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SEX IN THE “PEARL OF THE DANUBE”: THE HISTORY OF QUEER LIFE, LOVE,  
AND ITS REGULATION IN BUDAPEST, 1873-1941

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Professor Belinda Davis and Professor Paul Hanebrink

approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The dissertation examines the ideas, regulations, and experiences of queer sexualities in Hungary between the birth of Budapest as a unified metropolis in 1873 and Hungary’s entry into World War II in 1941. Focusing on same-sex sexuality throughout Hungary’s turbulent history provides an illuminating case study about how political conservatism and tolerance of non-normative sexualities could coexist prior to WWII. By piecing together scattered information on how regulatory bodies (police, courts, and medical establishments) and individuals negotiated sexuality throughout Hungary’s turbulent history, while simultaneously reading for historical and current silences around sexuality, the study exposes the complex interplay between the modernization efforts of Hungarian authorities, liberal ideas that equated “gay friendliness” with progress, and practical realities on the ground. I reconstruct the ambiguous legal discourse of same-sex sexuality, which criminalized male homosexuals, and, yet left a lot of room not to

prosecute them. The chapters examine both discourses and lived experiences of non-normative sexualities using a wide range of sources that include: the homosexual registry of the Budapest Metropolitan police, contemporary investigative journalism reports, a lesbian scandal and legal case involving two of Hungary's leading conservative women, the records of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic Revolutionary Tribunal's Experimental Criminology Department, and various documents from the Hungarian legal system. I argue that regardless of the varying political constellations between 1873 and 1941, authorities did not attempt to repress "respectable" homosexuals because they believed that tolerance was a means to secure Budapest's place in the transnational Western urban community. I demonstrate that in spite of Hungary's authoritarian conservative climate of the interwar years, the discourses, regulation, and policing of same-sex sexuality show remarkable continuities from the pre-WW I era. Using same-sex sexuality as a lens, the dissertation also illustrates that Budapest was not a cultural backwater in prewar and interwar Europe, but was in fact an important location in a European conversation about non-normative sexuality that is more commonly associated with Berlin, London or Paris. In spite of the West's sense of "superiority" and Hungary and Eastern Europe's keenness to "catch up," the transmission of knowledge about sexuality and its management was not a one-way flow.

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## DEDICATION

A világ legjobb nagyijának és nagypapájának akik feltétlen szeretete minden eddigi  
sikerem alapja

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## Introduction

In 1908, the celebrated Hungarian writer Soma Guthi published *Homosexual Love*, as part of his new crime novel series.<sup>1</sup> The novel, which revolves around a tragic love story between two well-situated gentlemen, stands as one of the few Hungarian sources from this period that directly addresses same-sex love and sexuality. It offers a rare window onto early twentieth-century representations of homosexuality in Hungary. Guthi's frankness with his readers about homosexual people remains striking and seems remarkably liberal, even over a century later:

The papers do not provide enough information [about homosexuality] for the curious lay reader. This is despite the fact that the nature of homosexuality can be described in two short words: sensual friendship. Brave definition, but I believe it is quite accurate. In friendship, the existence of sensuality is nothing else than a wonderful exception to the rule...

Whoever knows them, knows very well that they are different from their fellow men only in the nature of their sexual desire, and otherwise, they are, by and large, intelligent, kind-hearted, and honest people, who never sin against public morality because of their unnatural desire. The Hungarian Criminal Code labels love between men "unnatural fornication," and according to paragraph 241 makes it punishable with up to one year in prison. The penal code does not actually define what constitutes a criminal offense in this case, however, and it is up to a judge to decide and assess whether or not "unnatural fornication" had taken place. And since the establishment of the Criminal Code, we know not *a single* case when *any* Hungarian urning [contemporary name for male homosexual] had been fined or had been prosecuted for unnatural fornication. This also proves that these unlucky, bastard children of nature (whose numbers are considerable, about 1500 in Budapest), despite their different sexual preference, commit no offense against public decency. Rather, they would sacrifice all their property and belongings and even take their own lives, rather than be put in front of the law or society's judgments, following the denunciations of an informer ("chanteur"), or a prostitute.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guthi, Soma. *Homosexuális Szeretem : Bűnügyi Regény* (Homosexual Love: A Crime Novel), Fekete Könyv: Eredeti Bűnügyi És Detektív Történetek (Black Book: Crime and Detective Stories). Budapest: Kunossy - Szilágyi és társa, 1908. Italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Guthi, 6-7; 159-164.

The writer of these lines, along with Hungarian officials and many of their contemporaries, was painfully aware of the growing presence of men in Budapest who had sex with, bought sex from, or sold sex to other men. As this dissertation will argue, many of Gutha's observations, such as the considerable presence of queer men in the city, suggest an ambiguous legal discourse of same-sex sexuality, which on the one hand criminalized male homosexuals, and, on the other hand, left a lot of room not to prosecute them. It also pointed toward the general silence around same-sex desire and acts that were characteristics of non-normative (queer) Budapest and that took place in both public and private places of the city. What was common knowledge for contemporaries about Budapest's extensive sexual public culture throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century, however, has been subsequently forgotten and, at times, actively written out of history. This is particularly true for the history of same-sex sexuality. Unlike Berlin, Paris, London, and Vienna, but similar to other East-Central European capitals, the historical existence of a vibrant queer sexual culture of Budapest has not been acknowledged, either in public memory or in the broad historical scholarship.<sup>3</sup> This project originated in a prolonged and frustrating search to locate queer sexualities in Hungary's past. Consequently, the driving force behind my work has been to historicize non-normative sexualities and thereby reinsert Hungary and East-Central Europe into the history of sexuality and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> The dissertation examines the ideas, regulations, and

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<sup>3</sup> The place of Vienna has been acknowledged in history of sexuality in the last five years. The most important works include, Gunter, Pelinka, and Herzog, eds. *Sexuality in Austria (Contemporary Austrian Studies 15)*. Transaction Publishers, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The historical scholarship on urban homosexuality is considerable, yet to date Budapest (along with East-Central Europe) has received no attention. The title of the most comprehensive book on the interwar period by Florence Tamagne is telling: *The History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*. United States: Algora Publishing, 2004. Prior to WWII Russian cities were the only non-Western European cities that had been studied. See Dan Healey's *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

lived experiences of queer sexualities in Hungary between the birth of Budapest as a unified metropolis in 1873 and Hungary's entry into World War II in 1941. Placing non-normative sexuality at the center of inquiry provides new insights for existing political histories of East-Central Europe, as well as for scholarship on gender and sexuality.

The history of queer sexualities provides an opportunity to reconsider some of the long-standing arguments about the nature of the different Hungarian political systems that existed between 1867 and 1944. Looking at the era of liberal politics during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy before 1914, the Democratic and Communist Revolutions in 1918-9, and the authoritarian conservative interwar regime through the lens of gender and sexuality yields unforeseen results. By examining these four different political systems and their specific relationships to sex, I show the tensions within the commonly assumed "friendly" relations between Hungarian liberalism, leftist political ideas, and queer sex. At the same time, by showing how an increasingly authoritarian conservative regime tolerated certain forms of queer sexualities I also confront the assumption that there was a historically antagonistic relationship between political conservatism and non-normative sexualities. Finally, examining the politics of non-normative sexuality throughout the radically different political systems from above, as well as from the ground up, highlights important continuities in the ways in which authorities approached queer sexuality in practice. In contrast to conventional histories that highlight ruptures and differences between Hungary's political systems the history of sexuality shows how subsequent ideologically opposed political regimes learned from and built upon each other's approaches. By establishing continuities my work argues that both liberal and conservative political regimes tolerated certain queer sexualities.

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The history of queer sexualities presents unexpected insights into the evolution of East-Central European states. By reconstructing the cumulative changes that took place in the treatment of sexuality from late nineteenth century until World War II the dissertation argues that the management of non-normative sexual and gender behavior was intimately tied to the Hungarian state building. Rather than a marginal issue, the way (police and legal) officials handled non-normative sexuality was an important marker of Budapest's, and more generally of the Hungarian state's place among rapidly modernizing European nation-states. The specific ways Hungarian authorities sought out and interacted with leading Western theories on sexuality, criminology, and penal reform, attest to a genuinely interconnected historical European urban community, where information was relatively transparent and circulated widely. A careful consideration of how authorities and individuals negotiated sexuality, in their attempts to modernize, points to how Hungarian officials were actually at the forefront in implementing new approaches in the regulation and treatment of sexuality on a number of occasions. Such a discovery pushes the boundaries of current scholarship on transnational information flow prior to World War II in a way that challenges that (traditional) view of Western European and American metropolises as central sites and disseminators of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> I argue that in spite of the West's insistence on "superiority" and Hungary's (and Eastern Europe's more generally) keenness to "catch up," the transmission of knowledge was not necessarily a one-way flow, nor did it recognize the major East/West divide.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Historians of sexuality in general contend that queer sexualities and homosexual subcultures were first formed in Western urban areas. These works emphasize the importance of living in a city to same-sex sexuality. And while there are some innovative works in the US, such as John Howard's *Men Like That* that examine the centripetal influence of cities on rural sexuality, there is a lack of work in the European context that considers the co-constitutive nature of urban and rural same-sex sexuality.

<sup>6</sup> By Eastern and Western Europe I refer to both geographic and cultural boundaries as well as intellectually invented differences. At the same time, neither Eastern nor Western Europe can be reduced to homogenous

The historiography of European sexuality conspicuously lacks works on same-sex sexuality in East-Central Europe.<sup>7</sup> There are two main reasons for this. The first reason is that, within – as well as outside of – the walls of East-Central European academic institutions, homophobia (along with sexism) continues to be present. A direct association between intellectual topic of work and (sexual) identity makes writing on queer history a challenging endeavor. The second reason has to do with the scarcity of sources. In addition to the devastation of World War II that destroyed many historical archives, four decades of Communist rule contributed to the silencing of the historical sources on non-normative sexuality. As in the case of other sensitive issues, Historical records on sexuality, especially non-normative sexuality, have been closely guarded even after 1989. In light of these obstacles, the excavation of a lost or forgotten pre WWII queer community whose very existence has been denied is an important step in reintegrating East-Central European queer histories into a pan-European discourse.

Tracking how fundamentally different political constellations thought about and treated non-normative sexuality offers valuable insights to existing queer histories. This dissertation identifies historical variables that – regardless of the nature of existing political regimes – were crucial in shaping ideas and practices of queer sex. My findings highlight how throughout Budapest’s tumultuous history, the idea of “respectability” in conjunction with the importance of gender norms and class and the deliberate official

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entities. See Larry Wolff’s *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994). I demonstrate that the effects of the world-famous work of Magnus Hirschfeld, Krafft-Ebing, and Sigmund Freud were not confined to Berlin and Vienna. This is evidenced by medical publications such as Sándor Ferenczi’s *A homosexualitás szerepe a paranoia pathogenesisében* (The role of homosexuality in paranoia pathogenesis) (1911) Pál Harmat *Freud, Ferenczi és a magyarországi pszichoanalízis a budapesti mélylélektani iskola iskola története, 1908-1983* (Freud, Ferenczi and the histories of Hungarian psychoanalytic school and Budapest depth-psychology school 1908-1983) (1986), “Typus Budapestiensis : tanulmányok a pszichoanalízis budapesti iskolájának történetéről és hatásáról” (Studies on the history and effects of Budapest psychoanalytic school) in *Thalassa* Special edition 2008.

<sup>7</sup> I will provide a literature review in the historiography section.

silencing of non-normative sexual discourses, cut across different political establishments. It thus remained the decisive factor in determining the fate of people who engaged in non-normative sexual behavior. In this context, “respectability” was defined as gainful employment and keeping one’s sexual affairs private. The incorporation of rural voices on queer female sexuality offers new ways to conceptualize the dissemination of popular knowledge about sexuality.

### *The Birth of the Pearl of the Danube*

In 1892, Doctor Albert Shaw, an American journalist and editor of the *American Monthly and Review of Reviews* published an article upon returning from a European trip. Entitled, “Budapest: The Rise of a Metropolis,” it was an exposé on the rise of a new, distinctly urban, European capital city:

To the world at large, Budapest, the capital and metropolis of Hungary, is the least known of all the important cities of Europe. No other falls so far short of receiving the appreciation of its merits. Several reasons may be assigned for this comparative obscurity, among which are remoteness from the chief thoroughfares of travel and commerce, the isolation of Magyar language and literature, and the subordination of all things Hungarian to the Austrian name and fame. But the most important reason is the simplest of all: the Budapest of to-day is so new that the world has not had time to make its acquaintance. Its people justly claim for it the most rapid growth of all the European capitals, and is fond of likening its wonderful expansion to that of San Francisco, Chicago, and other American cities.<sup>8</sup>

Characteristic of American idealism, Shaw’s writing reflects a kind of late nineteenth-century optimism that was perhaps for the only time in history also shared by Hungarians and especially the inhabitants of Budapest. Writing for an American audience, Shaw provides a delightful analysis of the city that within three decades had grown from three sleepy towns to a buzzing metropolis. A latecomer to urbanization and other

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<sup>8</sup> Shaw, Albert. “Budapest: The Rise of a New Metropolis.” *The Century Magazine*, 1892. 1.

characteristics of modernity, Hungary and particularly Budapest witnessed an era of remarkably speedy transformation following the establishment of the Dual Monarchy in 1867.<sup>9</sup> Unlike many European capitals, which had been developing for centuries, Budapest experienced a rather sporadic and troubled development.<sup>10</sup> As late as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Hungary because of its geographic and turbulent history, experienced hardly any urbanization.<sup>11</sup> In the second decade of the nineteenth century, Pest and Buda together boasted only about eighty thousand inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> Well into the middle of the century Pest-Buda remained a sleepy town, completely in the shadow of Imperial Vienna. However, this was all about to change, with the arrival of industrial capitalism, and as a new generation of Western-European educated, progressive-minded politicians, literary figures, and scholars came of age.<sup>13</sup>

Even though the aims for Hungarian national sovereignty vis-à-vis Habsburg Austria were crushed by the Revolution of 1848-9, adherence to political and economic liberalism became the guiding principle among the Hungarian elite.<sup>14</sup> Following a decade of repression during the Habsburg retaliation, Hungary received a second chance

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<sup>9</sup> Hungary became part of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1526. It was split into three parts following the Ottomans captured Buda in 1541. After 150 year of war with the Ottomans, with the retreat of the Ottoman Empire Hungary was “liberated” and unified under Habsburg rule in 1718. Following the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-9, after the initial repression, Vienna made a strategic move to appease Hungarian separatism and save the Habsburg Monarch from growing nationalists movements. Consequently, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 created the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary.

<sup>10</sup> See János Poor’s “History of Budapest from Its Beginnings to 1703” and László Csorba, “Buda, Pest, and Obuda Between 1703 and 1815” in András Gerő and János Poór, *Budapest: History from its Beginnings to 1998*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> The three former towns that came to form the future capital, Buda and Pest and especially Óbuda all had a long history, and it was one of shared conflict. First the Mongol invasion of 1241-42 almost completely destroyed them and then 145 years of Turkish occupation (1541- 1686) posed a serious impediment to their growth and improvement.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> This was the so-called Reform Age in Hungarian history that lasted from the 1790s until 1848-9. Its key figures were Lajos Kossuth and István Széchenyi.

<sup>14</sup> Csorba László. “A Folyamatos Gyarapodás Időszaka: 1815-1873” (The Phase of Continuous Gain): 1815-1873). *Budapesti Negyed : Lap a Városról* 6. évf. (1998): 62–105.

only when the Habsburg Monarchy experienced heavy losses to unified Italian forces. By granting sovereignty for Hungary's internal affairs, the Compromise of 1867 that created the Dual Monarchy opened the way for progressive Hungarian forces. The establishment of a modern Hungarian capital that embodied the liberal vision of the Hungarian elite was a logical outcome. The administrative establishment of Budapest in 1873, with the merging of Buda, Óbuda, and Pest, gave a kick-start to the creation of a modern metropolis. The Hungarian political elite had a clear vision for the new capital: it was to demonstrate not only Hungary's strength in relation to its Austrian counterpart, but also Hungary's progress within the larger European context.<sup>15</sup> As Shaw observed and pointed out to his readers, the spectacular rise of Budapest was the result of a few distinct developments: the establishment of a national and international transportation network with Budapest at its center, the creation of a sovereign financial and commercial system, and investment in industry, which soon made the city into the mill capital of the world.<sup>16</sup> The interplay of these factors, similarly to major American and Western European cities at the time, facilitated a rapid population growth rate.<sup>17</sup> At the outbreak of the Great War, the number of inhabitants was almost a million, making Budapest one of the biggest

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<sup>15</sup> Zsuzsa L. Nagy - Transformation in the City Politics of Budapest: 1873-1941 in Bender, Thomas, and Carl Schorske. *Budapest and New York : Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870-1930*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Thanks to a Hungarian invention of the so-called "middling purifier" and gradual reduction system, which were then also implemented by millers in Minnesota, Budapest and Minneapolis contemporaneously became the two milling centers in the world. By 1900, in terms of railway tracks and accessibility, Budapest and Hungary was on par with the railway system of Paris and of France. Vörös, Károly, "A Fővárostól a Székesfővárosig 1873- 1896," in Spira, György, and Vörös, Károly eds. *Budapest története a márciusi forradalomtól az őszirózsás forradalomig*. (History of Budapest from March Revolution to the Aster Revolution) Budapest története. Budapest: Budapest Főváros Tanácsa: Akadémia Kiadó, 1978, 325

<sup>17</sup> During the late nineteenth century for brief period Budapest along with Berlin the fastest growing European city, whose population growth was only matched by cities of the New World. Bart, István. *Budapest krónikája : a kezdetektől napjainkig* (The Chronicle of Budapest). Budapest: Corvina, 2007, 277-330.



European metropolises.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, as historians of Hungary have described, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the Golden Age of Budapest, in terms of political, economic, cultural, and social developments.<sup>19</sup>

The transformation of Budapest into a major metropolis which became the industrial, financial and political center of Hungary and even East-Central Europe more broadly was intimately tied to Hungary's unique political and social circumstances. At the time of the Compromise of 1867, Hungary was a multiethnic, feudal society, with a powerful Hungarian aristocracy, whose members set out to modernize and unify the Hungarian side of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>20</sup> However, they championed a particular kind of modernization. Budapest was becoming a capitalist modern city, run jointly by powerful liberal aristocrats and a financial elite, with a growing middle and working class.<sup>21</sup> The so-called *virilista* (meaning highest tax payers) system assured that the most influential

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<sup>18</sup> Between 1870 and 1910 Budapest's population grew by more than 600,000 people.

<sup>19</sup>For political history and especially the success of "Magyarization" see Nemes, Robert. *The Once and Future Budapest*. DeKalb Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. For economic development during the period see Janos, Andrew C. *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982, 149-159. Berend, T. Iván, Tamás Csátó, János. *Evolution of the Hungarian Economy 1848-1998*. One-and-a-half centuries of semi-successful modernization, 1848-1989 Boulder, Colo.; Highland Lakes, N.J.; New York: Social Science Monographs ; Atlantic Research and Publications ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2000, Chapter I: The Birth of Modern Capitalist Economy, 1848-1914, and Hanák Péter, *The Garden and the Workshop: Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest*. 1998. For cultural history the seminal book remains John Lukacs. *Budapest 1900 : a Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture*. New York: Weindenfeld & Nicolson, 1988. For social history see Gyáni, Gábor, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch. *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*. Boulder, Colo.; Highland Lakes, N.J.; New York: Social Science Monographs ; Atlantic Research and Publications ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2004, Part I. Gyáni, Gábor. *Az Utca És a Szalon. A Társadalmi Térhasználat Budapesten (1870–1940)*. Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> Thanks to the Compromise, the Hungarian Kingdom was restored and the Hungarian government gained full sovereignty in determining the country's internal affairs. In addition, the Hungarian government was granted authority over a considerable territory that stretched from Bratislava to Trieste. The Hungarian lands were truly multiethnic, with non-Hungarian language speakers comprising about 45 percent of the population.

<sup>21</sup> Vörös Károly. "A Világváros Útján: 1873-1918" (On the Way of Becoming a Metropolis, 1873-1918). *Budaepesi Negyed : Lap a Városról* 2-3:20-21. (1998), 112–122.

financial elite would gain automatic representation in the governing bodies of the city.<sup>22</sup>

In this unprecedented arrangement, the new financial (largely Jewish) liberal elite, along with the traditional aristocracy, had a lion's share of the control in steering Budapest on a simultaneously capitalist, liberal, and increasingly democratic path, while maintaining aristocratic power.<sup>23</sup> The *virilista* system, which was a very particular type of liberalism, undemocratically assured that lucrative financial investments were secured and business plans were instituted in a way that benefited both the financial elite in Budapest as well as the city's overall growth.<sup>24</sup> United in their belief in liberal capitalism, the financial and political elite, while ultimately keeping their hands on political power, also facilitated an emerging mass society. It was defined by fast-paced social integration for incoming inhabitants, as well as considerable room for the rising new middle class of immigrant professionals, Hungarian civil servants and professionals, and workers in the industry and trade.<sup>25</sup> Along with liberal economic policies, much of the leadership of Budapest believed in the limited expansion of political rights, but the great expansion social rights for its inhabitants.<sup>26</sup> At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Hungarian capital was well on its way to become a modern, booming metropolis.

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<sup>22</sup> The word *virilis* came from the Latin *vir*, meaning man. "Virils" in Hungarian originally meant "manly" and over time it came to refer to the system where people who paid the highest taxes would be automatically represented in City Councils. The Hungarian political elite borrowed the idea of virilizmus from Prussia. The law XXXVI of 1872 codified that 200 of the 400 members of Budapest's Municipal Committee would be elected from the 1200 largest taxpayers. Vörös, Károly. *Budapest legnagyobb adófizetoi : 1873-1917* (Budapest's largest taxpayers: 1873-1917). Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1979, 7-9.

<sup>23</sup> Despite the fact that the system was fundamentally "anti-democratic," by facilitating rapid industrialization and the growth of commerce, it also contributed to making Budapest more urban and creating modern society, with growing middle and working classes.

<sup>24</sup> Vörös, Károly, "A Fővárostól a Székesfővárosig 1873- 1896," 460-461.

<sup>25</sup> While between 1896 and 1918 the pace of social upward mobility decreased, the growth of the urban working class accelerated. Vörös Károly. "A Világváros Útján: 1873-1918," 122 - 130.

<sup>26</sup> The Municipal Council invested unprecedented money in making Budapest more liveable. Major hospitals, public housing projects, sanitation system were some of the hallmarks of the Council's achievements. Siklóssy, László. *Hogyan Épült Budapest?: 1870-1930* (How was Budapest built? : 1870-1930). Budapest: ÉTK, originally printed in 1931, reprinted in 2004, 200-350.

However, from the moment of the establishment of Budapest, there was an inherent tension between the cosmopolitan capital and the rest of the country, where traditional customs prevailed. By and large, the rapid modernization of economic and social relations remained characteristic only of Budapest and a few other urban centers. The rest of the country remained firmly grounded in feudal social, political, and economic relations. Despite the rise of the capital as a financial and industrial powerhouse, and successful “Magyarization” of its ethnic minorities, in the eyes of a growing number of members of the conservative, traditional Hungarian aristocracy and lower nobility, the growing metropolis was increasingly seen as the antithesis of “Hungarian.”<sup>27</sup> Conservatives and many members of the traditional social elites, especially those outside of the capital considered Budapest to be alien and undesirable for its large assimilated Jewish, and German financial elite and powerful middle classes that in the eyes of many dominated financial and legal professions, rapidly growing working classes, as well as unprecedented numbers of single women in the workforce.<sup>28</sup> Budapest’s religious make-up, with its twenty-three percent Jewish and fifteen percent Protestant population, only fueled the contempt of the traditional Hungarian Catholic aristocracy.<sup>29</sup> For conservatives and, from the 1890s a growing number of socialists, Budapest embodied the ills of liberal capitalism. Nevertheless, it was not until the last

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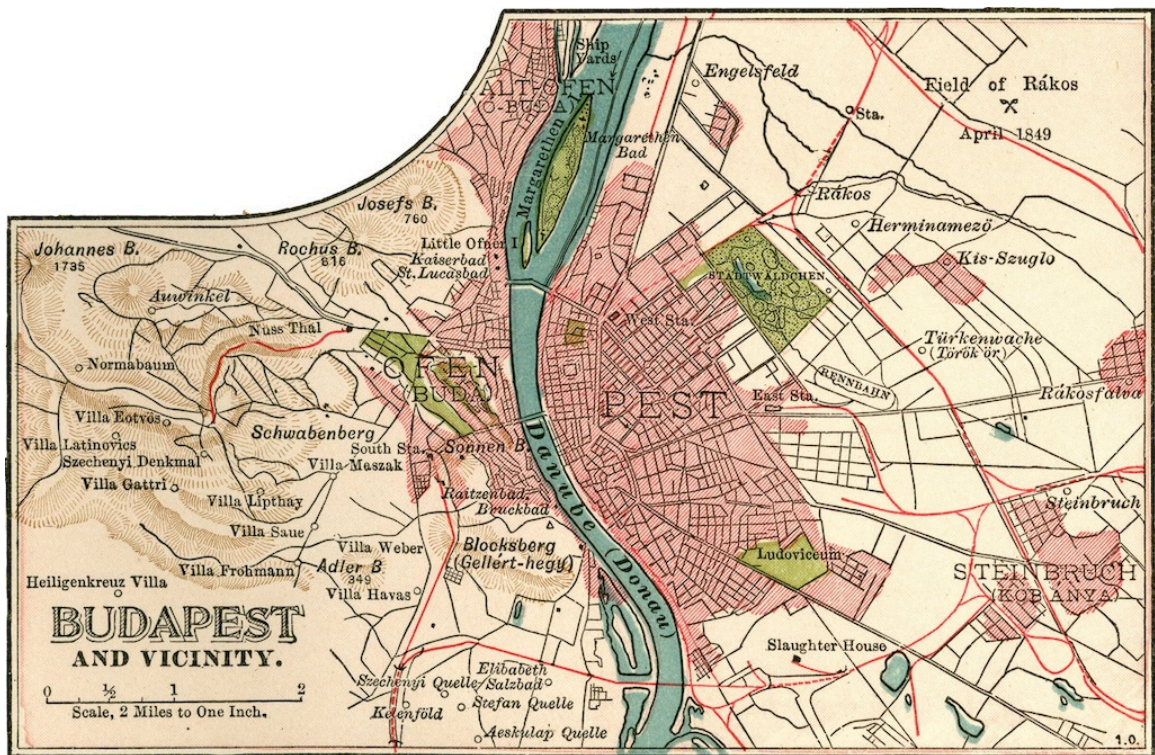
<sup>27</sup> „Magyarization” refers to the systematic efforts of the subsequent Hungarian governments from 1871 to assimilate and turn non-Hungarian ethnic populations living within the confines of the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy into Hungarian.

<sup>28</sup> The precise number of people with Jewish and German origins in the financial and educated classes is still debated. Nevertheless, by 1900 the cumulative percent of people with German and Jewish origins in the educated professions and financial businesses were close or above fifty percent. Since 1860s the schools in Budapest taught only in Hungarian, which greatly accelerated the cultural and language assimilation of large non-Hungarian communities (German, Slavic, Jewish, Greek). Vörös Károly. “A Világváros Útján: 1873-1918,” 124.

<sup>29</sup> In 1910 Budapest was close to sixty percent Catholic, twenty-three percent Jewish, ten percent Calvinist and about five percent Lutheran. From the establishments of Budapest Catholic religion declined over ten percent. Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Évkönyve az 1944-1946. évekről, KSH, Budapest. 1948, 14. In contrast, the percentage of Jews in the rest of Hungary, was less than five percent.

year of World War I that the organic connection between the city's structure and a particular type of liberalism was broken. Likewise, while anti-liberal and anti-Budapest voices were on the rise among these populations, for most people (official and lay private citizens alike) Budapest remained a shining example, the “pearl on the Danube,” and testament to the greatness of the Hungarian Kingdom throughout the years of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

### BUDAPEST – 1900



The growth of the city happened within a relatively confined space. Budapest virtually exploded within a fifty-year period. People poured in from the countryside by the thousands, with the hope of finding jobs and a livelihood in the many new factories and industries that guaranteed higher pay than seasonal, irregular agricultural work.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> “Magyarország gazdasági és szociálisállapota a XX. század első évtizedében” (Hungary's economic and social condition in the first decade of the twentieth. Century), *Husadik Század*, IX (1908): 12: 439 – 695.

The rapid population expansion, however, was not accompanied by spatial expansion. The city remained relatively small, and incorporated nearby villages rather than building new suburbs.<sup>31</sup> The geographic attributes of Budapest also played a role in the concentration of the population. The Buda side, on the west side of the Danube, with its picturesque rolling hills, remained relatively sparsely populated, aside from the districts surrounding the Royal Castle. In 1841 there were approximately thirty-eight thousand people living on the Buda side and about ninety thousand in 1890.<sup>32</sup> It was the Pest side that mostly absorbed the new inhabitants to tallying sixty-eight thousand in 1840, and half a million by 1890.<sup>33</sup> It did so, not by territorial expansion, but rather with a dense concentration of people into a rather small two- by three-mile area. As a result, Budapest's spatial constellation produced some of the densest living conditions in Europe, inhabited by people most of whom had migrated from some of the most sparsely populated parts of Europe.<sup>34</sup> In contrast with Paris, London, Vienna and many other European capitals in this era, the physical organization of Budapest was such that members of different classes remained in close proximity to one another.<sup>35</sup> In fact, there were a surprising number of middle- and working-class tenants living together in the same buildings.<sup>36</sup> This fluid use of space across class lines was also true for public

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<sup>31</sup> Spira, György, and Károly Vörös. *Budapest Története a Márciusi Forradalomtól Az Őszirózsás Forradalomig*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978.

<sup>32</sup> Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Évkönyve az 1944-1946. Évekről, 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* Villagers who moved to the city, of course did not become urbanites overnight. Rather, they took their village backgrounds with all their rural habits to the city.

<sup>35</sup> Péter Hanák *The Garden and the Workshop*, Gábor Gyáni in *Identity and the Urban Experience: Fin-de-Siècle Budapest* (2004) suspects that reasons for this might had a theoretical basis which was that according to governing bodies in charge of urban planning close proximity of different classes would bring a more peaceful relations, 48. For general spatial layout and urban development of major cities I found Donald J. Olsen's *The City as a Work of Art. London – Paris – Vienna* (1986) useful.

<sup>36</sup> Budapest's urban environment was similar to the mixing of tenants in apartment buildings found in Berlin. This mixing was a deliberate decision under Emperor William II His-Huey Liang "Lower Class Immigrants in Wilhelmine Berlin" in *The Urbanization of European Society in the Nineteenth Century* eds.

spaces and to some extent even neighborhoods. Budapest retained this distinct urban characteristic throughout the interwar years.<sup>37</sup> Although its territory expanded between the wars, this did not significantly change the city's spatial composition until the end of World War II.

### *Budapest and The Politics of Sex*

Unsurprisingly, the unique urban development of Budapest had an impact on the sexual landscape of the city and also on the ways in which city officials came to deal with same-sex sexuality. What Albert Shaw probably deliberately withheld from his modest American readers, but what was obvious for anyone who visited Budapest in the late nineteenth century, was the extent to which the new capital embraced a public sex culture. *The Morality of Budapest*, a satirical social critique dating from 1902 observed that

The parameters of Budapest today are actually small enough that people cannot hide their actions from each other. In spite of this, the city's moral standards stand at such surprising[ly] low levels that they are almost impossible to characterize. With the most certainty, we can conclude that no city in the world so openly cultivates the profiteering of all forms of vice, at the expense of morality, than does Budapest. Vice is openly present in public spaces, with official assistance. Frankly, this city operates as a real sex expo, where sex is considered as the most comfortable, most natural form of work, and actually thought of as a perfectly normal industry; people give and take, without anyone being offended by it, or protesting against it. At every street corner, there stand five or six painted pieces of merchandise, who in broad daylight sell themselves

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Andrew Lees and Lyn Lees cited in Gyáni. Consequently both in Berlin and in Budapest even though there were clear separations along class lines, different social classes were still in physical, and thus social proximity to one another.

<sup>37</sup> While there were changes in the ethnic make-up of the city, its character and urban design changed little in the interwar years. One of the most useful histories of Budapest's architectural and urban landscape from a comparative perspective remains Pál Granasztói's *Budapest arcuatai* (Images of Budapest). Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1980.

just as freely as under the night's wet air, when they throw themselves on anyone who comes their way.<sup>38</sup>

The relatively small size of the city may have made anonymity more difficult, but the author suggests that the city's inhabitants valued neither secrecy nor moral purity. The liberal atmosphere that surrounded sex in Budapest – whether it was publications about sex, illustrations and photographs of naked bodies, or first and foremost the buying sex – gained recognition at home and abroad by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> As satirical as the tone of the author is, and as imaginary as his content might have been, the author's description and his recognition of the liberal atmosphere reflected the contemporary view of the Hungarian capital.<sup>40</sup> “Budapest was the city with the most festivities on the continent.”<sup>41</sup> According to social critics and a growing number of conservative voices, fin-de-siècle Budapest or the “Sinful City,” as they increasingly referred to it had a swiftly expanding public sex culture.<sup>42</sup> Spurred by the growth of urban mass media and most especially the penny press, in the 1880s, the Budapest press regularly discussed prostitution, the supposed liberal sexual morals, and the lax regulation of the sex

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<sup>38</sup> “Budapest erkölce” (The Morality of Budapest), in Kostyál, Jenő. *A Budapesti Leányvásár Titkai* (The Secrets of Budapest's Girl Market Budapest). Fritz Ármin könyvnyomdája: Kostyál Jenő, 1902, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> While Budapest's “bigger sister” Vienna definitely remained more significant in the production of nude and sexual images, Budapest was also gaining momentum, despite the fact that officially the publication of these images were not allowed. At the turn of the century Vienna was also experiencing both an imagined and actual expansion of public sex culture. For the most recent work on the history of sexuality see footnote 3.

<sup>40</sup> At the turn of the century there were 930 pubs, 249 cafés, 87 restaurants, and 426 small cafés in the city. In addition to bordellos, prostitution was present in many of these establishments as well as in local baths and hotels. Judit Forrai, “Kávéházak és kéj nők,” *Budapesti Negyed*, no. 2 (1996): 120.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Bűnös* “sinful” was increasingly referred to Budapest indicating its immoral public morality. The phrase *sinful* soon became an umbrella term for critiquing the capital for its cosmopolitanism, non-Hungarian elements, and lax mores. In the words of Pesti Herald (1899), a daily newspaper, “The demoralizing smells of obscene Budapest emanates to the West, which threatens the national honor. The Hungarian life and character has no influence in the capital. It is some kind of cosmopolitan levity, which provides the color for all the festivities and partying.” Cited in Siklossy Miklos, 58.

industry.<sup>43</sup> Sex sold papers while papers became key vehicles for disseminating discourse and knowledge about sex.

Same-sex love and desire did not figure prominently in this explosion of mostly uncensored printed sex talk until the first decade of the twentieth century when a few books and articles about erotic relations between men began to appear.<sup>44</sup> *Metropolitan Mores* (1908) openly acknowledge the existence of “unnatural” love in Budapest, not just in its public culture, but in the privacy of family life. More ominously, the author warned that this “sick love” was so pervasive and so visible that it threatened the very existence of what constituted “natural” love.

If we take a closer look at Budapest’s love life, and also want to introduce it in its truest form, we have to divide the types of love that exist in the city into two main groups: the natural, healthy love and sick love... The life of the capital provides thousands and thousands of examples of the different manifestations of sexual life all day long, from morning until night. After all, that is why our nice Budapest is a large city. A myriad of night clubs and cafes further develop and shape the already awakened desires. In turn, all desires of humankind are experienced in the city, including the *wild offshoots of nature*. These wild offshoots are well-known and cunning perversities, which proliferate at the places of love, just like they do within so many families. After all, even here there can be some distinction made, considering that nowadays there are some perversities that have plunged themselves into the public consciousness, almost as if they were natural.<sup>45</sup>

The “wild offshoots of nature,” the author’s term for same-sex love, was so widespread that he worried that it would become normalized as something “natural,” like the love

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<sup>43</sup> Following the Compromise of 1867 Hungary readopted the 1848 regulation of the press, which granted in contemporary standards, great freedom and protection of speech. From the 1880s Budapest had a rapidly expanding commercial based press. For instance, in 1870 there were about 80 different publications in Budapest. By 1900 there were 384 publications. Lipták Dorottya. “A Családi Lapoktól a Társasági Lapokig : Újságok És Újságolvasók a Századvégen” (From the Family Papers to Social Magazines: Newspapers and newspaper readers in the late nineteenth century). *Budapesti Negyed : Lap a Városról* 1997: 5, 47.

