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**Homosexual Identity, Translation, and Prime-Stevenson's Imre and The Intersexes**

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**Margaret S. Breen,**

**"Homosexual Identity, Translation, and Prime-Stevenson's *Imre* and *The Intersexes*"**

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**Abstract:** In her article "Homosexual Identity, Translation, and Prime-Stevenson's *Imre* and *The Intersexes*" Margaret S. Breen examines the role of translation in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender studies. Breen's focus is Edward Prime-Stevenson, who, under the penname Xavier Mayne, wrote two works: a short novel, *Imre: A Memorandum* (1906), and a general history of homosexuality, *The Intersexes: A History of Similisexuality as a Problem of Social Life* (1908). Breen argues that Prime-Stevenson's texts are relevant to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discussions of (homo)sexuality because they point to the importance of translation in writings concerning sexual and gender identities and behavior, specifically in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender literature from the late nineteenth century forward.

**Margaret S. BREEN**

### **Homosexual Identity, Translation, and Prime-Stevenson's *Imre* and *The Intersexes***

Under the penname Xavier Mayne, Edward Prime-Stevenson wrote two works which are fascinating to consider in light of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discussions of homosexuality: a short novel, *Imre: A Memorandum* (1906), and a general history of homosexuality, *The Intersexes: A History of Similisexuality as a Problem of Social Life* (1908). These texts are key to understanding the importance of translation as both a linguistic and metaphoric act in *fin-de-siècle* writings concerning sexual and gender identities and behaviors; more broadly, these texts attest to the value of comparative cultural and literary approaches for the study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) literature from the late nineteenth century forward. Simply put, translation facilitates the making of meaning within and across languages. One might even say "sanctioning," for in validating certain terms as linguistic and cultural equivalencies, translation necessarily discards others as inappropriate and undesirable. Thus, as it selectively moves and creates meaning across geographical, temporal, cultural, epistemological, and discursive spaces, translation may entail not only empowerment but also restriction, loss, and even violence (see Butler 36-37; Spivak 15). Translation is an operation capable of erasure and consolidation, preservation, and subversion. Given this dynamic capacity, it is not surprising that not only cultural gatekeepers but also marginalized groups would be drawn to translation. Thus, the civil rights, democratic, feminist, gay, lesbian, and queer movements of the late twentieth century have made possible the increased creation, publication, circulation, and availability of LGBT literary works across cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries. Within the context of these movements, it is easy to recognize translation's political register. Of course, this register is fraught with issues of linguistic, cultural, gender, and racial privileging: not all languages and not all lives are valued equally. Even so, translation can be transformative. The rendering of access to queer stories in different languages answers that ever-present yearning across cultures to hear stories that reflect queer desires and so affirm and nourish queer lives.

LGBT writers since the 1970s have engaged translation figuratively and literally in order to champion the availability of and access to LGBT literature. One thinks, for example, of lesbian poet Adrienne Rich, whose landmark collection *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977* (1978) has as its underlying ethos the celebration of poetry for women, by women, and about women. Rich's project turns on a metaphoric act of translation insofar as it requires the rethinking and reconstitution of the female subject as a speaking subject in her own right. One also thinks of Cherríe Moraga and her multi-genre collection *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*. Here, with the movement between English and Spanish, Moraga explores her perpetual outsider status as a light-skinned Chicana lesbian who refuses to pass as either white or heterosexual. Within the contexts of both lesbian communities, she remains an un-translatable subject (see Cutter). Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1992) offers another interesting use of the translation. The novel's multiply-gendered narrator-protagonist, it is worth noting, is a translator. In this case the translation trope foregrounds Winterson's formal experimentation in the novel and her playful queering of the gender conventions of storytelling and romance (see Parker).

