challenge prevailing norms about class and gender relations and sexuality. These men and women may well have needed the freedom the slums offered them more than the poor in their adopted neighborhoods benefited from their labors.
> (Koven 4-5)

Cook recognizes Dorian's not so much philanthropic drive to the East End (107) while his path, nevertheless, "replicated those of philanthropists, urban explorers and 'slummers'" (109), and "[t]he allusions to his exploits there reproduced conceptions of the East End poor as sexually pliant and ideas of the 'sensual,' 'bestial' and 'revolting'" (109). Cook argues that Dorian enjoys mobility between certain fragments of the city, which keeps his path and destination a secret, and "[t]he revelry and the dashing, deceptive appearances" in the decadent city resemble the coverage of the Whitechapel

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murders and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) by Stevenson about the cliché London underworld (109-10).

The preconceptions of the English about Hungary were similar to the ones about the East End. For instance, *The Pall Mall Gazette* claimed that crimes like the Whitechapel murders had been unprecedented in England and could only happen in the "wilds of Hungary" (qtd. in Greenslade 87). That the Orient (and Hungary in particular) was associated with revolting sensuality in general is evident from the description of music in *Dorian Gray* and *Teleny* (1893), an erotic novel attributed to Wilde. Dorian "devoted himself entirely to music . . . he used to give curious concerts, in which mad gypsies tore wild music from little zithers" along with Tunisians, negroes, Indians "when Schubert's grace, and Chopin's beautiful sorrows, and the mighty harmonies of Beethoven himself, fell unheeded on his ear" (Wilde 94). In *Teleny*, the soon-to-be lover, Camille, listens to the Hungarian pianist Teleny playing a Hungarian csárdás, he imagines certain oriental scenes while stimulating himself to the rhythm of the music (Wilde et al. 11-16). Hungarian music in these works appears as an international language to speak for "the love that dare not speak its name."[1]

The referential meaning of Hungarian music was not lost on Prime-Stevenson the music critic. He writes in *The Intersexes* that "[m]usic . . . unites logically with uranianism as a deep problem in psychology. Precisely what music 'says,' when we think it 'says' something, and has such or such a 'message' to us, we really do not in the least know" (395). He continues, "[i]f we turn from the formalized neurotism of such great composers [like Wagner or Richard Strauss] we may say that no music seems as directly *sexual* as the Magyar; wonderfully beautiful in its rhythms, melodies and harmonies. And the Magyar is a distinctively 'sexual' racial type" (396). Prime-Stevenson's thoughts on the Magyar make it self-explanatory why he found it appropriate to feature a Hungarian soldier as the title character of his fictitious sexological case-study, *Imre: A Memorandum*.

The novel

Imre has all the four textbook attributes Stuart Kellogg claims to be pro forma reasons "why an author might treat the phenomenon of homosexuality" (3). For the first reason, Kellogg suggests that "there are authors who write to bolster the general prejudice against homosexuality, and there are those who plead for acceptance of homosexual men and women. These partisan works, because they are intended to influence social behavior, can be called *political*" (5, emphasis in original). Kellogg also states that tainting a homosexual character is "a literary sin . . . [t]o the extent that it depends on

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homosexuality being regarded as weak or criminal, it rehearses that assumption" (5). Prime-Stevenson lamented that "[Wilde] repudiated in his last writings . . . the morality of the homosexual instinct" and "was not a little a shrewd and superficial *poseur* " (363). He finds it unfortunate that homosexuality was associated with Wilde and his works by the public, and *Imre*, therefore, is offered as a counter-example of, for instance, *Dorian Gray*.

Prime-Stevenson's primary motivation for writing *Imre* is clear from the prefatory. The narrator, Oswald, offers his memoirs to Xavier Mayne (Prime-Stevenson's pseudonym for *Imre*):

> I have asked myself whether, instead of some impersonal essay, I would not do best to give over to your editorial hand all that is here? As something for other men than for you and me only? Do with it, therefore as you please. As speaking out to any other human heart that is throbbing on in rebellion against ignorances, the narrow psychologic conventions, the false social ethics of our epoch (too many men's hearts must do so!), as offered in a hope that some perplexed and solitary soul may grow a little calmer, may feel itself a little less alone in our world of mysteries—so do I give this record to you, to use it as you will. (32-33)

In his magnum opus on contemporary sexology, *The Intersexes*, Prime-Stevenson, under the same pseudonym identifying himself as the "authour [sic]" of *Imre* on the title page, laments that texts on male love are very few in English, inaccessible or incomprehensible to laymen including gay men as well (ix-xi). The objective, therefore, is to produce an easily consumable text for the first time in English with an absolutely positive example for gay men, who are struggling to identify themselves in the eyes of heteronormative society and against sexually dissipated deviants.