<sup>44</sup> For the history of the Hungarian press see, Buzinkay, Géza, and Kókay, György. *A Magyar Sajtó Története I. : a Kezdetektől a Fordulat Évéig*. Budapest: Ráció, 2005, section “Az üzleti sajtó térhódítása, 1878-1918,” available online, <http://vmek.oszk.hu/03100/03157/03157.htm#22>, last accessed April, 12, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Szatmáry, Sándor. *Nagyvárosi Erkölcsök: Budapest Sexuális Élete* (Metropolitan Morals: Budapest’s Sexual Life). Budapest: Országos Laptudósító, 1908, 12-15. Italics are mine.



between a man and a woman. By the 1900s, manifestations of what contemporaries referred to as “sick” or “unnatural” love were evident apparently even to those who did not want to take note of them.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, both the authorities and social critics believed that *not* talking about “perversities,” first and foremost among them homosexuality, was an essential element in stopping the spread of the “disease” across European metropolises. Regardless of disagreements about the roots and causes of same-sex desire, there was a tacit agreement among them, fueled by fear that talking about it, even if only to condemn it, would inevitably ignite, same-sex desire in some people. As a result, in the period between 1873 and 1942, apart from a series of articles during the 1900s, there are almost no traces of men who had sex with men and what was eventually labeled as “male homosexuality” in the popular press or in official documents. The notion that even reading or talking about homosexuality could “infect” people remained pervasive throughout Hungary’s most tumultuous decades when the country experienced four different political constellations: monarchy (1867-1918), liberal democracy in 1918, communism in 1919, and authoritarian conservatism from 1920 until 1944.<sup>47</sup> The collective silencing around issues of homosexuality cut across political and ideological divides; outside of the medical and legal professions, the subject of homosexuality was taboo.

Yet, as my dissertation will demonstrate, men who had sex with men and women who had sex with women were an integral part of the growing city. Sex between men

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<sup>46</sup> Contemporary sources that suggest that people would have come across same-sex acts include popular books that explicitly address homosexuality and the articles of the official police journal, *Rendőri Lapok*.

<sup>47</sup> Such view was of course not unique to Hungary, but as scholars in different contexts have illustrated, a wider European phenomenon. For a comparative perspective see Florence Tamagne’s *History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, 1919-1939*, part two; “A Brief Apogee: the 1920s, A First Homosexual Liberation.”

was criminalized according to the Hungarian Penal Code of 1878. This, however, like in all places where homosexuality was unlawful, did not prevent men from having sex and romantic relationships with other men. Rather, the regulation of homosexuality proved its existence.<sup>48</sup> Authorities in Budapest were acutely aware of a growing queer culture.<sup>49</sup> The Metropolitan Police in the late 1880s became one of the first police forces to create a “homosexual registry.” This was an integral part of Hungarian authorities’ efforts to establish a modern city, even if it would be another two decades before the registry (along with the police itself) began to function more effectively. In 1892 Albert Shaw noted to his American readers about the nature of Hungarians, i.e. that “Budapest is now the capital of a nation of seventeen millions of progressive and ambitious people, and this new political fact is of itself sufficient to account for much of its growth.”<sup>50</sup> The police’s approach to homosexuality reflected Shaw’s general observation about “progressive” and “ambitious” Hungarians. In the eyes of the police, the presence of homosexuals was one manifestation of Budapest’s arrival as a modern metropolis, and it required a sophisticated response. The implementation and subsequent operation of the homosexual registry was supposed to be a testament to the Metropolitan Police’s own ambitiously modern and scientifically progressive population management. By combining the latest law enforcement and criminological theories, the registry served as a means to

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<sup>48</sup> As Michele Foucault in *History of Sexuality* argued creating the category of the “homosexual” and the consequent criminalization and pathologization of homosexual acts was essential in the dissemination of homosexual acts and identity formation. *The History of Sexuality*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

<sup>49</sup> The connection between urban places and emerging queer and homosexual activities has been extensively documented in the Western context. The literature on the historical relationship between cities and homosexual identity and subcultures is also extensive. A highly informative overview of existing literature is Aldrich, Robert. “Homosexuality and the City: An Historical Overview.” *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (August 1, 2004): 1719–1737. For the latest work see for instance, Abraham, Julie. *Metropolitan Lovers : the Homosexuality of Cities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Shaw, 2.

demonstrate that Budapest was ready to take its place in the modern West.<sup>51</sup> However, at the same time, the homosexual registry also signified their ambivalence about the unhealthy effect of urban modernity. In spite of the turbulent political changes during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the registry continued to be a staple item. In fact, the homosexual registry remained in use at least until the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1962, and it is more than likely that it continued to have a function (although perhaps not the same one) until the end of Communism in 1989.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the lack of criminalization and official silence around female homosexuality, the issue of female same-sex sexuality ignited one of Hungary's greatest political scandals. Since female homosexuality was not criminalized legal, and police sources remained mostly silent about women who had sexual relationships with women.<sup>53</sup> During the first decade of the twentieth century there was a brief window when sex and love between women was more openly discussed, particularly in popular literature.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> As scholars have demonstrated the modern West was by no means a homogenic entity, At the same time, Hungary along with other (future) East-Central Europe states, constantly looked to the West (particularly to England, France and Germany) and defined its own progress by how quickly it could attain Western European standards. At the same time, as Larry Wolf in *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* has convincingly demonstrated that the idea of "backwardness" of the East and "modernity" of the West was as much as an intellectual construction as it was a reality. Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> In my first chapter, I document a court case as late as in 1966 involving homosexuals (and likely there are later ones) that still refer to an existing homosexual registry. This was the case despite of the fact that from 1962 onwards, male homosexual activity was no longer a criminal act.

<sup>53</sup> The Hungarian Penal Code in terms of the criminalization of female homosexuality rejected its Austrian counterpart that criminalized both male and female homosexuality. In the rare discussions of homosexuality in the legal realm, legal scholars did highlight the inconsistency of the law dealing with male and female homosexuality. In these instances, female homosexuality was used either to argue that male homosexuality should also be decriminalized, or that to make the law "fair," female homosexuality should also be criminalized. This was particularly the case in 1909 and in 1936-7.

<sup>54</sup> There were also some fictional representations of erotic relationships between women, which no doubt aroused male fantasies as much as they attested to the presence of same-sex relationships between women. Following a publication titled *Júlia És a Nők* (Julia and Women) by an unknown author in 1888, the series about the erotic and sexual experiences of a well-situated young woman (written under the pseudonym of Irma Nagy) became immensely popular. The heroin, who engages in wild sexual adventures with members of both sexes eventually "falls" in love with a woman. The series included three books; *Bűnös Szerelmek: Egy Úrileány Vallomásai* (Sinful Loves; Confessions of a Lady). Budapest: Magyar Könyvkiadó, 1908;

Love between women was also discussed in the contexts of prostitution. According to contemporary accounts, “it [was] a well-known fact that most prostitutes, whose numbers by the turn of century were considerable, ‘kept their’ hearts for their female lovers.”<sup>55</sup> But from the 1880s official accounts (government, police, or public health sources) intentionally avoided addressing the issue of female homosexuality. There were several exceptions to this official silence, notably within the medical (and to a lesser extent legal literature) which, following the footsteps of leading European sexologists and doctors, dedicated ample attention to female (homo)sexualities.<sup>56</sup> It was Hungary’s greatest political scandal and celebrated divorce trial of the 1920s however, that provided the most important break with the imposed silence of the authorities. The scandal of Eduardina Pallavicini and Cecilè Tormay exposed not just how contemporaries thought of queer sexuality but also how scandals about (homo)sexuality involving high society were also always about politics.

According to standard narratives, the Golden Age of Budapest and more generally of Hungary came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of World War I and, ultimately, with

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*Sötét Bűnők: Egy Úrileány Vallomásai* (Dirty Sins: Confessions of a Lady). Budapest: Kereskedelmi Reklámvállalat, 1908; *Nagy Irma Utolsó Könyve: a Szerelem Színháza Párisban* (Irma Nagy’s Last Book: Theatre of Love in Paris). Budapest: Szerző, 1909.

<sup>55</sup>Tábori, Kornél. *Bűnös Nők* (Sinful Women). Budapest: A Nap Nyomda, 1909, 65-69, Krúdy, Gyula. *Hét Bagoly: Regény* (Seven Owls: Novel) (originally published in 1922) Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1974. In addition, many official and semi-official publications on prostitution underscore that tribadism or homosexuality was common among female prostitutes. For a visual representation see contemporary images reprinted in Császtvay, Tünde. *Éjjeli Lepkevadászat: Bordélyvilág a Történeti Magyarországon* (Hunt for the Night Butterflies: The World of Bordellos in Hungary prior to 1918). Budapest: Osiris, 2009, 166.

<sup>56</sup>As the contemporary medical literature reveals, mirroring similar concerns elsewhere, Hungarian authorities were particularly wary of single sex institutions, especially the all-girl schools and convents, where they believed young women easily developed sexual attractions to each other. The association of the spread of lesbianism with all-female institutions was a widespread European phenomenon. For example, the acclaimed 1931 German film *Mädchen in Uniform* portrays the “dangers” of same-sex institution, even if the story is actually a positive portrayal of a lesbian relationship.

the Fall of Habsburg Empire at the end of the war in 1918.<sup>57</sup> The country that in a partnership with Austria constituted the second largest European Empire became one of the smallest and most battered countries on the continent. Most historians consider the brief existence of, first, the Democratic Republic under leadership of Mihály Károlyi, and, especially, the subsequent Hungarian Soviet Republic led by Béla Kun as ill-fated attempts at best, and as total disasters at worst, for Hungary's political development.<sup>58</sup> These historians emphasize how both regimes proved to be incompetent in dealing with the victorious powers in defending Hungary's territorial claims against those of neighboring countries. As a result, Hungary lost about two thirds of its former territory and population comprised of millions of ethnic Hungarians. In addition, most historians stress the mass terror, ad hoc actions, and overall negative consequences of the Hungarian Communist Revolutionary regime.<sup>59</sup> However, looking at this revolutionary period of 1918-9 through the lens of sexuality and more specifically, non-normative sexuality introduces a different narrative and yields important insights into the nature of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In the name of Communist revolutionary ideology, the Communist courts adopted a methodology in which the personal case/life histories of

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<sup>57</sup> Legislative and regulatory changes began earlier. In 1912 new restrictions were instituted on the distribution of sexual materials. In 1914 the government enacted a new media law that restricted the protection of press. The onset of the Great War, as in most other European cities, coincided with the centralization of power in the hands of the police and in general with a growing influence of the regulatory authorities.

<sup>58</sup> Károlyi became president following the declaration of the Hungarian Democratic Republic on November 16, 1918. Béla Kun declared the Hungarian Soviet Republic (second communist government after Russia) in 1919, which lasted 133 days. During the pre-1989 Communist period, Hungarian historians viewed the Hungarian Soviet Republic and even the Károlyi regime in a much more favorable light. And even when they presented more complex accounts of the period they were much more critical of Károlyi and remained overall positive about the achievements of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. This took a distinct turn following the end of Communist one party system in Hungary during the 1990s. From this point onwards, the scholarship was more favorable to Károlyi and much more critical of the Kun regime.

<sup>59</sup> Since 1989, historians have been very critical and by and large focus on the negative effects of the Kun regime. For the most recent works see Ignác Romsics' *Hungary in the twentieth century*. Budapest: Corvina ; Osiris, 1999; János Gyurgyák's *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok : a magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története*. Budapest: Osiris, 2007.

individuals became the center of understanding sexual crimes, as well as the basis of their rehabilitative (rather than disciplinary) treatment. Queer sexuality was seen as treatable and hence a transient feature of Communist subjects. Through a detailed analysis of the surviving documents of the Experimental Criminology Department of the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal this dissertation challenges recent historical interpretations. It shows that these records speak not of terror and political motivations, but rather of a serious effort to judge crime through the eyes of a comprehensive socio-medical approach, that also incorporated psychoanalytical theories.<sup>60</sup> The documents also reveal how the communists, believing that homosexuals could be treated and reintegrated into society as “normal” heterosexual subjects, granted no recognition to homosexual men and women. Homosexuality as an identity or as an innate and intrinsic part of the self, and a Communist subjectivity were mutually exclusive.

Following the short-lived democratic and communist governments, Hungary had an authoritarian, conservative political leadership. Hungary became a Constitutional Monarchy without a king. Admiral Miklós Horthy, the leader of Counterrevolutionary forces, became the Regent, and assumed many of the former king’s privileges. Between 1920 and 1944, two conservative groups vied for political preeminence: the old conservative right, representing the traditional Hungarian aristocracy and a new radical right, whose leaders came from the gentry and lower classes. While most old

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<sup>60</sup> This new revolutionary era of conceptualization and treatment of crime proved to be as ephemeral as the existence of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In less than three months, on August 8, 1919, after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, all of the power granted to the Experimental Criminology Department was revoked and the vanguard discipline of psychoanalysis, along with its extended influence, was pushed back to the margins, where it would remain for the next seven decades.

conservatives believed in some form of conservative parliamentary political system, the new radical right was openly militaristic, violently antisemitic and antidemocratic.<sup>61</sup>

In contrast to the period before 1914, the interwar years in Hungary have been considered by historians as stagnant at best, with Budapest being a second-rate cultural center (as many of the city's intellectual elite had left the country) under a repressive conservative government with authoritarian tendencies.<sup>62</sup> The so-called Horthy era did not simply see the halt of Budapest's liberal capitalist and democratic development, but rather it saw the attempts to turn the tide: aggressive nationalism, antisemitism, anti-liberalism, the renewed empowerment of the Catholic Church, and above all irredentism within the formerly liberal elite and intelligentsia delivered a killing blow to the capital's former ascendancy.<sup>63</sup> With drastic anti-liberal changes, one would expect that the

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<sup>61</sup> Throughout the interwar years, these two forces, which were both overlapping and, at times bitterly antagonistic, contributed to a constant shifting in Hungarian politics between anti-democratic parliamentarism and fascism. For a concise political history of interwar Hungary in English see Deák, István *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*. [New York, N.Y.]: Institute on East Central Europe Columbia University, 1989.

<sup>62</sup> Following the so-called White Terror, the Counter Revolutionary retaliation against the "enemies" of Hungary: communist, socialists, Jews and left leaning intellectuals from 1922, Hungary had a working parliamentary system. However, it was fundamentally undemocratic, with severely restricted voting rights and even more importantly with open ballot, which was unprecedented among contemporary European parliamentary countries. Romsics Ignác. "Nyíltan Vagy Titkosan? : A Horthy-rendszer Választójoga" (Openly or secretly? : The Suffrage of the Horthy regime). *Rubicon* 1: (1990), 4 -5.

<sup>63</sup> Miklós Horthy served as the Regent and Head of State of Hungary from 1920 until 1944. The historical scholarship on the period emphasizes that following the Treaty of Trianon in "Csonka (Mutilated) Hungary" Budapest assumed an even greater significance, even though the city itself lost its intellectual and creative vanguardism. *Csonka* refers to the fact that following WWI Hungary lost seventy-one percent of its former territory and two-thirds of its population. Mikós Lackó "Budapest During the Interwar Years" in *Budapest: A History from Its Beginnings to 1998*, 166. Congdon, Lee. *Exile and Social Thought : Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919-1933*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991. Frank, Tibor. "Berlin Junction: Patterns of Hungarian Intellectual Migrations, 1919-1933", n.d. [http://www.storicamente.org/05\\_studi\\_ricerche/02frank.htm](http://www.storicamente.org/05_studi_ricerche/02frank.htm). Last accessed April 24, 2012. On the other hand, historians of the interwar period characterize the city and the Hungarian government as anti-liberal, conservative, nationalist and alternatively mildly or radically antisemitic. This body of literature underscores the transition from a multi-ethnic and liberal political state to an ethnically homogenous, authoritarian political system and examines the reasons why both ended up fighting on the side of Germany in the World Wars. For Hungarian works see Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Social history of Hungary from Reformation until the Second World War) (1998) and Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története 20. Század* (Hungary in the Twentieth Century). 1999. For English; Mária Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics*

treatment of sexuality would have also followed suit. Indeed, the conservative Horthy regime instituted major changes on both the discursive and on practical levels. The rhetoric that called for chastity before marriage and the sanctity of the family was accompanied by a regulatory system that was more interventionist than it had been. Interwar governments also created discriminatory laws that included the first new, explicitly antisemitic law in twentieth-century Europe, and also bestowed more power on law enforcement.<sup>64</sup> The conservative state drove prostitution underground by eradicating the former liberal regulation of female prostitution which was constituted by a relatively easy process of providing licenses to operations as well as to prostitutes. Yet, the conservative rhetoric, policies, and actions on the ground were disproportionately directed against women, overall sparing most men with same-sex desires.<sup>65</sup> Even though authorities increased the policing of non-normative sexuality for both men and women, due to a particular set of circumstances, non-normative male sexuality continued to be tolerated and at times even protected. In fact, the combination of the perceived effects of the Great War on Hungarian men, the belief that men were inherently sexual, and the collective silence around homosexual relationships paradoxically facilitated a sexual culture in Budapest that provided space for an active queer culture, at least among men.

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(1999); Paul Hanebrink *In Defense of Christian Hungary* 2006, Iván Dénes, *Conservative Ideology in the Making*, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> In 1920 the so-called Numerus Clausus restricted the number of Jewish students in higher education to be proportionate to Hungary's Jewish population (6%). From 1920, new ordinances were periodically passed that placed greater power in the hands of the police to police individuals even in their private life.

<sup>65</sup> This was markedly different for countries where conservative politics targeted both female and male non-normative sexual acts and identities. See for instance, Benadusi, Lorenzo. *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. 1st ed. University of Wisconsin Press, 2012 and for more generally for interwar Europe Florence Tamagne's *The History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*, part three: "A Facetious Tolerance: Losing Ground Under the Repression." analyzes the years leading up to World War II."



As a result, the authoritarian conservative regime, in practice, chose to tolerate a growing homosexual subculture.

The question of why and how a conservative government would tolerate non-normative male sexualities brings me to the scope and main findings of my project. My study begins with the last decades of the nineteenth century, at the height of Budapest's political, economic, and cultural productivity. This was the time when the modern Hungarian nation state was coming into its own, with a rapidly expanding bureaucracy and increasingly more sophisticated means of keeping track of and controlling of its population. This was also the time when authorities for the first time systematically considered (male) same-sex sexuality. The end point of my study is Hungary's entry into the Second World War on the side of the Axis Powers in 1941. Specifically, my study ends in 1942, at the time of the actual physical deployment of the Hungarian army against the Soviet forces on the Eastern Front. By 1942, pro-Nazi, far-right politicians, military men, and police personnel came to yield decisive influence over Hungarian politics and internal affairs.<sup>66</sup> Those who were deemed "enemies" of the Hungarian *faj* (race, broadly construed), and therefore of the Hungarian State first and foremost Jews, Communists, ethnic minorities, and anyone who opposed the Hungarian government were categorically stripped of their most basic rights, incarcerated, or conscripted into forced labor.<sup>67</sup>

Homosexuals, like other "impure" groups also became targets. Consequently, my work

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<sup>66</sup> Despite of the fact that Hungary did not become "officially" fascist until 1944, from 1939 the parliament as well as informal politics became pro-Nazi, with the old Conservatives having a very difficult time to keep pro-Nazi and far right groups at bay. For the history of the far right in Hungary see, Paksa Rudolf. *A Magyar Szélsőjobboldal Története* (The History of the Hungarian Far Right), Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó és Kereskedelmi KFT. 2012.

<sup>67</sup> The category of "enemies" was first and foremost reserved for Jewish people. Anti-Jewish laws were introduced from 1938 onward. By 1941 (law of 1941:XV), Hungary adopted Nazi-Germany's Nuremberg Laws. For a comprehensive history of antisemitism and the situation of Hungarian Jews during World War II see Braham, Randolph L. *The politics of genocide : the Holocaust in Hungary*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

ends with the rise of extreme, far right politics at a time when the modern Hungarian state and its apparatuses for the first time became powerful enough to systematically determine the fate of its citizens.<sup>68</sup> When the silent acceptance of homosexuality was broken and far-right elements pressed for sending homosexuals to forced labor camps, there was a modern institutional apparatus in place to facilitate the plan.

My work reconstructs queer Budapest. It is about both queer men and women and those who wrote about, punished, treated, and regulated them. Piecing together the scattered information about how regulatory bodies (police, courts, and medical establishments) and individuals negotiated sexuality throughout Hungary's turbulent history, the dissertation exposes the complex interplay between the modernization efforts of Hungarian authorities, contemporary liberal ideas that equated tolerating certain so-called "respectable homosexuals" with progress, and practical realities on the ground.<sup>69</sup> I argue that regardless of the different political constellations between 1873 and 1941, having a registry along with the criminalization of male homosexuality did not necessarily lead to the repression of all forms of same-sex relations.<sup>70</sup> Queer Budapest

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<sup>68</sup> The relationship between modern bureaucracy, rational management, and extreme politics has attracted interest since the Holocaust. For a seminal work see, Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cornell University Press, 2001.

<sup>69</sup> The movement to decriminalize homosexuality based on some of the latest sexology and medical theories also found its supporters in Hungary. Never as visible as its German counterparts, Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee and later on, the World League on Sexual Reform nevertheless had its Hungarian supporters. One of the most notable was Sándor Ferenczi, the renowned psychoanalyst, who openly supported Hirschfeld and the Scientific Humanitarian Committee's aims to decriminalize homosexuality. In addition, members of the intellectual liberal left also supported decriminalization.

<sup>70</sup> Scholars following the works of Michel Foucault (most notably *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 *An Introduction*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990); have debated the extent to which oppressive legal, political, and social environments have historically shaped the actual practices (and identities) of non-normative sexuality. For a discussion on the works of the 1980s and 1990s see David M. Halperin *Saint Foucault: towards a gay hagiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. For some of the latest work see

Benadusi, Lorenzo. *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*. Translated by Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. 1st ed. University of Wisconsin Press, 2012 and Spector, Puff, and

reveals an underlying continuity of relative tolerance of certain forms of certain same-sex relations across successive political regimes, ranging from radical Soviet communism to authoritarian conservative.

Why was same-sex sex tolerated while other “deviations” (such as female prostitution, or being Jewish) were increasingly punished? The link between tolerance and “being modern,” the belief that men were inherently sexual, and the deliberate silencing of public discourse around same-sex sexuality fostered the growth of male queer culture in Hungary. By exposing the historical silencing of homosexuality, this study identifies what kinds of sexual behaviors were being privileged. Works on Western Europe and the U.S. demonstrate that studying histories of urban sexualities can foster an understanding of the interdependencies between cultural values and politics. These works have traced the role of non-normative sexualities in defining normality and establishing legal frameworks to support it.<sup>71</sup> My work draws attention to a highly gendered and class-based historical understanding of non-normative sexualities.<sup>72</sup> The examination of Budapest from 1873 until 1942 shows that cultural understandings of gender norms and class were more imperative than the political and legislative frameworks in shaping the treatment of men who had sex with men. Of course, such norms influence the nature of these legal and institutional frameworks. Even during the

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Herzog *After the history of sexuality : German genealogies with and beyond Foucault*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> For some of the most innovative recent works in the field see Jens Rydstrom, *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

<sup>72</sup> As scholars in various contexts have shown the interplay between existing regulations, the medicalization of non-normative sexualities, and cultural norms particularly about gender were crucial in shaping both the treatment and experiences of queer and same-sex sexualities. George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* and Matt Houlbrook’s *Queer London* and most recently Laurie Marhoefer’s dissertation *Among Abnormals: The Queer Sexual Politics of Germany’s Weimar Republic, 1918-1933* (Rutgers University 2008) are excellent examples.

increasingly conservative climate of the interwar years, authorities tolerated some forms of homosexual activity. Such tolerance was contingent on the repression of Jews and curtailing of women's rights. By unearthing the nuanced ways in which political conservatism and the toleration of non-normative sexualities coexisted within a deeply conservative authoritarian regime, this dissertation offers historical insights into current debates about the relationship between conservative states and sexuality.

The history of queer Budapest pre WWII provides an urgent lesson to the present. We are in the midst of a moment in Hungary and in East-Central Europe more broadly, of backlash against the rights and recognitions that LGBTQ people have achieved since 1989. The current situation invites historical contextualization. This dissertation offers a counter-narrative to the popular idea that queer culture was and can only be a product of liberal democracy, an inaccurate perspective oddly shared by both the young LGBTQ communities and their harshest adversaries. Furthermore, my work counters current narratives that assume a direct correlation between political conservativeness and intolerance towards "difference," sexually and otherwise. In writing a history of the repression and prosecution of same-sex desire and acts prior to Word War II, my dissertation also highlights the longstanding historical presence and tolerance of queer people in Hungary.

### *Literature and Existing Historiography on Sexuality*

The history of sexuality and LGBTQ history are relatively new areas of scholarly inquiry and are largely absent in the historiography of East-Central Europe.<sup>73</sup> Histories

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<sup>73</sup> There are notable exceptions. Healey, Dan. *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Matysik,

of Budapest and Hungary more generally have conspicuously ignored sexuality and above all queer or non-normative sexuality.<sup>74</sup> The only exception has been prostitution, which has, since 1989, received scholarly attention both in Hungary and in East-Central Europe more broadly.<sup>75</sup> To date, the history of Hungarian homosexuality, while an increasingly debated political and civil rights issue, has received very little scholarly attention. Reasons for this, to a great degree, have to do with the availability of historical sources. The difficulties of locating sources on queer sexualities in the past outside of the official legal, criminal, and medical sources have been an issue that has received

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Tracie. *Reforming the Moral Subject : Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. Cornwall, Mark. "Heinrich Rutha and the Unraveling of a Homosexual Scandal in 1930s Czechoslovakia." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 319–347. Maxwell, Alexander. "National Endogamy and Double Standards: Sexuality and Nationalism in East-Central Europe during the 19th Century." *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 2 (2008): 000–20. In addition, existing historical accounts on sexuality in Hungary and in East-Central Europe more generally, have focused on the Communist era and examined sexualities in relation to gender, social policy and citizenship. For instance, Lynn Haney *Inventing the Needy Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (2002) Berkeley: University of California Press, Barbara Einhorn, *Cinderella Goes to the Market Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East Central Europe* (1993), Èva Fodor "Smiling women and fighting men; The Gender of the Communist Subject in State Socialist Hungary" *Gender and Society* April, 2002, Goldman, Wendy Z. *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (eds.) *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism* (2000), Ruth Lister *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (1997). Schwartz, Agata. *Gender and Modernity in Central Europe : the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Its Legacy*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010. Kulpa, Robert, and Joanna Mizielinska. *De-centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011. The only exception is East Germany where sexuality has received considerable attention. See for instance, McLellan, Josie. *Love in the time of communism : intimacy and sexuality in the GDR*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Wolf, Sherry. *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation*. Chicago, Ill. : Haymarket, 2009. For a review of the latest books on sexuality in the Western Europe see the review article of Dagmar Herzog "Sexuality in the Postwar West" in *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006) pp. 144-171.

<sup>74</sup> There is only one book that explicitly addresses the history of Hungarian homosexuals. Eszenyi, Miklós. *"Férfi a Férfitől, Nő a Nővel": Homoszexualitás a Történelemben*. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Miklóssy, János. *A Budapesti Prostitúció Története*. Budapest: Népszava Kiadó Vállalat, 1989. Forrai, Judit. "Beautiful Girls' Ugly Malady--selected Passages from the History of Guilty Sex and Syphilis." *Orvosi Hetilap* 149, no. 40 (2008): 1895–901; Léderer, Pál. *A Nyilvánvaló Nők. Prostitúció, Társadalom, Társadalomtörténet*. Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1999; Császtvay, Tünde. *Éjjeli Lepkevadászok : Bordélyvilág a Történeti Magyarországon*. Budapest: Osiris, 200; Forrai, Judit. "Új Zónák - Régi Problémák. Történetek Az Utcai Prostitúció Szabályozásáról." *História*, no. 2000/1 (2000). For some of the latest works on prostitution in East-Central Europe see Stauter-Halsted, Keely, and Nancy M. Wingfield. "Introduction: The Construction of Sexual Deviance in Late Imperial Eastern Europe." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 2 (2011): 215–224. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur-Deckard. *Gender and war in twentieth-century Eastern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

considerable attention.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the full or partial destruction of archives during World War II caused a great deal of damage to official sources on non-normative sexualities. In the subsequent Communist period 1948-1989, there was a general avoidance of public discussion of sexuality despite the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1962. Following democratization in 1989, censorship was lifted, but due to an incomplete transition of party archives and preexisting official sources, many sources from the Communist era and possibly the era before 1948 remained classified. Some still are. There are also indications that prior to the transition in 1989, sources regarding Communist era and potentially earlier eras were deliberately destroyed.<sup>77</sup> However, the fact that until this current project not a single work focused explicitly on gay and lesbian (let alone transgender or transsexual) history in Hungary points to the final reason why there have been no histories of non-normative sexuality: the continuing shame and stigma surrounding homosexuality.<sup>78</sup> The 2010 conservative political shift in Hungary has renewed the historical stigmatization with chilling effects. It deters

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<sup>76</sup> For some of the seminal works see, Martin Duberman, *Hidden from History : Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. New York: New American Library, 1989; Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin. *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. 1st ed. Routledge, 1993. On the latest approaches to dealing with sources or the lack thereof, see Halperin, David. "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2000): 87–123. The lack of explicit sources on same-sex sexuality and played a pivotal role in new historical approaches. See for instance, Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women : Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Hungary remains the only country in the former Eastern Block that has not made the Party archives on agents and informants public. Access to party and state documents of the Communist period vary in the former Soviet Block. In Hungary the so-called III/3 agents' files still remain inaccessible to the public. Many of who were allegedly homosexuals.

<sup>78</sup> I am referring to turmoil around Gay Pride events across the former Soviet Block as well as around the Eurovision song context. Most recently, the far right party *Jobbik* introduced an amendment to the Hungarian parliament that would recriminalize homosexuality.

researchers from studying queer history, individuals from sharing their relatives' documents, and queer people from talking about their own histories and sexuality.<sup>79</sup>

Existing urban histories of Western European cities and of the US have offered invaluable models as I have sought to restore same-sex sexuality to Budapest's history. There has been a burgeoning literature on non-normative sexuality in Western Europe and North America about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>80</sup> Recent histories have established the city as a queer space and in their various contexts have analyzed the historical relationship between urban geography, social and cultural norms, and being queer.<sup>81</sup> Studies have shown how urban spaces have been quintessential in not only facilitating, but also in shaping sexual cultures, politics, and identities.<sup>82</sup> A major trend has been to look at the ways in which being sexually different constituted a part of urban

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<sup>79</sup> There are notable exceptions, including the publications of Judit Takács, Miklós Eszenyi and Anna Borgos.

<sup>80</sup> Still, histories on homosexuality tend to focus on the United States and England and to a lesser extent on Germany. Initially historians saw urbanization and the city both as precondition and in a sense "liberator" of same-sex practice and homosexual identities. These earlier works tended to use a hetero-homo binary in an effort to write a usable past for homosexuals. Most notably, Jeffrey Weeks and John d' Emilio (see footnote# 19) More recently, scholars have portrayed urbanization as more than simply being a liberating agent for sexuality and in reality was a much more complex phenomenon. According to these scholars the city is not a "happy" site but also "an alienating, disruptive and dangerous place" Matt Houlbrook *Queer London*, 10. This resonates with the critiques of queer theory of gay and lesbian histories. The application of queer theory to histories of sexuality brought attention to the ways in which sexualities and identities were multiple, historically contingent as well as how their interpretive frameworks shaped contemporary understandings of desire, sexuality and cultural practices. In addition, studies showed how cities were not only centrifugal but also centripetal in terms of shaping sexual (sub)cultures. John Howard *Men Like That: Southern Queer History* (2001).

<sup>81</sup> I am using queer as an umbrella term for all non-normative sexualities and sexual practices. Consequently, what I mean by "being queer" is the practice of or identifying with non-hetero/non monogamous sexuality.

<sup>82</sup> For a good review essay of recent literature see Matt Houlbrook's "Toward a Historical Geography of Sexuality" *Journal of Urban History* 27, no. 44 (2001), 497-504 Some of the most important and most recent works: George Chauncey *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1995), Marc Stein *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Love: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-72* (2000) Elisabeth Kennedy *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (1993), Matt Houlbrook *Queer London*, Rainer Metzger and Christian Brandstetter *Berlin: The Twenties* (2007).

modernity.<sup>83</sup> On the whole, this literature convincingly illustrates the ways in which sexual politics in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were deeply embedded in other political, economic and social factors.<sup>84</sup> For the history of these (mostly Western) sites, the study of sexual practices and sexuality of the past has become an important and insightful instrument in understanding the interdependency of politics, economics, society, gender and sexual norms.<sup>85</sup> By analyzing why and how people conducted or thought about their sexuality, alongside how various authorities presented sexuality, histories of sexualit(ies) have contributed invaluable insights not only to other fields of history but also to neighboring disciplines. These insights have shaped the theoretical underpinnings of my study.

In historicizing same-sex desire and acts, I build on works that have compellingly shown how the urban environment is a constitutive part of sexual desires, practices and identities.<sup>86</sup> In line with recent histories of sexuality, I believe that sexuality and sexual

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<sup>83</sup>In this respect historians have demonstrated how the mutually constitutive relationship between urban modernity and the “birth” of sexual subcultures and identities. In addition, to George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* and Matt Houltbrook’s *Queer Cook, Matt. London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

London, and this is true for works such as Jens Rydstrom’s *Sinners and Citizens*. On the relationship between the city, modernity and sexual identity see a review essay by Harry Cocks. “Modernity and the Self in the History of Sexuality.” *Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (2006): 1211.

<sup>84</sup>See for instance Seth Koven’s *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

<sup>85</sup>One only has to think of Michel Foucault and his tremendous influence. For a great overview of the recent achievements of the field see *The American Historical Review*, 24 no 5, (2009) especially, Margot Canaday’s “Transnational Sexualities - Thinking Sex in the Transnational Turn: An Introduction.” 1250. And Dagmar Herzog’s “Syncopated Sex: Transforming European Sexual Cultures.” 1287.

<sup>86</sup>Some of the early works include Jeffrey Weeks’s *Sex, Politics, and Society : the Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*. London ; New York: Longman, 1981, Trumbach , and John’D Emilio whose essay *Gay identity and capitalism* is More recent works include for instance George Chauncey’s *Gay New York, Matt Cook’s London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. In addition, for the connection between the city and lesbians see Faderman, Lillian. *Lesbians in Germany : 1890’s-1920’s*. 2nd ed. Tallahassee Fla.: Naiad Press, 1990 and more recently, Doan, Laura, and Jane Garrity. *Sapphic Modernities : Sexuality, Women, and National Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, especially Joanne Winning’s piece “*The Sapphist in the City*.”



practices are historically constructed and specific to particular times and places.<sup>87</sup>

Historians have shown the complex interplay between professionalization and institutionalization of modern science and medicine and the “birth” of modern sexualities.<sup>88</sup> Central Europe was at the center of these processes. Building on the extensive scholarship on medical sciences and sexualities, this study shows not only that the Hungarian medical community and queers in Budapest were taking part of these processes but also the specific ways in which they were at the forefront. In addition, my approach has been informed by scholars working on historians of female and male masculinity and more generally, on gender.<sup>89</sup> Following in the footsteps of scholars whose works have examined the ways in which gender norms, dominant and non-normative forms of masculinity and femininity have historically been constructed and performed, I historicize and contextualize gender norms within Hungary’s history.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> On the essentialist – constructionist debate and in more generally an introduction to the post-structuralist approaches to the historical conceptualization of homosexuality is David M. Halperin’s *How to do the history of homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> Since the publications of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, historians have responded by historicizing and examining the intimate relationship between sexology, psychiatry, neurology and psychoanalysis and the creation – and or- appearance of sexual categories and eventually identities. While initially earlier scholars argued that it was the aggressive and “prejudice” nature of new sciences that led to the creation of “sexual abnormals,” more recent scholarships also highlight the role of patients and the more generally the part that “sexual abnormals” themselves played in creating new categories and identities. See for instance, Oosterhuis, Harry. *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft- Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2000. For an overview of the historiography and debates Rosario, Vernon. *Homosexuality and Science : a Guide to the Debates*. Santa Barbara Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2002. For the latest interpretations of the relationship between science and sexuality see Cryle, Peter, and Christopher E Forth. *Sexuality at the Fin de Siècle the makings of a "central problem"*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008.

<sup>89</sup> Since Joan W. Scott’s call (in *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) of taking gender as a category of analysis seriously, the historical scholarship on gender has become extensive. Similarly to gender, there is an extensive historical scholarship that places masculinity and femininity in the center of analysis. Some of the latest innovative works, which I found particularly helpful in providing helpful ways to look at official sources through lens of gender, include Srole, Carole. *Transcribing Class and Gender : Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-century Courts and Offices*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010, and Roos, Julia. *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender : Prostitution Reform, Woman’s Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-33*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

<sup>90</sup> I found George Mosse’s by now seminal works on cultural norms of respectability and masculinity useful for thinking through the interconnectedness of cultural norms and discourses around homosexuality.