Yet another contemporary writer concerned with translation is the gay US-American poet Mark Doty. His poem, entitled "Retrievers in Translation," offers a case in point. In the poem the speaker contemplates an Italian Renaissance tapestry that features a hunting scene: men and dogs surround a wounded stag in the water. At the center of the scene are two dogs: "retrievers — recognizable but, like Renaissance lions, / unmistakably Italian, as though they've been, // somehow, *translated*. One, blue-eyed, / is caught in profile, grinning, turned/to the action a dozen feet from shore, / the other looks directly at us, the textile hung // so that his eyes meet ours dead on / with a shocked — and shocking — immediacy: / animal eyes staring five hundred years/but new as the surprise of yellow primroses, // this morning" (lines 27-37, page 82; emphasis in the original). In contrast to the hunters who, clad in their "scarlet tights" (line 23, page 81) and "horned shoes" (line 56, page 83), belong to a long-lost world, the dogs prove "intractable /, fixed ... alive" (lines 53-54, page 83). Their immediacy serves as an invitation for human connection. Of the dog staring out from the tapestry, the speaker observes, "this dog's here, now, and made/to startle us to witness, mute friend" (line 59,

page 83). Within the poem the retriever proves to be Doty's metaphor for otherness. "*What do you think/ otherness is?*" asks a voice in the poem (lines 50-51, page 83; emphasis in the original). The speaker answers. It is not something foreign, removed, unreachable; rather, in its difference it beckons and invites: "The life/of animals, the life of art,/they seem to meet in this gaze//which is fabric but looks back at us,/from the cinquecento and from the abyss/between dogs and people" (lines 42-47, page 82; emphasis in the original). Whether on the level of text or textile, "otherness" for Doty facilitates translation: it proffers the possibility for connection, for immediacy. In contrast to Gertrude Stein's rose, a dog really is a dog is a dog.

This treatment of otherness can be found not only in other poems from the same 1998 collection, *Sweet Machine*, but also in Doty's other works from the 1990s, including *My Alexandria* (1993) and *Atlantis* (1995). The recurrent exploration may be understood at least in part in terms of Doty's twinned aesthetic and political sensibility. Whether implicitly or explicitly, he considers gay desires, intimacies, and communities often in light of their interplay with larger mainstream society. In so doing, he argues, via a kind of poetics of identity politics, it is precisely our otherness that makes us beautiful, memorable, beloved, vital, and fully human. It might seem that Doty's perspective on otherness, especially as it underpins his understanding of translation as the basis for human connection, is a particularly contemporary one: a viewpoint that depends on the gay rights struggles of the 1980s and 1990s and that marks a generation of gay US-American writers for whom the mourning and outrage precipitated by the AIDS crisis have proven emotionally and politically formative. Perhaps this is so. (Mark Wunderlich's and Deborah Landau's work suggest as much.) Yet, it is worth noting that Doty's perspective is one that he shares with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientists, scholars, and writers for whom, in some cases, the study and representation of homosexuality was a personal quest.

Stated slightly differently, translation, in its capacity to validate LGBT subject positions, needs to be understood not simply in terms of modern writers' preoccupation with it; literally and figuratively, translation has been a sustained concern of LGBT writers for more than a century, and it figured especially prominently in *fin-de-siècle* and early twentieth-century scientific, social, and literary treatments of homosexuality. As Heike Bauer has argued, sexologists considered "the process of sexual classification itself ... a process of translation, as [they] sought to reproduce in textual form what they perceived to be 'truth of sex'" (16). This was particularly the case with regard to the study and characterization of people who were alternately called Urnings, Uranians, the third sex, similisexuals, invertes, intersexes, intermediates, and homosexuals. The very proliferation (one might say confusion) of terms in English reflects different, though at times overlapping, points of emphasis within the conceptualization of sexual and gender desires—whether the person with same-sex desires was, for example, someone with a male body but a female soul or vice versa (as in the case of the Uranian and the invert) or someone who desired a person of the same sex (as in the case of the homo- and similisexual) or, again, someone who, from an evolutionary perspective, existed as an intermediate and therefore a potentially mediating figure between a man and a woman (as in the case of the intermediate and intersexual). This last is a recurring characterization in social philosopher Edward Carpenter's *Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, published in 1908: intermediates "have a special work to do as reconcilers and interpreters of the two sexes to each other" (14). Even within these terms there are finer distinctions that sexologists and scholars of the time made.