There had been a number of literary works with a similar attitude defining and legitimizing male love in German. For instance, having been shocked by the sentence of a Swiss judge in a murder trial in 1817, Heinrich Hössli (1784-1864) asked Heinrich Zschokke (1771-1848), known for progressive journals, to write a novel to demonstrate that the cruel punishment (of breaking the convicted on the wheel) was only passed because the judge did not understand male love. Zschokke's *Eros* (1821) did not suit the expectations of Hössli and was only published under the same title in 1838. The book focuses on the relationship between the individual and society, arts and sciences, sexuality and love under the influence of *Venus Urania* (1798) by Basilius von Ramdohr; however, Robert Tobin asserts that Hössli's request shows his belief in a public literary discourse influencing the attitude of not only legal and medical professionals but also of society in general (30).

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Another exemplary text Prime-Stevenson must have encountered in the sixth volume of *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* [Yearbook for Intermediate Sexual Types] (1904) was the article "Die Enterbten des Liebesglückes" [Those Dispossessed of Love] (1893) by Otto de Joux, in which he found the description of "useful matters for lay-reading" (Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes* 110). He cites the story of a Continental young nobleman and a German or Austrian officer as an instance for the "Typical case of Uranistic 'Love at Sight'" (109-11). The two men meet in a café and the lover contemplates what preoccupies the beloved so much. At a ball they meet later, the lover exclaims, "What was Hecuba to me?" (qtd. in Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes* 111) as he is so eager to get away with his loved one. They give up their struggle against fate and realize that "[t]here *is* a happiness that knows no end" (qtd. in Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes* 111). Excited by the possibilities of these German works, Prime-Stevenson must have thought that this was exactly what the Anglo-Saxons needed, so he started writing *Imre* based on de Joux's good example.

The exposition of the novel shows very straightforward resemblances: Oswald meets a soldier, Imre, in a café; his eyes scour Imre's countenance; he also contemplates what preoccupies the young soldier, and—though in a slightly different context—Oswald also exclaims, "What was Hecuba to me?" (Prime-Stevenson, *Imre* 36). They share the story of their life-long struggle and in the end conclude that "[they] shall be all the happier now for what is real for [them] . . . For [them] two it surely is . . . Rest" (127). Since Prime-Stevenson did not choose to simply translate de Joux's story, he allows himself to adapt the hopeful precedent as the narrative of an Englishman, suggesting that the happy ending is likewise possible for Anglo-Saxons. He strongly believes that literature can reach out and explain male love to English-speaking readers while rare psychiatric texts on sexology in English cannot. Referring to Foucault, Christopher Looby suggests that "sexuality itself is fiction, an imaginary composite of many different experiences, identifications, and performances" (843). Moreover, there is "more than an analogy," he asserts, "between the stylization of literary language and the stylization of the sexualized self" (843). Prime-Stevenson chooses fiction as a mode of speaking out so that the scripts of his idealized sexual self, as Looby claims, "need to be articulated, promulgated, circulated, and encountered in order to be received and adopted and performed, and this requires a literary public sphere" (843). However, it is not only the nationality of the narrator that he changes but the setting and the nationality of the beloved as well, which triggered my interest in the "Hungarianness" of Prime-Stevenson's narrative.

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It is only reasonable to assume that choosing Szent-Istvánhely as the setting also has political connotations.