Finally, scholarship that looks specifically at the relationship between authorities; the law, the police, medicine, and the treatment of non-normative sexualities served as my starting points.<sup>91</sup>

### *Note on the Sources and Methodology*

Since there have been no histories, and there are no particular archives or collections dedicated to the subject of sexuality and especially few sources on queer sexuality, my work could not build on a Hungarian secondary source base, nor could it really count on archives that had gathered sources focusing on sexuality as a category.<sup>92</sup> There were serious impediments to the archival research as even “normative” sexuality was and is still not particularly well represented or catalogued in any of the Hungarian archive. But since sex between men was criminalized prior to 1962, the documents of the Budapest Criminal Court, housed in the Budapest City Archives (BFL), served as a starting point and constitute the basis for my chapters on the interwar period.<sup>93</sup> The City Archives and

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Thanks to rise of scholarship on gender Mosse’s approach has undergone considerable revisions. This is apparent in the difference between his *Nationalism and Sexuality : Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. 1st ed. New York: H. Fertig, 1985 and *The image of man : the creation of modern masculinity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Furthermore, the works of Judith Halberstam has influenced my approach. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. First ed. NYU Press, 2005.

<sup>91</sup> I am particularly indebted to books that combine discursive analysis with an analysis of the actual outcome of the discourses. Richard F. Wetzels’ *Inventing the criminal : a history of German criminology, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) offers a great model.

<sup>92</sup> One of the earliest recognition of how non-normative sexualities are outside of institutional memory was the seminal work of Gayle Rubin “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” in Carole S. Vance (ed.) *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. London: Pandora, 1992. 267-293. Rubin highlights how historians of queer sexualities have to build upon archives, often not assembled for queer purposes. The dearth of primary sources particularly on female same-sex sexuality explains why it occupies considerably less space in my dissertation than its male counterpart, although I have tried to evoke this past too, as possible. Although the historical scholarship on same-sex sexuality has categorically established a common problem facing historians of sexuality there has been a growing number of new works that demonstrate new innovative approaches to locate female same-sex erotic desire and feelings (if not sex) in the past. See for instance, Sharon Marcus’ *Between Women : Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

<sup>93</sup> The Budapesti Fővárosi Levéltár (BFL) Budapest City Archives

its personnel were also quintessential for locating and providing the materials on the Experimental Criminology Department of the Revolutionary Tribunal that operated in Hungarian Soviet Republic.<sup>94</sup> The Hungarian National Archives (OSZK) served as the other main source of primary sources. Housing all existing Hungarian publications on issues of sexuality, newspapers, as well as the official Police Journal the National Archives was indispensable for my project. In addition, the Parliamentary Archives provided the primary sources for legal discourse and the Hungarian Medical Archives was helpful for supplying information on medical discourse.<sup>95</sup>

Reading against the sources and into the silences that surrounded homosexuality and non-normative sexuality more generally (including prostitution) prior to 1989 was crucial. My hypothesis was that LGBTQ people did not arrive with democracy and western liberal ideas, as many conservatives today like to claim. My task was to show it. Thus, in addition to reconstructing the existence of queers in the past, I also needed to uncover the reasons for the historical silence that surrounded non-normative sexualities in the histories of pre-1989 Hungarian political systems. First, it was necessary to contextualize the political, cultural and social context of Hungary and particularly that of Budapest.<sup>96</sup> More specifically, familiarity with wider debates concerning women's

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<sup>94</sup> I would particularly like to thank András Lugosi and Mihály Szécsényi for their generous help.

<sup>95</sup> The names of the archives in the order of above are the following: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár; Országgyűlési Könyvtár; Semmelweis Orvostörténeti Múzeuml és Levéltár.

<sup>96</sup> The historiography of political history of Budapest and Hungary is extensive. I relied both on Hungarian and English scholarship. In addition, I am indebted to Gábor Gyáni's work on the urban and social history of Budapest. Some of his seminal works include *Parlor and Kitchen Housing and Domestic Culture in Budapest, 1870-1940*. Budapest: Central European Univ. Press, 2002; *Identity and the Urban Experience: Fin-de-Siècle Budapest*. Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 2004. And Gyáni, Gábor, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch. *Social history of Hungary from the reform era to the end of the twentieth century*. Boulder, Colo.; Highland Lakes, N.J.; New York: Social Science Monographs ; Atlantic Research and Publications ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2004. With that is said, despite that urban history on East-Central Europe has been a thriving field, there is a conspicuous void of (non-normative) sexual minorities in these histories. For specifically Hungary, the country's particularly disruptive geopolitical history of the twentieth century, losing seventy-one percent of its territory and two-thirds of its

rights, feminism, prostitution, venereal disease, and syphilis in the cultural, political, legal and medical spheres proved crucial in deciphering the subtle hints about non-normative sexuality therein and also in reading between the lines of official sources. While there has been no historical work on same-sex sexuality in Hungary, there has been work on the regulation of sexuality – namely, prostitution and venereal disease, and syphilis.<sup>97</sup> In addition, there are some secondary sources on Hungarian feminists and their attitudes towards sexuality.<sup>98</sup> Although they do not directly address same-sex sexuality, their views on issues of prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, and questions concerning “respectable” masculinity and femininity were important for my study.

Secondly, the reconstruction of the gender norms for men and women and track how they changed during the period between the late nineteenth century and World War II was important. Building on existing works on the East-Central European context, I simultaneously paid attention to what official Hungarian sources prescribed as proper gender norms and also to what actually happened on the ground. Third, in close

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population following the 1918 treaty of Trianon, has meant that the study of Hungarian minorities has primarily revolved around Jewish and ethnic Hungarians living outside of Hungary. In terms of the situation of Jews in Hungary Randolph L. Braham's *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary. Revised and enlarged edition*. 2 Vol. (1994), about ethnic Hungarians Károly Kocsis and Eszter Kocsis-Hodosi, *Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin* (1990) Rudolf Joo, and Ludanyi Andrew (eds) *The Hungarian Minority's Situation in Ceausescu's Romania* (1994), Charles Wojatsek. *From Trianon To The First Vienna Arbitral Award: The Hungarian Minority In The First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938*. (1999). The histories that do focus on minorities living within Hungary's borders have been confined to religious minorities and recently, to the history of Roma people. For histories of minorities, especially of the Roma see, Crowe, David M. *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (1994)

<sup>97</sup> Most of the historiography on prostitution uses official sources. And while they acknowledge that there were differences on the implementation and on the ground – their analysis treats the rhetoric and sources as the proof of the attitudes of Hungarian authorities. This is true for even the most recent works such as Judit Forrai's "Beautiful girls' ugly malady--selected passages from the history of guilty sex and syphilis," *Orvosi hetilap* 149, no. 40 (2008): 1895-901. (!) Or Gábor Kiss' "Nemi betegségek az osztrák-magyar haderoben az elso világháború idején," *Orvosi hetilap* 147, no. 46 (November 19, 2006): 2237-8.

<sup>98</sup> For instance, Pető Andrea, and Szapor Judit. "A Női Esélyegyenlőségre Vonatkozó Női Felfogás Hatása a Magyar Választójogi Gondolkodásra 1848–1990." *Recepció És Kreativitás*; Schwartz, Agatha. *Shifting Voices : Feminist Thought and Women's Writing in Fin-de-siècle Austria and Hungary*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008.

connection to work on gender roles, I also traced the changing discourses on Hungarian masculinity.<sup>99</sup> Word War I had crucial consequences for Hungarian masculinity.<sup>100</sup> To understand how people understood non-normative sexualities I needed to uncover how they understood normative gender roles for men. Thus, identifying the premises of Hungarian masculinity and femininity and how they changed over time became central to my analysis. In light of the dearth of secondary literature on gender and ideas of masculinity in Hungary prior to 1945, I read contemporary sources (popular and official) with the intent to decipher normative understandings of gender and sexuality.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, I relied on the extensive secondary literature on the history of gender and masculinity in other contexts – mostly Western, with a few notable exceptions on East-Central Europe.<sup>102</sup>

Finally, I placed Budapest within the greater European context in terms of the legal, medical, political, and cultural discourses on issues of sexuality and events that undoubtedly influenced happenings in Budapest. Whether it was the Oscar Wilde trial, the Eulenburg Affair, or other scandals about homosexuality, or new cultural trends,

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<sup>99</sup> Similarly to sexuality, I believe that gender, masculinity, and femininity are also historically specific and never absolute. There are always multiple meanings that are often competing with one another in defining “normal” or “respectable” gender specific behavior.

<sup>100</sup> While there is no scholarly work on Hungary the literature on masculinity and gender of the period is substantial. For ideas on Word War I’s effect on gender roles particularly during the war, I found Belinda J Davis’ *Home fires burning : food, politics, and everyday life in World War I Berlin*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000 a useful model. For comparative history of gender perspective see Grayzel, Susan R. *Women’s identities at war : gender, motherhood, and politics in Britain and France during the First World War*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999. In terms of works that also focus on masculinity see the review essay by Robert A. Nye, “Western Masculinities in War and Peace.” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (April 2007). For Eastern Europe specifically, the edited collectio by Wingfield, Nancy M, and Maria Bucur-Deckard. *Gender and war in twentieth-century Eastern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. For a review essay see

<sup>101</sup> Of course, as scholars in different contexts have demonstrated, what constitutes as “normal” is also historically specific, and contingent on the time and place.

<sup>102</sup> In addition to the extensive historiography on Western Europe, on the East-Central European context without providing the exclusive list I drew on the works of Maria Bucur-Deckard, Mark Cornwall, Melissa Feinberg, Keely Stauter-Halsted, Dan Healey, Maria N.Todorova, Andrea Pető, Nancy M. Wingfield and Tara Zara.

urban or national policy, or laws that were enacted in Paris, London, or in Berlin, such matters affected and interacted with what was taking place in Budapest – both in terms of discourses and in terms of the treatment and experience of queer sexualities.<sup>103</sup> The rapid information exchange that we tend to associate with the digital age was in many ways present even at the end of the nineteenth century. News travelled fast, via telegraph and other means, and authorities and the public were both informed about the latest sexual scandals, and, increasingly, theories on sexuality. Moreover, the authorities (city officials and police, as well as members of the legal and medical establishments,) were tuned in to transnational information channels and learned about the latest developments regarding the treatment and policing of non-normative sexualities, even if these discussions did not feature in the mainstream media.

The combination of these four prongs of research allowed me to critically read sources that directly addressed queer sexualities and especially male and female homosexuality. The fusing of political, cultural and urban histories of East-Central Europe with an analytical lens of gender and sexuality also enabled me to recreate narratives around queer sexuality and reconstruct multiple discourses and experiences around it. Furthermore, by foregoing a unified theoretical framework, my approach looks at the discourses and representation of sexuality, while at the same time paying attention to the multiple ways discourses were received and adapted. Thus, even though none of the subjects of my study (men, women, and the authorities) existed outside of the discursive system, the actual effects of those various discursive powers (language and

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<sup>103</sup> For a transnational approach of sexuality see Herzog, Dagmar. *Sexuality in Europe : a Twentieth-century History*. Cambridge UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

representation) on the ground were by no means uniform. Having exposed these discursive frameworks, I then turned to studying their effects.

So who and what are the subjects of this dissertation? The debates around the terminology describing same-sex sexual activities by now have their own considerable historiography. I purposefully did not commit myself to using one expression such as “same-sex sex,” “queer sex,” “homosex,” or “non-normative sex,” because I wanted to use them interchangeably.<sup>104</sup> In using these terms, I refer to men or women who engaged in sexual activities with their own sex. I use the term “homosexual” and “homosexuality” much more carefully, and only apply them when contemporaries (popular or official sources) use the terminology.<sup>105</sup> The limited source material has dissuaded me from a thorough examination of sexual identity formation.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, while this is a study of same-sex sexuality, I also use same-sex sexuality as an analytical tool, not just an object of the study. Such an approach provides the benefit of revealing a more complex picture of Budapest’s and more generally of Hungary’s turbulent history from 1873 to 1942.

### *Chapter Breakdown*

My first chapter investigates the same-sex registry of the Budapest Metropolitan Police, which, according to contemporaries, was the first of its kind. In addition to reconstructing the historical existence of the registry, which disappeared after 1989, I

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<sup>104</sup> Each of these terms has its own historiography and have been subject to fierce scholarly debates. By using them interchangeably I simply want to be inclusive.

<sup>105</sup> For the conceptual history or genealogy of the term “homosexuality” see David M. Halperin’s *How to do the history of homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. For the term queer, see

<sup>106</sup> The historical development of queer identity and subculture has been a major concern for historians of sexuality. While I draw on these works, my dissertation does not engage with the question of when and how exactly individuals and the collective embraced homosexuality as an identity category.

confront the various questions raised by its existence. My dissertation explores the startling fact that most men who appear in the registry were never brought to trial for their illegal homosexual acts, despite significant state efforts to conduct surveillance and catalog these acts. I argue that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, allowing respectable (i.e. biologically innate, adult men who had sex with adult men in private places) queer sexual desire and acts to occur, and trying to secretly limit the threat of immoral or inauthentic queer acts, was seen as the “modern” and hence, sensible thing to do. In spite of Hungary’s increasingly conservative and irredentist political climate between 1920 and 1941 following Hungary’s loss of two thirds of its territory and a brief reign of a Communist government in 1919, I demonstrate that the discourses, regulation, and policing of same-sex sexuality show remarkable continuities from the pre-WW I era.

Via an account of the vibrant gay subculture and recurrent discussions in popular medical and legal sources of same-sex acts in Budapest, my second chapter uncovers how contemporary Budapest came to an understanding of its place in the modern world of metropolises. As I critically examine the motives and analyze the writings of Hungary’s leading investigating journalists, Vladimir Székely and Kornél Tábori, who in the early 1900s took on the slumming world of the “Knights of Sick Love”, I present an account that simultaneously attends to the historical existence of an extensive culture of men who had sex with men and the surprising level of toleration of it. I demonstrate how information of the latest political, social, and legal news about queers from Western capitals was incorporated into gay Budapest, but also how queer bodies themselves moved across the geographic boundaries of East and West. Furthermore, by contextualizing the writings of Székely and Tábori against the backdrop of cultural fears



about spreading immorality and urban decline around the turn of the century, I illustrate how their reports on same-sex sexuality exemplified the complex and often conflicting ways in which Hungarian authorities and denizens of Budapest came to terms with the city's rapid modernization. Thus, "homosexuals" were considered both as the manifestation of urban decline and the "living proof" of Hungary's place in the modern Western world.

My third chapter analyzes the recently recovered files of the Experimental Criminology Department, which was set up in the name of communist revolutionary ideology in 1919. I show that the Experimental Criminology Department of the Revolutionary Tribunal that operated during the brief life of Hungarian Soviet Republic represented a radical break in the treatment and understanding of non-normative sexuality, not only within the Hungarian context, but also in the larger international scene. The detailed case studies and particularly, the opinions of the experts of the Department reveal how in their medical approaches to sexuality, medical experts considered sexual crimes and non-normative sexualities more generally, as symptoms and manifestations of unresolved traumas from people's pasts. Thus, queer sexuality was conceptualized neither as an innate condition nor as an immoral/criminal act. Rather, authorities, following the footsteps of Sándor Ferenczi, Hungary's internationally renowned psychoanalyst, believed that although queers might have broken existing laws, with "necessary empathy" the majority of "sexual abnormals" could and should be rehabilitated into a heteronormative lifestyle. By treating non-normative sexualities as curable defects of personal and societal psychological health, the Experimental Criminology Department was at the cutting edge of international psychoanalytic practice

and theory. The vanguard approach of the Communists in making psychoanalysis central to remaking Hungarian subjects into Communist citizens shows how transmission of knowledge within European states was both porous and multidirectional.

In my fourth chapter, I look at the sensational divorce and libel trials of Hungary's two most influential aristocratic women during the 1920s. Romantic love between women rarely emerged in the courts, ostensibly because in Hungary the Criminal Code covered only male homosexuality. Nevertheless, the sensational trials of Cecile Tormay and Eduardina Pallavicini show that lesbianism served as a legally recognized reason to divorce. I analyze the highly charged political circumstances of the scandal. Its "shocking" details, such as the Count's order of a peephole drilled into the ceiling of his wife's bedroom to spy on her activities, also offer novel insights into contemporary conceptualizations of female (homo)sexuality and the interrelationship between urban and rural servants' understandings of sexuality. Despite urban-rural differences in the language describing female homosexuality during the first decades of the twentieth century, neither country folk nor sophisticated urbanites could imagine female same-sex sexuality outside of a strictly heteronormative composition. The surviving voices of the servant witnesses, while expressing a clear conceptualization of female homosexuality, do so in a manner markedly different from their urban counterparts. These individuals, often from provincial backgrounds, blended regional and local language with class-specific and gendered conceptions and in so doing invented a hybrid language of sexuality.

The fifth chapter tracks the changing approaches within the legal prosecution and defense of male homosexuality until 1939. In addition to my qualitative analysis, this

chapter is grounded in my quantitative data on the court cases during the interwar period. Despite the growing conservatism of Hungarian politics, the courts continued to protect “respectable homosexuals.” I show that in the eyes of the authorities, the presence of certain queer sexualities continued to be seen as a symbol of Hungary’s connection to the West. Without denying the hardships and repressions that same-sex acts could produce for individuals, I argue that same-sex desire and sexuality in interwar Hungary was not seen as a political act or as threatening public order, concerns which, following the turbulent years after WWI, were what most preoccupied authorities. Consequently, the chapter highlights the co-existence of a thriving same-sex culture, and the conservative Horthy regime. This view of Budapest challenges understanding of the relationship between conservative politics and non-normative sexualities. It also offers insight into lived experience under authoritarian regimes, and into negotiations between official prescription and actual practice.

## Chapter One

### The Registry of Homosexuals

This chapter reconstructs the history of a remarkable document: the homosexual registry of the Vice Department of the Budapest Metropolitan Police. It explores why it was first created, how it was maintained and used, as well as the ways in which contemporaries acknowledged its existence. The actual registry and most historical traces of it are gone. In 1933, the well-known neurologist Zoltan Nagy referred to the registry as he catalogued the hazards of modern love:

In the entire world, Budapest is the first metropolis, where homosexuals are (semi) officially registered. The police keep a registry for known notorious homosexuals, mostly the blackmailers. This is especially important for policing purposes, since male homosexuals are followed like a shadow and threatened by blackmailers.<sup>107</sup>

Homosexuality was “a tragedy of sexual life,” Zoltán Nemes Nagy repeatedly demonstrated in the nearly one hundred pages he devoted to its discussion in his seminal study *Tragedies of Love Life*. Although contemporary publications from the late nineteenth century and onward took up the issue of same-sex sexuality, most of them either omitted or provided only subtle references to this registry.<sup>108</sup>

The registry was established at the end of the nineteenth century under the Austro-Hungarian or Dual Monarchy during particularly explosive period of economic and

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<sup>107</sup> Zoltán Nemes Nagy, *Tragédiák a Szerelemi Életheben* (Budapest: Aesculap, 1933), p. 73.

<sup>108</sup> In fact, apart from Professor Nagy’s book and Dr. Jenő Szántó’s articles on male homosexuality, all from the 1930s, I have found no sources that *explicitly* discuss the homosexual registry. Szántó’s articles include, “A homoszexualis férfiprostitutio kérdése,” *Népegészségügy*, (1933): 20-21. and “A homoszexualitásról különös tekintettel a Budapesti viszonyokra,” *Bőrgyógyászati, Urológiai és Venereológiai Szemle* (1934): 21.

cultural growth in Budapest.<sup>109</sup> The city was on its way to becoming a cosmopolitan metropolis, notable for its emerging working class and culturally-assertive, economically-powerful urban middle class, committed to advancing the city's liberal politics.<sup>110</sup> This was Budapest's Golden Age. The homosexual registry was part of a conscious and collaborative effort on the part of governing authorities to "catch up" and make Budapest into a modern capital.<sup>111</sup> Originally conceived as a bureaucratic tool to regulate and repress same-sex sexuality, the registry paradoxically proved neither wholly repressive nor regulatory. It also functioned as a means to protect "respectable" male homosexuals from unscrupulous blackmailers. The registry, with its mixed aims, may have been an artifact of the liberal leadership under the Dual monarchy, but it survived into the authoritarian and conservative interwar regime.

The chapter is based on the sources that directly or indirectly address, talk about, mention, or provide information about the historical origins, purpose, and implementation of the homosexual registry. I focus on the police's relationship to sexual crimes and non-normative sexuality more generally. In addition, I rely on historical works that discuss contemporaneous policing of sexualities in other European cities. I follow extant sources

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<sup>109</sup> There are indications that the registry functioned throughout the Communist era. Although consensual male homosexuality was decriminalized in Hungary in 1961, there is growing evidence that the police continued to use the registry as a tool for blackmailing. I will discuss the "fate" of the registry in my conclusion.

<sup>110</sup> Bart, István. *Budapest krónikája : a kezdetektől napjainkig*. Budapest: Corvina, 2007, 277-429. <sup>5</sup> On the development of Budapest see: Gerő, András, András Poór, Cecil B. Elby, and Nora Arató. *Budapest : a history from its beginnings to 1998*. Boulder; New York: East European Monographs ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1997. Vera Bácskai, *Budapest története : a kezdetektől 1945-ig* (Budapest: Budapesti Fővárosi Levéltára, 2000). For cultural histories of the city during this period see Robert Nemes, *The once and future Budapest* (DeKalb Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005) and John Lukacs' *Budapest 1900*.

<sup>5</sup> On the development of Budapest see: Gerő, András, András Poór, Cecil B. Elby, and Nora Arató. *Budapest : a history from its beginnings to 1998*. Boulder; New York: East European Monographs ; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1997. Vera Bácskai, *Budapest története : a kezdetektől 1945-ig* (Budapest: Budapesti Fővárosi Levéltára, 2000). For cultural histories of the city during this period see Robert Nemes, *The once and future Budapest* (DeKalb Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005) and John Lukacs' *Budapest 1900*.

like Nagy's in referring to the registry as the "homosexual registry." When the registry was set up the police may have called it a number of different names, as there were competing words and expressions to describe same-sex desire and acts between men. Contemporary official words describing same-sex desire and acts included "*férfiak között elkövetett fajtalanság*" (perversion between men), congenital perverts, *Urnings* (Uranians, from German), *pederaszák* (pederasts), and the *harmadik nem* (third gender). All of the terms either used the same word or literal translation from German and English terms invented in the last part of the nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, over time and during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the word "homosexual," even if often used concomitantly with other terms, came to be used officially to denote men who desired and had sex with men.<sup>113</sup>

The reconstruction and historical contextualization of the homosexual registry reveals a missing facet of the portrayal of the sexual landscape of Budapest, which emerged as the new Hungarian capital claimed the name, the "Pearl of the Danube." John Lukács's describes how in this emerging capital, "[t]here was the sense of erotic promises, earthy and tangible, as well as transcendent. It penetrated the hearts of the

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<sup>112</sup> As scholars of sexuality in various contexts demonstrated these multiple words and expressions that were used to describe same-sex sexuality between men prior to the twentieth century were not exclusively about homosexual desire. Desire for one's own sex was conceptualized as sexual inversion, which referred to a broad range of deviant gender behavior. On the history of the naming and conceptualization of male same-sex desire and acts see David Halperin's "One Hundred Years of Homosexuality" in Halperin, David M. *One hundred years of homosexuality : and other essays on Greek love*. New York: Routledge, 1990. 15-41. In addition, the word *päderastie* spelled *pederasztá* in Hungarian contemporaneously referred to "faux ami." basically to homosexual relations of one sort. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the word was frequently conflated with male prostitution. This was not unique to Hungary. For a discussion of the phenomenon in France during the same period see Wilson, Michael L. "Suspect Physiognomy: The Male Prostitute in Belle Époque Print Culture." *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 34 (2006). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.0642292.0034.012>. Last accessed June 14, 2012. For the latest work on the emergence of sexuality as central defining feature of human beings and homosexuality as a distinct modern category particularly in the East-Central Europe context see Peter, and Christopher E Forth. *Sexuality at the Fin de Siècle the makings of a "central problem."* Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008, especially the introduction.

<sup>113</sup> The word homosexual first appeared in the official police journal *Rendőri Lapok* in 1903. (January 11)

people, and not only the young...”<sup>114</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, Budapest was swiftly becoming infamous for its bordello culture and “ladies of the night,” while contemporaries began to acknowledge the growing presence of men who had sex with men and the emerging queer subculture in the city. Female prostitution and queer sexuality were facilitated by some of the same circumstances as the rising Hungarian metropolis during the heydays of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As the Hungarian Medical journal *Orvosi Hetilap* in 1862 noted in regards to (Buda)Pest, “[I]n every big city, the level of lechery and lewdness increases in direct proportion with the growth of population and of prosperity and wealth.”<sup>115</sup> The rapid economic and population growth of Budapest, in tandem with liberal politics, brought about a more visible and expanding public sexual culture.

This visible sexual culture expanded more swiftly than the city’s regulatory system, enforced by the Budapest Metropolitan Police. Keeping up with the burgeoning sexual culture was difficult and it was only at the very end of the nineteenth century that the police were able to rise to the challenge. Existing accounts of the “hetero” sexual world of Budapest during these last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries highlight the rapid growth of the city and sex trade, as bodies circulated more rapidly (geographically and intimately), and emphasize the inability of government authorities to regulate these developments. A focus on official attempts to regulate same-sex desire also underscores the systematic shortcomings of the regulatory system.

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<sup>114</sup> Lukacs, John. *Budapest 1900 : a Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture*. New York: Weindenfeld & Nicolson, 1988, 11.

<sup>115</sup> Before the unification of Buda and Pest into Budapest in 1873, Pest was the commercial and cultural center. *Orvosi Hetilap* 1862, cited in Miklóssy, János. *A Budapesti Prostitúció Története*. Budapest: Népszava Kiadó Vállalat, 1989, 25.

Practical realities and the inefficiency of the authorities aside, the homosexual registry make it possible to glimpse the complex processes by which Hungarian authorities devised new ways to manage the lives of their citizens.<sup>116</sup> If the state's desire to manage individuals was not necessarily new, the methods that allowed greater oversight of people's lives were most certainly novel at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup> Drawing on the latest international scientific and regulatory methods, the police in Budapest instituted a complex and thorough regulatory system that—among many other crimes—registered female prostitutes and male homosexuals. In this sense, the registry was part of the implementation of “modern” structures of sexual regulation in Budapest as politicians, physicians, journalists, the police, and the public looked outward to other leading metropolises for frameworks of understanding economies of sexual desire.

This chapter illustrates how the establishment and increasingly more proficient implementation of the homosexual registry was a manifestation of the Hungarian State's expanding ability to control people's lives. Placing the policing of same-sex desire and the police's homosexual registry center stage, however, not only corroborates and deepens the history of a spectacularly rapid modernization and the growing power of the State. It also offers new insights into the ways in which Hungarian officials, during an increasingly liberal political environment, understood Budapest's place in modern Europe. More specifically, this chapter argues that (homo)sexuality prior to World War I offered the authorities both the concrete challenge of urban Western modernity as a well

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<sup>116</sup> In this regard, the Hungarian state, similarly to other European states at the time was expanding its apparatus.

<sup>117</sup> Following and in response to the works of Michele Foucault, who traced the development of modern statecraft's concern with the biological and sexual life of people, there has been a burgeoning literature on the relationship between sexuality and the increasing role of the state in the European context.



as the means to deal with it. Homosexuality embodied many of the fears associated with urban modernity: fears about the moral and physical decline of Hungarians and the changing social and gendered order. But the understanding and treatment of homosexuality could also demonstrate Budapest's successful modernization and attest to Hungary's place in the West. This chapter and the next show how discussions and the treatment of homosexuality, particularly male homosexuality, offered contemporary Budapest authorities and citizens concrete ways to understand the city's place in the modern world of metropolises.

### *Homosexuality and the Penal Code*

How did authorities regulate and seek to control same-sex sex and what was the legal status of homosexuality in the Dual Monarchy? The Hungarian judicial system, independent from its Austrian counterpart since 1867, was a blend of the German, Austrian, and French systems.<sup>118</sup> The modern Hungarian Penal code followed the course and patterns of European penal reforms.<sup>119</sup> The evolution of the Hungarian Penal Code, *Büntető törvénykönyv*, reflected Budapest's growth as a city and during the 1830s and 1840s, the codification process experienced a "rebirth."<sup>120</sup> During this time, the reform-minded educated elites became committed to "placing Hungary into Europe." They

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<sup>118</sup> Following the Compromise of 1867 and the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, both Austria and Hungary could have their own legal system, including Penal Codes. In general, the Hungarian legal system and Penal Code became significantly more liberal than the Austrian system.

<sup>119</sup> Thus, it was in the age of the Enlightenment during the second half of the eighteenth century that the first attempts to codify the criminal system took place. As a comprehensive history of the evolution of Hungarian legal system Andor Csizmadia's *Magyar állam- és jogtörténet : egyetemi tankönyv* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1998) is one of the most useful. On the evolution of the court system István Stipta's *A magyar bírósági rendszer története* (Debrecen: Multiplex Media - Debrecen University Press, 1998) is the most helpful.

<sup>120</sup> Ferenc Finkey, *A magyar büntetőjog tankönyve* (The Textbook of Hungarian Criminal Law). Budapest: Grill, 1914, 82.

sincerely believed and hoped that the Penal Code would be a testament to Hungary's "well deserved place in the forward thinking European world."<sup>121</sup> The renowned politician and future Minister of Justice Ferenc Deák's draft included equality before the law, abolition of the death penalty and corporal punishment, specific rules of conduct within the prison system, and police accountability for their actions. This initial draft was approved by the lower house of Hungarian Parliament but was categorically rejected by the upper house. According to the famous Hungarian legal scholar Ferenc Finkey, if the draft had been accepted, it would have become the model liberal Criminal Code in Europe. But instead, the existing Hungarian Penal system remained the same—anachronistic and often inhumane.<sup>122</sup> Following the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution for Independence in 1848-9, the significantly stricter Austrian Penal Code (1803, revised in 1852) was implemented in Hungary until 1861. It was not until the Compromise of 1867, which bestowed power over internal affairs of the country to an elected Hungarian government, that reform and belated enactment of the first Hungarian Penal Code would take place.<sup>123</sup>

The history of the Penal Code, with its sanction on punishable sex crimes, reflects how the Hungarian state attempted to modernize and catch up to established European powers. Being a latecomer to modernization, in terms of political, economic, and social processes, yielded certain advantages. Most importantly, the officials and their immediate staff had been educated through travel to more advanced countries and

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>122</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence that despite the lack of reform, in practice the judges did observe an increasingly more humanistic attitude, which explains why in actual practice, punishments were in general very moderate. (The number of people executed annually averaged 6-8 and judges stopped ordering floggings as a form of punishment) Finkey, 83.

<sup>123</sup> According to the Compromise, Austria and Hungary had separate parliaments, each with a prime minister, while they yield power to the Monarch who remained in charge of the common army, navy, and foreign policy.

therefore had firsthand experience of how the most developed countries functioned. Thus, they felt confident identifying the specific areas, whether in regulation, infrastructure, or execution, in which Hungary needed reforms. In drafting the new Penal Code in the early 1870s, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Interior Károly Csemegi carefully analyzed leading European countries' Penal Codes in order to pick which system might offer a framework that would be most appropriate to Hungary.<sup>124</sup> After considering most Western European penal codes, Csemegi chose to follow outlines of the German Penal Code of 1871, a code that remained in place until 1961.<sup>125</sup> Although in comparison the Hungarian Penal Code was relatively more “enlightened” in its view of crimes than many others, the new justice system followed in the footsteps of established nation-states. It aimed to keep order and reduce crime by focusing on punishment, rather than treating crimes in a more comprehensive manner with a focus on prevention.

In terms of the regulation of same-sex sexuality, the Code rejected Austria's approach. The Austrian penal code criminalized both female and male homosexuality; instead Hungary only criminalized sex between men.<sup>126</sup> This exclusion marks an

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<sup>124</sup> The king of Hungary and emperor of the Monarchy, Franz Joseph I, sanctioned it as the first Hungarian Criminal Code on May 27<sup>th</sup> 1878. It was declared in the National Statute Book as Article V. of 1878: “*Hungarian Criminal Code of crimes and infringements*”. In addition, Csemegi also drafted Article XL of 1879 “Hungarian Criminal Code of petty offences”, and the Hungarian Criminal Codes went into effect in September 1, 1880.

<sup>125</sup> On the history of the German Penal Code, which did not get unified until 1896, see Michael John, *Politics and the law in late nineteenth-century Germany: the origins of the civil code* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

<sup>126</sup> In terms of the Criminal Codes prior to the nineteenth century, same-sex acts, if mentioned, were criminalized under the Latin term “*Sodomiticum*,” (sodomy) which in theory encompassed both male and female same-sexual activity. For a discussion on the history of legal treatments of “unnatural” sexual acts in the Hungarian context until 1878, see Angyal, Pál. *A Szemérem Elleni Büntettek És Vétiségek*. Magyar Büntetőjog Kézikönyve 14. Budapest: Attila-Nyomda, 1937, especially 73. With exception of countries that did not criminalize homosexuality, in most countries, as in Hungary, it was “only” male sodomy that was criminalized. Exceptions include Austria and Finland, where both female and male sodomy was illegal. On the history of the regulation of female homosexuality in Austria See Claudia Schoppmann, *Verbotene Verhältnisse: Frauenliebe 1938-1945*, Berlin: Querverlag, 1999, Tracie Matysik, *Reforming the moral subject: ethics and sexuality in Central Europe, 1890-1930*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008,

acknowledgment of female same-sex sex, even as lawmakers insisted it did not exist. Closely following Prussian law, §175 Paragraph 241 of the Hungarian Penal Code criminalized sexual acts between men and bestiality as “*természet ellenes fajtalanság*” or “*unnatural fornication*,” acts that could be punished by up to one year of *fogház* (the most lenient form of prison).<sup>127</sup> What exactly constituted an act of “unnatural fornication” was never concretely defined and remained open to different interpretation until its ultimate decriminalization in 1961. In the eyes of the law, acts that resembled “natural” (heterosexual) sexual acts, anal sex, and mutual masturbation between men, were generally seen as “*természet ellenes fajtalanság*.”<sup>128</sup>

Paragraph 242 declared non-consensual “crimes against nature” punishable by up to five years in prison, with potential life imprisonment if the act caused the death of the victim. Presumably, the state was the plaintiff in a murder trial. With the criminalization of consensual sex between adult men, the Hungarian regulation chose not to follow countries such as France, Holland, or Italy that did not criminalize same-sexual relations as long as they were consensual and took place outside of the public sphere.<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, the law was much more lenient than the majority of European criminal codes. The Hungarian code called for a maximum of one year in the least harsh form of

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153-155. For Finland, Kati Mustola and Jens Rydström “Women and the laws on same-sex sexuality” in *Criminally queer : homosexuality and criminal law in Scandinavia, 1842-1999*, Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007.

<sup>127</sup> The term *természet ellenes fajtalanság* is the Hungarian equivalent of the “*widernatürliche unzucht*,” which most closely means “*unnatural fornication*” in English. For the debates and discussions of the German term and §175, the historiography is extensive. The seminal work is James Steakley’s *The homosexual emancipation movement in Germany*. New York: Arno Press, 1975. The Hungarian prison system consisted of three tiers: *fogház* was the most lenient form of prison, *börtön* was more serious, while *fegyház* was the most severe and strict form of incarceration.

<sup>128</sup> For a discussion on different interpretations prior to 1937 see Angyal, *A Szemérem Elleni Büntettek És Vétségek*, 80-83.

<sup>129</sup> Of course the lack of criminalization did not automatically mean freedom and lack of policing same-sex and queer sexualities.

incarceration.<sup>130</sup> As the subsequent chapters illuminate, the actual application of the law was both surprisingly rare and also lenient. Nonetheless, from 1878 onwards, concrete laws regulated male homosexuality in Hungary.

### *The Metropolitan Police of Budapest*

Following a gradual political liberalization that continued after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Hungary, and Budapest particularly, gained control over its internal affairs. Between the Revolution of 1848-9 and the Compromise of 1867, the Habsburg bureaucracy in Vienna ruled with draconian vigor and made most of the major decisions about Hungary's internal affairs.<sup>131</sup> A testament to the new relationship between Austria and Hungary as a joint partnership between equals the Hungarian capital was to have its own Hungarian police force. The arm of law enforcement in the Hungarian capital, the Budapest Metropolitan Police, was established in 1871. After the unification of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda in 1873, the state under theegis of the Ministry of Justice, assumed control over the Metropolitan Police a nascent step in expanding the influence of the national government.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Florence Tamagne in *The History of Homosexuality in Europe* discusses the evolution of the different legal regulations of homosexuality within the Western European states. In later chapters I will address the legal discourse and the debates within the Hungarian Association of Jurists as well as the changes in the ways in which the various courts came to interpret the law between 1878 and World War II.