The difficulty of terminology was in turn compounded by the movement across languages, as in, for example, the translation of the work of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Richard von Krafft-Ebing from German, which was not only their primary language but also the predominant language of science at the turn of the century, into other languages, such as English. Summarizing the vexing complexity of this issue of terminology and translation is sexologist Havelock Ellis, who in his thirties had himself translated Emile Zola's novel *Germinal*. Ellis wrote the multi-volume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. In the 1927 or third edition of *Sexual Inversion*, which is the second of the ultimately six volumes and the one first written and published, he remarks:

It is scarcely legitimate to use the term "Urning" in English. "Uranian" is more correct. ... it has been largely superseded by the term "homosexuality." This was devised (by a little-known Hungarian doctor, Benkert, who used the pseudonym Kertbeny) in ... [1869], but at first attracted no attention. It has, philologically, the awkward disadvantage of being a bastard term compounded of Greek and Latin elements, but its significance—sexual attraction to the same sex—is fairly clear and definite ... (Edward Carpenter has proposed to remedy its bastardly linguistic character by transforming it into "homogenic;" this, however, might mean not only "toward the same sex," but "of the same kind," and in German already possesses actually that meaning). The term "homosexual" has the further advantage that on account of its classical origin it is easily translatable into many languages. It is now the most widespread general term for the phenomena we are dealing with, and it has been used by Hirschfeld, now the chief authority in this field, as the title of his encyclopedic work, *Die Homosexualität*. (18-19)

Two points are worth noting here. First, *Sexual Inversion*, whose earliest version was co-authored by Ellis and John Addington Symonds, was published in English in 1897 after first appearing in German in 1896 (see Dixon 72-73). Second, the reference to "homosexuality" as a "bastard term" not only points to the construction of homosexual identity in eugenic race projects, but also encodes the unsettled quality of conceptualization at the core of the thinking and naming of queer desires (see Somerville). As these points indicate, translation is a culturally over-determined project that produces a taxonomy of homosexuality in order to answer (or silence) various aesthetic, legal, political, and social issues. Drawing on the earlier work of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing, Ellis and Carpenter made impassioned arguments regarding the acceptance of homosexuals. Key to Ellis's and Carpenter's writings regarding the emergent identity category of homosexuality was the figure of translation. While Ellis conceived of homosexuality as an "organic aberration" and Carpenter underscored its cultural importance (Ellis and Symonds [1897] qtd. in Dixon 73; see also Foster 245), in the work of both, translation functions as a powerful vehicle. As linguistic act, process, and metaphor, translation facilitates early twentieth-century arguments that homosexuality was not only a naturally occurring but also a socially useful behavior within human communities over a range of cultural and historical contexts (see Carpenter, *Intermediate Types*). For Carpenter especially, the homosexual him/herself came to embody the translator *par excellence*, who not only mediated between men and women (and so in the process stabilized heterosexual practices) but also, because of a natural predisposition for the arts, literature in particular (see Carpenter, *Intermediate Sex* 32, 110; see also Ellis, *Sexual Inversion* 341), was able to create, tell, and translate homosexual stories and, in the process, affirm their valued place within Western literary history. Prime-Stevenson's study *The Intersexes* and his novel *Imre* need to be understood within this framework.

Born in New Jersey in 1858, Prime-Stevenson spent much of his twenties and thirties as a professional writer. His early works included numerous essays and poems published in various literary magazines and three novels that he published under pseudonyms. In the late 1890s he worked for *The Independent* and *Harper's Weekly*. He served as a literary and music critic, translator, and editor. With few exceptions, his works from 1900 onward, when he gave up his career and moved to Europe in order to travel and to write, were published privately and were self-financed. The writing from this period includes *Imre*, *The Intersexes*, and a collection of essays and criticism on music. He died in Switzerland in 1942 (see Gifford, "A Brief Chronology" 27-29). Of Prime-Stevenson's works, *The Intersexes* is the most substantial. As John Lauritsen notes, the work takes its title from the English translation of *sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (37), the term that Magnus Hirschfeld, the most prominent German sexologist and homosexual rights advocate of the early twentieth century, used in his writings, notably in his *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, published between 1899 and 1923. The analysis of *The Intersexes* and *Imre* foregrounds the crucial role that translation played in early twentieth-century queer discussions of homosexuality. Dedicated to the memory of Krafft-Ebing, whom Prime-Stevenson had met and been encouraged by (see Gifford, "Introduction" 25), *The Intersexes* serves as a kind of guidebook — a layman's sexological *Pilgrim's Progress* — for homosexuality (for particularly Bunyanesque passages, see *The Intersexes* 5, 122). Whether homosexual or not, readers, Prime-Stevenson assumes, are in need of assistance in understanding people whose "similixsexual instinct defines a series of originally intermediary sexes ... rather than mere aberrations, degeneracies, psychic tangents, from the male and female" (*The Intersexes* x). Initially in his study, Prime-Stevenson suggests that that understanding requires readers to engage in acts of translation: "Perhaps the clearest descriptions [of the homosexual] come when we tell the reader to take any and every phase of admiration, of attraction and sexual love, which a normal,