Another reason for writing *Imre* is psychological. Kellogg writes that "[a]n author of a *psychological* bent, eager to study the formation and management of individual identity, has a perfect subject in the man or woman who, staring down the fear that knowledge of the forbidden may lead to forbidden acts and thence to madness or death, dares to scrutinize his or her own homosexual feelings" (7). As Prime-Stevenson himself puts it, *Imre* is a "psychological romance" (*The Intersexes* 558). According to James J. Gifford, this classification means that the reader will not meet hair-raising plot twists, sexually heated affairs, and tricky escapes from the police but inner thoughts of two homosexual men trying to get to know each other and themselves during their everyday struggle (13). This aspect of the novel is what the reader can easily understand and identify with. The psychology of a person, as Prime-Stevenson's "Madonnesca" (1913), in which Imre returns, is something that a layperson can understand by the behavior of another without any prior studies on psychology.

However, at another point, he labels his novel as "a little psychiatric romance" (*The Intersexes* 538). This would oddly shift *Imre* from the literary and psychological discourse to one of medical professionals. The love story of Imre and Oswald is a case study which helps both pathologizing professionals and laymen understand new sexological discoveries at a time when the latter could only inform themselves on male love either from newspaper articles about scandalous sexual affairs or clandestine fiction. For instance, the term "homosexual," coined by Karl-Maria Kertbeny of Hungarian origin, had been around in German-speaking Central Europe since 1869. It was widely popularized by Gustav Jäger's second edition of *Die Entdeckung der Seele* [The Discovery of the Soul] (1880) and became the most widely accepted word for same-sex desires by the end of the century, as Magnus Hirschfeld's *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (1899-1933) attests. In the meantime, according to Halperin, it barely entered the English language in 1892 with Charles Gilbert's translation of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) by Richard von Krafft-Ebing (15). In addition, "homosexual" was just one term besides "pederast," "sodomite," "urning," "uranian," "invert," "intersex," "third sex," "similisexual," and so forth, which laymen encountered, while some of these had become synonymous despite the different theoretical insights inspiring each of them.

Imre, therefore, walks a fine line between literary fiction and sexological case study. Unfortunately, it seems that this strategy has deprived Prime-Stevenson of being a prominent representative of either discourse. The

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problem is similar to Marc-André Raffalovich's, who was a member of Wilde's circle and is lesser-known for his literary works and sexological studies:

> [Raffalovich] to this very day is ignored simply because people are still tied to the compartmentalization of disciplines and we still find it incongruous to exhume a literary man who is mired in a scientific magazine, who prided himself on being more scientific than the scientists themselves on the subject of homosexuality, that is when we come face to face with the question: Who was the true founder of humane science? (Cardon 191)

The issue is similar with Prime-Stevenson, whose literary text is too scientific, while his scientific text is too literary. Oswald's confusion when contemplating Imre's sexuality may be the best example to demonstrate this: "Was Imre von N. what is called among psychiaters [sic] of our day a homosexual, a Urning. . .? . . . a Uranian? . . . a Dionian-Uranian? . . . Uranian? Similisexual? Homosexual? Dionian?" (Prime-Stevenson 63-64). In this sense, Prime-Stevenson's work is a courageous attempt to demonstrate his belief in the power of literary discourse, which shows guidance shaping the thoughts and attitudes of society in general. It needs to be added, however, that *Imre* was printed privately in five-hundred copies in Naples. Prime-Stevenson was very much aware that "the authour [sic] or publisher of a homosexual book, even if scientific, not to speak of a belles-lettres work, will not readily escape troublesome consequences" (*The Intersexes* 376). Gifford suggests that Stevenson's friends received a copy and some bookstores may have played a role in distributing the novel. However, in his opinion, the paradox that *Imre* "reached only 'converted' readers" remains (18). Nevertheless, the novel had an underground life largely unknown to critics as it travelled. It reached, for example, Raffalovich, who by the time of publication had fled to Edinburgh from London with Wilde's former lover, John Gray, in an attempt to disassociate themselves from Wilde's circle, among other reasons. Obviously, Raffalovich was homosexual, or "unisexual" as he theorized male love, but hardly could he be called "converted" from the perspective of Prime-Stevenson's ideas.