<sup>131</sup> Lendvai, Paul. *The Hungarians : a Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003, 284-288.

<sup>132</sup> Following Hungary's defeat in 1849, Vienna stationed Austrian police forces in Pest, then the Hungarian capital. From 1861 until the unification of Budapest in 1873, each municipality had its own independent police force. On April 11<sup>th</sup> 1881 the Hungarian parliament ratified article XXI. that established the nationalized Hungarian Kingdom's Budapest Metropolitan Police, which was no longer responsible to the Budapest City Council but directly to the Ministry of Interior. Czaga Viktória – Horváth J. András – Jancsó Éva: A fővárosi rendőrség története. 1. köt (1914-ig). Kollár Nóra, ed. Bp., [BRFK], 1995, 205.

The internal structure of the police was finally established in the mid-1880s.<sup>133</sup> This was the era of the infamous Captain Elek Thaisz, who served as the first chief captain of the Budapest Metropolitan Police.<sup>134</sup> Captain Thaisz, notorious for his love of “members of the oldest profession,” and lucrative business deals with the criminal underworld, actually facilitated [prostitution’s] development”<sup>135</sup> and fostered a liberal attitude toward sexuality in general. During the 1870s and 1880s, the police forces were seriously understaffed, and seemed incapable of keeping up with the criminals. To make matters worse, they were allegedly involved in businesses with the very criminals they were supposed to protect the city from. By 1881, the Metropolitan Police were responsible for about 75 square miles, the second largest area of enforcement in Europe after London. For such a vast area there was only one policeman for every 600 inhabitants and for approximately every 77,000 acres; thus, the number of policemen per inhabitant in Budapest was significantly lower than in other European capitals.<sup>136</sup> It comes as no surprise then that until the late 1890s, the police achieved rather modest results in creating a safe and regulated city. While the police struggled to fulfill even their most basic functions, Budapest’s prostitution and bordello culture was becoming internationally (in)famous.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Thaisz (1829-1892) initially served as the chief captain of the Police of Pest (1861- 1873).

<sup>135</sup> Borbély Zoltán és dr. Kapy Rezső szerk: *A 60 éves magyar rendőrség 1881-1941*. Bp. 1942, 196.

<sup>136</sup> Czaga, 260.

<sup>137</sup> There is a growing and already extensive historical scholarship on prostitution in Hungary. Works appearing after 1989 include János Miklóssy, *A budapesti prostitúció története*, Budapest: Népszava Kiadó Vállalat, 1989. Mihály Szécsényi, “A bordélyrendszer Budapesten,” *Rubicon*, no. 8 (1993); Judit Forrai, “Kávéházak és kéj nők,” *Budapesti Negyed*, no. 2 (1996): 110-120. For some of the latest works see Pál Léderer, *A nyilvánvaló nők. Prostitúció, társadalom, társadalomtörténet*, Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1999. Császtvay, Tünde. *Éjjeli Lepkevadászat : Bordélyvilág a Történeti Magyarországon*. Budapest: Osiris, 2009.

Although initially corrupt, seriously understaffed, and despised by the public, the Metropolitan Police underwent a series of reforms during the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>138</sup> The establishment of the criminal registry was one of the notable results. The real change and new era for the police came following the resignation of Thaisz in the wake of the preparation for the millennium celebration of the *Honfoglalás* (the Settlement of Hungarians into the Carpathian Basin) in 1896.<sup>139</sup> Although the Detective and Vice Squad departments had been established during the mid 1880s, it was during the captaincy (the Hungarian name for the head of police) of Béla Rudnay (1896 – 1906) that crucial developments and implementation of regulations and improved policing in Budapest took place.<sup>140</sup> It was also in Rudnay's time that the criminal registry and the so-called Galton-Henry method of identifying and keeping the records of criminals was established and became effective. A closer look at how the Budapest Metropolitan Police—and eventually the Hungarian police system—adopted fingerprinting technology and a specific classification system is indicative of how a combination of being informed and aware of the latest developments (and technology) along with the “desire” of an emerging city to modernize, was an essential component in the evolution of the regulatory structure.

Budapest's position as a relative latecomer to modernization, along with sheer coincidence, was instrumental in making the Budapest Metropolitan Police and Hungary the second law enforcement agencies in the world to adopt fingerprinting. In 1897,

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<sup>138</sup> Even in 1902 *Rendőri Lapok*, the official police journal complained that in contrast to London, not only did inhabitants of Budapest not respect the Metropolitan police but they actually purposefully made it more difficult for the police to do their job.

<sup>139</sup> While originally it was supposed to take place in 1895 the delay in the building of monuments and overall preparation led the authorities to hold the event in the following year in 1896.

<sup>140</sup> Borbély, Kapy, 232, Baksa, *Rendőrségi Almanach*, 59-84.

officials of the Metropolitan Police attended the Berlin Conference on the Bertillon system, a method of criminal identification already used in Austria and Germany which measured body parts to identify criminals. Alphonse Bertillon's work had been translated into Hungarian and a chief detective (accompanied by the translator of Bertillon's work) even traveled to Paris to have a personal meeting with the father of anthropometry, the first scientific system to identify criminals. The Bertillon system was introduced in Budapest as well, and there were a number of Hungarian detectives who attended the Bertillon school in order to master the workings of the method and make its integration smooth.<sup>141</sup> As a result, Budapest would become not only a worldly metropolis known for its culture and economy, but one whose police would meet the standards of any Western metropolis.

The Bertillon's methodology was not the only system that Hungarian authorities considered. The so-called Galton-Henry system, which Britain had been developing in its colonies, also came to the attention of the Metropolitan Police chiefs of staff. As opposed to the Bertillon method of measuring body parts, the Galton-Henry method of dactyloscopy classified crimes and identified individuals based on fingerprints. The fact that in the end it was actually the English system that was adapted in Budapest and later throughout Hungary is revealing for a number of reasons. First, historical sources on the origins of the criminal registry highlight how Hungarian authorities were fully informed about the latest developments of European and American police systems.<sup>142</sup> In addition, since Budapest had only recently claimed its city status, authorities had the opportunity to set up a new system based on the hard-learned experiences of other cities. Last, but not

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>142</sup> Berlin Police introduced a system of criminal registry in 1876, Baksa, 43.



least, these sources attest to the role that pure luck and circumstances played in the final decision about which registry method would be incorporated into the Hungarian justice system.

In fact, the organization of the implementation of the Bertillon system had already started. If it was not for Ferenc Pekáry, one of the district captains who spent his holiday with his relatives in London, where he had first-hand experience with the latest criminal tracking system, the Bertillon system might have continued to be the leading registry method. Instead, the captain became so convinced of the effectiveness of fingerprinting that he gathered all available publications on it and took them back to Budapest. Once there he approached chief of police Rudnay and presented his findings.<sup>143</sup> After careful consideration of the evidence presented by Pekáry as well as expert opinions, the chief of police decided to implement the dactyloscopy system. Thus, following its introduction in England, Hungary became the second country to introduce the Galton-Henry classification method in Budapest in 1902.

Budapest's criminal registry was created within the framework of a modernizing police force, intent to implement the latest scientific methods to regulate and police the city. Initially, the registry for each criminal consisted of four parts, but within a few years pictures were added as the fifth component.<sup>144</sup> By 1903, there were 75,445 people in the criminal registry, which included pictures of 10,807 people.<sup>145</sup> In 1908, the

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<sup>143</sup> Baksa, 85-86.

<sup>144</sup> Baksa, 42.

<sup>145</sup> In order to make the Registry manageable, authorities introduced the so-called "American style card-index" system, through which they could classify and sort their rapidly expanding files. Baksa, 85-86

criminal registry was made national, and by 1925, the Office of National Criminal Registry had almost 300,000 fingerprints stored.<sup>146</sup>

### *The Road to the Establishment of the Homosexual Registry*

The homosexual registry was the result of several factors: the Hungarian authorities' interest in the most up-to-date European police methods, their desire to modernize and sheer coincidence. Modernization required a more transparent and effective police and urban management system. Based on structures of metropolitan police in leading cities, the Hungarian authorities set up a file system for each crime in order to track individuals.<sup>147</sup> While the exact date of origin of the homosexual registry is uncertain it appears to have reached its final form in 1908, and as a consistent registry, lasted at least until the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1961; however, there are also indications that it was actually in place until 1989.<sup>148</sup> In 1908, following the Vice Squad department's move to a separate building, the registry was restructured along the lines of the so-called "American style" card-filing system, which presumably functioned in that form throughout the existence of the registry.<sup>149</sup> Although none of the sources

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<sup>146</sup> Tolnai Nagylexikon, <http://www.netlexikon.hu/yrk/Gbyanv/8097>, last accessed 2010-05-14.

<sup>147</sup> Borbély and Kapy, 157.

<sup>148</sup> The registry not only survived World War II and the establishment of the Communist one party system but, as sources indicate, it was systematically utilized throughout the Communist years for blackmailing purposes and to keep homosexual subculture under surveillance. Trial records of a murder case in the late 1960s, by which time homosexuality had been decriminalized, speak of the police registry, which "helped to track down and solve the case." However, all files and the registry itself, along with scores of other official documents, have disappeared and were most likely destroyed by the Communist Party during or shortly after the democratic changes in 1989. Miklós Eszenyi, *"Férfi a férfival, nő a nővel": Homoszexualitás a történelemben*, Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 2006.

<sup>149</sup> Baksa, 106.

acknowledge it explicitly, the data on homosexuals was most likely permanently housed alongside the registry of prostitutes.<sup>150</sup>

Some of the most informative details about the homosexual registry come from medical professionals writing in the 1930s. Although there are surviving references and hints about the existence of the registry in police, legal, and popular sources from the 1890s onward, it is from two doctors that we learn the most about the exact makeup, as well as the content, of the homosexual registry.<sup>151</sup> Using their accounts, I will sketch the parameters of the registry. Dr. Zoltán Nemes Nagy provides background and insight into how registration occurred:

There are about 5000 (in 1933) homosexual men in the Metropolitan police's registry. But by no means does the registry contain all the homosexuals, only those individuals who have had run-ins with the police.... The registry has been introduced in Budapest for about 15 years. But it contains mostly those who are passive or working for money and out of material interest.<sup>152</sup>

The key point here is that homosexuals only entered the registry when they encountered the law as victims or lawbreakers rather than through rumors, informants, or sightings at clubs for example. In light of the previously discussed police documents, Nemes Nagy's estimate about the duration of the registry must be slightly off. Nevertheless, his description of the registry and the personal accounts of his patients that he includes from the registry, offer invaluable insights. Consequently we learn that:

In the registry, the person has three different facial photos and his entire "life". Every important bit of data about the person is documented:  
 Name: Language of Origin:  
 Birthplace and Birth date: Eye Color:  
 Religion: Mouth:

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<sup>150</sup> Czaga – Horváth – Jancsó, 301.

<sup>151</sup> Explicit references include police publications and legal documents from the interwar period. In addition, implicit references include journalistic and popular accounts from both the pre 1914 and interwar periods.

<sup>152</sup> Nemes Nagy, 74.

Marital status:	Nose:
Occupation:	Ears:
Address:	Face:
Location, where picked up:	Hands:
Nationality:	Hair:
Languages spoken:	Mustache:
Female name:	Beard:
Inclination:	Special peculiarities:
Social Affiliations:	Criminal Record: <sup>153</sup>

Wanting to classify, characterize, and control criminal elements, the registry reflected the authorities' intention to scientifically categorize men who had sex with men.

Furthermore, quite interestingly, these categories of identification reflect not only the apparatus of criminal identification—who is this person and how can we keep track of him—but also reflect a sexological apparatus for discerning who is a homosexual. In addition to the generic information collected on all criminals, the homosexual registry included the homosexual person's inclination and female names. These features provide some clues about the operation of the registry and more crucially police assumptions about the nature of the homosexual population. The question of “inclination” was important to determine the essence of an individual's non-normative sexuality. From examining traces of the homosexual registry in medical, legal, and police documents, it seems clear that the Vice Squad of the Metropolitan Police was serious about determining whether or not the person was a “real” or “authentic” homosexual. Otherwise, considering that the establishment of the homosexual registry was embedded within authorities' effort to establish a modern police system, most of the information that the homosexual registry contained would have been universally provided, regardless of the crime committed or the type of registry.

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<sup>153</sup> Nemes Nagy, 73.

Furthermore, the information gathered on the registry points to the influence of both modern criminology schools, criminal sociology, and criminal anthropology that emerged during the last part of nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>154</sup> To be more accurate, as legal scholars have argued, the registry actually reflects the approach of the so-called “*közvetítő iskola*” (go-between school), otherwise referred to as the “neo-classical school,” which from the late nineteenth century characterized the Hungarian legal system.<sup>155</sup> Due to late modernization, “in Hungary neither criminal sociology nor criminal anthropology attracted major fans.”<sup>156</sup> Rather it was Franz von Liszt, whose “progressive” school became the most influential and whose approach Hungarian legal scholars and the legal system adopted.<sup>157</sup> As seen in the homosexual registry, this approach combined both exogenous (environmental) and endogenous (biological) factors in explaining the causes of crime. Questions about the individual’s social, economic, and educational background reflect the exogenous focus, which was central to criminal sociology, while questions about people’s physical attributes embody the anthropometrical, logical, or biological focus.<sup>158</sup> Although they distinguished between different types of homosexuality by stressing the social factors and the role of immediate

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<sup>154</sup> On the history of criminology and the different approaches in different countries see Becker, Peter, and Richard F Wetzell. “Criminals and their scientists : the history of criminology in international perspective”. New York: Cambridge University Press German Historical Institute, 2006. On the effects and influence of each of these schools on the Hungarian legal system see Csizmadia, Andor. *Magyar Állam- És Jogtörténet : Egyetemi Tankönyv*. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1998, 448-450.

<sup>155</sup> Csizmadia, Andor. *Magyar Állam- És Jogtörténet : Egyetemi Tankönyv*. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1998, 449.

<sup>156</sup> Király, Tibor, Máthé, Gábor, and Mezey, Barna. “A Polgári Büntetőjog Története.” In *Magyar Jogtörténet*, edited by Mezey, Barna. Budapest: Osiris, 2003, 303-305.

<sup>157</sup> Liszt (1851- 1919) was one of the most influential criminologists and legal scholars of his era. He was widely read in Europe and arguably two of the most influential Hungarian legal scholars, Angyal Pál and Finkey Ferenc, were followers. On the history of Liszt and his approach see Wetzell, Richard F. *Inventing the criminal : a history of German criminology, 1880-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

<sup>158</sup> While the “sociological school” located the seeds of criminal activities in the external environment, the criminal anthropology school located them in innate physical features that were the result of biology.

environment in creating “criminals,” the police remained skeptical of criminal anthropology and Cesare Lombroso’s ideal of the “Born Criminal.”<sup>159</sup>

The information on the homosexual registry was important both for keeping track of and identifying people and also for statistical purposes. Documenting social and economic background, as well as education level and occupation, were important for identifying someone amidst the flow of incoming and unregistered inhabitants of Budapest.<sup>160</sup> Like the police agencies of other European capitals, when the Vice Squad of the Budapest Metropolitan Police arrested men for same-sex sexual activities, they tediously documented all information about these men.<sup>161</sup> All of the details about individuals would have been stored and potentially available for statistical analysis.<sup>162</sup> Physical attributes, such as hair color, nose and ear shape were also important for future identification of the registered person.<sup>163</sup> In the rapidly growing city, where people frequently changed their address and location, keeping track of “*notórius homoseksuálisok*,” (notorious homosexuals) was by no means an easy task.<sup>164</sup> In addition, the detailed information that the registry supplied could be useful to identify individuals

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<sup>159</sup> Lombroso and his work was read and cited in Hungarian legal and medical discourses and in police papers, but overall it remained less influential than the already mentioned “progressive” German school. Perényi Roland. “A Bűnügyi Statisztika Magyarországon a Hosszúé XIX. Században.” *Statisztikai Szemle* 85. évf. (2007): 534.

<sup>160</sup> Upon arriving in Budapest new residents had to register at the local office of registry.

<sup>161</sup> For the police’s detailed documentation of men who engaged in sexual activities with other men in Paris, see Peniston, William A. *Pederasts and others : urban culture and sexual identity in nineteenth century Paris*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004. For Berlin, Dickinson, Edward. “Policing Sex in Germany, 1882-1982: A Preliminary Statistical Analysis.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (November 19, 2007): 204–204–250.

<sup>162</sup> The Hungarian Statistical Office was officially established in 1871. However, it was only in 1881 that it set up to collect nationwide statistical data. It took considerably longer before the office provided regular statistical analysis of criminals. For the history of the beginning of criminological statistical analysis see Balázs, József. *A Magyar Bűnügyi Statisztika Kialakulása És Fejlődése Különös Tekintettel Annak Módszertani Kérdéseire*. Szeged: Szegedi Nyomda, 1969.

<sup>163</sup> The ears became especially important once photographs were taken of those arrested. Bogdán, Melinda. “A Rabosító Fénykép : a Rendőrségi Fényképezés Kialakulása.” *Budapesti Negyed : Lap a Városról* 13. évf. (2005): 143–165.

<sup>164</sup> The phrase “notorious homosexuals” comes from the 1930s.

in cases dealing with male homosexual prostitution and the blackmailing of “respectable” homosexuals.

At the same time, all of the information, such as occupation and descriptions of physical attributes, could be used for racist, antisemitic or sexist typologies about who could become a “criminal,” a “homosexual,” or a “homosexual criminal.”<sup>165</sup> An article in the official journal of the police from 1907 provides a clear example of how the data of the registry could serve as a basis for creating stereotypes about homosexuals, as well as about men in traditionally female professions. “The experience of police offers interesting insights into the nature of men who desire their own sex. Statistical data supports the fact that men who have female occupations tend to fall ill of perversity.”<sup>166</sup> According to the police and based on the registry, men in traditionally female occupations (such as tailors) and in homo-social environments (such as an all boys’ school or a camp) were in danger of becoming homosexuals. But the data the registry provided about the occupation and social setting of men who were caught for same-sex sexual activities could be used in even more creative ways. The same article that made the statement about homosexuals and their occupational preference is a case in point. Having used the registry to generalize about homosexuals, it goes on to use the information of the registry to make patriarchal claims about women’s place in society:

And here we cannot but make a statement, which might seem a mockery. Could not facts [from the registry] offer a lesson for those who support the fashionable social wave of feminism? It is unquestionable that the nature of one’s profession has profound effects on one’s mentality, character, and even on one’s appearance. What would remain of a woman if she were to decide to take all areas from men even those, which require his strength and maleness? We would not declare that in this way, women would drift away from their own natural channel, but it is

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<sup>165</sup> Perényi Roland. “A ‘Figyelő, Megelőző És Felfedező’ Rendőrség: egy Bűnözői Névjegyzék Tanulságai.” *Budapesti Negyed : Lap a Városról* 13. évf. (2005): 63–92.

<sup>166</sup> *Rendőri Lapok*, “Harmadik Nem,” March 10, 1907.

quite evident that within a feminist society, the essence of a woman sooner or later would fill up with mixed-gender subjects.<sup>167</sup>

The registry was not only useful for creating stereotypes about homosexuals but also to clarify and substantiate the police's negative attitude towards feminism (even if it was shared by most contemporaries).<sup>168</sup>

The homosexual registry reflects the triumph of "scientific" approaches to managing society.<sup>169</sup> In theory, Budapest and the Hungarian government authorities followed the lead of other modern countries in setting up the conceptual, experimental, and institutional apparatus for social control.<sup>170</sup> Containing homosexuality and registering homosexuals were part of the new and modern forms of governance.<sup>171</sup> Looking at its effort to define, collect data on, analyze, quantify, and police male same-sex sexuality, albeit comparatively later than Western European nations, Hungary's concentrated attempt to modernize, centralize, and expand its power over the population is evident.<sup>172</sup> Also relevant in accessing the impact of the registry is the fact that, by the last decades of the nineteenth century and increasingly in the twentieth century, concerns about the degeneration of the Magyar (Hungarian) race were also present.<sup>173</sup> Bearing half

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Perényi Roland. "A Bűnügyi Statisztika Magyarországon a Hosszúé XIX. Században." *Statisztikai Szemle* 85. évf. (2007): 537.

<sup>169</sup> Wiener, Martin J. *Reconstructing the criminal : culture, law, and policy in England, 1830-1914*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Nye, Robert A. *Crime, madness [and] politics in modern France : the medical concept of national decline*. Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984.

<sup>170</sup> Harry Cocks, "Modernity and the Self in the History of Sexuality," *Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (2006): 1211.

<sup>171</sup> One of the forefathers of this approach is Michel Foucault. His works have been instrumental in directing attention to how modern institutions became locus of power. For the relationship between institutions and sexuality see *The History of Sexuality*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

<sup>172</sup> On the expansion of Hungarian state over the course of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century Andor Csizmadia's *Magyar állam- és jogtörténet : egyetemi tankönyv* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1998) provides a comprehensive overview.

<sup>173</sup> Marius Turda, "The Magyars: A Ruling Race': The Idea of National Superiority in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary," *European Review of History* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 5-33.



of the name of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy did not mean that half of the Monarchy's population was ethnically Hungarian. In fact, a majority of the Hungarian population was not ethnically Magyar, which made the ruling elite even more obsessed with strengthening an ethnically Hungarian nation.<sup>174</sup> And while the forced assimilation of non-ethnic Hungarians through the government's policies of Magyarization was seen as legalized discrimination and spurred nationalism among ethnic minorities, it also reflected Hungary's long history of being on the defensive against invaders.<sup>175</sup> By the late nineteenth century scientific racism and ideals of Hungarian racial superiority over other races, for example Slavs or Romanians, were also increasingly invoked.<sup>176</sup> To Hungarian nationalists sexual deviance (particularly homosexual activity) would have been considered both abnormal and also very unpatriotic.<sup>177</sup> In this context, the registry of homosexuals along with other criminals could have served the dual purpose of policing lawbreakers and also containing "non-desirable elements" of the Hungarian race.

In the process of gathering information, data was collected that was specific to the homosexual registry. "Inclination" and "Female Name" of the registered men suggest that the police differentiated between different queer sexualities. The police journal *Rendőri Lapok* provides the most direct evidence of the police's view and approach. The journal ran a couple of series of articles on "the pathological aberrations of sexual life,"

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<sup>174</sup> Paul Hanebrink, "Transnational Culture War: Christianity, Nation, and the Judeo- Bolshevik Myth in Hungary, 1890-1920," *The Journal of modern history*. 80, no. 1 (2008): 55.

<sup>175</sup> For ideas on the defensive nature of Hungarian nationalism see Peter F. Sugar, 'The more it changes, the more Hungarian nationalism remains the same', *Austrian History Yearbook*, XXXI (2000), pp. 127-55. Most historians, especially Hungarians hold that throughout the thousand years of Hungary's history since the Magyars arrived at the Carpathian basin in the late ninth century, the survival of Hungarians in the midst of frequent attacks from the East had been the most consistent and powerful force shaping Hungarian policies and eventually Hungarian nationalism.

<sup>176</sup> Turda, 7-8.

<sup>177</sup> For a revealing discussion on the relationship between sexual deviance and ethnic and national identity in East-Central Europe see Stauter-Halsted, Keely, and Nancy M. Wingfield. "Introduction: The Construction of Sexual Deviance in Late Imperial Eastern Europe." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 2 (2011): 215-224.

“sexual offences the Criminal Code,” and explicitly on homosexuality in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>178</sup> In all of these articles the authors explain the latest views of sexologists and criminal anthropologist along with their own ideas about sexual “abnormalities.” The reader learns about the symptoms and causes of perverse deeds such as masturbation, sadism, and masochism, as well the various forms of same-sex love (Lesbos love and sodomy).

The journal also published a number of articles that provide snapshots of the police’s approach to homosexuals in cities such as Berlin and Paris.<sup>179</sup> Considering that it was the official police organ and was delivered nation-wide to most police stations, its content is especially revealing. Information found in the journal indicates that the police believed there were two major types of homosexuals. In one group homosexuality was innate; in the second group it was acquired. This is clearly expressed in an article explicitly on the “Third Gender:”

[H]omosexuality and its seed is something that people bear within themselves since birth – and regardless of the circumstances it will take hold of those who have it and it is almost impossible to suppress it. It requires the utter most energy and self-control in order to hide one’s perversity. But he will be always aware of it. Aside from the congenital perverts there are quite a number of people whose case it is not nature’s fault that is to blame. Their perversity comes about as a result of their education, environment, their general life style, and not once as the consequence of an ill-considered moment or act.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> T. S. E. “Az önfertőzős és kóros nemi életéről,” *Rendőri Lapok*, September 23, 1900, 7:39.; Béla Újhegyi, “A nemi ösztön kóros tévelygése,” *Rendőri Lapok*, Oct. 28, 1900, 7:44., In 1903 the journal once more ran an informative and educational series on the “legal implications of sexual perversions,” “Bevezetés a büntetőjogi ismeretekbe: Szemérem elleni erőszak,” *Rendőri Lapok*, January 1, 11 1903, On Pornography, December 18, 1904; “A Harmadik Nem” (Third Gender), January 27, February 3, February 10, March 10, 1907; “A Harmadik Nem: Homosexualitás” (Third Gender: Homosexuality) September 27, October 4, October 11, 1908.

<sup>179</sup> On homosexuals in Paris; May 6 & May 13 & May 20 and May 27, 1906, on Berlin; “A kóros szerelem” (abnormal love), November 3, 1907, On Vienna; “Pederasták Bécsben” (Male prostitutes in Vienna), October 18, 1908.

<sup>180</sup> “Harmadik Nem” 3. Rész, March 10, 1907.

In the police's view, "authentic" homosexuals were born desiring their own sex and could not help their "inclination." People who acquired their homosexuality developed it "artificially" by being exposed to it. The latter group of men actually had a choice about their sexuality but did not resist. My hunch is that the term "inclination" corresponded to this important distinction circulating in police circles at the time the registry's categories were created.

The exact procedure that the police used to determine "innate" vs. "acquired" homosexuality is not explicitly documented in records. It is likely that such determinations were the result of a combination of self-admission, the assessment of police medical experts and the pressure of interrogation. The registry's inclusion of the "female name," while useful to track down cross-dressers and homosexuals, who liked to impersonate women, perhaps reflected the police's understanding and differential treatment of male same-sex sexuality. Nemes Nagy's observation that the registry contained only those homosexuals who are "passive and working for money" provides further clues. For one, the police differentiated between men on the registry based on gender representation and sexual performativity.<sup>181</sup> For example, there were so-called "active" men who had sex with other men whom the police did not necessarily consider "authentic" homosexuals. Those thought to be "authentic" in the eyes of the police were usually passive and "could not help their sexual inclination." Thus, sexual roles were bound to understandings of "authenticity"—only men who were sodomized, i.e. accepted

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<sup>181</sup> There is an extensive literature on the differential (by and large preferential) treatment of manly homosexual men compared to that of male homosexuals who acted feminine and whose gender representation transgressed traditional gender norms. Without trying to be comprehensive some of the seminal works include George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994; John Howard, *Men Like That: Southern Queer History*. Chicago: Illinois: University Of Chicago Press, 2001 and Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Peril and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

anal penetration, could be authentic homosexuals. This conflates gendered assumptions about the essentially “active” nature of normal men—and the passive or feminine nature of queer men—with sexual selfhood. Furthermore, the police made note of men who were selling their sexual services to other men.<sup>182</sup> These men were considered “inauthentic” and were thus seen as particularly dangerous. The following excerpt from the police journal in 1908 illuminates the perceived threat associated with male prostitutes as a result of their monetary motivations:

The male prostitute is very far from being nominated for the Legion of Honor. Who sells his body has given up his soul; his respect and moral righteousness. The female prostitute has a lot of excuse. Just to mention one, there are quite a few among both registered and clandestine prostitutes whose unstoppable licentious blood and exotic desire for men place them among the condemned. This would be almost impossible among male prostitutes. They are all businessmen, who destroy the last drop of human decency by throwing themselves even to perverted bestialities, for money. It is understandable therefore that their moral insanity is soon arrives to criminality. This is the case for almost all of them. There are thieves, swindlers, cynical murders among them, but the majority is a blackmailer. They have nothing to lose, unlike their *respectful* partners, whose entire existence would crumble in a minute if their secret would be revealed.<sup>183</sup>

Consequently, the registry, which theoretically included all men who have had sex with another man, made a distinction between men engaged in consensual sex and male prostitutes. The consequences of those distinctions will be discussed after I present additional information about the registry. Anita, avoid these sorts of organization snafus, they make the reader feel that you are not controlling your material.

Another medical doctor provides both quantitative and qualitative information about the registered individuals. Doctor Jenő Szántó’s 1933 article in the *Journal of Dermatology*,

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<sup>182</sup> As we learn from Jenő Szántó, initially the police marked/tagged men who sold sex with “monetary interest,” before establishing a separate registry for male homosexual prostitutes in the 1920’s. A homosexualis férfiprostitutio kérdése / Szántó Jenő Népegészségügy, 1933. 20-21.

<sup>183</sup> *Italics* are mine. “Harmadik Nem: Homoszexualitás” II. A férfi prostituált,” *Rendőri Lapok*, October 4, 1908.

*Urology and Venereology* on homosexuality in Budapest presents fascinating data on the socio-economic background of men who were in the registry of the Metropolitan Police.<sup>184</sup> Szántó was allowed to study the specific content of the registry and openly discuss it in a widely circulated medical journal.<sup>185</sup> He presents statistics on 3,425 registered men in terms of their occupation, marital status, religion, and criminal history:

<b>Occupation of 3,425 men</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Factory worker, day laborer, house servant	431	12.58
Merchant, salesman	422	12.38
Private office-holder, factory owner, landowner, property owner	309	9.09
Civil servant, civil worker	243	7.09
Tailors (both for men and women)	233	6.80
Ironworkers, chauffeurs	222	6.47
Waiters, bartenders, barkeepers	168	4.99
Carpenters, masons, glazers	163	4.76
Gardener, digger	158	4.61
Baker, cook, confectioner	137	4.00
Shoemaker	137	3.70
Manservant	107	3.12
Jeweler, artificer, optician, photographer	103	3.00
Pupil, university student	90	2.61
Hairdresser, barber	77	2.24
Upholsterer, decorator, painter	74	2.15
Artist, actor, music teacher	50	1.48
Butcher, slaughterer	46	1.33
Engineer, architect, chemist	40	1.16
Teacher, instructor	33	0.96
Nurse, masseuse	32	0.93
Artiste, dancer	31	0.90
Musician	28	0.81
Textile worker, weaver	24	0.70
Bookbinder, printer	24	0.70
Medical doctor	19	0.55
Soldier (incomplete data)	15	0.43
Writer, journalist	10	0.29
Lawyer	9	0.26

<sup>184</sup> “A homosexualitásról, különös tekintettel a budapesti viszonyokra” *Bőrgyógyászati, Urológiai és Venereológiai Szemle* 1933: 21.

<sup>185</sup> Szántó was practicing as a chief medical doctor during the 1920s and 1930s. In his articles he explicitly acknowledges his contact with police. I have not been able to track down where he actually practiced, but it is likely that he was affiliated with both a private practice and the public medical establishment. The circumstances and actual details of Szántó’s connection to the Vice Squad in Budapest remain unknown.

Szántó's data comes from the early 1930s resembles what we know of the distribution of homosexuals across professions from the pre-WWI period. While, overall, working class and lower class people are the majority, people of means (professionals, merchants, civil servants) make up a considerable segment of the registry. The fact that "merchant and salesmen" is the second largest category, followed by "business owners" and "civil servants" is a clear indication that the Vice Squad of the Metropolitan Police registered men regardless of their social and economic status.

Szántó also provides information about the marital status of the men in the registry.

Single	2691
Married	605
Widowed	64
Divorced	65

The majority (almost 80%) of registered men were single, which had likely been the case in the last part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as well.<sup>186</sup> As to the men's religious affiliation we learn that homosexuality was represented proportionately across several religions, with Roman Catholicism having the highest percentage:

<b>Religion of 3425 homosexual men</b>	<b># of homosexuals</b>	<b>% of homosexuals</b>	<b>% of Budapest's population (in 1930)</b>
Roman Catholic	2236	65.28	59.9
Greek Catholic	53	1.54	1.0
Calvinist	494	14.42	11.4
Lutherans	153	4.52	4.8
Jewish	445	12.99	21.6
Other	44	1.28	1.3

<sup>186</sup> Considering that most people in the Budapest Criminal Registry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were single, it is also likely that people on the homosexual registry would have been too. For a statistical analysis of the Criminal Registry prior to WWI see Perényi Roland. "A 'Figyelő, Megelőző És Felfedező' Rendőrség: egy Bűnözői Névjegyzék Tanulságai." *Budapesti Negyed : Lap a Városról* 13. évf. (2005): 63–92.

All religions were proportionately represented in terms of the religious demographics of Budapest, except for Jews who were underrepresented.<sup>187</sup> As for the data on age, over half of the men on the registry were between twenty and forty years old.

<b>Age of 3425 homosexual men</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 20 years of age	124	3.62
20 – 30 years of age	1235	36.08
30 – 40 years of age	997	29.10
40 – 50 years of age	599	17.48
50 – 60	331	9.67
60 and above	139	4.05

This pattern seems to correspond with demographic trends in Budapest, with young single men flocking to the city for work.<sup>188</sup> These general characteristics are in line with the police’s “typical registered male” on the Budapest Criminal Registry prior to WWI: between twenty and forty years old, born in the countryside, and unmarried.<sup>189</sup>

Furthermore, the information that the homosexual registry conveys on homosexual men and men who had sex with men in Budapest, is consistent with what historians have discovered about other urban communities: the majority of men who were caught for sex with men tended to be in their twenties and thirties, were unmarried, and at the time of their arrest, gainfully employed.<sup>190</sup>

The last set of data Szántó provides is the criminal history of the registered men. This information begins to offer some answers regarding the purpose and operation of the registry. Szántó presents the following categories:

<sup>187</sup> In this respect the situation of Budapest resembled London, where according to Matt Houlbrook in *Queer London*, Jewish men were also systematically underrepresented.

<sup>188</sup> According to John Lukacs, because the rapid industrialization of Budapest attracted so many young men (and women) “the average age of the population remained fairly young, younger than the generally urban aging population of other European cities” in *Budapest 1900: a Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture*. New York: Weindenfeld & Nicolson, 1988, 75.

<sup>189</sup> Perényi Roland. “A ‘Figyelő, Megelőző És Felfedező’ Rendőrség: egy Bűnözői Névjegyzék Tanulságai.” 89-91.

<sup>190</sup> These characteristics as historians of sexuality have demonstrated seemed to be true for capital cities across Europe as well as for New York city.

<b>Criminal history of 3425 h. men</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Convicted for blackmailing	40	1.16
Convicted for fornication	307	8.96
Convicted for other reasons	357	10.42

We learn that about one in five (20%) of the registered men had had prior contact with the justice system. Nine percent of them had been convicted for homosexuality under paragraph 241 or 242 and ten percent had been convicted for other reasons. While the statistics from Szántó, as well as from police sources, do not specify, it seems that it was most often petty crimes and theft that these men were convicted for.<sup>191</sup> In police captain *József Vogl's* essay, “Homosexualitás” (Homosexuality), the captain Vogl claims that while relatively few homosexuals were prosecuted for *unnatural fornication*, most homosexuals arrested are charged with petty crimes such as stealing.<sup>192</sup> The third category of crimes—blackmailing—is numerically small. However, for the purpose of the operation of the registry, it had a much greater significance than its numbers indicate.

### *The Homosexual Registry in Practice*

What principles informed how the Vice Squad and the police in general treated homosexuals and how did they use the registry? The homosexual registry represented the application of ‘modern rational technologies of power,’ and the intensification of policing of non-normative sexualities. In practice, local circumstances and understandings of sexuality shaped its application and influence on the daily lives of queers in Budapest.

<sup>191</sup> In addition, to the statistics Szántó presents this is implicit in articles of *Rendőri Lapok*, for instance in an article “Homosexualitás a bűnözők között” (Homosexuality among criminals), July 21, 1912.