amorous man feels for a woman, and to translate that into the Uranian passion: into sexual love for a man or youth on the part of a man. ... There are the same struggles, hopes, fears, self-sacrifices, workings for good or ill on the nature of the lover: the same joys, jealousies, despairs: and too often (as we shall see) the same tragedies of slow or of fiercely swift culmination. All, all, are to be 'translated' from their normal relations in distinctly masculine natures, into the sexually feminine instincts and experience of the male-loving Uranian heart" (*The Intersexes* 85).

Translation, then, is a necessary methodology for the recognition of Uranians (homosexuals) as fully human. What soon becomes apparent from a reading of *The Intersexes* is its function as a mediating text: one that renders accessible to a lay audience sexological studies of homosexuality published over the previous half century. Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* especially serves as a continual reference point and source text for Prime-Stevenson: *The Intersexes* includes translations of a number of *Psychopathia*'s case histories (see, for example, 104-06; 116-09). *The Intersexes* also reflects *fin-de-siècle* and early-twentieth-century scientific and scholarly views on race and sexuality. So, for example, he reports, "three races of the world ... the Jew, the Gipsy, and the North-American Negro, are all excessively similisexual" (76). This statement reveals the critical assumption engaged by contemporaries such as Ellis: racial categorization structures discussions of homosexuality.

Prime-Stevenson's rhetorical reliance on translation intensifies as the book proceeds. Increasingly, he emphasizes contributions to Western culture, the arts in particular, that homosexuals, especially male homosexuals, have made: "in the more aesthetic professions [the Uranian's] work has been the wonder of the world since it began" (81); he includes numerous lists of notable male and female homosexuals who were either "complete or partial" Uranians (77). While literary excerpts appear throughout, Chapter 13, the last chapter, is devoted completely to a discussion of the life and work of German poet August von Platen, while Chapter 9 offers an overview of queer US-American and European literary history, with special emphasis on authors writing in German. Whereas at the outset of *The Intersexes* he invites readers to consider homosexuals as if they were heterosexual, by the halfway mark, Prime-Stevenson has inverted his strategy. Across Western cultural history, he argues, homosexuals have served as their societies' artistic translators, and he himself engages enthusiastically in this role. He provides translations of excerpts from German and French literary works, letters, and diaries, some texts fairly well known, others obscure. Many of these translations are his own, marked with an asterisk and the abbreviation X.M. (for Xavier Mayne). So he translates an excerpt from Austrian writer Franz Grillparzer's play *Weh dem der Lügt!* (307), along with entries from Grillparzer's diary (304-06) and a letter (303-04). So, too, he laments the lack of any translations of Alexander von Sternberg's stories: "They have not been republished in German within many years. What English translations of them ever appeared (the present writer has not been able to find any) seem to have become lost" (308). As these textual moments indicate, translation for Prime-Stevenson, literary translation in particular, is a form of queer activism.

Although Hirschfeld cites it in his 1914 work *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (see Lauritsen 39), *The Intersexes* is not, from a medical or scholarly point of view, a significant study. Taken as a cultural document, it is, however, useful, because it offers insight into the importance of translation for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conceptualizations of homosexuality. As a metaphor, process, and act, translation not only facilitates but proves to be integral to Prime-Stevenson's discussion of homosexuality. Particularly important is the use of literary translation as a means for arguing for the social acceptance of homosexuality: the "man who is homosexual [must] be taught that he is not more criminal or monstrous than the 'normalist' ... Common-sense, science and humanity together demand this sort of medical-psychiatric sentiment; and in time social ideas and laws, the world around, will endorse such logical, human acceptances" (*The Intersexes* 121). Prime-Stevenson's overview and translation of Uranian-infused literature in *The Intersexes* work to that effect.