The third reason why someone would want to write about homosexuality, according to Kellogg, is sociological: "If you hold your eye smack up against a pear, you cannot see the pear, because light must intercede between the eye and an object for the object to be seen, and that requires distance. This law of distance can serve a *sociological* purpose in literature" (6). Prime-Stevenson sends Oswald, the English narrator to the capital of Hungary to study the language of the most sexual race. While Prime-

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Stevenson's motivation was to offer literature for the Anglo-Saxon, as it has been established, Oswald can do so in an environment free of their superstitions and prejudices. Strangely, the exposition evoked an urban scenery largely associated with decadent sexual pleasures:

> It was about four o'clock that summer afternoon, that I sauntered across a street in the cheerful Hungarian city of Szent-Istvánhely, and turned aimlessly into the café-garden of the Erzsébet-tér, where the usual vehement military-band concert was in progress. I looked about for a free table, at which to drink an iced-coffee, and to mind my own business for an hour or so. Not in a really cross-grained mood was I; but certainly dull, and preoccupied with perplexing affairs left loose in Vienna; and little inclined to observe persons and things for the mere pleasure of doing so. (*Imre* 35)

This is where Oswald meets Imre, a soldier "of no ordinary beauty of physique" (36) sitting alone at a table detached from his brother-officers. First, Imre receives Oswald with a "glance, by no means welcoming" (36), but later, when the soldier realizes that an innocent conversation commenced between the two, he greets the Englishman with a look "no longer unfriendly" but both "winning and sincere" (36).

At first sight the setting does not raise suspicion. Baedeker's *Austria, including Hungary, Transylvania, Dalmatia, and Bosnia* (1896) recommends the *Kiosk-Café* on Elizabeth-Promenade (324). The "*Elisabeth-Platz* (*Erzsébet-Tér* . . .)" was popular "with its pretty pleasure-grounds and its *Kiosque*, decorated with frescoes by Than and Lotz" (Baedeker 333) and "where a military band plays thrice weekly in summer" (Baedeker 326).

However, these are all carefully plotted elements of the exposition for a distinctively strong argument: this imaginary Budapest is not a decadent city, and to further establish the idea, Prime-Stevenson renames the capital to Szent-Istvánhely (St. Stephen Place [Gifford 35 n2]), which might suggest a sort of protective shield for a homosexual discourse in Hungary. Oswald leaves Vienna, another capital strongly associated with sexual decadence, mainly due to *Psychopathia Sexualis* by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, to whom Prime-Stevenson dedicated *The Intersexes*. We find Oswald sauntering and loitering on the streets of Szent-Istvánhely. His movement in a particular space and a particular hour, as we have seen from contemporary gay fiction in English, must be read with suspicion. With regard to military prostitution, Prime-Stevenson himself notes that "any quiet part of a public promenade has its group of young warriors strolling about or sitting in im-modest obscurity, waiting for 'business'" (*The Intersexes* 217). For instance, "in Austria-Hungary,

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soldier-harlotry is universal. Such parks as . . . the Erzsébet-tér in Budapest . . . and so on, are notable markets of an evening for any type of military youth that may be preferred" (218). Finding a military prostitute is easy, "[t]he Uranian has only to stroll, or to seat himself in a tranquil corner, to have unmistakeable opportunities. Usually the soldier-prostitute detaches himself from any companions . . ." (218). Oswald and Imre in this context align perfectly with the *modus operandi* of an "unnatural assaulter." However, the two do not register each other as homosexuals at first sight (80) and do not "make a sort of 'coquettish' play with [their] eyes" (626) as *The Intersexes* suggest would be customary between homosexuals. Moreover, music is not a vehicle for same-sex desire and auto-erotic impulses as in *Teleny*, but the topic of a neutral, intellectual conversation. As a result, the urban life that was associated with decadent sexual desires in *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Teleny*, therefore, lost its nonconformist, even criminal taint.