<sup>192</sup> *József Vogl* in Turcsányi, Gyula, ed. *A Modern Bűnözés I-II*. 2 vols. Budapest: Rozsnyai Károly kiadása, 1929, 142. This was by no means a uniquely Hungarian phenomenon. It was common in other capitals. See for instance the discussion of Matt Cook about the Metropolitan Police in London. *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 46-48



In contrast to subsequent historical accounts, which praised the police for setting up a modern criminal registry, contemporary sources highlighted the continuing inability of the police to sufficiently implement it. Although rarely writing explicitly about the criminal registry, the daily newspapers reported on and even ridiculed police corruption and “spectacular” (in)efficiencies on a regular basis throughout the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>193</sup> The portrayal of the police in the most circulated and read comic journal of the day, *Borsszem Jankó* (Mighty small Johnny), indicates how denizens of Budapest thought about their law enforcement.<sup>194</sup> In the two decades prior to World War I, this popular weekly journal featured a character, András Mihaszna (Useless Andrew), who achieved national fame.<sup>195</sup> As historian Géza Buzinkay states,

[H]is purpose was not only to serve as a tool for presenting jokes about policemen; he embodied the awkward constable with his sense of omnipotence, a representative of official arrogance and conceit, the officer whose duty it is to keep order in the chaos of the metropolis but who is, of course, always clumsy, always in the wrong place at the wrong time.<sup>196</sup>

The character of András Mihaszna along with dozen of his counterparts highlight the struggles of the police to meet even minimal expectations; the operation of a modern criminal registry system included.

At the same time that the public was expressing its skepticism, the civic leadership also voiced concern about the effectiveness of the police. During a parliamentary debate

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<sup>193</sup> Buzinkay, Géza. “A Bűnügyi Hír, a Riporter És a Rendőr.” *Budapesti Negyed* 47-48 (2005/2 2005), Buzinkay, Géza. *Mokány Berczi És Spitzig Itzig, Göre Gábor Mög a Többiek... : a Magyar Társadalom Figurái Az Élclapokban 1860 És 1918 Között*. Budapest: Magvető, 1988, 742-4.

<sup>194</sup> *Borsszem Jankó* (1868- 1936) was the first truly urban comic journal, claiming the highest circulation (around 15-20,000/issue).

<sup>195</sup> Between 1882 and 1902 András Mihaszna was a regular in *Borsszem Jankó*. Even after his departure, he continued to serve as a reference point. Géza Buzinkay, “The Budapest Joke and Comic Weeklies as Mirrors of Cultural Assimilation” in Bender, Thomas, and Russell Sage Foundation. *Budapest and New York : Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870-1930*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994, 224-248

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* 229

in 1881 one member said that “in comparison to the Metropolitan Police in London and in Vienna, where two-third of the police staff work during the night and one-third during the day, here (in Budapest) one-tenth of the police works at night. That is the source of our public safety (or more precisely the lack thereof).”<sup>197</sup> The statement clearly reflects the relationship between the Metropolitan Police and the mayor and civic leadership of Budapest, a relationship that was not necessarily harmonious throughout the life of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>198</sup> The pointed criticism of the police for being lenient with criminals at best and indifferent and careless at worst, seemed to resonate with every sphere of society. It also implied both qualitative and quantitative shortcomings. Thus, the operation of the criminal registry system (and its subparts, like the registries of sexual “vice” crimes) faced significant burdens.

In fact, the police admitted that the implementation of the criminal registry was a slow process, and that it was not fully operational even by the turn of the century. For instance, an 1899 article entitled “The National Registry System” in the *Rendőri Lapok*, declared that “the Criminal registry (in Hungary) only exists in one place, in Budapest.” It cited a lack of funding as the reason that no registry functioned elsewhere in Hungary and lamented that “the police struggled with operational problems and certainly lacked personnel, resources and organization to efficiently manage the registry even in Budapest.”<sup>199</sup> Another article from 1902, echoing the critical voices in parliament, went

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<sup>197</sup> Czaga et. al. 243.

<sup>198</sup> On the relationship between the police and the Budapest City Council see Spira, György, and Vörös, Károly. *Budapest története a márciusi forradalomtól az őszirózsás forradalomig* (History of Budapest from the March Revolution to the Aster Revolution). Edited by Vörös, Károly. Budapest története. Budapest: Budapest Főváros Tanácsa: Akadémia Kiadó, 1978, 459-473.

<sup>199</sup> The two articles that explicitly acknowledge the failure of the police in respect to the registry are Miklós Rèdey, “Az Országos Bűnügyi Nyilvantartás,” *Rendőri Lapok*. March 5, 1899, 6:10.; Gyula Fekete, “A Berliini bűnügyi rendőrség,” *Rendőri Lapok*. April 23, 1899, 6:17. The National Criminal Registry was finally established in 1908.

further in acknowledging that “amidst the continuing rise of population the police are not only unable to keep up with the rising crime rates (let alone register them), but that they are not even able to assure basic public safety.”<sup>200</sup>

When the official journal of the police explicitly acknowledged the incapacity to fulfill their most basic function of protection, it is not surprising that registering men who had sex with other men was not a high priority or even feasible. Furthermore, law enforcement authorities admitted that “this (late nineteenth century) was the golden age of prostitution, when sex trafficking, procuring, pimping as well as *all other forms of crimes against morality*, were charged simply with a misdemeanor.”<sup>201</sup> In addition, contemporary police articles also reasoned that while the police were supposed to protect the public from “perverse deeds,” “and even as the public itself views sexual crimes as ignominious, in actuality, they either do not even notice them, or more likely, the people themselves in fact engage in such deeds.”<sup>202</sup> In 1903, the police declared that it was “worrisome that perversion between men is quite common in the capital.”<sup>203</sup> They blamed the situation on a lack of adequate executive and regulatory power, asserting that fighting moral vices, including sex between men, brought little success. In response to the police’s self justification and complaints, the otherwise liberal City Council expressed its own opinions about the ways in which the police handled prostitution and other issues of public morality: “The shocking state of things (around procuring and such) has nothing to do with the lack of existing regulations, rather with the fact that the regulations are not

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<sup>200</sup> “Statistics on Criminality in Budapest 1901,” *Rendőri Lapok*, August 3, 1902.

<sup>201</sup> Borbély and Kapy, 196. *Italics* are mine.

<sup>202</sup> “Az önfertőzés és a kóros szexuális élet” (Self-contamination and abnormal sexual life), *Rendőri Lapok*, September 23, 1900.

<sup>203</sup> *Rendőri Lapok*, “Bevezetés a Büntető törvénykönyvbe” (Introduction to the Criminal Code) – January 11, 1903.

enforced with necessary might.”<sup>204</sup> Contemporary reports and articles, including those in the official police journal, agreed that the actual accomplishment (or lack thereof) of the police in dealing with homosexuality and managing sexuality was far from ideal. In regard to same-sex sexuality more specifically, the articles explicitly acknowledge that while “the law in theory is relatively strict about male homosexuality in real life its application is not.”<sup>205</sup> In sum, the police were not on top of things.

### *Sex and Morality in the Eyes of the Police*

In the eyes of Hungarian authorities, concern for public and social order and facilitating a vibrant sexual culture were not mutually exclusive. As Budapest was expanding at lightning speed, authorities on both the state and city level were deeply concerned about maintaining order, especially social order and social hierarchies. Because the social composition of the city included a rapidly growing working class population, the safeguarding of the respectable classes from “immoral” and “uncultured” elements was an important priority from the onset. In the densely populated central districts of the city there was little physical separation between the rich and respectable and the urban poor, viewed by authorities as immoral elements in society. The police saw its role as safeguarding public spaces and ensuring the protection of the respectable classes.<sup>206</sup> Alongside keeping the unruly and rowdy denizens from disrupting public

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<sup>204</sup> BFL Székesfővárosi Közgyűlés jegyzőkönyve February 20, 1901– March 20, 1901 cited in Czaga et al, 258.

<sup>205</sup> T. S. E. “Az önfertőzés és kóros nemi életéről,” *Rendőri Lapok*, September 23, 1900; Bèla Újhegyi, “A nemi ösztön kóros tevélygése,” *Rendőri Lapok*, Oct. 28, 1900. Reading through each issue of the *Rendőri Lapok* from the 1880s, there is an undeniable sense that the police’s inefficiency in dealing with prostitution and queer sex throughout the 1890s and 1900s, was part of their struggle over implementing the new criminal registry system.

<sup>206</sup> For instance, in 1901, 36% of the population of Budapest lived in what was considered at the time “worrisome bad conditions,” (six or more persons per room), and 30% of the population shared the same

order, a top priority of police and city authorities alike was to prevent criminal behavior as the number of thefts and property related crimes had been on the rise.<sup>207</sup> City authorities made begging and vagrancy strictly illegal and subject to police prosecution.<sup>208</sup> As understaffed as the police were in the 1880s and 1890s, subsequent police chiefs paid particular attention and allocated considerable resources to policing the urban poor.<sup>209</sup> The police also monitored socialist and workers movements. The growing appeal of socialist ideas among workers kept the police on their toes, as they had to pre-empt major strikes or other disruptions in the life of the modern metropolis.<sup>210</sup> As it happened, being tough on these issues did not automatically translate into toughness on sex.<sup>211</sup>

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, regulating sexuality in the city was, for the most part, a very low priority on the authorities' agenda. Scholars examining various urban environments have described the close relationship between the rapidly growing working population and the increased visibility and presence of sexual subcultures and

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room with three or four persons. Frigyesi, Judit. *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the Century Budapest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 45.

<sup>207</sup> Nyigri pp 527-529, *Rendőri Lapok's* annual crime statistics of Budapest, which the journal published every year in August and September with a short analysis. For instance, in August 3, 1902 in their analysis the editors basically acknowledge that amidst the continuing rise of population the police simply cannot keep up, crime rates are rising and there are not enough personnel to even assure public safety.

<sup>208</sup> According to the Law of 1879. XL. 62§- 73§ begging and vagrancy became illegal. The punishment varied from simple warning to arrest, and detention. In addition, the so-called *toloncsabályzat* of 1885 entrusted the police with the power to forcefully return vagabonds, beggars and prostitutes to the town or village of origin. See Susan Zimmermann's "Making a living from disgrace': the politics of prostitution, female poverty and urban gender codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860-1920" in Malcolm Gee (ed.), *The city in Central Europe: culture and society from 1800 to the present* (Aldershot England ; Brookfield VT: Ashgate, 1999). 175.

<sup>209</sup> Baksa, János. *Rendőrségi Almanach*. Budapest: Stephaneum Nyomda és Könyvkiadó R.T., 1923.

<sup>210</sup> Kollár, Nóra, ed. *A Fővárosi Rendőrség Története 1914-ig. I.* Budapest: Budapesti Rendőrfőkapitányság, 1995, 316, Parádi József. "A Polgári Magyar Állam Rendőrsége, 1867-1918." *Rubicon* 20. évf. (2010): 4-13.

<sup>211</sup> Some of the contemporary accounts that contemporary accounts that explicitly involved in cultivating Budapest's booming sex industry and sexual culture include: Lajos Molnár, *Az Erkölcök, a Közegészség, a Prostitúció* (Budapest: Neumayer Ede Könyvnyomda, 1899).; Mór Linka, "A prostitúció rendezése Budapesten," *Huszedik Század XV* (1907): 245-254. Dr. Schreiber Emil, *A Prostitúció* (Budapest: Pátria Irodalmi Vállalat és Nyomdai Részvénytársaság, 1917). For historical works see footnote 22.

sexuality in general.<sup>212</sup> In terms of Budapest, there are also number of contemporary as well as historical accounts that address the origins and evolution of an entire industry that sprung up to facilitate and cater to the sexual “needs” of incomers, residents, and visitors of the city.<sup>213</sup> As a social commentator in 1908 noted, “In Budapest, this great metropolis of love, the lust of the East rendezvous with the urbanity of the West. Bon viveurs from around the world come here to have fun and swim in the pleasures of love. They come here to the world market [of prostitution], where life is so precious and the female body is so cheap.”<sup>214</sup> While prostitution had existed previously, Budapest saw an unprecedented growth in not only the number of bordellos and public houses but also in all other forms of entertainment. These establishments often blurred the lines between emotional, mental and physical stimulation.<sup>215</sup> While the top-ranking police officers became less corrupt after the change of leadership in 1885 and were no longer personally involved and invested in the city’s sex industry, it was not until the interwar period that policing sexuality became a central concern.<sup>216</sup> This does not mean that general discussions about

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<sup>212</sup> Works discussing the relationship between cities and sexuality include: Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1992). Elizabeth A. Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). On the relationship between same-sex sexuality and urban development see for instance John D’Emilio’s *Capitalism and Gay Identity* in Ann Snitow ed., *Powers of desire: the politics of sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), Martin Duberman, *Hidden from history : reclaiming the gay and lesbian past* (New York: New American Library, 1989). David Halperin, “How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2000): 87-123. Robert Aldrich, “Homosexuality and the city: an historical overview,” *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (August 1, 2004): 1719-1737. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Peril and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>213</sup> See footnote 137.

<sup>214</sup> “Bon viveurs” comes from French, an expression meaning a person who enjoys the good thing in life. Szatmáry Sándor. *Nagyvárosi Erkölcsek: Budapest Sexuális Élete*. Budapest: Orsz. Laptudósító, 1908, 11.

<sup>215</sup> On the explosion of the number of prostitutes see Gábor Doros, *A prostitúció kérdése* (Budapest: Osiris, 1935).

<sup>216</sup> On Captain Thaisz’s regime and his involvement in prostitution see, János. *Rendőrségi Almanach*, especially 260-263. On the period from 1873- 1918 more generally see Miklóssy, János. *A Budapesti Prostitúció Története*. Budapest: Népszava Kiadó Vállalat, 1989, 30-67.

sex and sexuality, the subject of my next chapter, did not occur from the establishment of the capital. But until the end of the nineteenth century, and in terms of same-sex sexuality into the first decade of the twentieth, these discussions tended to happen outside the arena of the police and governing authorities.<sup>217</sup> Thus, even though the police had first-hand experience of increasingly frequent public displays of sexuality, they were less concerned with prostitution and the rapidly growing sex industry than with what they viewed as their undesirable effects.<sup>218</sup>

The main concern of the police was to ensure that the “ill effects” of the sex industry, as well as of non-normative sexualities in general, would be controlled and eventually eliminated. The concern over managing sex predated the establishment of the Metropolitan Police; the police forces of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda all had their own Vice Squad departments. These departments dealt with prostitution, fornication, trafficking, pornography, and “unnatural fornication” (which, as previously discussed, was the term used for sex between men). Following the unification of Budapest in 1873 and the establishment of Metropolitan Police, a Vice Squad department was set up which would serve as the “moral police” of the integrated city. The founding document outlining the responsibilities of the department made clear that the primary goal of the police was not to get rid of sex or even necessarily to limit the extensive sex industry. Instead, as the following passage from the Chief Captain’s bulletin makes explicit, the main concerns

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<sup>217</sup> As I will demonstrate in chapter two, with the exception of the issue of the regulation of prostitution, it was on the pages of daily newspapers, medical journals, and social commentaries of various forms that people addressed the “problems” of the sex industry and the sexual culture of Budapest.

<sup>218</sup> Budapest was certainly not unique in this respect. Rather, Budapest seemed to fit within the general pattern of Western urban centers. For a similar discussion of the German case, see Edward Dickinson, “Policing Sex in Germany, 1882-1982: A Preliminary Statistical Analysis.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (November 19, 2007): 204–250, 213-214.

and responsibilities of the police were to eliminate what was seen as the ‘side effects’ of the sex industry, namely scandals, venereal disease, and trafficking:

Morals...are one of the preconditions of communal and social cohabitation, which can only be based on education and impeccable family life, neither force, or coercive methods are capable to create or sustain it. Immorality is just as much a product of society as morality is, and it is therefore a concern of the police only as long as it leads to damage, problems, or dangers for specific individuals. The responsibility of the Vice Squad is to prevent and lessen these effects... The squad does not aspire to eradicate or suppress prostitution, rather it aims to prevent its consequences; scandals, spread of venereal disease and trafficking in girls.<sup>219</sup>

Writing in 1894, the Chief Captain of police makes it clear that it was neither the Vice Squad nor the police’s role to change public morals. The police, as well as most city officials, saw sexual activities considered “immoral” as an inevitable part of a modern metropolis. Consequently, not even in rhetoric did they argue that the role of the police was to abolish the institution of prostitution or to suppress the existence of queer sexualities. This attitude continued to dominate the police’s approach, even after reforms had resulted in decreased corruption and the top echelons of the police were no longer beneficiaries of the sex industry.

The police came to understand sex—outside of marriage and the home—as an organic part of a modern urban city, and dealt with the related issues in a highly practical manner. Articles in the official police journal *Rendőri Lapok* dating from the first issue in 1894 to well into the 1920s underscore that the guiding principle of police action was to ensure that sexual activities caused as little harm as possible.<sup>220</sup> Their understanding of prostitution changed over time from the view that “[E]ver since human society was

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<sup>219</sup> Főkapitányi Jelentés (Bulletin of the Chief of the Police) 1894, pp. 187-188 cited in Czaga, Horváth, Jancsó, 301.

<sup>220</sup> The Hungarian Ministry of Interior began to publish an official police journal in 1869. It had various names. From 1894 to 1907 it was called *Rendőri Lapok*. From 1907 onwards it was named at *Közbiztonság*, but *Rendőri Lapok* remained a subtitle.



born it has been carrying a heavy burden, which it has not been able to get rid of and *never will*; prostitution,” to a sociological explanation that “young poor men in a cramped industrial city could simply not afford to marry and have respectable wives.”<sup>221</sup> But regardless of their changing view of its causes, the police consistently operated on the belief that the sex industry was there to stay.<sup>222</sup> Rather than fighting to eradicate prostitution or queer sexualities, the police focused on safeguarding morality in public and limiting effects of sex industry, namely sexually transmitted diseases, theft, blackmailing, and the trafficking of young girls. In addition, the top priority of the police, until the outbreak of World War I, was halting the two most pertinent criminal activities: property crimes (mostly in the form of theft) and physical assault.<sup>223</sup>

Initially, sexuality and its control was a more pressing priority for the army than the police. The rates of syphilis and venereal disease were growing at an alarming rate, essentially incapacitating the Monarchy’s soldiers.<sup>224</sup> It was not until city officials and authorities came to see the sex industry as a burden and impediment to Budapest and Hungary’s development that more comprehensive steps were initiated and carried out to regulate the city’s sex culture in the form of systematic and sustained attention from the police.<sup>225</sup> Amidst a growing outcry from medical professionals, army officials, and social critics, and as part of the growing international movement to fight the trafficking of women, authorities enacted new legislations in 1908 and 1912. The 1908 law entrusted

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<sup>221</sup> See for instance, Harkanyi Edea, *A Holnap Asszonyai: Tanulmány a Társadalom Tudomány Köréből*. Budapest: Politzer Zsigmond és Fia Kiadása, 1905, 17-19.

<sup>222</sup> Italics are mine. *Rendőri Lapok*. November 29, 1908.

<sup>223</sup> Baksa, 120.

<sup>224</sup> Gábor Kiss, “Nemi betegségek az otszrak – magyar haderőben az első világháború idején,” *Orvosi Hetilap*, 2006 Nov 19;147(46):2237-8.; Judit Forrai, “Szép lányok csúnya betegsége, avagy szemelvények a bűnös szex és a szifilisz történetéből,” *Orvosi hetilap* 149, no. 40 (2008): 1895-1901.

<sup>225</sup> This included both legislative as well as regulatory changes that affected the relationship between the police and lawmakers, granting more power to the police to enforce laws regulating behavior. For changes in terms of the police see Baksa, *Rendőrségi Almanach*, 104.

the police with greater powers to arrest people who were unlawfully “pimping” women. In addition, following the international agreement reached in Paris in 1904 to fight the global trafficking of women, the Hungarian parliament passed laws criminalizing trafficking—Law of 1912. XLIX. The same year, modeling an international agreement prohibiting the distribution of “perverse” publications (Paris 1910), the Hungarian parliament followed suit and adopted similar laws.<sup>226</sup> Finally, a criminal vice court was established in 1911 under theegis of the vice police, which became solely responsible for dealing with female-prostitution related charges.<sup>227</sup> These laws granted greater power to the Vice Squad to regulate female prostitution and queer sexualities.

The actual effects of these laws on the ground is difficult to assess. It seems that even if there was an intention by legislators and other authorities to modify law enforcement practices in policing sexual behaviors, the economic downturn of 1912-3 shifted the attention of the police to other matters. From 1912 onward, “due to economic hardship, Budapest experienced growing crime rates, the possibility of war was looming... political tension was high, and there were frequent street protests.” All of these circumstances consumed the police’s resources.<sup>228</sup> The outbreak of World War I only reinforced the priorities of the police— to keep order and manage the city during an especially long war, to monitor the growing black market, and during the last year of the war, to keep an eye on social unrest.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Law of 1912. L. Following this new legislations, a new department was established, with the sole responsibility of suppressing trafficking in women and the distribution of pornographic (perverse) publications. The office began its work in April, 1913.

<sup>227</sup> Baksa, Rendorsegi Almanach, 120.

<sup>228</sup> While in 1912 the number of criminal prosecutions significantly increased, the following year saw an unprecedented 60% increase, making 1913 the year with the highest number of criminal prosecutions since statistics were in place. Baksa, 125.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* 129-181.

Of course, the ways that authorities perceived public morality and social order and dealt with sexuality were all highly gendered. What historians of Western Europe have illustrated about the double moral standards for men and women could not have been truer for Hungary during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>230</sup> Nineteenth-century bourgeois ideals of respectability, prescribed chastity, and modesty for women made them the natural guardians of public and private morality. While the parameters of *respectable* femininity were quite confined, the ideal of respectable male behavior was significantly more inclusive and its boundaries far more porous. At the same time that men were entrusted with representing Austro-Hungary's strength by being virile and honorable, the Hungarian male *dzsentry* (gentry), which made up a considerable part of society and had great cultural influence, was notorious for having a different understanding of "respectability."<sup>231</sup>

The approximate number of *dzsentry* is difficult to estimate, but it was considerable. What is most significant is their lifestyle and cultural values, which

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<sup>230</sup> Walkowitz, Judith. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Clark, Anna, Hagemann, Karen, and Dudink, Stefan. *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture*. 1st ed. New York N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Herzog, Dagmar. *Sexuality in Europe: a Twentieth-century History*. Roos, Julia. *Weimar Through the Lens of Gender: Prostitution Reform, Woman's Emancipation, and German Democracy, 1919-33*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010, chapter 1. For Hungary see Andrea Pető, *Társadalmi Nemek Képe És Emlékezete Magyarországon a 19-20. Században*. Budapest: A nők a valódi esélyegyenlőségért alapítvány, 2004.

<sup>231</sup> The word *dzsentry* originated from the English gentry. However, its meaning in the Hungarian context is quite different. The name was used to describe those small holders from the 1870s who lost their estates and often took up governmental and intellectual positions. Along with the assimilated Jewish and German urban middle class, the *dzsentry* constituted the emerging middle class in Hungary. Perhaps no other Hungarian writer described the situation of the gentry in the late nineteenth, and early twentieth century more accurately than the great novelist Kálmán Mikszáth. See particularly *A Noszty Fiú Esete Tóth Marival: Regény*, (1906 -8), and *Gavallérok* (1897) which highlight the different cultural norms for men and women in the period. For an overview of the cultural significance of the Hungarian gentry see the essay by Eszter Tarjányi, "A Dzsentry Exhumálása." *Valóság*, December 2008. <http://www.valosagonline.hu/index.php?oldal=cikk&cazon=79&lap=5>, last accessed March 26, 2012. Maxwell, Alexander. "Nationalizing Sexuality: Sexual Stereotypes in the Habsburg Empire." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 3 (2005): 266–290. And also "National Endogamy and Double Standards: Sexuality and Nationalism in East-Central Europe During the 19th Century." *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 2 (2008): 000–20.

became the norm for both middle-class and also urban lower-class males. It was not that members of the gentry were viewed as lacking virility or honor. Rather, in the eyes of contemporaries, lavish spending, decadent parties, and chivalrous behavior were also closely associated with the masculinity of the Hungarian gentry.<sup>232</sup> John Lukács's view, expressed in his seminal work *Budapest 1900*, that "masculinity and virility were still very dominant; the supremacy of [the] male was unquestioned and unquestionable, sometimes to the detriment of female sensitivities," also shaped the attitude and practice of the police.<sup>233</sup> Within this milieu female prostitution was considered a "necessary evil." For many Hungarian men who could afford it, visiting prostitutes was understood as a coming-of-age and expected expression of masculinity.<sup>234</sup> Even as social critics, politicians, and particularly religious institutions, were by the late nineteenth century increasingly demanding moral purity for both sexes, in Budapest and other Hungarian cities the double standard of morality for men and women continued.<sup>235</sup>

The authorities' (both lawmakers and the police) approach and attitude toward female prostitution embodied these double moral standards. Female prostitution was officially legalized in 1869, although there was no uniform national law regulating the practice until the post World War I period. It was up to each municipality to regulate the

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<sup>232</sup> This was as much a cultural construct as a reality. On the discussion of cultural significance of the *dszentri* see Gyáni, Gábor. *Magyarország Társadalomtörténete a Reformkortól a Második Világháborúig*. Budapest: Osiris, 2006, 164-169.

<sup>233</sup> Lukacs, *Budapest 1900 : a Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture*. New York: Weindenfeld & Nicolson, 1988, 105.

<sup>234</sup> Such an understanding of masculinity was, of course, present in many other countries. Despite growing critiques, the acceptance of sexual virility for men was characteristic not only of Hungarian cities but also in the countryside. Molnár, Lajos. *Az Erkölcsök, a Közegészség, a Prostitúció*. Budapest: Neumayer Ede Könyvnyomda, 1899. Forrai, Judit. "Kávéházak És Kéj nők." *Budapesti Negyed*, no. 2-3 (1996): 110-120. Császtvay, Tünde. *Éjjeli Lepkevadászat : Bordélyvilág a Történeti Magyarországon*.

<sup>235</sup> The seminal work on the relationship between male sexual morality and respectability is George Mosse's *Nationalism and Sexuality : Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. 1st ed. New York: H. Fertig, 1985. In the Hungarian context, see Frigyesi, Judit. *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the Century Budapest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 44- 49, Lukacs, *Budapest 1900*, 105-107

sex trade. While lawmakers in Budapest and the rest of Hungary created laws that granted police the power to regulate prostitution, law enforcement agencies, although publicly condemning it, facilitated the growing sex industry throughout the first three decades of the Metropolitan Police's existence. The local Vice Squad registered female prostitutes, and the places that wanted to employ them (bordellos, cafes, and restaurants) were granted permits by the police. And although women prostitutes were subjected to police harassment, forced regular medical exams, and social opprobrium and contempt, their male clientele were typically not prosecuted and usually left alone. Captain Thaisz was instrumental in establishing the Metropolitan police's lenient approach to male sexuality and, in particular, their use of prostitutes. Thaisz and successive police chiefs in Budapest considered the purchase of sex a staple part of the male metropolitan experience. Yet, they increasingly policed women who sold their own bodies. With rising rates of sexually transmitted diseases and the criminality surrounding prostitution, the police focused its limited resources on policing women who were either already registered prostitutes or suspected of secretly being sex workers.<sup>236</sup> In contrast, the police continued to consider male clients and consumers of sex as a normal part of life in a growing modern metropolis and felt much less inclined to police their public behavior.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> As Susan Zimmermann in "Making a Living from Disgrace" explains, this had consequences for all women in the city, especially the lower classes, who were often assumed to be prostitutes. That policing female sexuality imposed strict norms of female respectability on all women in public is pointed out in Gee, Malcolm. *The City in Central Europe : Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present*. Aldershot England ;;Brookfield VT: Ashgate, 1999, 175-192.

<sup>237</sup> Nothing points to the double standard in policing male vs. female behavior in public more clearly than the fact that from the 1890s on there were undercover detectives on the street making sure that women behaved in a respectable and "ladylike" manner. There was no counterpart for monitoring respectable "gentlemanly" behavior. Zimmermann, *Ibid.* 187.

*Same-sex Sexuality in the Eyes of the Police*

The double moral standard held by the police and municipal authorities had implications for queer male sexualities. Taking men's sexuality and sexual behavior for granted, the police were primarily concerned with safeguarding *public* safety and morality displayed *in public*. During its first two decades of existence and until the turn of the century, the Budapest Metropolitan police did not concern themselves with sex between men (or between women).<sup>238</sup> Men having sex with men, like female prostitution, were seen as inevitable characteristics of rapid urbanization and modern life. Regardless of whether law enforcement officers understood male homosexuality as an “aberration” of love and an “unhealthy” behavior, or as an immoral perversion, the police did not see it as their responsibility to eradicate same-sex sexuality.<sup>239</sup> Instead, the police were responsible for making sure that what they saw as the ill effects of same-sex sexuality and other sexual aberrations would be reduced and potentially eliminated. Therefore, in regard to homosexual activities the police focused on theft, blackmailing, and, increasingly, men soliciting their bodies for money. Within this context, the purpose and usage of the homosexual registry became more complex. Authorities believed that

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<sup>238</sup> This is reflected in their official police journal *Rendőri Lapok*. Until 1900 it published only one article related to same-sex sexuality, a piece about the Oscar Wilde trial (July 7, 1895).

<sup>239</sup> The police's understanding of homosexuality was not monolithic, and there were different co-existing interpretations. Nevertheless, by the time their official journal took up the question of homosexuality, it seemed that the police had embraced the medicalized view that some people were born with congenital homosexuality. The following is the list of dates on which *Rendőri Lapok* published articles on queer sexualities, mostly on male homosexuality: 1895 July 7; 1896 December 6; 1900 September 23; 1900 October 28; 1903 January 3rd; 1904 December 18; 1906 May 20 & 27; 1907 January 27; 1907 February 3 & 10; 1910 March 10; 1907 November 3; 1907 December 15; 1908 September 27; 1908 October 4 & 11 & 18; 1909 February 15; 1909 June 7; 1909 November 15; 1912 July 21; 1912 October 6; 1913 April 6; 1914 May 17; and 1914 June 21.

the very act of registering men who had sex with men would help reduce the crimes they saw as associated with male homosexuality.<sup>240</sup>

Men considered innately or congenitally homosexual who had sex with men privately and away from the eyes of the public and police, and who did not recruit or turn men seen as normal into homosexuals, were of no concern to the police. It is likely that until World War I such individuals did not even get registered. On the other hand, those “authentic” homosexuals, who conducted their affairs in public or semi-public places, which in view of the housing situation in Budapest was much more likely, did indeed get registered.<sup>241</sup> It seems that although the police registered them, officers only pressed charges in specific circumstances. The intent was not necessarily to punish homosexuality with a prison sentence. Such leniency would have been supported by the enactment of article 1908:36 in the 1908 law. Reflecting the liberal attitudes of the times, this article introduced conditional suspension of charges in the case of minor offenses.<sup>242</sup> Piecing together the available evidence suggests that men who were caught for having sex with men in public might spend a few days in custody but would rarely ever see a trial. As I will discuss in chapter five, even as the number of people in the homosexual registry increased, the actual number of people prosecuted, let alone sentenced, for violating Paragraph 241 of the Penal Code that criminalized same-sex activities between men, remained low between the 1870s and 1939.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> It is important to remember that even though being registered on the homosexual registry did not impose any legal burden on an individual (unlike the case of female prostitutes), it most likely implied a considerable social and psychological burden.

<sup>241</sup> On the policing of different neighborhoods and districts of Budapest see Perényi Roland. “Városi Tér És Hatalom: Utcapolitika Századfordulós Budapesten.” *Századvég* 11. évf. (2006): 29.

<sup>242</sup> This was an amendment to the Penal Code supplementing the Code on Criminal Procedure. Csizmadia, *Magyar Állam- És Jogtörténet*, 449-450.

<sup>243</sup> In chapter five I will provide statistics and a quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of the legal prosecution of male homosexuals between 1900 and 1939.

Low arrest and prosecution rates did not mean, however, that from the 1880s and especially during the period between 1900 and 1914, the Vice Squad's policing strategies were unchanged. Like other Vice Squad departments across Europe, the Vice section of the Budapest Metropolitan police became gradually more institutionalized and their policing technique more sophisticated.<sup>244</sup> Nevertheless, even as the number in the homosexual registry rose and the most frequented homosexual rendezvous places came under closer supervision, the Vice Police appear to have pressed charges against “non-criminal” homosexuals only in specific cases—being in a public space that was frequented by respected citizens, non-consensual sex, procuring, and sex with a minor.<sup>245</sup> An individual's social class, time spent in Budapest, and especially the motives of sexual acts were the most important factors determining one's treatment by the police. In instances when the apprehended person was not a permanent resident or was a recent newcomer to Budapest, the authorities would escort him back to his native village or town. Once there, the detained person would be set free on condition that he not return to Budapest any time soon.<sup>246</sup> And although socio-economic background did not always prevent one's entry into the homosexual registry, a middle or upper class identity would significantly lower one's chances of being registered, and would also affect the treatment received. Although the category of “private office-holder, factory owner, landowner,

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<sup>244</sup> The number of policeman per inhabitants also increased. Whereas in 1884 there were 673 inhabitants to one policeman, by 1939 the rate was 220 inhabitants to one. Borbély and Kapy, *A 60 Éves Magyar Rendőrség*, 541. For a comparative European history of the metropolitan police see Hsi-huey Liang's *The rise of modern police and the European state system from Metternich to the Second World War*. Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

<sup>245</sup> By “non-criminal” I mean those homosexuals who, other than committing a crime by acting on their homosexuality, did not break another law. The legal prosecution of homosexuality is the subject of the fifth chapter.

<sup>246</sup> As was the case with beggars and vagabonds, surviving records indicate that homosexuals who were repeatedly caught having sex in public were sent back to their hometowns. Budapest City Archives (Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Kísérleti Kriminológiai Osztály és az Országos Kriminológiai Intézet iratainak gyűjteménye 1919) BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 623-5. Integrate at least snippets or phrases from these sources into your text so we know how you come to these conclusions.



property owner”—presumably men with financial means—became the third most numerous category in the homosexual registry by the 1930s, prior to WWI, those with a more affluent or professional background rarely stood trial. Exceptions to this generalization were homosexual acts that fell under Paragraph 242, which criminalized non-consensual sex between men, such as making advances to a youth.<sup>247</sup> Another exception to this generalization occurred when a charge was brought in by one or more individuals rather than by the police.<sup>248</sup>

The primary concern of the police, and represented in substantial numbers on the homosexual registry, were men who acted out of monetary interest rather than “unstoppable innate desire.” It was those men who engaged in homosexual activities with an ulterior or criminal motive that interested the police. Contemporary police reports highlight the connection between homosexuality and criminal behaviors such as theft, blackmail, and prostitution.<sup>249</sup> Tracking homosexuals by registering them allowed the police to catch criminals who attempted to take advantage of “authentic” homosexuals. As the physician Nemes Nagy noted, the registry was also important for “policing purposes, since male homosexuals are followed like a shadow and threatened by blackmailers.”<sup>250</sup> In addition, homosexuals were also targeted by professional thieves, who the police could sometimes arrest by monitoring individuals listed on the registry. Consequently, even if the homosexual registry generally functioned as a tool to control, intimidate, and manage individuals, it could also serve as a form of protection from

<sup>247</sup> Engaging in sexual conduct with a person under 12 was considered as a non-consensual act.

<sup>248</sup> I will discuss this in more detail in chapter four.

<sup>249</sup> For instance, the following articles in *Rendőri Lapok* that explicitly acknowledge this connection include: Budapest 1903-as Kriminál Statisztikája” (Budapest’ Criminal statistics of 1903), 1904 July 24; Articles on homosexuals in Paris, May 6<sup>th</sup> and 13, 1907; “Harmadik Nem: Homoszexualitás” (The Third Gender: Homosexuality), September 27, 1908, October 4, 1908, “A tiltott szerelem áldozata”(Victim of Forbidden Love), June 7, 1909

<sup>250</sup> Nemes Nagy, *Tragédiák a Szerelemi Életben*, 73.

blackmailers and criminals targeting those seen by authorities as “authentic” homosexuals.”<sup>251</sup>

As fragmentary as the surviving sources are on the specific details of the interactions between members of the police and men engaging in homosexual behavior, there is evidence that prior to 1914 performativity (as well as class and gender) was a crucial factor determining one’s fate. Along with policing the morality of “respectable women” and making sure that unhealthy prostitutes would not endanger the virility of Hungarian men, the police increasingly dealt with men who had sexual encounters with men. What historians of sexuality in other cities of the period have observed seems consistent with the ways it was treated by Hungarian authorities. In Budapest, as in other cities, those so-called “passive” men, who behaved sexually like a “woman,” were a primary concern for the police.<sup>252</sup> In the majority of cases, the police deemed these passive men “authentic” homosexuals. Consequently, it was these men who “could not help their behavior” that the police initially focused on.<sup>253</sup> In turn, those “active” men who had sex with men but otherwise led a “respectable” *manly* life were of a little concern to the police. In this respect, Budapest seemed to fit a larger urban/metropolitan trend; men who otherwise conformed to the Hungarian masculine ideal could engage in same-sex sexual encounters without being judged or punished.<sup>254</sup> They might be warned

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<sup>251</sup> This is further underscored by legal records that suggest it was by and large men involved in theft, bribery, and prostitution whom the police pressed charges against. This will be discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>252</sup> Most notably George Chauncey in *Gay New York* observes that it was well into the twentieth century before “active” men who had sex with men became a concern for the authorities.