Written two years before *The Intersexes*, *Imre* encodes Prime-Stevenson's concern with translation, literary translation especially, as a means of garnering homosexual awareness and acceptance. The interplay for the terms he used to describe the work — "memorandum" (subtitle), "novelette" (*Imre* 112), and "romance" (*Imre* 210) — indicates that for him, as for Hirschfeld, literature offered readers artful case studies and that literature functioned as a mediating force, one that linked a general public with the world of scientific research (see Bauer 17). Literature and

translation are intertwined preoccupations in *Imre*. Together, they facilitate not only the telling of a homosexual love story but also, more specifically, a cross-cultural (and within the terms of early twentieth-century sexology a cross-racial) homosexual love story, wherein a romanticized understanding of Hungarianness serves as a metaphoric point of reference for Prime-Stevenson's thinking through and consolidating of homosexual identities. Approximately 100-pages long, divided into three parts, and loosely patterned on Platonic dialogue, *Imre* is most immediately indebted to Otto de Joux's (Otto Rudolf Podjuki) 1893 *Die Enterbten des Liebesglücks* (1897, expanded edition), a work that Prime-Stevenson briefly discusses in *The Intersexes* and does not credit as a crucial source text for his novel (for a discussion of the two texts, see Livesey 103-16.) As Wolfram Setz, editor of the 1997 rosa Winkel German edition of *Imre* remarks, "the correspondences are obvious. Mayne apparently liked de Joux's book and had read it with profit" (157; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine; note that the German edition of *Imre* lists Xavier Mayne as the author). Prime-Stevenson's English reworking of de Joux begins with a one-and-one-half-page prefatory letter. Written by an English businessman named Oswald and addressed to the author Xavier Mayne, the letter introduces Oswald's account of his meeting and falling in love with an Hungarian army officer, Imre, whose name serves as the novel's title. This mediating strategy, a convention of realistic fiction, is a reminder that Prime-Stevenson could not directly tell this gay love story without serious repercussions to his own social standing (E.M. Forster's the novel *Maurice*, written between 1913 and 1914, offers a point of comparison: the novel was not published until 1971, one year after Forster's death). Prime-Stevenson's penname and his further distinction between narrator-protagonist and author serve to insulate him from public scrutiny. The novel was released privately: the publisher, A. Rispoli of Napoli, printed only 500 copies (see Gifford, "A Brief Chronology" 28).

Translation's importance to the novel is apparent from the start. Oswald's account of his love story is linguistically mediated, racially marked, and musically themed. He and Imre speak to each other in German, as well as in French. Some of their words and phrases are, however, in Hungarian, and, at the novel's end, the swells of a "*cigány* orchestra" (Gypsy orchestra) together with "the free, impassioned leap and acclaim, '*huszár legény vagyok!*'" ("I am a lad of the hussars") form a musical backdrop to their celebration of "'the friendship which is love, the love which is friendship'" (*Imre* 126). As Oswald notes, he and Imre are "two men ... of absolutely diverse race, unlike objects in life and wide-removed environments, who could not even understand each other's mother-tongues" (72). In other words, the communication between characters of the "third sex" is in a "third [or fourth] language," and it is metaphorically aligned with an exoticized and musically inflected representation of Hungarian identity as "eternally oriental, minor-keyed, insidious, nerve-thrilling" (127). Oswald's and Imre's unfolding love story is a romance whose linguistic, racial, and sexual otherness depends upon translation; so, too, does the English-language memorandum recording that romance. The translation trope in effect structures readers' reception of the gay love story. In *Imre*, as in *The Intersexes*, translation is a means for not only understanding the naturalness of homosexuality but also discursively producing the homosexual subject. Moreover, since these processes are dependent upon readers' engagement, the trope may be said to queer the readers themselves, to place them in a mediating position that recalls Carpenter's description of Uranian men and women who "function as reconcilers and interpreters" (*Intermediate Sex* 38).

The novel's intertwining of ethnic, racial, and sexual discourses underscores Prime-Stevenson's investment in the translation trope. Imre's and Oswald's story takes place in *Szent-Istvánhely*, literally Saint Stephen Place (*Imre* 35, note 2), Prime-Stevenson's name for Budapest. This setting is interesting, given the history of sexology. As Robert D. Tobin has noted, Karl Maria (Károly Mária) Kertbeny, who coined that unruly if readily translatable term *der Homosexuale* ("the homosexual"), was both a homosexual rights advocate and a supporter of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution against Austrian rule (see also Takács; about eroticism and sexuality in Hungarian literature, see Tötösy de Zepetnek). *Imre*'s setting draws attention not only to sexology's but also to the novel's investment in the making and movement of meaning across geographical, cultural, linguistic, gender, and ethnic/racial divides. Budapest is a twin city, whose two parts, Buda and Pest, located on either side of the Danube, were joined together as one city in 1873. Connecting the two parts of the city was the Chain Bridge (Lánchíd) (Prime-Stevenson, *Imre* 66, note 1). In the novel the bridge functions as Prime-Stevenson's objective correlative for translation. The bridge metaphorically links the text's