The fourth reason on Kellogg's list is the Arcadian: "The universal desire to be free but safe, to be far from all critics and creditors and yet not utterly lonely, has given birth to a literature of *Arcadia*, that almost mythical land of sweet airs and contentment" (4). The homosexual Arcadia "is based not only on familiar yearnings for an easy life and many young lovers, but also on a desire to be pardoned for being homosexual, to be kissed on the eyelids and included among the innocent" (4). Taking on Kellogg, Byrne Fone emphasizes that it is an Arcadian park in which Oswald finds it appropriate to confess his love for Imre for the first time (21-23). Like many homosexual literary Arcadias, this imaginary space serves as a place for mutual happiness to same-sex lovers. Prime-Stevenson further establishes that this is a queer space: "Like most old estates near Szent-Istvánhely, it has its legends, plentifully" (*Imre* 70). He evokes the legend of Z. Lorand and Z. Egon, two "deeply attached" cousins. According to the story, the Count, when hearing that the Turks killed his beloved cousin, "held up his sword, and swore by it, and Saint Stephen of Hungary" to avenge "his cousin's fate" (70). He managed to drive the Turks out of the estate but was attacked and killed by another troop. He was buried with his cousin. Oswald and Imre sit down at the foot of their monument, which reads, "To the Unforgettable Memory of Z. Lorand, and Z. Egon" (70). While this park is outside of Szent-Istvánhely, Saint Stephen is evoked in the story of the estate, nevertheless.

It might be argued that, similarly to other urban gay fiction, the characters leave the decadent city to free themselves from corruption. However, as the name suggests, Szent-Istvánhely is not a depraved urban space. Like many other elements in *Imre*, the relevance of the park has a psychological explanation: "[The Uranian] is often intensely fond of Nature . . . as if . . . he harks back to some great and

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elementary sympathy between Nature and his instincts" (Prime-Stevenson, *The Intersexes* 84). Evoking an Arcadian park, it seems, is not merely a literary device for Prime-Stevenson. His psychological explanation of the homosexual's relationship with Nature shifts fiction in the realm of science again and offers a plausible explanation why one can connect with his instincts in nature.

Szent-Istvánhely as "other space"

A question, however, remains: how is it possible that there is an Arcadia and a possible happy ending to the Englishman, Oswald, in the corruptive, sensual, bestial East? The key here is to understand that Hungary is a liminal space between the West and the East, which is even more emphatic with the topography of the capital. For instance, "The Pandour and His Princess: A Hungarian Sketch" (1832), published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, writes that "Hungary was once the land of kings, and it was still the land of nobles. Half oriental, half western, the Hungarian is next in magnificence to the Moslem" (7). Another stereotype this sketch commemorates is that great Hungarian heroes had "immeasurable magnitude of mustache, and majestic longitude of beard" (5-6). In the nineteenth-century, Hungarian heroes came into prominence with the 1848-49 revolution, as "On Refusal of Aid between Nations" (alternately titled: "Moribund Men") by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and "Sonnet to the Hungarian Nation" by Matthew Arnold attest in 1849. In the second half of the century, Hungarians had international recognition for the celebration of the Hungarian Millennium in 1896, when, for instance, the construction of Heroes' Square began. David Mandler asserts that the publications of the well-known orientalist Ármin Vámbéry, such as *A magyarság keletkezése és gyarapodása* [The Origin and Proliferation of the Magyar Nation] (1895), influenced the view on Hungarians very deeply. Vámbéry intended to prove that even before the Hungarian Conquest (in 895 CE), Hungarians had been a mixture of the West and East and, as a result, no bloodline of the ancient Hungarians could be found anymore by the nineteenth century. Based on this concept of Hungarian identity, he concluded that anyone could fit into this heterogeneous nation, which was "tolerant and appreciative of those who wanted to become Magyars" (Mandler 52). And there is another reference to the liminal position of the capital in *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker: "Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place . . . . The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East; the most Western splendid bridges over the Danube, which is here of noble width and depth, took us among the traditions of Turkish rule" (5). Roger Luckhurst regarded "the famous Chain Bridge" over "the Danube as the border between Europe and the Turkish

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East" (363). What these selected occurrences show is that the figure of the Hungarian evokes notions of both spiritual and physical masculinity ideals to Western cultures. The bearded and virtuous Hungarian man is wholesome both in body and spirit. This, however, is the complete opposite of the Hungarian taken as an Oriental, sensual, bestial entity.