<sup>253</sup> Both Szántó, Jenő and Zoltán Nemes Nagy allude to the fact that prior to WWI the police only registered “passive” homosexuals. “A Homoszexualitásról Különös Tekintettel a Budapesti Viszonyokra.” 40–44, Nemes Nagy, 73 -78.

<sup>254</sup> Scholars in other European contexts have demonstrated that prior to the interwar period, and perhaps even later, such phenomenon was present in large urban areas. See for instance, Healey, Dan. “Masculine Purity and ‘Gentlemen’s Mischief’: Sexual Exchange and Prostitution Between Russian Men, 1861-1941.”

or temporarily detained. Considering the accepted notion that men were *inherently* sexual, as long as a man engaging in sex with another man *looked like* a man and *performed* as a man, in the eyes of the police, they did not threaten the social or gender order. Thus, in fin-de-siècle Budapest, “active” homosexual men and masculine men who occasionally wanted to have sex with men enjoyed relative freedom to do so.<sup>255</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Rapidly developing cities usually have the misfortune to grow wrongly, due to lack of foresight and wise regulation on the part of the governing authorities. Budapest has not wholly escaped this; but it would be hard to find another large town whose development authorities have kept so well, and whose development in terms of city development and urban planning, has been so symmetrical and scientific.<sup>256</sup>

Albert Shaw, 1892

By the turn of the century, Budapest was developing with meteoric speed into a modern metropolis. It was not only known for its mills and factories but also became notorious for its bustling bordello culture. The city’s relatively lax regulation of prostitution, along with its nightlife, gained international fame, and Budapest became a destination for men in search of a good time. The extensive salon, tavern, and cheap entertainment industry in Pest was enjoyed by young and old, the poor and the well to do. In light of the continuous flow of people to the city, the crowded living conditions, and the infamous nightlife and other vices, policing homosexuals was a low priority. Since many homosexuals were secretive, often meeting in private places without disturbing the peace, the chronically understaffed law enforcement agencies showed little concern about

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*Slavic Review* 60, no. 2 (2001): 233. Rydström, Jens. *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

<sup>255</sup> I say this while fully acknowledging the psychological burdens that being a homosexual or engaging in same-sex sexual activity could carry for individuals.

<sup>256</sup> Shaw, Albert. “Budapest: The Rise of a New Metropolis.” *The Century Magazine*, 1892. 1.

homosexual activity during the years prior to World War I. Overburdened by having to deal with petty crimes and keeping public order, in practice, the authorities only investigated same-sex activities when they perceived them as particularly dangerous. Examples of such activity were cases involving older men seeking underage male prostitutes or insider's tips about exceptionally wild parties. Moreover, in the eyes of the authorities, social class, economic status, and gender performativity were often more salient variables in determining police actions and treatment of suspects than one's sexual preference and acts alone.

At the same time, the mere existence of the homosexual registry underscores the fact that, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a growing concern among police and government officials about men having sex with men. Rapid urbanization also brought a dramatic increase in what social critics, religious figures, and, eventually, local authorities saw as immoral and unhealthy behaviors. As in most other European countries, the registry of male homosexuals existed in part to monitor and police Budapest's sexual and moral economy. In this sense, the registry was part of the modernization and centralization efforts of Budapest officialdom during rapidly changing times. Tracing the medical, legal, and police discourse on the homosexual registry demonstrates that it served multiple functions. By condensing personal and private information about individuals, the registry functioned from the moment of its creation as one of the tools for "scientifically" managing the sexual economy of the city. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate that official registries of homosexuals in Budapest were not simply a tool of repression. In fact, it is clear from the evidence, that the registry

of homosexuals and an extensive same-sex subculture were not mutually exclusive.<sup>257</sup>

While serving as a means to keep track of the ebb and flow of homosexuals into and within the urban environment, the registry also attempted to provide a concrete action plan by which authorities could make sense of and navigate the increasingly complex sexual landscape of the city. Albert Shaw's 1892 observation that Budapest was a well-planned city underscores how the establishment of the homosexual registry marked or reflected the coming of age of the Metropolitan police and the Hungarian government generally. The swiftly modernizing city required a modern police. In this sense, the homosexual registry was simultaneously both proof of and a platform through which authorities could express and work out their own modernizing processes. Hungarians, like most Europeans, connected homosexuality to urban modernity; how the Hungarian capital was to deal with it and the mechanisms by which they disclosed its existence and represented it, had implications for the city's own place in the modern world of metropolises.

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<sup>257</sup> I see Foucault's ideas on repression as applicable here. Yet, I will illustrate in my dissertation that until the twentieth century authorities in Hungary tried only "half-heartedly" to repress non-normative sexualities.

## Chapter Two

### The “Knights of Sick Love”: The queers of Kornél Tábori and Vladimir Székely

Urban love is also love. It lacks naivety and poetry...but urban love also has its own poems, which poets will not be able to ignore much longer. Sooner or later they will have to versify it. In fact it is the true modern love. The country love is out of date. The love in the metropolis is more genuine, more tangible, more naturalistic in its expressions, makes its way to its goal in a more direct and straightforward way, which is at the end of the day the same thing in the field, as it is in the City park: many times marriage with Amor, but more frequently Amor – without a marriage certificate. It is the love making of poorer classes that provide the character and glowing warm colors of Budapest’s love. Not only because there are more poor people in love than of wealth, but also because the love of poor people is more candid, boisterous, less shy, does not hide from the eyes of the world, more unassuming, would be satisfied with a bench, a tiny shrubby space, where one can whisper and kiss...<sup>258</sup>

Kornél Tábori, 1905

This chapter examines the emerging public discourse about non-normative sexuality during the first decade of the twentieth century. More specifically, I investigate why and how the first public discussions of homosexuality (and queer sexuality more generally) in Hungary originated in Budapest. In doing so, I set out to answer three questions: What factors were present in Budapest in 1908 that facilitated the arrival of the “Hungarian homosexual” in the popular press? How were those people who desired, or had sex with, their own sex introduced and represented and what can that tell us about contemporary Budapest? Furthermore, what were the effects of publications about homosexuality on the conceptualization and treatment of homosexuality?

In addition to reinserting the history of queer sexual discourses into the history of Hungarian political and social history, this chapter continues to examine the connection between the appearance of homosexuals and the Hungarian capital’s perceived coming of age. An analysis of the representation of non-normative sexuality reveals how reports on

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<sup>258</sup> “Szerelmes Budapest” (Budapest in Love). *Magyar Hirlap*, September 24, 1905, 9.

queer sexuality exemplified the complex and often conflicting ways in which Hungarian authorities and denizens of Budapest were coming to terms with the city's rapid modernization. While scholars highlight the cultural and economic dynamism of the period, more recent accounts of Budapest during this era also portray a society filled with fears about the decline and composition of modern Hungarians.<sup>259</sup> These works discuss the escalating fears of authorities and social critics about the negative effects of the rapid growth of the city on the strength of ethnic Hungarians. The "Knight of Sick Love" archetype and growing concern about the spread of homosexuality were part of the anxiety of contemporaries held about the future of Budapest and of Hungarian genetic stock. In this regard, the appearance of queers in the popular press, by cultivating growing awareness of a sexual subculture of Budapest, corroborated and deepened fears about the future of the city. Yet, examining this medium's portrayal of same-sex sexuality also sheds light on more "optimistic" ways in which contemporary Budapest came to recognize its place in the modern world of metropolises. Thus, the current chapter demonstrates that even though homosexuals were considered a manifestation of urban decline, they could concomitantly stand as the "living proof" of Hungary's place in the modern "progressive" Western world.

By 1900, the Liberal Party had been in power for a quarter of a century: its aims were clear: securing Hungary's place as Austria's equal counterpart. This would require

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<sup>259</sup> Kovács, Mária. *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Hanebrink, Paul. *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. Turda, Marius. "The First Debates on Eugenics in Hungary, 1910-1918." In *"Blood and Homeland": Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2007, 185-223. There has been also new works in Hungarian that highlight this issue. See for instance, Gyurgyák, János. *Ezzé Lett Magyar Hazátok: a Magyar Nemzeteszmé És Nacionalizmus Története* (What Your Hungarian Motherland Has Become: The History of Hungarian Ideas of the Nation and Nationalism). Budapest: Osiris, 2007. Paksa, Rudolf. *A Magyar Szélsőjobboldal Története* (The History of the Hungarian Far-Right). Budapest: Jaffa Kiado es Kereskedelmi KFT., 2012.

an efficient state bureaucracy, a strong economy, and first and foremost a unified “Magyarized” state. Until 1905, growing state bureaucracy, continuing industrialization, secularization, and assimilation of minorities, particularly Jews, were all taking place rapidly. During this time Hungary entered an era of mass politics. By 1900, in addition to the opposition of the 48-ers, social democrats, socialist, liberal democrats, and peasant parties, Christian socialists and feminists entered the political and public sphere and made their demands heard.<sup>260</sup> While forming and running a government between 1905 and 1914 became more difficult, the 1900s were the height of liberal politics, economic growth, and cultural creativity in Budapest.<sup>261</sup> As historian John Lukacs notes, in Budapest there was an “appetite for life—including the material pleasures of words, sounds, colors, tastes and touches—abounds.”<sup>262</sup> There was a sense of pervasive optimism (very uncharacteristic of Hungarians in other periods) about both, individual and collective prospects of life that cut across class, gender, and age. During this time, a booming mass culture went relatively uncensored, especially in Budapest.<sup>263</sup> And it was in this milieu that queers and same-sex sexuality made their grand entry into public discourse.<sup>264</sup> Consequently, it was the combination of these specific political, cultural,

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<sup>260</sup> As I explained in the first chapter the so-called 48-ers wanted greater independence from Austria; such as an independent Hungarian army and customs zone, and the establishment of a Hungarian national bank. For the history of emerging political voices and groups at the turn of the century see Kozári, Monika. *A Dualista Rendszer, 1867-1918* (The Dualist System, 1867-1918). Budapest: Pannonica, 2005, 143-148.

<sup>261</sup> Gyáni, Gábor. *Identity and the Urban Experience: Fin-de-Siècle Budapest*. Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 2004, 90-92; Frigyesi, Judit. *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the Century Budapest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 10; Lukacs, John. *Budapest 1900 : a Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture*. New York: Weindenfeld & Nicolson, 1988, 24-29.

<sup>262</sup> *Budapest 1900*, 25.

<sup>263</sup> Until 1912, thanks to its liberal laws, Hungary had one of the most lax publishing laws. During this period Berlin for instance had much stricter regulation of the print media market.

<sup>264</sup> They were not the first to introduce the topics. Official government reports, news accounts, and some popular novels had surfaced about same-sex love and non-normative sexuality. References and literature on non-normative sexuality prior to the turn of the century include the novel *Júlia és a nők* (Julia and the women), a book about “a high-society woman and her sexual life and adventures with women and only women.” The author is unknown, and it was published in the early 1890s, alongside homosexual erotica,



and social factors that explain why in 1908, the publications of Kornél Tábori and Vladimir Székely, Hungary's vanguard investigating journalists, made male homosexuals—and to a much lesser extent females—a topic of conversations on the streets of the capital and in towns across the country overnight.<sup>265</sup> Their books, which were commercial and critical successes, offer a rare window into the world of queers and the public's conception of them.

This chapter is based on the published and unpublished works of Székely and Tábori, who were the most famous and widely-read authors on the seamy side of Budapest during the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>266</sup> They were both regular commentators in various newspapers and journals, including the police journal, and wrote over two dozen books on social outcasts, on topic ranging from prostitutes to gamblers, and also published on wide range of social issues, such as child criminality and occultism. In what follows, I examine the particular ways in which Tábori and Székely approached, depicted, and employed non-normative sexuality in their works. In my analysis, I treat the journalists not simply as tools of social and discursive forces outside their control, although those forces clearly influenced them. I also study the journalists' personal feelings and agendas and reflect on the difficulty they faced regarding ethical dilemmas

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both in the form of explicitly erotic visual illustrations, and of satiric humor, such as *Fidibusz* the erotic-satire magazine. Tünde Császtvay's *Éjjeli lepkevadászat* provides examples for both, See especially pages 340-344. For the history of satiric humor and erotically themed magazines in Hungary see Géza Buzinkay's *Borsszem Jankó és társai: magyar élclapok és karikatúráik a XIX. század második felében* (Jankó Borsszem and his company: Hungarian satire magazines and caricatures in the second half of the nineteenth century), Budapest : Corvina, 1983.

<sup>265</sup> According to their publishers the book series of Tábori and Székely were available and sold in every bookstore within Hungary.

<sup>266</sup> In addition to the published materials that are housed in the National Hungarian Library, I rely on Tábori Kornél's personal diaries and collection of papers, which are held at the OSZKK.

about their subjects.<sup>267</sup> I pay particular attention to the language, expressions, and words that the journalists used to describe same-sex sexuality. I contend that the inconsistency of their terminology, and at times the contradictory accounts of the nature of homosexuality, was representative of their own, and in many ways of a general confusion, about what to make of—and how to deal with—people genuinely desiring their own sex. Tábori and Székely’s ambiguous representation of homosexuality, yet openly tolerant attitude toward “respectable” homosexuals, incited a public discussion and provided guidance to their readers about queer sexuality.

Following an analysis of the representations of queers in the works of Tábori and Székely, this chapter explores the reception and immediate effects of their writings. Like the authorities discussed in chapter one, Tábori and Székely made distinctions between “respectable” authentic homosexuals and immoral or inauthentic queers. In addition to providing a “model” of how men could become “respectable homosexuals,” their description of queers had a significant impact both on the public perception of homosexuality and on the ways in which authorities (legal, police, and to some extent, medical) interacted with and treated same-sex sexuality. Two lectures on homosexuality at the Hungarian Association of Legal Scholars in 1909 demonstrate that the works of Tábori and Székely resonated within the debates of Hungary’s legal scholars and also with wider concurrent European debates about the treatment of homosexuality. I conclude the chapter by considering the long-term consequences of Tábori and Székely’s reports on queers. As the first—and in many ways, until the 1990s, the sole—initiators of a more open public discussion around homosexuality, their representation of homosexuality, their

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<sup>267</sup> Seth Koven’s approach to his subjects in *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004 has been formative for my own approach.

terminology, and their differentiation between respectable and non-respectable homosexuals, had a lasting impact. These journalists shaped public perception and influenced the state's construction and regulation of male homosexuality during the existence of the Dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and beyond.

*The Motives of Tábori and Székely*

Budapest is an immoral city – where the liberty of the West is combined with a kind of gallantry of the East – that is in the heated competition of merchants to sell more, they are aware of the softness of both the authorities and courts. And the public is also open to pornographic and debauched publications, which have inundated the city.<sup>268</sup>

Although the issue of same-sex sexuality, along with concerns about other forms of deviance, appeared in public discourse in the last decades of the nineteenth century, discussions of deviance were not the only avenue by which homosexuality entered public discussion.<sup>269</sup> As Hungarian authorities were undertaking the management of a rapidly growing city by providing new residents with the most basic necessities, citizens of Budapest also attempted to create recreational activities for the city's fast expanding population. Soon after the unification of Budapest in 1873, the print media established a new form of entertainment by increasingly infusing sensationalism into traditional news and information. The penny press became one of the most accessible forms of entertainment for the urban masses. Prior to the 1880s, politically-oriented papers

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<sup>268</sup> *Rendőri Lapok*. July 26, 1903, 1.

<sup>269</sup> Sexuality had become more public, aided by traditional forms of art such as fine arts or literature. Also, new mediums like photography and film graphically depicted sensuality. Social and intellectual movements of the fin-de-siècle played an important role in the growing attention to sex and sexuality as well. Although often denying and opposing urbanization, these movements helped to bring greater public discussion thereby expanding popular knowledge of sexuality. As the third chapter will make clear, the emergence and popularization of psychoanalysis was also an important factor in making a previously private or hidden topic more openly discussed. The new psychology led to an increasing tendency to view human sexuality within the framework of human rights and freedom. Szalai, 13.

dominated the market; by the end of the century, the “yellow press” had inundated the city.<sup>270</sup> While in 1870 there were about 80 different papers and journals, by 1900 their numbers were up to 384.<sup>271</sup> Of course, the fact that there were no exclusively erotic or pornographic publications printed in Budapest did not mean that people, most of whom spoke German as well as Hungarian, had no access to them in German or French.<sup>272</sup> As the previous chapter demonstrated, sex and sexuality were discussed in academic legal and medical professional journals, as well as in sociological studies. But sex and sexuality were also regular subjects in the contemporary press. Whether it concerned prostitution, the sex industry, sexually transmitted diseases, or news about sexual innuendos, newspapers openly discussed sex and sexuality beginning in the 1890’s. Since talking about sexuality, let alone promoting sex and the sex industry, meant financial gain, even conservative papers provided space for “sex ads.” Albeit often written in veiled language, advertisements for sex became standard features of the press in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>273</sup>

The publications of Vladimir Székely and Kornél Tábori, who were the pioneers of Hungarian investigating journalism, were unique in their detailed and informative descriptions of the sexual culture of Budapest. In particular, their work provided the most

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<sup>270</sup> The decision of the Ministry of Interior to lift a ban against selling daily papers on the street in 1896 had a major role in the growth of mass print media. Péter Szigeti “A szexualitás nyilvánossága a századforduló Budapestjén” (The publicity of sexuality in Budapest around the turn of the century) in *Kritika*, Spring 2002, 2.

<sup>271</sup> The most comprehensive history of the Hungarian press prior to World War II is Géza Buzinkay and György Kókay’s *A magyar sajtó története I.: a kezdetektől a fordulat évéig* (The history of the Hungarian press I: from the beginning to the year of change), Budapest: Ráció, 2005.

<sup>272</sup> Even though pornography was illegal in Germany, along with French, German was the language of pornographic and erotic publications.

<sup>273</sup> Szalai, 11, Miklóssy János. *A Budapesti Prostitúció Története* (The History of Prostitution in Budapest). Budapest: Népszava Kiadó Vállalat, 1989, 106-8. Császtvay, Tünde. *Éjjeli Lepkevadászat : Bordélyvilág a Történelmi Magyarországon*. For a critical analysis of the intimate connection between the commercialization of sex and changing ideas around sexuality see Birken, Lawrence. *Consuming Desire : Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871-1914*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988.

thorough and detailed descriptions of homosexuals, or “the knights of sick love,” as some contemporaries came to refer to them. Székely and Tábori’s “uniqueness” was the result of a number of factors: first, their educational and professional background granted them access to an enormous and comprehensive source of knowledge and information about sexuality; second, Tábori’s experience with sexual cultures of both the West and East (he travelled and reported from Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, as well as from Russian and Serbia) helped them to contextualize Budapest in the greater European context; and finally, their talent for writing captivating stories absorbed their readers. As evidenced by the sales and contemporary reports, the publications of Székely and Tábori, which merged investigative journalism with the topic of sex, appealed to people across boundaries, transcending social, cultural, and even age differences.<sup>274</sup>

As the head of the public relations office of Budapest’s Metropolitan Police, Vladimir Székely was as connected and informed about Budapest as was possible for someone on the “right side” of the law. Székely had joined the police during the mid-1890s and began working for the public relations office once it was established in the late 1890s.<sup>275</sup> He became the head of the Metropolitan Police’s Public Relation Department in 1902 and directed it until 1918. His duties included overseeing the daily newscast to the press, the flow of information about police activity, as well as the publication of the

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<sup>274</sup> The exact number of copies is difficult to determine. One of the reviews stated that fifteen thousand copies were printed. But there were also reprints. In addition to the books, many daily newspapers across Hungary published excerpts from the books. Finally, the fact that the publisher and book reviews announced, “the books were available in “every bookstore across Hungary” is evidence of their popularity. Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88:1-13, OSZKK.

<sup>275</sup> There is conflicting information about the exact date of the beginning of Székely’s employment. Although the public relation office of the police was established in 1880, it only became operational in the late 1890s. *A Budapesti Napilapok Rendőri Rovatvezetőinek Szindikátusa 50 éves jubileumi emlékkönyve* (The 50-year anniversary memorial book of the syndicate of the editors of the daily newspapers’ crime section in Budapest) (from now on, B. N. R. SZ.) Budapest: B. N. R. SZ. 1930, 4-7.

annual Bulletin of the Police.<sup>276</sup> He was also the editor of the “Criminal Chronicle” section of *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), Hungary’s progressive and most prominent social science journal which served as the mouthpiece of pro-western, democratic, and liberal ideas between 1900 and 1919.<sup>277</sup> During the interwar period, Székely continued to work for the police and edited or authored a number of police publications.<sup>278</sup> Though his works were well known by contemporaries, and historians often mention him in passing, there is very little information about Székely’s personal life. Nevertheless, it is telling that his professionalism and work on behalf of the police, was not only approved, but also praised by liberals and conservatives alike.<sup>279</sup> His focus on “practical issues” rather than on the “politics,” explain how, throughout his lifetime, Székely could work for the progressive left-leaning liberal *Huszadik Század* while also playing an important role during the interwar conservative regime.<sup>280</sup>

Unlike Székely, who worked for the civil authorities, Kornél Tábori, was paid to entertain as well as to inform. While he was attending law school, Tábori became a journalist and had his first job in 1901 at *Pesti Napló* (Pest Journal), a popular political paper where he later became an editor. He was a prolific writer and a regular contributor

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<sup>276</sup> In addition, Székely edited *Rendőri Lapok*, the Metropolitan Police’s official weekly journal.

<sup>277</sup> Following the establishment of Társadalomtudományi Társaság (Social Science Society) in the Society published *Huszadi Század* until both were banned during the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919.

<sup>278</sup> For instance, Székely was the author of the following books: *Házi Rendőr: Közhasznú Rendőri Tanácsadó* (Home Police: Police Public Advisory). Budapest: Omnia, 1929.; *Árny És Derű: Egy Rendőrtiszt Naplójából*. (Shade and serenity: A Police Officer diary). Budapest: Centrál Ny., 1930.

<sup>279</sup> Buzinkay, Géza. “A Bűnügyi Hír, a Riporter És a Rendőr” (Criminal News, The Reporter and the Policeman). *Budapesti Negyed* 47-48 (2005/2). <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00003/00034/buzinkay.html>. Last accessed June 18, 2012.

<sup>280</sup> According to secondary sources he continued to have an important role at the police during the 1920s and 30s. In addition, The National Library lists Székely as the chief editor of *Országos közbiztonság : a magyar közrendet népszerűsítő könyvtár* (National Public Safety; bookseries of promoting Hungarian public policy), which was launched in 1941.

to many popular daily and weekly papers.<sup>281</sup> He was always interested in criminal behaviour and soon set out to become a police reporter, eventually editing the police column for *Pesti Napló*. His fascination with criminals did not stop with reporting, however, as became apparent when he translated Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes detective novels into Hungarian.<sup>282</sup> In 1904-5, Tábori covered the Russo-Japanese War and published books about the horrors he had witnessed there. During his journalistic career, he also travelled to numerous Western European capitals including Amsterdam, Bern, and Brussels and reported on urban developments and the special characteristics of each city.<sup>283</sup> In World War I, he worked as a war correspondent and later gave lectures in various Western European countries to help arrange aid for the poor as the war dragged on. However, because of his support of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, he was blacklisted and could not continue his journalistic career. Nevertheless, he continued to work, which included editing of a number of book series, translating literature, and even directing a film.<sup>284</sup> Over his career he wrote and co-authored over forty books, the majority of which were on social issues. In sharp contrast to his friend and co-author Vladimir Székely, Tábori was exposed to the most discriminatory policies of the authoritarian Horthy regime that reigned between 1920 and 1944. Being Jewish,

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<sup>281</sup> Daily papers included but not limited to *Pesti Hirlap* and *Budapesti Hirlap*, and the weekly paper *Vasárnapi Újság*.

<sup>282</sup> Conan Doyle. *Sherlock Holmes feltámadása és egyéb bűnügyi elbeszélések* (The Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes and other crime stories, original title in English was *the Return of Sherlock Holmes*.) Budapest, : Csendőrségi Könyvtár, 1904.; *A feltámadt detektív. Sherlock Holmes legújabb bűnesetei*. (The resurrected detective's latest crime stories) same publisher, 1907. Tábori's interest in criminology continued throughout his life. The detective rose. Sherlock Holmes' latest crime Gendarmerie Library: Budapest, 1904.

<sup>283</sup> A borzalom országa (The Country of horror). 1907. He was a war correspondent during World War I.

<sup>284</sup> Albertini Béla. "Az Első Magyar Szociofotó "Album" (The First Hungarian Social Photo "Album"). *Budapesti Negyed : Lap a Városról* 13. évf. (2005): 119–142.

Tábori was subjected to antisemitic laws and, despite his amazing achievements, he was deported to Auschwitz, where he was killed in July 1944.<sup>285</sup>

Vladimir Székely and Kornél Tábori became friends and regular collaborators about societal problems that they, along with many of their contemporaries, considered to be blights on Budapest.<sup>286</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, by the late nineteenth century Budapest had caught up to other “sinful” metropolises and the city experienced an unprecedented boom in crime rates. Contemporary crime statistics—along with police, sociological, and news reports—attest to an increase of crimes. They are also evidence of a growing fascination and concern with the underworld by authorities and the population as a whole. Not surprisingly, this obsession with Budapest’s sinfulness, along with that of other capitals, was closely related to and reflected in the rapid growth of print media and the penny press that inundated the emerging metropolis.<sup>287</sup> Although always a step behind the popular press, the police joined the bandwagon of what seemed to be an unstoppable expansion of printed media. The department not only established the official police journal *Rendőri Lapok*, wherein both Székely and Tábori were contributors, but it also devoted sustained attention and resources to its public relations department.<sup>288</sup> In some ways, the collaboration of Székely and Tábori was inevitable and particularly

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<sup>285</sup> And despite his pioneer work, and great deeds for the Hungarian poor, there is yet to be a book dedicated to his life and commemorating Tábori’s achievements.

<sup>286</sup> Like cities elsewhere, Budapest and Hungary in general experienced the emergence of new disciplines that focused on urban poverty, crime, and their “scientific” measurement as well as management.

<sup>287</sup> The historiography of the relationship between “sinfulness” and the birth of the modern metropolis is extensive. For London, see Judith Walkowitz’s *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992; Seth Koven’s *Slumming*, for Paris, Judith Surkis’ *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006; and for Berlin, Dorothy Rowe’s *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2003.

<sup>288</sup> The Ministry of Interior had its own official publication from 1869 on. It went by different names such as *Rendészeti Közlöny* (1878), *Rendőri Lapok* (1894), *Bűnügyi Értesítő* (1903), *A Rendőr* (1913), *Rendőrségi Lapok* (1914), *A Rend* (1921), *Magyar Detektív* (1925), *Magyar Rendőr* (1934, 1948–1951, 1956–1992).



transformative. They represented a productive intersection of the concerns of authorities and a growing general interest in the urban poor, as well as the founding of an investigative journalism that was attentive to feeding public curiosity. They were also prime examples of the profitability of sensationalist crime reporting.<sup>289</sup>

Although the collaboration of a journalist and a policeman seemed odd to many at first, both Tábori and Székely had a strong conviction that journalism and police investigation could mutually benefit from working side-by-side. This was acknowledged by contemporaries such as *Pesti Hírlap*, a daily paper that praised them for illustrating the fruitful collaboration of between journalism and the police: “Kornél Tábori and Vladimir Székely set an example for how a journalist and policeman need not quarrel and be in disagreement with each other. There are only benefits from them joining forces.”<sup>290</sup> Both Tábori and Székely were deeply committed to assisting Budapest’s development into a modern, safe, and more manageable city. By responding to a growing demand for expert reporting on crime, they could transcend the mutual distrust between journalists and members of the police. In fact, this was precisely one of the motivating factors for both men.

As the person in charge of the police’s press and news reports, Vladimir Székely not only broke with existing police attitudes about the media but also sought to change the public’s suspicion of the police. Embodying “modernity,” Székely believed that collaboration between the police and journalists had to be approached “through an eye of

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<sup>289</sup> This was the time when the fields of urban sociology, criminology, and statistics were professionalizing and gaining institutional power.

<sup>290</sup> *Pesti Hírlap*, December 28, 1907. Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88/17.

a scientist.”<sup>291</sup> As he wrote in his memoir, “It has not gotten across to the general public how the police and the media are interdependent...and conversely, [it is] as if there were a widespread belief among the police that attending to the media is an inconvenient imposition.”<sup>292</sup> Throughout his life, even when criticized in print, Székely continued to defend the importance of the police’s collaboration with the press and worked tirelessly to counteract the press’s constant lampooning of law enforcement agencies.

Similarly, Tábori remained committed to bridging existing differences between the way the police released information and the way in which the papers reported them.<sup>293</sup> Nevertheless, as we turn to their publication series on *Budapest*, it is undeniable that their style of writing and their exposure of scandalous facts about the less venerable side of the city served hungry readers across the country while also demonstrating the benefit of cooperation between the police and journalists.

Székely and Tábori’s idea about writing on same-sex sexuality had likely been directly inspired by investigative reports from the Imperial capital, Vienna. To be sure, by the first decade of the twentieth century, there was a popular market for writings on sexuality. Succulent stories seemed to be in high demand. What were equally significant, however, were the happenings that had been taking place in Berlin and Vienna. The so-called Harden-Eulenburg affair that involved members of the close circle of Kaiser William II became the biggest homosexual scandal that reverberated across Europe. The scandal broke out in 1907 when a journalist, Maximilian Harden, accused the Prince of

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<sup>291</sup> Géza Buzinkay, “A bűnügyi hír, a riporter és a rendőr.” As scholars in various contexts have demonstrated, the desire to be scientific and apply science in order to solve (social, economic, and cultural) problems was characteristic of later nineteenth, early twentieth century urban centers in Europe.

<sup>292</sup> B. N. R. SZ., 29.

<sup>293</sup> “Budapest nyomora; Elsősorban az állam vétkes ezért” (Budapest’s misery: Primarily it is the State’s fault), *Politikai Hetiszemle*, n.d. OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/83/260.

Eulenburg and General Moltke (both in the inner circle of the Kaiser) of homosexual conduct. There were multiple accusations and counteraccusations, with trials that lasted for two years and ended in convicting the members of the inner circle and politically tainting the Kaiser.<sup>294</sup> Like the Oscar Wilde trial in 1895, the Harden-Eulenburg affair ignited a public discussion of homosexuality, not only in Germany, but across the whole continent.<sup>295</sup> The ongoing scandal became a catalyst for a public discussion and growing awareness of homosexuality. This was particularly the case in Vienna, where as Scott Spector has recently discussed, “the affair seemed at once so distant—so German, so Prussian—and at the same time, it could not help but raise questions about the possible existence of such activity in Vienna.”<sup>296</sup> In fact, as Spector tells the story, despite the fact that at first critics suggested that such immorality—seen as “characteristics of Protestant Germans”—would never occur in Catholic Austria, a newspaper in May 1907, took up the issue. Over the course of weekly reports on male “homosexuality,” the newspaper exposed the extensive queer subculture of Vienna.<sup>297</sup> This newspaper, *Österreichische Kriminal-Zeitung* (Austrian Criminal Newspaper), was a typical example of the criminal/detective newspapers that sprung up across Europe during the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. It is also telling that the former head police commissioner of

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<sup>294</sup> For a detailed account of the scandal see Hull, Isabel V. *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888-1918*. Cambridge University Press, 2004, 45-146.

<sup>295</sup> James D. Steakly, “Iconography of a Scandal: Political Cartoons and the Eulenburg Affair in Wilhelmin Germany” in Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, eds. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. Plume, 1990, 233-264.

<sup>296</sup> Scott Spector, “The wrath of the ‘countess Merviola’: Tabloid exposé and the emergence of homosexual subjects in Vienna in 1907.” In Bischof, Gunter, Anton Pelinka, and Dagmar Herzog, eds. *Sexuality in Austria (Contemporary Austrian Studies 15)*. Transaction Publishers, 2007, 35.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.* Contemporaries melded male homosexuality and sex with the under age. Often they used the word “pederasty,” which although was supposed to refer to male homosexuality still embodied the reference to sex with boys.

Vienna, Ferdinand Lebzelter, once edited the paper.<sup>298</sup> Székely and Tábori most likely knew Lebzelter personally, through their frequent travels to Vienna and meetings with international police personnel. It is just as likely that they would have followed the *Österreichische Kriminal-Zeitung*'s coverage of the sexual underworld of Vienna. Having seen a model for investigative reports on sex that sparked interests and was financially lucrative, Székely and Tábori knew they had a great scene to uncover and a captive audience that would want to read their stories. In 1908, the series *Bűnös Budapest* (Sinful Budapest) was born.

*“Good vs. Bad Queers”: Who was a respectable homosexual?*

What exactly caused Székely and Tábori's publications to become a popular sensation? Once the collaborators' first reports were published in various dailies, and eventually in book form, their stories became a national phenomenon overnight. Overwhelmingly positive reviews and headlines exclaiming “Real Life in Pest,” “Secret Bohemians,” “Queerness from the streets of Pest,” or “Behind the scenes of life in Pest,” appeared in the book review section of newspapers across Hungary. These headlines illustrate both the main subject of their work and reveal why Székely and Tábori's pieces would have been widely popular.<sup>299</sup> As one daily newspaper stated:

Kornél Tábori journalist and Vladimir Székely police drafter introduce Budapest in a novel light in a new book series. The two authors paint the background of the developing Budapest as they expose the criminals and the miserable, who are as

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> Based on the numerous book reviews found in Tábori Kornél's bequest, Székely and Tábori were appraised by most papers irrespective of their politics. Some of the papers that published reviews of, or excerpts from *Bűnös Budapest* and *Sick Love* include: *Aradi Közlöny*, *Budapesti Hírlap*, *A Hír*, *A Friss Újság*, *A Hadi Közlöny*, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Népszava*, *Pesti Hírlap*, *Pesti Napló*, *Tonal Világlapja*, and *Független Magyarország*. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Kézirattár (The Manuscript Collection of the National Library from now on OSZKK), Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88:13 – 71.

stable and indestructible features of Budapest, as the urchins of the French capital.<sup>300</sup>

While readers were introduced to the various shady elements of the streets of Budapest, the book reviews inform us that the subject of queer sexuality, and especially the “Knights of Sick Love”, was the most intriguing subjects for contemporary readers. For instance, *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation) in its review of *Sinful Budapest* declared;

... gloomy is the world of these buggers, but the authors’ pen fills it with bright colors. The interest of the reader never languishes even for a second. It is such a book, which one cannot put down until he or she, avidly with a fever of excitement, reads it to the end... Undoubtedly, the section that should expect the greatest interest from readers is the one, which the authors devote to the perverts. Are they unfortunate or guilty? To this important question the authors do not provide a definite answer, even though they thoroughly light up the souls of these people.<sup>301</sup>

What exactly do we learn from Székely and Tábori about queers? Why did their stories about homosexuals garner such great attention when they appeared? There is considerable evidence that, from its creation in 1873, Budapest had a queer culture and that men who had sex with men were an increasingly visible part of the city’s landscape.<sup>302</sup> Yet, until the publications of Tábori and Székely, homosexuality remained absent from public discourse. Discussions about non-normative sexuality were relegated to the professional journals of medicine, police newspapers, and elite intellectual publications. Not only did Tábori and Székely break existing silences about queer lives in Budapest, they did so in such a captivating manner that the subject became a topic of conversation on the streets of the city across the lower, middle, and classes. In their

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<sup>300</sup> *Független Magyarország* December 28, 1907, OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88/13

The word apache, adopted in the Hungarian (as well as the English) language from the French in the early-twentieth century, means “violent street ruffian” and was originally used in Paris.

<sup>301</sup> *Magyar Nemzet* February 8, 1908. OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88/14

<sup>302</sup> An early example is Kálmán Brichta’s *Budapestnek vesznie kell! : röpirat* (Budapest must perish!). Budapest: Heisler nyomda, 1891. In addition, as the articles discussed in chapter 1 illustrated, the police journal *Rendőri Lapok*, also from 1900, acknowledged the presence of queer men.

widely-read publications, the authors recounted shocking stories, created suspense, and, for the first time, gave voice (even if vigilantly mediated) to homosexuals. In light of the historical silencing of homosexuals and the topic of homosexuality, ultimately Székely and Tábori's writings provide the most compelling evidence and details of an established queer presence in Hungary.<sup>303</sup>

Even if Székely and Tábori's passionate series on the underworld of Budapest was more concerned with specific—and in their view, negative—aspects of same-sex sexuality, the co-writers provide a window into the existence and social world of Budapestian queers. The simple fact that the authors deemed the issue so important that they would grant it considerable print space and comprehensive examination underscores two things: first, that they thought there was a potential demand and interest in homosexuality among readers, and secondly, that same-sex sexuality was a recognizable part of the Hungarian urban landscape.<sup>304</sup> In *A Bűnös Budapest* (Sinful Budapest) (1908), the very first piece in their series on the “real” Budapest, Tábori and Székely devoted a chapter to male same-sex sexuality entitled “A Beteg Szerelem Lovagjai,” literally meaning “The Knights of Sick Love.”<sup>305</sup> Here, just as in all of their references to same-sex sexuality, the authors embrace scientific over religious perspectives. They declare that “modern science has already determined that homosexuals are not evil-doers, but rather

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<sup>303</sup> The series of their books include; *A bűnös Budapest* (Sinful Budapest). 1908.; *A tolvajnép titkai* (The secrets of thieves). 1908.; *Az erkölcstelen Budapest* (Immoral Budapest). 1908.; *Bűnös nők* (Sinful Women). 1908.; *Nyomorultak, gazemberek* (Les Miserables and villains). 1908.; *Vasuti tolvajok* (Railway thieves). n.d.; *Bűnös szerelem*. (Sinful Love). n.d. In terms of the history of investigative journalism Seth Koven's chapter on James Greenwood in *Slumming* provides a detailed description of the novelty of a type and method of journalism that included cross-class dressing and sensationalist reporting about the poor. Koven, 26.