discourses of ethnicity, race and sexuality, even as it symbolizes German's function as the "third language" on which Imre and Oswald depend for their relationship. The bridge also proves to be the locus for the men's first conversation about the "third sex" (65-68), an intriguing counterpoint to Radclyffe Hall's post-World War 1 metaphor in her 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness*, "the no-man's-land of sex" (79). Near the end of Part 1, two pages before mentioning the bridge, Oswald asks himself, "Was Imre von N. what is called among psychiaters of our day a homosexual, a Urning in his instincts and feelings and life, in his psychic and physical attitude toward women and men? Was he a Uranian? Or was he sexually entirely normal and Dionian? Or a blend of the two types, a Dionian-Uranian? Or what, or what not? ... Uranian? Similisexual? Homosexual? Dionian? Profound and often all too oppressive, even terrible, can be the significance of those cold psychic-sexual terms to the man who — 'knows!' *To the man who 'knows!'*" (63-64; emphasis in the original).

The movement here between terms — Oswald's uncertainty about Imre's relation to or location *vis-à-vis* the "cold" language of sexual identity — is recast subsequently in the bridge scene that follows the passage. What matters in the novel (as opposed to, say, in *The Intersexes*) is not so much the kind of homosexual each man is. Although Prime-Stevenson takes up this question several times in *Imre*, it proves to be less important than the possibility of recounting a romantic connection between Oswald and Imre. Sexological study gives way to love story. (For a slightly different reading, see Livesey, who argues that Oswald and Imre are "entirely masculine, in body and mind and emotion"; for him, this characterization constitutes a "completely new" kind of gay male love story (89). So, as they cross from one side of the city to the other, Imre himself broaches the subject: "'Do you have such affairs in England?' 'Yes. Certainly.' 'In military life?' 'In military and civil life. In every kind of life.' 'Indeed. And how do *you* understand that sort of thing?' 'What sort of thing?' 'A ... a man's feeling *that way* for another man? What's the explanation, the excuse for it?' "'Oh, I don't pretend to understand it. There are things we would better not try to *understand*'" (66; emphases in the original). Much as the bridge demarcates the space between Buda and Pest, the two men traversing it explore their relation to each other. Much as the bridge is suspended over the Danube, so the men's exchange is characterized by rhetorical suspension: question follows question. Rhetorically, their conversation marks them not as "men who know" but rather as "men who wish to know." Thus, the bridge offers an intermediate space for Imre and Oswald's initial shared claim to a discourse (though as of yet not an identity) of sexual intermediacy.

Within the novel, that discourse depends largely on translations facilitated by Oswald in his capacities as narrator and character. So, for example, Part 1 begins with an epigraph, taken from Austrian writer Franz Grillparzer's play *Die Argonauten* and translated into English (35). A few years later, Prime-Stevenson references the passage again in *The Intersexes* and provides a different translation that, this time, he marks as his own (307). In *Imre*, it is unclear whether the translation is Oswald's and by extension Prime-Stevenson's. Whatever the case, nine pages after offering the epigraph, Oswald alludes to it, this time in German, in order to underscore the lines' significance. The reference is meant to signify Imre and Oswald's "swift confidence, the current of immediate mutuality which sped back and forth between [them]: "Es gibt ein Zug, ein wunderliches Zug" (44), as Gifford translates, "there is an attraction, a strange attraction" (44, note 1). In the German edition, editor Setz notes that the German is "etwas entstellt" (Mayne 24, note), that is, "somewhat garbled," with a connotation of dislocation. Oswald gets the gender wrong: it is "der Zug," not "das Zug," that is, "there is a pull, a wonderful pull." Taken together, Oswald's English translation of the Grillparzer verse at the outset and his ungrammatical German recollection of the verse later in the chapter anticipate his uncertain relation to psychiatry's sexual terminology near the chapter's end. Even so, the literary citation accomplishes something that science's "oppressive," "terrible," and "cold terms" (64) cannot: it affirms a "current, mystic" the sense of which, one might argue, the imperfect translation actually intensifies. That is to say, Oswald's German may falter, but from the start his relationship with Imre, primarily carried out in German, does not. The citation, whether in English translation or in imperfect German, conveys and celebrates an intimacy that psychiatric discussions, tethered to alienating terminology, cannot. Stated differently, these moments in *Imre* reveal that translation is performative; it entails linguistic destabilization; the translation of literature in particular discloses the capacity of linguistic and social grammatical limits to be not only tested but transcended. Did Oswald get the gender wrong? Maybe not. What might be dismissed as disorderly grammatical conduct in