I suggest that these contradictions were recognized and, as it has been established, reflected on by Prime-Stevenson; moreover, the topography of the Hungarian capital as a Foucauldian heterotopia helped the author reconcile these contradictory associations with the West and East. What Prime-Stevenson offers in his novelette is a mirror. This mirror, Foucault suggests, is a utopia with two obvious consequences: first, it is a site "that [has] a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with a real space of Society"; second, it is "fundamentally [an] unreal space" (24). It is "outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (24). Hence, "[b]ecause [it is] absolutely different from all the sites that it reflect[s] and speak[s] about," Foucault calls it a "heterotopia" (24). There is a joint experience in the mirror: one sees oneself in the mirror where he is absent (in a utopia), but the mirror exists in reality and makes one recognize one's real position by observing a place where he is not (24). As the preface to *Imre* and *The Intersexes* shows, the contemporary reader of the novelette as a sociological observer could see himself in an unreal space, Szent-Istvánhely, and examine himself from a safe distance. At the same time, he could evaluate contradictory ideas regarding his own unconventional sexuality by observing the subject in a Hungarian space: sexual and criminal activities associated with the East and the argument for a super-virile homosexual type evoked by Imre and acceptable in terms of Western masculinity. Ultimately, recognizing the same contradictory associations concerning the Hungarian and the homosexual, the reader can re-evaluate his own position in his real space.

The first principle of heterotopias is that "there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. That is a constant of every human group," Foucault asserts (24). The heterotopia that Prime-Stevenson created based on the tradition by the subculture of Wilde and his circle, who included references to the Hungarian in their queer fiction, works well along the principles. Szent-Istvánhely fits two main categories of heterotopias. First, it is a heterotopia of crisis, which is "privileged or sacred . . . reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis" (Foucault 24). The new name of the capital clearly indicates that it is a sacred space. Given the protagonists' sexuality gradually unfolding to the reader and the characters themselves, it is a homosexual subculture that needs shelter in this space.

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Second, it is also a heterotopia of deviation "in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (Foucault 25). The placement of the characters might be relevant for two reasons in terms of deviation. On the one hand, the homosexual as a non-conventional sexual type might need to be placed in a space with a half-oriental overtone just out of Western culture. On the other hand, there were novels set in London, but Imre and Oswald deviate from the homosexual type and the kind of business they seek. Therefore, they need to be placed in another city that deviates from the decadent city, which leads us back to Szent-Istvánhely as a crisis heterotopia, where our expectation regarding the cruising place and a possible military prostitute are not met.

The second principle, according to Foucault, is that "a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion" (25). As we have seen, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Teleny*, Hungary is evoked through music in the first place to speak for sensuality and secreted desires. Wilde and his circle achieved this by emphasizing the rhapsodic and oriental characteristics of Hungarian music, which have an overbearing effect on the body. In *Imre*, music has no particular effect on the sexual organs; it is merely a topic for an intellectual conversation. Instead of using music evoking an eastern country to describe the homosexual body, Prime-Stevenson uses the masculine virtues associated with Hungary for his case of a super-virile couple, which cannot be defined by pathologizing and criminalizing mainstream sexological ideas on the "invert," a female soul in a man's body.

According to the third and fourth principles, a "heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 25), and, when not just space but time is considered as well, "time never stops building up and topping its own summit" in a heterotopia (26). The topography of Szent-Istvánhely, consisting of Buda representing the West and Pest representing the East, shows that the story juxtaposes ideas coming from different directions regarding same-sex desire. On the one hand, there is the criminal and overly sensual aspect of homosexuality associated with the East and foreign vice. As the analysis of the exposition has shown, Prime-Stevenson worked with these notions to shift the nature of discourse from the criminal to the legitimized. On the other hand, the figure of the Hungarian evokes the heroic, super-virile masculine type associated with the West. Moreover, German-speaking Central Europe having produced a large number of new sexological terms and theories—such as the homosexual, invert, and so on—also belongs to the West in this respect. Oswald's attempt to define Imre's sexuality with the help of Western science

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also connects Szent-Istvánhely to the West. However, it is impossible to associate Imre with either side only. Oswald mentions the Turkish invasion of Hungary, for example, as a characteristic influence still visible in the Hungarian race. This echoes Vámbéry's views on the Hungarian, who is simply an accumulation of various Western and Eastern races from different historical times and places.