<sup>304</sup> Most certainly, the motives of Tábori and Székely should not be simply considered as altruistic. Still, at the end of the chapter, I argue that unlike many sensationalist journalists, the search for “truth” was much more important to them than profit making. For a different interpretation see Koven's reading of journalists and philanthropists in *Slumming*.

<sup>305</sup> “A beteg szerelem lovagjai” (The knights of sick love) in Tábori and Székely, *A Bűnös Budapest*. Budapest: ANAP Ujságvállalat nyomdája, 1908.

unfortunate neuropaths, who belong in the sanatorium rather than in prison.”<sup>306</sup> The authors seem to have a decidedly empathetic view of at least some homosexuals. They assert that there are quite a few homosexuals among intellectuals and speculate that the reason for the above average intellect of homosexuals and their disproportionately high representation among writers and artists is “a way for nature to redeem itself.”<sup>307</sup> With that said, even if the authors embrace the “scientific view,” there were many competing views about the nature of homosexuality.<sup>308</sup> Characteristic of the early twentieth-century discourses (popular and medical alike), Tábori and Székely’s representation of same-sex desire, sex, and love, reflects the messiness that surrounded the “essence” of same-sex sexuality.<sup>309</sup>

The expression, “The Knights of Sick Love,” embodies the paradox inherent in the journalists’ representation of homosexuals. The Hungarian word “Lovag” or “Knight,” in spite of the different ways it might have been used, had a positive connotation.

Regardless of whether it indicated one’s social status or, more likely, a chivalrous man who courted a (wo)man, the meaning of the word had a much more positive association than many words that could have been used to describe homosexuals. The word *lovag* had no negative connotations. In contrast, “Beteg Szerelem” translated as “Sick Love” was much more in line with the Pan-European discourse on homosexuality, connecting

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<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>307</sup> *Bűnös Szerelem* (Sinful Love) (Budapest: Nap Kiadó, 19??.) Exact publication date is unknown but most certainly it is before 1914. The Hungarian National Library estimates that it was published in 1910.

<sup>308</sup> For fin-de-siècle discourses and theories on homosexuality in the European context see Rosario, Vernon A. (ed.) *Science and Homosexualities*. New York: Routledge, 1997, 26-155 and also *Homosexuality and Science: a Guide to the Debates*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2002, chapter 1 and 2.

<sup>309</sup> For some of the latest works that address the conflicting coexisting interpretations of same-sex sexuality, see Robert Beach. “The German Invention of Homosexuality.” *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 801–838.; Edward Ross Dickinson. “‘A Dark, Impenetrable Wall of Complete Incomprehension’: The Impossibility of Heterosexual Love in Imperial Germany.” *Central European History* (Cambridge University Press / UK) 40, no. 3 (2007): 467–497; Peter Cryle, and Christopher E Forth. *Sexuality at the Fin de Siècle the makings of a "central problem*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008.

same-sex desire and love to sickness and a visible symptom of urban decay.<sup>310</sup> The term “sick” in this context could be understood both as a medical condition, that is non-normative sexuality as a genuine incurable illness, and as sexually sick (i.e., perverted), and therefore a moral question. Juxtaposing the seemingly conflicting words, the phrase “The Knights of Sick Love” expresses a rather ambiguous view that does not fall on either side of the spectrum. Rather, the expression points to a certain fluidity (or confusion) within the authors’ representation of homosexuals. Along with the negative subtext that those practicing same-sex sexuality are sick perverts, are themes that indicate a possible normalizing of same-sex desire and that present certain male homosexuals as decent men who, instead of women, courted other (decent) men. The particular way in which Tábori and Székely inform their readers about the homosexuality of many of Budapest’s respectable and renowned figures can be read as evidence of their tendency to normalize homosexuality. Without mentioning any names—although considering the explicit descriptions it is likely that most of their readers knew to whom they were referring—the journalists point out that the ranks of homosexuals included a number of widely-known writers, a pianist, a millionaire *Maecenas* (patron of arts) who was also involved in sports, and a famous actor, among many others in the city.<sup>311</sup> Presenting homosexuality as a medical condition that cannot be changed and which many of Budapest’s finest men possess may indicate an intention to demystify homosexuality. Tábori and Székely’s sympathetic account of the Oscar Wilde scandal further underscores this kind of

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<sup>310</sup> As Carolyn J. Dean states, “Fin-de-siècle medical constructions of homosexuality turned homosexual persons into deficient human subjects - so that images of perverts focused increasingly on their faces rather than their genitalia - and fostered discussions about whether such creatures were benign or a social menace.” “The ‘Open Secret,’ Affect, and the History of Sexuality” in *Sexuality at the Fin de Siècle the makings of a "central problem*, 156.

<sup>311</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 12.



empathetic and “normalizing” view of same-sex sexuality. In describing Wilde’s story (whose sexual perversity we learn was “nothing” compared to some of Budapest’s leading figures), the authors note that it was England’s “brutish laws” that destroyed one of England’s finest artists merely for “*betegség gyötörte*,” (“suffering from an illness,”), namely his homosexuality.<sup>312</sup> In light of contemporary European discourses on homosexuality that were heavily infused with degeneration theories, it is notable how “progressive” Tábori and Székely were in their views.<sup>313</sup>

Like the Budapest authorities discussed in chapter one, Tábori and Székely’s work exhibits a distinction within the representation and understanding of non-normative sexuality. In their writings, there is a category of homosexuals who, while clearly far from celebrated, are depicted with empathy and given certain respect. Tábori and Székely do not question the existence or the legitimacy of certain queers or the “real knights,” and define them as “respectable” against other forms of non-normative sexualities. Such a portrayal resonates with both the discourses about the tolerance of respectable queers present in contemporary progressive and liberal circles, and with the actual treatment of respectable homosexuals.<sup>314</sup> Surviving court records, which will be the subject of chapter five, illuminate how authorities were selective in their policing of non-normative sexualities. Often this meant that people with “legitimate and scientifically proven” desire for same sex individuals could practice and live their chosen lifestyle in relative

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<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.* Italics are my own.

<sup>313</sup> For the relationship between degeneration and homosexuality see Bland, Lucy, and Laura Doan. *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1999, part two, 39-73.

<sup>314</sup> The most explicit a plea on behalf respectable homosexuals actually is written by Gyula Kramolin, “A homoszexualitás kérdéséhez,” and it is published in *Huszadik Század*, the journal, where Székely was the editor of the Criminology section. I will discuss the piece in more detail later on this chapter. *Huszadik Század*, no. 1 (1910): 157-160.

freedom.<sup>315</sup> Yet, it is important to consider who exactly, according to Tábori and Székely, were those “respectable” homosexuals?<sup>316</sup>

Tábori and Székely never explicitly defined ‘respectable homosexuals’, nor did they use the word “tiszteletreméltó,” (respectable) in their works. Yet, every time they wrote about same-sex sexuality, there was a certain type of homosexuality that Tábori and Székely distinguished from the immoral, “degenerate,” and criminal elements. Whether in the context of discussing Oscar Wilde, citing their experience in a Berlin’s homosexual party, or talking about “well-known” elite Hungarian homosexuals, there was a certain kind of respect that they evoked. In these cases, Tábori and Székely refrained from dwelling on the actual sexual nature of these individuals and focused instead on other aspects of their lives. Even if not necessarily on even footing with their heterosexual counterparts (which likely would have been impossible to imagine at the time), the journalists assigned this category of men with respectability on the basis of their achievements and social standing. In doing so, they also advocated tolerance towards a certain type of homosexuality, which remained an elusive category and open to interpretation.

The relationship between class and respectable homosexuality in Tábori and Székely’s writings was also not straightforward. Social class and wealth obviously mattered. For one, they enabled a considerable amount of privacy and, thus protected one’s sexual life from the eyes of the law and from the public, a precondition of

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<sup>315</sup> I am using the word “relative freedom” with full awareness that queers could be and were harassed and lacked protection.

<sup>316</sup> A more theoretical description of “respectable” and respectability, which will certainly draw on various foundational texts ranging from George Mosse’s *Nationalism and sexuality: respectability and abnormal sexuality in modern Europe*, 1st ed. (New York: H. Fertig, 1985), to some of the most recent books, such as Tracie Matysik’s *Reforming the moral subject: ethics and sexuality in Central Europe, 1890-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

respectability. But in the authors' eyes, class and power could also enable the exploitation of poor men and the underprivileged. Consequently, higher socio-economic status did not automatically mean respectability. Rather, the well-known Hungarian homosexuals of higher classes that Tábori and Székely mention are considered "respectable," not simply because of their class or social position, but also because of the work they did as members of society. In this sense, social class was neither necessary nor an inevitable component of respectable homosexuality. To be a respectable homosexual meant that one had to be both a model citizen in public life, and a conscientious individual in his private life.

While Tábori and Székely express pity for nature's faulty mechanisms that led some men to have "abnormal" sexual desires, it is not the "innate" queers who act out of their true desires that are of primary interest or concern to them. Rather, in the eyes of Tábori and Székely, it is those who act out of greed and make their living by exploiting the "real" homosexuals that are a concern to society. Indeed, their readers learn a great deal about young men who sell themselves to the "devotees of *paederastia*."<sup>317</sup> As the following excerpt demonstrates, it was not necessarily queer, or same-sex sexuality that the authors primarily took issue with, but specifically those who exploited these desires and made a profit from the "real" queers or homosexuals. The following excerpt is telling:

...those young pretty striplings, who entice ill older gentlemen just like female prostitutes would, that falls into an entirely different category... What drives these people is not perversion. Most could have a normal sexual life, in fact most do, aside from *paederastia*. Apart from having relations with men they often also have relations with *éjjeli pillangók* (night butterflies) [prostitutes]. These men's pedophilia is nothing other than male prostitution, which at the same time

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<sup>317</sup> *Bűnös Budapest*. 47. Italics are mine. In this instance, the word use "devotees of pederasty" refers to men who desire young men or even boys.

inherently implies far more dangers than female prostitution. It also includes stealing and blackmailing on a grand scale.<sup>318</sup>

The authors' use of the word *paederastia* [Greek word for pederasty that was assimilated into Hungarian without any changes], which originally meant, "love of boys" to refer to homosexuality was not a mistake. In fact, Tábori and Székely's conflation of the term was representative of a European-wide phenomenon. As scholars have shown, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the word "pederasty," was used in many countries to denote men "who engaged in same-sex sexual activities."<sup>319</sup> At the same time, unlike with some of the other words that contemporaries used for homosexuality, the word "pederasty" had only negative connotations, connecting same-sex sexuality with vice and immorality.<sup>320</sup> Tábori and Székely's use of the word also attests to that. As they go on, using dramatic language that would most certainly excite readers, the authors present a detailed description of the "bad" queers, including their physical appearance, their whereabouts, and even a script of their actions:

Their clothes and behaviors are conspicuous. Their hair is done up, combed nicely, and they often grow it long. They have makeup on their face. They have a tight blazer, which surely is enticing. Their movements are easily noticeable. Their hands are full of rings. Their perfume can be smelled and they are talented socializers. Such is the lead character of blackmailers. He is the hero of terrible tragedies, which take place in a few minutes, but as dramas of life in general, they hold their poor victims in horrible agony for months and years.

Not one *buzeráns* [slang word for homosexual] works alone in order to maximize his earnings. Once having met and enticed his aberrantly inclined person at the Elisabeth Square, City Park or one of the Baths and then having the act

<sup>318</sup> "éjjeli pillangók" (night butterflies) is the Hungarian corollary for the American euphemism "ladies of the night,") *Ibid.* Italics are mine.

<sup>319</sup> See for instance William Peniston's discussion of the term in the French context. *A. Pederasts and others : urban culture and sexual identity in nineteenth century Paris*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004. For Austria, Scott Spector, "The wrath of the 'countess Merviola': Tabloid exposé and the emergence of homosexual subjects in Vienna in 1907."

<sup>320</sup> For the discussion of the meaning of *pederasty*, see Michael L. Wilson. "The Despair of Unhappy Love': Pederasty and Popular Fiction in the Belle Époque'." In Cryle, Peter, and Christopher E Forth. *Sexuality at the Fin de Siècle the makings of a "central problem*. 109 – 142.

performed: the *buzi* [an abbreviated form of *buzeráns*] in love turns into a businessman. He threatens with scandal or the police and demands money. In the case of well-off people he also accepts bonds.

Nevertheless, for the most part homosexuals work in groups and they have a talent for how to enmesh healthy people, who do not know the secrets of perversion and get into trouble solely for their callowness. Within the criminal gang there are the following roles; the *buzi* entices the victim and the rest of the gang, often the head of the gang – dresses up as a policeman with one or two fake detectives. They often go to baths, which specialize in the treatments of specific disease [particularly those for venereal disease]. The group lurks as the *buzi* and the victim get together and start the “game”: “What an egregious atrocity!” The gang leader shouts. “Don’t you feel ashamed of yourself to entice such a young gentleman?!” Then he turns to the “detectives.” “Go on, take him to the police station.” At this point the victim loses his mind. He asks, begs, and perhaps even cries; “What would the world and his family say?!” Then comes the big shock. The head of the gang gets softer over time and eventually for a significant amount of money he lets the enmeshed muff go. But often this is not the end of his gauntlet. He will be blackmailed as long as the gang thinks he has money. It happens that they would get 1000 Coronas from persons of the well to do.

It is a clear fact: Once somebody gives in to the initial blackmailing, he becomes prey for the blackmailers and at times it is only through committing suicide that he can get rid off the criminal gang.<sup>321</sup>

Leaving their talent for sensationalist reporting aside, it is clear that the authors are less concerned with men who prefer pretty young men than with those who exploit people that cannot help their sexual inclinations. It is even imaginable, their dramatic voice and depiction of the unfortunate homosexual victims reflects, and likely could have generated, sympathy for “authentic” homosexuals. Overall, Tábori and Székely’s focus, as well as their representation of the criminal and “inauthentic” homosexuals, echo the initial articles

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<sup>321</sup> *Bűnös Budapest*, 48-49. Prior to 1914 the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy’s currency, Corona or “korona” in Hungarian, was among the strongest in Europe. Consequently, 1000 korona was more money than an average factory worker earned in a year. <http://www.magyardortenelem.eoldal.hu/cikkek/osztrak-magyar-monarchia/tarsadalom> last accessed 2/11/2011

The authors’ mention of certain baths specializing in curing venereal diseases also point to the link that authorities (as well as homosexuals themselves according to Tábori and Székely) made between the venereal disease and homosexuals.

of the *Österreichische Kriminal-Zeitung*, published a few months earlier.<sup>322</sup> Taking a step back, the content and tone of *Sinful Budapest* is indicative of a number of things: first, that by the first decade of the twentieth century same-sex sexuality was seen as an inherent characteristic of Budapest, even when not discussed publicly; second, that there was an extensive network of male (not just female) prostitution; and finally, and perhaps most interestingly, that there were certain forms of non-normative sexualities that were tolerated over others.<sup>323</sup>

### *Sinful Love and the Culture of Queer Budapest*

It was not long after the publication of *Sinful Budapest* that Tábori and Székely published a second book, *Bűnös Szerelem* (*Sinful Love*). This work was entirely and explicitly dedicated to queer sexuality.<sup>324</sup> Again, Tábori and Székely's motivations for writing on this topic were clearly mixed. Following the publications of their first books, they received considerable financial compensation and national fame as "the authors who finally showed what true life was really like in Budapest".<sup>325</sup> It seems that once they had introduced queers to the greater public, it would have been a missed opportunity not to take advantage of the emerging market for juicy stories about same-sex sexuality. But money and fame aside, Tábori and Székely remained deeply committed to what they

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<sup>322</sup> Scott Spector, "The wrath of the 'countess Merviola': Tabloid exposé and the emergence of homosexual subjects in Vienna in 1907." 36-43.

<sup>323</sup> Laurie Marhoefer's *Among Abnormals: The Queer Sexual Politics of Germany's Weimar Republic, 1918-1933* (Doctoral dissertation) speaks to this in Weimar Germany. Proquest, Umi Dissertations Publishing, 2011.

<sup>324</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*. Exact publication date is unknown but it occurred between 1910 and 1912.

<sup>325</sup> OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88.

conceived as the betterment of Budapest and believed it was their obligation to inform the public about the lurking dangers within the city.<sup>326</sup>

Consequently, in *Beteg Szerelem* (Sick Love), Tábori and Székely explicitly address Budapest's homosexual subcultures, and readers are presented with a more detailed and complex picture of them. Even the term "sinful love" seems to contradict the idea expressed in the previous book that sexuality—and thus, sexual preference—was entirely innate and a biological or medical issue rather than a moral one. While a few years earlier in *Sinful Budapest*, the authors referred to "real" homosexuality and desire as a medical sickness, here (most likely sometime in the early 1910s) they show less sympathy for the "knights and queens of sick love." That is not to say that their opinions had necessarily changed, but rather, their change in word choice and more critical tone reflected what they saw as an epidemic rise of queers and the particular way in which non-normative sexuality was spreading.

Love between men ought to be more substantially dealt with by defenders of public safety as well as of morality, because *this terrible fervor has been spreading* recently, and not only in Budapest but also in small places in the countryside. Five [or] ten years ago they only operated in bigger cities. But since there have been organized associations and even clubs that have been set up by *certain men*, the number of homosexual men has been rapidly rising even outside of the metropolis.<sup>327</sup>

Their depiction is illuminating for a number of reasons. While writing their Budapest book series, the leading investigating Hungarian journalists became intimately familiar with the various worlds of Budapest's inhabitants (rich, poor, middle classes and men and women alike). The passage above indicates that their time spent on the streets of Budapest caused Tábori and Székely to be particularly concerned with two aspects of

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<sup>326</sup> This is implicit in both Tábori and Székely's diaries and writings. OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/74, B. N. R. SZ.

<sup>327</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 1-2.

homosexuality, namely the mounting visibility of queers and homosexuality's disease-like proliferation.

Tábori and Székely, inspired by the journalists, social reformers, and altruistic social elite of London and other urban metropolises who “went slumming,” embarked on operations to uncover the world of the underprivileged. According to their account, it was during these investigations that they discovered the world of the so-called *buzeráns*. “A few years ago—one of the authors of this book—spent weeks in masquerade among beggars, petty thieves and people like such. During his time he was able to get to know the *perverzeket* (perverse people) quite well.”<sup>328</sup> Their mission to expose the *knights and queens of sick love* was partly motivated by the belief that, other than doctors and sexologists (especially Richard von Krafft-Ebing the author of *Psychopathia Sexualis*), only those who come in contact with the homosexual community could have accurate and genuine knowledge about same-sex sexuality.<sup>329</sup> Rather than observe same-sex sexuality through the lens of medicine, in *Beteg Szerelem*, the authors declared that they wanted to understand this sexuality as journalists as well as through the reports of others who had had direct contact with these individuals. In their view the perspectives of policemen were imperative to investigate because the police files were much more informative than the files of any experienced medical professional. For example, as the readers learn:

During his time masquerading among perverse people, with another undercover colleague he discovered a *buzeráns tanyát* [homosexual bar]. His partner was a rubicund, almost girl-like faced young lad, and the guests of the bar thought that he was with his “*warme Schwester*,” [in German literally meaning warm sister, which meant homosexual] his “girlfriend”. By the fourth time they walked into the bar, they were received very friendly.... They saw such orgies in that bar that

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<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* 1.



they lost their appetite for days. But their disgust gave place to anger when they realized that nearly every day there would be a new victim. Not just one respectable families' son was seduced this way.<sup>330</sup>

Tábori and Székely assert that it was the consistent luring of the “young and respectable” that prompted them to denounce the homosexual bar, and its nearby restaurant, to the police.<sup>331</sup> They informed the police, who sent its own very handsome undercover detective who “proceeded to make a whole lot of homosexuals fall in love with him.”<sup>332</sup> According to Tábori and Székely, this tactic made gathering evidence easy. In a week, the police had busted both establishments. Once again, and with a hint of sensationalism, Tábori and Székely inform their readers that although the “delicate details” of the raid prevented the papers from covering the most important and scandalous parts of the case, they also wanted to refrain from “burdening their readers” with the specifics. Nevertheless, subsequently they present some snippets of information, and we learn that quite a few respectful and public gentlemen were exposed in the raid. To illustrate their point about how “*this terrible fervor*” of same-sex sexuality spread, Tábori and Székely introduce the following dialogue between a young homosexual and a detective, which the authors allege took place at the police station following the raid:

**Detective:** How did you get to this foul place?

**16-Year-Old Boy:** I was sitting at the Elisabeth Square and was studying to pass my fifth gymnasium exams. Then came a gentleman who talked to me nicely and told me that he was a teacher and he could work with me on my studies. He invited me to his place...and then *it happened*.

**Detective:** And why didn't you tell this to your father, who is a respected merchant?

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<sup>330</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 2-3.

<sup>331</sup> The authors' conflation of homosexuality with same-sex desire between older men and different expressions denoting young men, young male adults, and male teenagers, suggests the lingering belief in an age-differential homosexual model, and also the existence of fluid boundaries of youth, adolescence, and adulthood.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*

**16-Year-Old Boy:** I was ashamed. And then I tried to avoid this man, to no avail. He found me, first begged me, than threatened me that he would get me arrested, while he would promise me great things. By the third time it was me who went to his place. At the end I ran away from home and I have been making my own living for three months.

**Detective:** Well, what a nice way of supporting yourself!

**16-Year-Old Boy:** What can I do? Now, I cannot stop.<sup>333</sup>

Their message was clear: once you go the “homo” route, you can never go back. This is what most concerned Tábori and Székely, who viewed same-sex sexuality, and particularly its effect on individuals and their greater community, as terribly detrimental. It would disrupt families and hurt the moral fiber of society. This view is evident in their follow-up discussion about the young boy who was being interviewed by the police:

The 16-year-old boy was very calm while talking about his sexuality and only got upset when the detective told him that his father would be notified of his whereabouts. Then his eyes swelled with tears as he shouted: “Please everything but that! It would be better if they thought I was dead. If you do not notify my parents I would confess everything and would swear that I would never go around *schwesters* [meaning sister in German] ever again.”<sup>334</sup>

The boy was supposedly caught six months later on a corner on the Pest side of the city. According to the authors, he was standing like a female prostitute, with make-up on, waiting for customers. By then he was “worn out,” an old *schwester*, and was making money by pimping “like an old bawd.” Tábori and Székely exhorted their readers to wonder, “How many young lads are ruined this way, physically and emotionally? People who fall into the abyss, have no power to get out.”<sup>335</sup> It is probable that this dramatic statement was just as likely to arouse the readers’ imagination, as it was to spark genuine reflection about the authors’ concerns. Aside from reinforcing the association of homosexuality with an incurable disease and exhibiting anxiety for the well-being of

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<sup>333</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 3-4.

<sup>334</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 4.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

Hungary's young lads, the segment also reveals how same-sex desire and the homosexual lifestyle was considered shameful even among many homosexuals.<sup>336</sup> While the depiction of Tábori and Székely underscores the existence of a Hungarian homosexual subculture, in their view, Hungarian homosexuals lacked a sense of "self-acceptance" and were far from brave advocates for sexual reforms or toleration.<sup>337</sup>

Although in their earlier work, Tábori and Székely acknowledged respectable homosexuals and their "right" to exist, in *Beteg Szerelem* the authors seem to exhibit a more tangible concern about a growing homosexual threat. Their statement about homosexuality as a "terrible fervor [that] has been spreading," indicates a perspective that had become increasingly prevalent in Hungarian professional circles, as well as among governing authorities, since the late nineteenth century. There was growing anxiety about the rise of homosexuals, which on one hand reflects the authors' concern about effects of the growing metropolis on sexual norms and practices. Tábori and Székely's understanding of same-sex desire and homosexuality as a disease that spreads with contact explains why they considered homosexuality both a moral and public health issue. On the other hand, there is the pressing question of what exactly makes people turn toward their own sex so "feverously." Since the journalists attest that they believed that circumstance and experience played a vital role for most people who 'became' queer, their concern about exposure to non-normative sexuality is understandable. Yet, their actual

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<sup>336</sup> While this study does not focus on the subjectivity of queer men and women and the historical trajectories of people's understanding of their sexuality, I hope that in the near future it will be granted the necessary scholarly attention.

<sup>337</sup> For instance, during this time, particularly in Germany, there was a growing movement for sexual liberation, where homosexuals took an active role. See for instance Harry Oosterhuis' *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in pre-Nazi Germany : the Youth Movement, the Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise : Original Transcripts from Der Eigene, the First Gay Journal in The*. New York: Haworth Press, 1991, and James Steakley's *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*. New York: Arno Press, 1975.

representation of homosexuality becomes contradictory, indicating that their understanding of what homosexuality was and what it signified about the denizens—and more generally, what it signified about the city—was by no means transparent.

Tábori and Székely, whose points of view had been shaped by their investigative reporting, their contact with the police, as well as by personal experience at police raids of homosexual places, were first and foremost alarmed by the appalling social conditions in Budapest. Not unlike social reformers in London, Berlin, or New York, they believed that poverty and lack of adequate living space bred social and psycho-biological diseases.<sup>338</sup> Thus, in this context, the spread and increase of same-sex sexual activity was seen as the embodiment of urban degeneration and signified everything that was wrong with modern Hungarian society. Indeed, the authors underscored that “even in the most normal human being exists some perversion or at least, the propensity for it”.<sup>339</sup> But they go on to say that the environment and coercive factors can slowly influence ‘normal people’ to an extent that the “perverse desires” become very powerful. It is important to note that Tábori and Székely call attention to homosexuality as an effect, rather than a cause of social problems. Their belief that the inclination for perversion (homosexuality) was an innate characteristic of mankind, is not only indicative of their knowledge of the latest Western theories on sexuality, but, in many ways, foreshadows these theories as early as the 1900s.

With these caveats in mind, even as they sensationalized the spread and threat of homosexual desire, Tábori and Székely did not question that there were homosexuals who

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<sup>338</sup> Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1992). Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class, and the state* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and Seth Koven’s *Slumming*.

<sup>339</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 2.

“cannot help” their sexuality. Consequently, as long as they did not entice non-homosexuals (i.e. behave respectably), they should not be punished: “Our goal is not to denounce, and we have absolutely no intention to “*pereatot kiáltani*” [scream perish] to all perverts. In general, and according to many people, sex between men with the exclusion of women, is a type of act that requires mourning rather than punishment.”<sup>340</sup>

### *The Broader World of Tábori and Székely's Queers*

Aside from the sensationalist language and the incontestable fact that their authenticity and factual basis will most likely never be confirmed, *Sinful Budapest* and *Sick Love* provide substantial information about the life of queer Budapest. At the very least, readers of these texts get a very good sense of how the authors perceived the situation of queers in Budapest at the time. For one, we learn that the number of homosexuals prior to World War I was perceived to be steadily on the rise. According to Tábori and Székely, the fact that they had their own clubs and associations also attests to the existence of a homosexual subculture, not only in the Hungarian capital but also in smaller cities.<sup>341</sup> In this sense, the account underscores that homosexuality and homosexual subcultures were part of Hungarian, and more generally of East and Central European, urban history. It also suggests that both Hungarian authorities and queer communities looked to the metropolises of Western Europe and the United States for inspiration and knowledge. On the one hand, as I analyzed in chapter one, the police were cutting-edge and creative in their emulation of the West's more developed models of policing. As discussed in the

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> This is underscored by the article published in *Arad és Vidéke* 1908 January 1, which in reviewing Tábori and Székely's book explicitly names a club in Arad (today in Romania) as well as acknowledging the validity of their claims about homosexuals. OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88.

previous chapter, Budapest's position as a relative latecomer to modern urbanization helped shape the ways in which authorities in Budapest had come to perceive and police homosexuals. On the other hand, Tábori and Székely inform us that by the first decade of the twentieth century, when the city was becoming one of the largest European metropolises, homosexuals themselves also mirrored their Western counterparts, who by then had more defined and visible queer subcultures.<sup>342</sup>

Like cities in the New World, Budapest experienced massive waves of immigration and tremendous ethnic diversity, and its queer residents organized and built an extensive network that often cut across ethnic, class, and age differences. They were able to do this, in part, because information (medical and legal) and news stories about homosexuals were available not only in Budapest but also in smaller cities and towns. Hungarian homosexuals and people with queer desires could look to Berlin, Paris, and other major metropolises—as well as to the queer publications currently circulating—for explanations about their sexuality and ideas about organizing. Tábori and Székely allude to this international exchange of ideas in their work, noting that homosexuals could make sure they followed the latest trends of the homosexual “Meccas,” namely, Berlin and Paris. In fact, whenever they explicitly or implicitly discussed homosexuality, which usually happened within an international and mostly western context, Hungarian authorities—the police, legal scholars, doctors, and, not least, Tábori and Székely—were

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<sup>342</sup> Robert Aldrich, “Homosexuality and the city: an historical overview,” *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (August 1, 2004): 1719-1737. Florence Tamagne, *The History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*; Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Peril and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*; Matt Cook, *London and the culture of homosexuality, 1885-1914*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*.

actually actively contributing to the information flow.<sup>343</sup> Thus, keeping up-to-date on queer affairs was not difficult for most urban Hungarian homosexuals.<sup>344</sup>

Tábori and Székely's discussion of the language of queers, and of the popular expressions used to label them, attests to a strong German influence. One does not have to be a linguist to detect that most of the terms that came to be used by the queer community itself, as well as by anyone referring to people attracted to their own sex, came from the German language. Considering the powerful and historically robust Hungarian relationship with the Habsburgs and the Hungarian elite's admiration of German culture, this comes as no surprise.<sup>345</sup> German was the language of the imperial court of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; even though Hungarian became the official language within the Hungarian Kingdom after 1867, most people continued to be at least bilingual. In addition, since Hungary, and especially Budapest prior to 1918, was an ethnically and linguistically diverse society, people who spoke different languages would often fall back on German as an intermediary language of communication.<sup>346</sup> This explains why many of

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<sup>343</sup> Even much more so than the publications of sexologists, like Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which contained much more "scientific" language and descriptions of non-normative sexuality, people likely found the lay language of Tábori and Székely particularly informative.

<sup>344</sup> Of course there is the issue of literacy. At the turn of the century there were still many people who were illiterate even in the urban setting. Ráczy Gyula. "Magyarország gazdasági és szociális állapota a XX. század első évtizedében" (Hungary's economic and social condition in the first decade of the twentieth century). *Huszadik Század*. December 1908. 439-492.; W.B. Forster Bovill, *Hungary and the Hungarians*, 1908. Otherwise, Hungarian homosexuals would have had access to the German *Der Eigene*, the first homosexual journal in the world, as well as to the publications of French authors such as Andre Gide, Marcel Proust, and Jean Cocteau who discussed homosexuality in their writings. In addition, in this period there were an increasing number of pornographic catalogs that could be ordered through the mail. Once they were in someone's possession the catalogs could be circulated widely. Tünde Császtvay, *Éjjeli lepkevadászok : bordélyvilág a történelmi magyarországon*.

<sup>345</sup> Following the tripartition of Hungary in the 16th century during the Turkish invasion, parts of Hungary came under Habsburg rule. From 1699 when Hungary was freed from Turkish occupation, until 1867 it was ruled by the Habsburgs and was part of the Habsburg Empire. In addition, Hungary's intellectual and political traditions were deeply influenced by Prussian and subsequently German traditions.

<sup>346</sup> Szász Zoltán. "A mai magyar irodalom sorvadásának okairól" (On the reasons for the decline of contemporary Hungarian literature). *Huszadik Század*, December 1908. 596-597; Thomas Bender and Russell Sage Foundation., *Budapest and New York : studies in metropolitan transformation, 1870-1930*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994). Robert Nemes, *The once and future Budapest*. DeKalb Ill.:

the Hungarian expressions and references about homosexuality came from German and were often adopted without translation into Hungarian. Consequently, the word *buzeráns*, used for homosexual men, was originally German adopted from Italian, and expressions such as *warme bruder*, *warme schwester*, or *Urning* were adopted by both the authorities as well as homosexuals themselves.<sup>347</sup> The word *Urning*, which was invented by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, was occasionally used to refer to men who desired their own sex, but also had other connotations.<sup>348</sup> Perhaps no other word can better illustrate the symbiosis of Hungarian and German languages in the Hungarian language of sexuality than the word “homosexuality.” *Homosexualität* was coined by Karl-Maria Kertbeny (or Károly Mária Kertbeny), who, in his own words: “was born in Vienna, yet I am not a Viennese, but rightfully Hungarian.”<sup>349</sup> Yet, Kertbeny’s mother tongue remained German and it was also in a German that he first used the expression “homosexuality.”<sup>350</sup> The word eventually entered into the Hungarian legal, medical, and popular discourse through German publications—first and foremost, through Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*.<sup>351</sup> At the time of Tábori and Székely’s writing, during the last years of the 1900s, the word homosexuality had begun to appear but was only one of the many terms used to denote same-sex desire. However, unlike the word *paederestia*, the

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Northern Illinois University Press, 2005.

<sup>347</sup> In fact, over time the word *warme* has been literally translated into Hungarian as *meleg* to signify homosexual and gay, and today it is the most used and politically correct reference to homosexuality.

<sup>348</sup> According to Ulrichs’s third sex theory of homosexuality urnings possessed a male body with a female soul. The term “urning” throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century across Europe was concomitantly used with other terms such as homosexual or invert to describe people who preferred their own sex. For Ulrich’s theory see Hubert Kennedy “Karl Heinrich Ulrichs” in Rosario, Vernon A. (ed) *Science and Homosexualities*, 26-46.

<sup>349</sup> Cited by Judit Takács in Gert Hekma, “The Double Life of Kertbeny.” In *Past and Present of Radical Sexual Politics*. Mosse Foundation, 2004. 39.

<sup>350</sup> Kertbeny campaigned for the decriminalization of homosexuality (Paragraph 175) in Germany, on the grounds that the state had no right to regulate people’s sexual life in private.

<sup>351</sup> Krafft-Ebing’s book was first published in 1886. The Hungarian edition was published in 1994. Krafft-Ebing, Richard, translated by Fischer, Jakab. *Psychopathia Sexualis: A Visszás Nemi Érzések Különös Figyelembe vételével/Orvos-törvényszéki Tanulmány*. Budapest: Singer és Wolfner Kiadása, 1894.



words of *buzeráns*, *warne bruder*, *schwester*, *urning*, and, eventually, homosexuality, were not only used in a pejorative sense but also as references of (self-)identification.

One of Tábori and Székely's more surprising findings is that there was a formally established Hungarian homosexual association by the first decade of the twentieth century. Although we learn that it was not officially registered, as legally it could not have been, our eager journalists state that the association even had proper bylaws, which they claim to have viewed.<sup>352</sup> The text of the bylaws was missing, and Tábori and Székely describe the only surviving article. It stated that in the case of the death of a member of the group, every member was required to attend the funeral. The club was based in Budapest but soon had "offices" in a number of cities within the Hungarian Kingdom, including Arad, Nagyvárad (Oradea), Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), Pécs, and Székesfehérvár.<sup>353</sup> The offices were in touch with each other as well as with the main office in Budapest. While there is no available data on the number or background of their members, it is clear that these places facilitated the meeting and socializing of homosexual men in these towns and Budapest. It also provided them with up-to-date information about current issues relating to homosexuality. All the offices had subscriptions to a number of queer-friendly or exclusively homosexual publications, including the ornate German publication, *Der Eigene*—the first homosexual journal in the world.<sup>354</sup> In addition to the official association, by the turn of the century there were also homosexual bars and cafés in the bigger towns, where homosexuals could enjoy a relatively safe space.

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<sup>352</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 6.

<sup>353</sup> The examination of local archives in each of these towns and cities will be an important future endeavour. Apart from the reference in Tábori and Székely's book throughout my research, I did not come across any other direct reference to these cities.