effect points to the aesthetic and cultural production of meaning outside the confines of the gender of grammar and the grammar of gender.

A related point may be made about the selectivity of Oswald's translation, particularly an instance of non-translation that proffers a queer intimacy between narrator and reader via a shared engagement of a literary text. In the final section of the novel, Oswald offers readers an account of his "coming out" conversation with Imre. Oswald's back story — his description of years of homosexual loneliness — builds to a declaration of love for Imre. In the process, Oswald quotes Platen's poetry twice, once in German and once in English. It is the first instance that is particularly interesting because of the queer performativity that it potentially requires of the novel's readers. Oswald records, "Ah, I could well exclaim in the cry of Platen" (90). A couplet, an English translation of which Gifford provides, "Woe to you whom all the world disdains just for being / And whose entire soul yearns just to be" (Prime-Stevenson, *Imre* 90, note 1), immediately follows: "O, weh Dir, der die Welt verachtet, allein zu sein / Und dessen ganze Seele schmachtet allein zu sein!" (90). For Imre, who speaks with Oswald in German, translation of this couplet from Platen's "Ghazal IV" is not necessary (or perhaps is not a possibility). Oswald, in his capacity as narrator, offers his readers no translation. The lack ruptures the fictional continuity between narrator and reader. Did Prime-Stevenson simply forget to translate? Was his German too shaky (as the above grammar mistakes might suggest)? Or was he interested in producing a break between narrator and reader: in locating his English readership in a position of potential linguistic remove, one that rhetorically mirrors Oswald's account of his own experience of homosexual isolation?

Interestingly, this remove enacts (or performs) the meaning of the untranslated couplet itself. Thematically, a ghazal explores the loss or lack of love and, the loss notwithstanding, the beauty of that love; the ghazal does so in part through formal features such as the repetition of key words and phrases. In the case of this couplet from Platen's ghazal, the repeated phrase is "allein zu sein," which in the first line conveys the doubled meanings of "just for being" and "to be alone" and in the second signifies "only to be" (compare with Gifford's translation, Prime-Stevenson, *Imre* 90, note 1). The couplet might be rendered in English as follows: "Woe to you, whom the world despises, to be alone [(or) just for being], / And whose whole soul yearns only to be." The narratologically induced distance thus both reproduces formally for readers the isolation that Oswald experiences and calls upon them to bridge it through a direct encounter with Platen: to tease out the meaning of his German—to themselves become his translators. This instance of the text's non-translation in effect invites readers to take up the task that is a signature feature of Prime-Stevenson's queer activism: not simply to mirror Oswald in his loneliness and so connect with him but also to engage the literary representation of that loneliness. Thus the ghazal couplet becomes not only for Platen and Oswald but also for Prime-Stevenson's readers a poetic expression of homosexual yearning. *Imre's* happy ending has as much to do with the characters Imre and Oswald's romance as with the literary act at the core of that romance: the narrator and the readers' shared experience of literary translation.

In conclusion, a comparative approach to Prime-Stevenson's *The Intersexes* and *Imre* illuminates late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century struggles to represent non-normative gender and sexual desires and identities, in this case, male homosexual desire and male homosexuality. Key to that struggle for Prime-Stevenson is translation. In his writing translation facilitates both the representation of the story of gay male desire and his articulation of that desire and its telling. The translation of literature in particular enables in these works not only the creation of epistemological and discursive spaces to think and represent same-sex desire, but also, beyond it, the emerging recognition, advocacy, and discursive codification of homosexual identity. In their awareness of the significance of translation — its capacity to validate, to de-stigmatize, and to transform — contemporary writers of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender literature such as Doty have much in common with Prime-Stevenson.

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