The fifth principle states that "[h]eterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates and makes them penetrable" (Foucault 26). This system is relevant from the reader's point of view. While Budapest was visible to everyone, Szent-Istvánhely was not. One very simple reason for this is that *Imre* had a limited number of copies. However, having a copy did not necessarily mean that the novel was "open" to the reader. Similarly to initiation ceremonies in an actual space, the reader himself had to be initiated to be able to actually read Szent-Istvánhely. First, the reader had to be familiar with previous homosexual fiction, like *Dorian Gray* or *Teleny*, to recognize it is not by chance that the title character is a Hungarian soldier. To understand the relevance of Hungarian music in *Dorian Gray*, for instance, which most probably was lost on many contemporary readers, one had to be familiar with a subculture's ideas on the connection between their sexuality and Hungarian music, which is overtly stated in *Teleny*. Moreover, the reader himself had to be familiar with the cultural context and information on the "homosexual life" of a particular city to understand the dangers and relevance of Imre and Oswald's encounter in an Erzsébet-tér café, which has a straightforward explanation in *The Intersexes*. It is also clear from the novelette that the happy ending and permanent stay in Szent-Istvánhely are not accessible for everyone. Prime-Stevenson makes a case for a particular kind of homosexuality. In *The Intersexes*, he makes the following distinction:

> This brief study will have been written to no sufficient purport, and many far more extensive studies can be read with indifferent results, if the observer does not realize that the ranks of indisputably similisexual mankind (over and above all clearly detractive or doubtful examples) present a great list of what we call superior types, including geniuses; in their moral mental and other dignity. The world owes a vast debt to men who have been homosexual. But in contrast to these, we have an equally indisputable and disconcerting array of similisexual human beings so marked out by weakness, by depravity, by vice and crime, that the aggregate in such a review chills even a discriminating tolerance. (557)

Prime-Stevenson continues with "a summary of just this confusion and contrast" by citing his own work *Imre*, where Oswald gives voice "to his

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bewildered reflections on contrasts in uranian types" (557). It is clear from several incidents in the novelette that Imre resents the latter type, which would sort them in the former. As the novel attests, the happy end is available to this type in Szent-Istvánhely as well. This brings us to the last principle of heterotopias: "they have a function in relation to all the space that remains" (Foucault 27). Prime-Stevenson created Szent-Istvánhely so that the homosexual protagonists of a novel would find hopeful prospects for the future. As *Imre* was written for fellow Anglo-Saxon homosexuals as guidance, Prime-Stevenson follows his own advice which he later put down in *The Intersexes*: "let us make it our practical business, as individuals and fellow-mortals, whether Uranians ourselves or not, to climb higher with all our best wills and works—and everywhere and eternally to help human nature to climb" (562). Walking on the Chain Bridge, Oswald and Imre, as a result, test different notions of homosexuality in the Hungarian city, which demonstrates that the choice is theirs which path they choose and there is a way for homosexuals to better themselves. This is exactly what Imre follows when he, having been exhausted by Oswald arguments on homosexuality, takes Oswald's arm on the bridge, "a rare attention from him" and "said not more till the Bridge was past" (68).

Conclusions

Edward Prime-Stevenson's urban imaginary in *Imre* was designed to contradict notions of the decadent city in previous gay fiction in English. While the characters in *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Teleny* seek sexual pleasures in particular urban spaces, Oswald discovers Imre only to find peace and male love in a place which otherwise could have offered similar pleasures as London to Jack Saul, Dorian, and Teleny. Instead of a physiological romance, Prime-Stevenson created a psychological/psychiatric one to support male love for political, sociological, psychological, and Arcadian reasons. Taking advantage of the parallels between the associations of same-sex desire and the Hungarian, his protagonists could negotiate notions of transgressive sensuality and European masculinity in a heterotopia. The fictional capital of Hungary, Szent-Istvánhely, is neither a slum nor an Arcadia but a place for the lovers, who know how to better themselves, to legitimize their desires against contradictory Anglo-Saxon notions on same-sex desire.

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Note

[1] A Hungarian csárdás also appears in "The True Story of a Vampire" (1894) by Eric Stenbock, in which a Hungarian vampire, Vardalek, seduces his boy-lover, Gabriel, with his rendering of Hungarian rhapsodic music.

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