<sup>354</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 4. On the history and content of "Der Eigene", see Oosterhuis, Harry. *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in pre-Nazi Germany: the Youth Movement, the Gay Movement, and Male Bonding Before Hitler's Rise: Original Transcripts from Der Eigene, the First Gay Journal in The World*. New York: Haworth Press, 1991.

Often these places were disguised amidst the thriving bar and café culture in Budapest and other bigger towns across Hungary.<sup>355</sup>

That homosexuals had their own semi-official bars and cafés is not surprising considering that by the turn of the century Budapest was moving with meteoric speed toward becoming a modern metropolis. While Paris and Vienna are, for many compelling reasons, considered the café capitals of Europe, Budapest also had a vibrant and extensive café culture.<sup>356</sup> While many cafés in turn-of-the-century Budapest served as a sanctuary for literature and sophisticated culture, the majority of cafés also functioned as places for sexual openness and debauchery.<sup>357</sup> In fact, most cafés resembled “the nightclubs and bars of today, rather than the nostalgic images of marble tables and newspaper reading.”<sup>358</sup> Without denying their cultural function it is important to acknowledge, as Tábori and Székely aptly observed, that cafés were central in accommodating and facilitating Budapest’s sexual (sub)cultures.

On the subject of homosexual cafés, Tábori and Székely inform us that, that while there were no openly-homosexual establishments, there were places that served as homosexual gathering places. They go on to say that like their heterosexual counterparts, semi-private places in the center of Pest tended to be quite restrictive in their accommodation of homosexual guests. In general it was the homosexuals with professional jobs and social stature who were regulars at these establishments. Working-

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<sup>355</sup> It is difficult to verify the claims of Tábori and Székely. There is one article in *Arad és Vidéke* (January 1, 1908) which in reviewing Tábori and Székely’s book supports the existence of homosexual clubs in other cities/towns by explicitly naming a club in Arad (today in Romania). OSZKK, Tábori Kornél Bequest 160/88/50-55.

<sup>356</sup> Gábor Gyáni, *Az utca és a szalon. A társadalmi térhasználat Budapesten: 1870–1940*, Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1999. Éva Szentes and Emil Hargittay, *Irodalmi kávéházak Pesten és Budán : irodalom a kávéházban, kávéház az irodalomban*, 2nd ed., Budapest: Universitas Kiadó, 1998.

<sup>357</sup> Judit Forrai, “Kávéházak és kéj nők,” *Budapesti Negyed*, no. 2 (1996): 110-120.

<sup>358</sup> Szalai, 3.

class homosexuals tended to carve out their establishments in the poorer suburbs and neighborhoods, and according to Tábori and Székely, were generally less discrete. In addition, their cafés and bars were more accepting of prostitution. As *Beteg Szerelem* informs us, while the “better sort” of homosexuals certainly had wild parties in their clubs, it was the working class “*urning partik*” [homosexual parties] that apparently became infamous for being carnivalesque and out of control.<sup>359</sup>

While there might have been wild antics and rowdy costume parties, most queers tended to be secretive and often met in private places. Although less interesting to readers looking for titillating entertainment, there were many homosexuals who did not disturb the peace, and for whom the chronically understaffed police showed little concern during the years prior World War I.<sup>360</sup> As discussed in chapter one, despite the police’s homosexual registry, the continuous flow of people into the city and the crowded living conditions, along with the high incidence of other crimes, made policing homosexuals a very low priority of law enforcement authorities.<sup>361</sup> As they tried to deal with petty crimes and keep public order, the authorities went after same-sex activities only if they perceived them as particularly dangerous (i.e. cases of underage male prostitution that catered to older men) or, as in the case of Tábori and Székely, they received an insider’s tip about exceptionally wild parties. By reading our authors along with contemporary press and

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<sup>359</sup> Florence Tamagne argues for differences between national models of homosexuality. Berlin witnessed a ‘communitarian’ approach, the collective nightlife for which the city became famous, and rising political consciousness in the face of anti-homosexual laws. In Paris, decriminalization meant that homosexual life was less politicized and more individualistic. London displayed a veritable ‘cult of the homosexual’ with ‘homosexualisation’ of the elite induced by public schools and sex-segregated sociability, combined with an identity crisis of post-war British youth. Paris and London were more of a magnet for lesbians than Berlin; homosexuality in the German capital was especially linked to working-class culture. Tamagne characterizes political differences as ‘contestatory militancy’ in Germany, ‘subversive integration’ in Britain’ and ‘pleasure-seeking individualism’ in France. *Beteg Szerelem*, 4-5.

<sup>360</sup> The number of policemen per inhabitants in Budapest was significantly lower than in other European capitals. See Baksa’s *Rendőrségi Almanach*.

<sup>361</sup> Bèla Újhegyi, “A nemi ösztön kóros tèvelygèsei,” *Rendőri Lapok*, Oct. 28, 1900, 7:44.

police reports, it is evident that many Budapest residents were both exposed to and/or partook in queer activities. According to contemporary police reports, the majority of both long-time and recent Budapest residents, even if they did not engage in queer sexual activities, tended to be rather oblivious or indifferent to them. As one article states: “while the public itself view queer sexual crimes as disgraceful, in actuality, they do not even notice them or the people themselves are in fact engaging in such deeds.”<sup>362</sup> It is unclear what exactly the article means by “queer sexual crimes.” Ambiguity aside, it seems that regardless of people’s moral and personal points of view on queerness, the growing city accommodated a wide range of sexual activities. In this regard, Budapest like other major metropolises in the Old and the New World could attract and shelter men, and, to a much lesser extent, women, who desired their own sex.<sup>363</sup> As Julie Abraham in her recent work *Metropolitan Lovers: The Homosexuality of Cities* on the symbiosis of homosexual men and cities explains, the city provided homosexual men not only space, but a community.

*“Parasites of Perverts”: Male Homosexual Prostitutes*

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the most “treacherous” form of homosexuality, and what most concerned Tábori and Székely and the authorities, was male prostitution. In *Beteg Szerelem*, we learn about a “whole army of *pervezek parazitái* [parasites of perverts]”, who according to the authors, “made their living similarly to the female

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<sup>362</sup> T. S. E. “Az önfertőzős és kóros nemi életéről,” *Rendőri Lapok*, Sept. 23, 1900, 7:39.

<sup>363</sup> The close relationship between urban environments and sexual otherness and homosexual subcultures has a substantial historiography. For the latest work see Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan lovers: the homosexuality of cities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

residents of bordellos” in the city.<sup>364</sup> Though not supporting female prostitution, Tábori and Székely thought of this activity as an evil social phenomenon that was an inherent part of human civilization, whereas they viewed male prostitution as a more malevolent form of business—the ultimate sign of urban decay.<sup>365</sup> The writings of Tábori and Székely and their conceptualization of “bad” versus “good” homosexuals must be understood in the contexts of prostitution, and its unwanted and negative consequences.

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, male prostitution had become a staple of Budapest’s urban landscape. Unlike female prostitution, which had a long history of regulation in Hungary, male prostitution was never officially regulated. Given that sex between men was illegal, authorities initially saw no reason to specifically address male prostitution. Over time, however, although enjoying less “freedom” than women, male prostitutes carved out their own turf at number of locales. Tábori and Székely inform us that their most frequent workplace was a busy street, where prostitutes had their own routes and corners. The City Park and Elisabeth Square earned infamous reputations, but the promenade by the Danube and the Castle Gardens also served as “consulting places.”<sup>366</sup> Male prostitutes also appeared at ‘masquerade parties’, at bars, and, frequently, in the city’s many baths. As Budapest’s bath culture expanded, receiving international praise and an increasing number of guests, so did the number of “knights of sick love” who frequented them.<sup>367</sup> Some male prostitutes would also offer their services in the love columns of various papers. Such was the case with the following ad published

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<sup>364</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 13-15.

<sup>365</sup> Of course, the issue of female prostitution was complex, and there were various competing ideas circulating about what the best course of action would be. On the various contemporary discourses on prostitution see Anka, László. “A Budapesti Prostitúció És Szexpiac Története a Boldog Békeidőkben.”

<sup>366</sup> *Bűnös Budapest*, 47; *Beteg Szerelem*, 14.

<sup>367</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 14.

in the personals of a daily newspaper: “A handsome young, 18 year old would befriend an energetic, well-to-do gentleman. Letters to the publisher under the motto, Night Eye.”<sup>368</sup>

Tábori and Székely made a distinction between the men who sold themselves for a lot of money but were strong enough to keep their “heterosexual manhood” intact, and those who eventually joined the “perverts” permanently. They were much more tolerant and even sympathetic toward men who prostituted themselves purely for money than those who, like the 16-year-old boy discussed earlier, “became addicted” to men. By excusing some on the “supply” side of prostitution, the authors stood in contrast the police and the courts, which were harsher on the providers of sexual services in the case of same-sex prostitution.<sup>369</sup> Citing harsh living conditions and desperation, Tábori and Székely applied the rhetoric that social reformers used for describing female prostitution. Mirroring their thoughts on female prostitution, when it came to people selling their bodies in order to make ends meet, Tábori and Székely blamed the demand side. They criticized men who, instead of finding partners based on mutual interest, had the means to buy the services of the economically vulnerable young men (and women). The authors saw male prostitution as symbolic of the perils of modern urban life and, therefore, a symptom of *sinful* Budapest. In their eyes, male-to-male prostitution by soldiers fell into this category. Following in the footsteps of female prostitutes who worked in certain designated cafés, there were actually cafés where the “soldier – gallants” auctioned their

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<sup>368</sup> Cited in *Beteg Szerelem*, 13.

<sup>369</sup> When it came to the treatment of prostitution, both hetero and homosexual, the Hungarian police and justice system similarly to police elsewhere in Europe were more tolerant with the demand side. The reasons for this will be discussed in the following chapters. While in practice the police and the courts shaped the treatment of prostitution, Tábori and Székely were important in influencing public discourse around homosexual prostitution.

services to the highest bidder.<sup>370</sup> Soldier prostitution was blooming in most big cities, and Budapest was no exception. However, rather than an innate illness or moral perversion, the authors regarded the “valiant soldiers” prostituting themselves to men as individuals performing acts of economic necessity. It was apparently understandable to Tábori and Székely that the notoriously low incomes that soldiers in the infantry received, “which was not even enough for a daily cigar,” made them turn to prostitution. Tábori and Székely decried the fact that these men’s poor pay left them ripe for becoming the “mediums of perverted gentlemen”, whose love for the uniforms was well known.<sup>371</sup> The soldier prostitute was also regarded as distinct from others because he possessed “mental toughness.” Thus, even though they made extra cash by selling their sexual services to other men, the authors assumed that soldiers were able to keep their own integrity and heterosexuality.<sup>372</sup>

In addition, the authors made a distinction between male prostitutes who provided only physical services and those whose physical acts were accompanied by blackmailing. As has been previously discussed, Tábori and Székely were sympathetic toward men who worked as prostitutes to ease economic hardship. In contrast, they saw male prostitutes that were smart enough to make a living in other “decent” ways, but instead chose to exploit those who were attracted to their own sex by “*nature’s will*”, as the real danger. The writers graphically described the so-called parasites of perverts who often worked in

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<sup>370</sup> In order to curb indecent behavior and the procurement of “night butterflies” the police granted special permits to cafés allowing prostitutes to meet with their customers in semi-private rather than public spaces. In addition, according to the logic of the police, this would also allow the police to monitor these places. *Beteg Szerelem*, 12.

<sup>371</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 12.

<sup>372</sup> Matt Houlbrook in his article “Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys: Homosex, Masculinities, and Britishness in the Brigade of Guards, circa 1900-1960,” *Journal of British Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003): 351 -388, highlights the peculiar position of British guards who could simultaneously represent the so-called “soldier hero,” thereby embodying the traditional masculinity of the nation, while at the same time they could also become “rent boys” and be object of queer desire who would engage in sex for money.

groups to set up and then blackmail men of stature and made their money by taking advantage of unfortunate homosexuals. In this case, Tábori and Székely, like the authorities in general, blamed and disdained the supply side. These “parasites” were not just symptoms of urban decay and immorality, but rather represented the epitome of *Sinful Budapest*. According to Tábori and Székely, “this is where the real danger of forbidden love lies.”<sup>373</sup>

Similar to the approach of the Metropolitan Police discussed in the previous chapter, Tábori and Székely’s understanding and representation of non-normative sexuality was highly gendered. The fact that, according to the authors, soldiers, regardless of being in a homosocial environment and even when engaging in sex with men, would keep their own masculinity and virility intact, reflected the prevailing belief in the strength of Hungarian masculinity.<sup>374</sup> In sharp contrast to women—who, like male soldiers were pushed into prostitution for economic reasons, but, once involved in it, lost both their femininity and moral purity—male soldiers in the eyes of Tábori and Székely could continue to uphold Hungarian masculine virtues. Thus, while women who decided to give in to prostitution, even if the authors pitied them, were considered the embodiments of the nation’s impurity, the soldiers were neither considered as the epitome of decline of

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<sup>373</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 16.

<sup>374</sup> There is yet to be a historical investigation of Hungarian masculinities and specifically of soldiers. The existing social histories on the Hungarian army, while mostly concerned with the officers and military schools include: *The East Central European Officer Corps 1740-1920s: Social Origins, Selection, Education, and Training*. Atlantic Studies on Society in Change ; No. 43; East European Monographs ; No. 241; War and Society in East Central Europe ; No. 24; War and Society in East Central Europe ; Vol. 24. Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs ; Highland Lakes and first and foremost, Deák, István. *Beyond Nationalism : a Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. For a theoretic overview on constructing different types of masculinities see Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man: the Creation of Modern Masculinity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, and specifically related to the army, see Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh (eds.) *Masculinities in Politics and War : Gendering Modern History*. Manchester; New York; New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2004, especially Karen Hagemann’s “German heroes: the cult of the death for the fatherland in nineteenth-century Germany.”



Hungarian virtues nor were they personally at risk of “losing” their own virility.<sup>375</sup>

Consequently, as in the case of the Metropolitan police, the sex of the prostitutes was considered more important than the sex of their customer in determining the attitude of the journalists. Being a female prostitute and keeping one’s respectability and decency became mutually exclusive and impossible, whereas male soldiers who prostituted themselves were considered to be economically poor, but also virtuous fighters, and therefore respectable members of society. The uncontested masculinity and “heterosexuality” of soldiers (and most Hungarian men) seemed to be taken for granted not only by contemporary authorities and the public, but also by historians.<sup>376</sup>

### *Female Homosexuals*

Although addressed less thoroughly, Tábori and Székely also wrote about women who “fall for Lesbos love” in their various publications.<sup>377</sup> They are presented as more private than their male counterparts. In the view of the authors unlike men, who if could not find

<sup>375</sup> Kámán Kéri “A soldier does not engage in politics; his entire conduct is determined by the rules of the service and the official obligations of his calling” “The Ludovik Military Academy, 1802 – 1920,” in *The East Central European Officer Corps 1740-1920s: Social Origins, Selection, Education, and Training*, 151

<sup>376</sup> The lack of concern about same-sex sexuality seemed to be shared by the military itself. As István Deák in his seminal study on the Habsburg officers declares, that despite that homosexuality must have been widespread in the army was “[A]ll in all, the military courts were not preoccupied with sexual crimes,” and goes on to conclude that the army prosecuted homosexuality only if it involved non-consensual sex, minors or subordinates from rank and file. *Beyond Nationalism*, 145. Deák used the court-martial proceedings of the Military War Archive in Vienna for his study. Although Deák refers to the multi-ethnic Habsburg army, his observation would have been very likely true for the Hungarian home army Honvédség. According to the 1867 Compromise, Hungary could have its own Hungarian army for homeland security purposes. The Honvédség was an exclusively Hungarian army within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition, describing Hungarian soldiers, another historian remarks “It is commonly held that Hungarians have always been a nation of proud warriors, born to ride and fight on horseback and little inclined to settle down and work hard,” Tibor Hajdu, “Social Origins, Selection, and Training of the Officer Corps in Hungary after the Ausgleich, 1867-82,” 167. Similarly, John Lukacs in *Budapest 1900: a Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture*, without any probing also underscores and takes for granted that masculinity and virility were simply unquestioned in fin-de-siècle Hungarian society, 105. In this respect authorities in Hungary seemed to be less concerned about Hungarian masculinity and strength of their men, than for instance authorities were in France. Surkis, Judith. *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006.

<sup>377</sup> *Bűnös Budapest*. 47; *Beteg Szerelem*, 9; in addition, *Bűnös Nők* (Sinful Women), 97.

a private place would fulfill their queer desire in public, women would not engage in queer sexual acts in public. Then the authors go on to state that approximately thirty percent of Budapest's prostitutes are lesbians: "And who would have thought that the most rampant female same-sex love takes place among 'love's official priestesses'?" Being sickened by too much sex with men, female prostitutes are inclined to turn to their own sex."<sup>378</sup> As in the case of their male same-sex counterparts, the authors described "Sinful Love" between women. Once again, Tábori and Székely pay particular attention to those "inauthentic" female homosexuals, who blackmailed and profited from women who were genuinely attracted to their own sex. Although their appearance was less noticeable and their activities were more private, their methods of extortion from their victims were just as "cruel and sophisticated" as their male counterparts'.<sup>379</sup> The authors claimed that one of the only ways to discover these relationships was when the relatives of respectable women filed a complaint with the police about "the overbearing and unhealthy influence of a female servant or a friend on their frail female relative."<sup>380</sup> Yet, unless the person who was being blackmailed turned to the police—a rare occurrence—these stories were forever lost. Women who were blackmailed would rather keep paying their blackmailers than have their reputation suffer. To conclude their succinct analysis of women, Tábori and Székely declared that, just as in case of their male counterparts, blackmailing is an inevitable aspect of those female homosexual relations in which one

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<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.* This view was widely shared by contemporaries. Publications on female prostitutions regularly cited that sexual relations were common between prostitutes. See for instance the publication series *Vita Sexualis*.

<sup>379</sup> *Bűnös Nők, Beteg Szerelem* This would have been certainly proven "right" by the publication of Irma Nagy's *Sötét bűnök: egy úrleány vallomásai* (Dark Sins: a lady's confessions) (Budapest: Kereskedelmi Reklámvállalat, 1908), which was published a few years prior. In this semi-pornographic book, the female protagonist after emotionally wounding his male lovers at the end of the book finds her happiness and erotic fulfillment in a relationship with a woman.

<sup>380</sup> *Beteg Szerelem*, 16.

half of the couple has no real passion. Reinforcing their views about homosexuality, they end with the sentence: “Same sex sexuality is an illness but exploiting it is a serious crime.”<sup>381</sup>

### *The Legacy of Tábori and Székely*

On the whole, Tábori and Székely’s categorization and representation of (homo)sexuality is indicative of a number of factors affecting contemporary views on same sex relationships. For one, their inconsistent, or more fluid, and contradictory representation and understanding of homosexuality reflect the array of competing contemporary Hungarian and Western European professional discourses around the topic.<sup>382</sup> Even though discussions of homosexuality in Western Europe, as well as in Austro-Hungary, were mostly relegated to the medical and legal professions prior to World War I, these debates were widely disseminated and the various strands appear in Tábori and Székely’s publications. Homosexuality as an inborn versus acquired condition, the importance and consequence of active versus passive homosexuals, the question of age difference between partners, the relationship between social position and homosexuality, and the relationship between cities and queers were all issues that occupied the minds of scholars who tried to define and understand same-sex relations both in Europe and the New World.<sup>383</sup> The motivations to do so also stemmed from multiple sources: the establishment and professionalization of medicine and particularly psychiatry; the ongoing movement for legal reform as in the case of Germany; the drive to label and categorize which

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<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> See footnotes 308 and 309.

<sup>383</sup> For a historical examination of contemporary medical debates see Rosario, Vernon. *Homosexuality and Science : a Guide to the Debates*. Santa Barbara California: ABC-CLIO, 2002.

accompanied modernization; and, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, homosexual and queer people's own desire to be "figured out."<sup>384</sup> In addition to being informed and in some cases bound by those concurrent discourses, Tábori and Székely had also gained experience with Hungarian homosexuals.<sup>385</sup> Furthermore, Tábori had encountered homosexual and queer subcultures personally outside of the Monarchy in Berlin, St. Petersburg, and other metropolises.<sup>386</sup> Consequently, the flexibility of their representation of homosexuality is the result of a combination of being exposed to different theories about homosexuality and having had diverse experience with non-normative and homosexualities.

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<sup>384</sup> Historians of sexuality following Michel Foucault highlighted the relationship between the need of legitimizing psychiatry as a medical field that should have the authority to deal with sexual "abnormals," and the "birth of sexological categories such as invert or eventually homosexual. See for instance, George Chauncey, "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and Changing Concept of Female Deviance," *Salmagundi*, no. 1982 (1983), and Lisa Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology and the Lesbian Subject in Turn of the Century America," *Signs* (1993): 791-814. In addition, Jens Rydstrom in *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950* highlights that in the case of Sweden medicalization was less of the catalyst of bringing about "homosexuals," and it was a "paradigm shift" that happened in urban areas, which differentiated bestiality and sodomy in the eyes of the law. Matt Cook in *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* emphasizes the unstable relationship between changing notions of modern metropolis and understanding of homosexuality. Robert Beachy in "The German Invention of Homosexuality." underscores the importance of legal reform movement, particularly in the German context (along with a free press) and in general the wider social, cultural and political context that facilitated that the issue of same-sex sex and desire would appear as an important issue at the time of Tábori and Székely's writings *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 801-838. On the issue of homosexuals self-reflection and how the role of the "homosexual" clientele of the psychiatrists in creating interests and new categories see Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the making of Sexual Identity*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

<sup>385</sup> In similar vein to Harry Oosterhuis's thesis in *Stepchildren of Nature*, the journalists were likely to learn from queer Hungarian men who shared with them, their conceptualization and understanding of their own sexuality.

<sup>386</sup> Tábori traveled extensively as a journalist and published a number of informative articles on homosexuals and queer subcultures in the journal of the Police (*Rendőri Lapok*.) Here he explicitly acknowledges that with the help of a friend in the German police he attended homosexual balls and event. Some of the articles include; "A kóros szerelem" (abnormal love), November 3, 1906: "A Harmadik Nem: a perverzsek társas élete." (Third Gender: The social life of perverted people) February 10, March 10, 1907. At the same time Tábori was traveling to St Petersburg and Moscow was a shift, taking place in the sexual norms. Dan Healey in *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia* (2001) documents how prior to the 1900s men could have sex with younger men and prostitutes without constraints but from that on he argues that the new same sex sexual norms was sex between two "equals."

*Sinful Budapest* and *Sinful Love* were both instant successes and remained popular books until the 1940s. Subsequently, they were abruptly forgotten and never mentioned or reprinted during the era of Hungary's post-war Communist regime. More recently, in the last fifteen years they have been "rediscovered" and both have been reprinted. *Sinful Budapest* is once again a staple item in bookstores. It is unlikely that there will ever be conclusive evidence to confirm the credibility of Tábori and Székely's observations about queers and homosexuals. The practical difficulties of validating their "facts" aside, such an endeavor would perhaps not even be a rewarding or useful exercise. Considering that Tábori and Székely wrote the only widely read source on Hungarian homosexuals and their culture, their observations, characterization, and ideas about the "Knights of Sick Love" became the reference and, in a sense, the "truth" to contemporaries about homosexuals. It is also likely that their writings provided valuable information to people who wanted to seek and connect with queer and homosexual communities. Publishing the names of places and descriptions of locales where homosexual and queer activities took place would have been valuable to readers with an interest in such things. Thus, Tábori and Székely actually may have played an important role in the dissemination of knowledge about non-normative sexuality.

In light of Tábori and Székely's extensive readership their descriptions of respectable homosexuals and dangerous queers could have contributed significantly to circulating and popularizing such views to a much greater public. Again, the fragmentary and scattered evidence makes it difficult to determine the specific effects of their writings on future understanding and representation of homosexuality. Nevertheless, the subsequent novels and short stories that talk or address homosexuality prior to World War

II undeniably resonate with Tábori and Székely's descriptions. Whether they are novelists like Gyula Krúdy and Ernő Szép, or public intellectuals and doctors who published for lay audience, the depiction of same-sex desire and homosexuals resonate with and recreate the Tábori and Székely's portrayal.<sup>387</sup>

*The Legal Profession Responds to the "Knights of Sick Love": Two lectures at the Hungarian Association of Legal Scholars, 1909*

Two important lectures on homosexuality were delivered at sessions of the Hungarian Association of Legal Scholars in March 1909. The intellectual roots or sources for these lectures are likely lay within the concurrent legal debates around the reforming of penal codes in Austria and especially in Germany. Austria, where both female and male homosexuality had been criminalized, published a new penal code in 1909, with simply re-codifying the ongoing legal practice.<sup>388</sup> In Germany however, the government commissioned proposal to extend paragraph 175 to include the criminalization of female homosexuality elicited not just a legal but also a broad public debate.<sup>389</sup> Thus, the following legal debate that took place in Budapest among Hungarian lawyers was undoubtedly inspired and informed by both the Austrian and German events. At the same

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<sup>387</sup> Some examples from the literary representation of homosexuals include Gyula Krúdy, *A Szobrok megmozdulnak : írások az irodalomról*, Budapest: Gondolat, 1974, Gyula Krúdy, *Hét bagoly : Regény*. (Seven Owls). Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1974, Ernő Szép, *Natália*, 1st ed. Budapest: Noran, 2008, Kramolin Gyula, "A homoszexualitás kérdéséhez," *Husadik Század*, no. 1 (1910): 157-160. György Pál, *A homoszexuális probléma modern megvilágításban*, Budapest: Mai Henrik Kiadó, 1927, Zoltán Nemes Nagy, *Tragédiák a Szerelemi Életben* Budapest: Aesculap, 1933.

<sup>388</sup> Female homosexuality had been criminalized in Austria since 1532 and the new penal code in 1909 simply continued an existing practice, it did not generate a legal or public debate. Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject : Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008, 153.

<sup>389</sup> In Germany, paragraph 175 of the Criminal Code criminalized only male homosexuality. The revised government proposal under paragraph 250 would have criminalized female homosexuality and also made the punishment for homosexuality more severe. There was an ongoing debate around the proposal, which was only brought to an unexpected end by the outbreak of World War I in 1914. For the nature of the debate see Tracie Matysik's *Reforming the Moral Subject*, chapter 5, 153-172.

time, a close reading of the content of the lectures also point to the influence of the publications of Tábori and Székely. Without assigning a direct influence to Tábori and Székely's *Sinful Budapest*, the content of the lectures and the resulting legal publications bear interesting similarities to Tábori and Székely's books. The exact texts of the lectures did not survive. Yet, if one looks at the published version of the lectures in the Association's journal, *Magyar jogászegyleti értekezések* (Journal of Hungarian Legal Association), it is possible to gain important insights about the impact that Tábori and Székely's publications could have had on ongoing debates about (homo)sexuality and its regulation in Hungary. Without necessarily attempting to provide a comprehensive analysis of the two lectures, it is clear that the lectures echo Tábori and Székely's distinction between respectable and disreputable homosexuals. Furthermore, they advocate protecting respectable homosexuals even more forcefully than do the two journalists.<sup>390</sup>

The first of these lectures occurred on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1909 and was given by a physician, Ignác Fischer. A neurologist and expert in forensic medicine, Fischer delivered a passionate paper entitled "Homosexuality and its Forensic Contemplation" about why homosexuality should not be punishable by law.<sup>391</sup> The following excerpt is from Fischer's published lecture:

I share the perspectives of Hirschfield, Merzbach, Näcke and Löwenfeld, and declare that homosexuality is not a psychical disorder, only an anomaly, where the sexual feeling desires an unnatural same-sexual fulfillment. But such desires do not make a person inferior in anything compared to those who exhibit and express

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<sup>390</sup> While a comprehensive *legal* history of same-sex sexuality in Hungary is beyond the scope of this dissertation, placing these legal debates within a wider European framework underscore how deeply and widely knowledge circulated about homosexuality in a Pan-European context by the first decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>391</sup> Fischer Ignác, "A homosexualitás és annak forensikus méltatása," *Magyar jogászegyleti értekezések* no. 295. (1909). Italics are mine.

heterosexual desires... Just as we do not hold people with crooked noses or crooked legs inferior, we should not, and in fact it is not allowed to devalue those physically, whose sexual desires differ from the norm. Since we cannot change the law, or abolish it, we who are touched by the feeling that public sentiment is detrimental to these unfortunate, sexually different individuals, *it is our duty to inform the public, that in terms of intellect and ethical values, these people are fully on par with people of normal sexual orientation, and they provide no reason for contempt, let alone any punishment.*<sup>392</sup>

It is significant that Fischer's words, citing influential German medical and legal professionals, repeat the message and representation of respectable homosexuals expressed in *Sinful Budapest* and *Sinful Love*. Each of these commentators believed that "real" homosexuals, who differ from "normal" people only in their same-sex sexual desire, should be considered full members of society. Fisher's assertion that in terms of their intellect and especially their ethics, homosexuals are on par with any respectable citizen echoes the views of Tábori and Székely. They also spoke highly of respectable homosexuals in their work. As if responding to Tábori and Székely's attempt to enlighten people about the "real" Budapest and reinforcing their views about whom city authorities and citizens should really be concerned, Fischer makes a strong argument that it was most certainly not respectable homosexuals. In fact, Fischer's defense of respectable homosexuals was even more explicit and his call for the education of the public about how homosexuals should be full members of Hungarian society went even further than Tábori and Székely's evocation. Fischer's words demonstrate how a strand of Hungarian authorities believed that granting respectable homosexuals equal legal rights was the "modern" way forward. Furthermore, the differentiation between those "sexual abnormals" who were worthy of protection and those who were not, foreshadow what came to take place in Weimar Germany over a decade later, where one set of homosexuals

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<sup>392</sup> Fischer, 34.



was recommended to be given new legal status, while another was to lose rights correspondingly.<sup>393</sup>

The second lecture took place at the next meeting of the Hungarian Association of Legal Scholars and provides further insights about the impact of Tábori and Székely's ideas about homosexuality. Zoltán Halász, a lawyer and legal scholar, delivered a lecture where, like Fischer, he made an earnest plea on behalf of decriminalization of homosexuality.<sup>394</sup> He categorically declared that:

A homosexual person is born as a homosexual, and who was not born as such, under no circumstances would he become a homosexual. I deem it necessary to highlight in opposition to those who want *pedarasztiá* [in this context homosexuality] to be punishable on the basis of its physical contagiousness, the idea that without prohibiting and punishing homosexuality it will spread and gain followers. In contrast to this idea, I would like to remind people about the typical assertion by heterosexual supporters of the abolitionist camp [of the decriminalization of homosexuality] who argue that although they could imagine that under certain circumstances they would break every single paragraph of the Criminal Code, they could never imagine breaking paragraph §241, that is the crime of male homosexuality.<sup>395</sup>

By declaring that homosexuality is not “spreadable,” Halász actually challenged Tábori and Székely's view that being exposed to same-sex sexuality could induce same-sexual desires in some people. Given his more favorable view of homosexuality, it isn't surprising that the legal scholar also believed that there was a category of homosexuals who were worthy of protection. What is more noteworthy is that Halász illustrates his point of view in ways that are remarkably similar to those of Tábori and Székely. Thus, he also finds it vital to declare that “normal” or “authentic” homosexuals under no

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<sup>393</sup> For a concise summary of the politics of homosexuality in the Weimar Republic, see the introduction of Laurie Marhoefer's *Among Abnormals*.

<sup>394</sup> Halász Zoltán, “A szemérem elleni bűncselekményekről, különös tekintettel az erőszakos nemi közösülésre és a természet elleni fajtalanságra,” (Crimes against decency with a specific attention to forced sexual intercourse and unnatural fornication), *Magyar jogászegyleti értekezések* no. 296 (1909).

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

circumstances have sexual relations with young boys. This is a deliberate attempt to make a point that homosexuality and homosexual relationships can be among “equals.” Halász argues:

An otherwise healthy adult person—fat or skinny—will never make a young child his sexually desired object. The matter is rather that just as a neurotically weak old heterosexual man could desire young girls, a *quad erectionem impotens* [in Latin: an impotent male homosexual] could similarly desire young boys. *But* a non-pervert homosexual adult would never desire a child; the mechanics of his own sexual desires will only work with physically matured men over, who were over a certain age and showed signs of physical adulthood.<sup>396</sup>

The message here is clear: otherwise “normal” individuals who happen to desire their own sex are neither a threat nor any different from their normal, heterosexual counterparts.<sup>397</sup> By making same-sex relations between “equals,” i.e. two adult men, Halász’s argument is representative of a “paradigm shift,” that Gert Hekma argues were taking place within the sexual relationship between men.<sup>398</sup> In addition, like Tábori and Székely, Halász also makes the distinction between “good” and “bad” queers. He does so by declaring that while same-sexual acts and homosexuality should not be criminalized, it would be essential to criminalize (sexual) violence in order to protect both heterosexual and homosexual men.<sup>399</sup> Halász believed that consensual male homosexuality should be legal and even protected, but sexual violence, exploitation, and underage sex should be punished. Implicit in his argument is the category of “good” homosexuals, who apart

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<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.* 20. *Italics are mine.* In accordance with contemporary European practice of sexologists, medical and forensic doctors, and lawyers, Halász used Latin to describe “offensive” and “compromising” terms such erection or sexual impotence.

<sup>397</sup> This view is also echoed by Gyula Kramolin’s article, “To the Question of Homosexuality” in *Huszadik Század* Gyula Kramolin, “A homoszexualitás kérdéséhez,” *Huszadik Század*, no. 1 (1910): 157-160.

<sup>398</sup> According to Hekma, sexual relationships between men well into the twentieth century tended to be “unequal,” in terms of age, social, and economic position. Same-sex relationships were also gendered; masculine, rough men paired with soft and feminine men. In “The Drive for Sexual Equality,” *Sexualities* 11, no. 1–2 (February 1, 2008): 46–50.

<sup>399</sup> As I will discuss in chapter five, apart from underage males, according to the Hungarian Criminal Code, it was only women who could be victims of sexual and domestic violence.

from their sexual orientation, are respectable members of society and should be recognized as such.

Overall, Fischer and Halász wished to protect a specific category of homosexuals. They both had a clear, positive, and less sensationalist view of homosexuals than Tábori and Székely had. At the same time, all four men upheld the notion of respectable homosexuality. Fischer and Halász, as a medical doctor and a lawyer respectively, represented different categories of authorities than Székely and Tábori, their police and investigating journalist counterparts. Yet, in some important ways they each reflected the ways in which authorities and residents of Budapest were dealing with the city's rapid modernization and its complex consequences. Without denying their personal interests—in the case of Székely and Tábori monetary gain from the publication and sale of stories about the “Knights of Sick Love”—these four men, by taking issue with non-normative sexuality, were all genuinely invested in the betterment of the Hungarian capital. Consequently, the ideas of Tábori and Székely, as well as Fischer and Halász, and their mutual and growing concern about the spread of ‘sick love’ were part of a much wider concern about the future of Budapest and the Hungarian race and must be seen side by side with the “heterosexual” discourses of Budapest during this era. Their interest in homosexuality took place within and alongside contemporary debates about current social questions, such as poverty, social hygiene, and women's work more generally. Furthermore, their representation of the same-sex world is consistent with contemporary accounts and historical works that portray a society filled with fears about the decline and composition of modern Hungarians. It also highlights the rapid growth of the city and sex trade as bodies circulated more rapidly (geographically and intimately), and the inability

of government authorities to regulate these developments.<sup>400</sup> To all four commentators, and likely for many others in Budapest, queers seen as “inauthentic” (i.e. not biologically queer), or “immoral” (i.e. because they exploited others) were similar to the urban poor and prostitutes, thought to be manifestations of Budapest’s urban decline. Of course, viewing queers as visible products of the emerging modern metropolis was certainly not unique to the Hungarian capital.<sup>401</sup> On the contrary, Hungarian discourses of non-normative sexuality merely imitated those circulating about Western European capitals and confirm existing accounts about the representation of homosexuals as one of the many harmful byproducts of urbanization.<sup>402</sup> At the same time, the ideas of Tábori and Székely, and especially Fischer and Halász, not just mirrored but in some ways were ahead of European discourses on sexuality.

The Pan-European discourse on homosexuality prior to World War I generally saw homosexuality as a disease and a purely negative consequence of urban modernity. However, certain Hungarian authorities in Budapest, such as those discussed in this chapter, were willing both to create and embrace a category of homosexuals.<sup>403</sup> The reason why the publications of Tábori and Székely, Fischer, and Halász mattered was because they endorsed and disseminated the idea of a category of “respectable

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<sup>400</sup>Marius Turda, “‘The Magyars: A Ruling Race’: The Idea of National Superiority in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary,” *European Review of History* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 5-33. See also *The idea of national superiority in Central Europe, 1880-1918*, Lewiston N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004.

<sup>401</sup> There is already a substantial scholarship around the nexus between urbanization, modernity, and the appearance of various discourses (popular as well as medical and legal) around queer sexuality. Foucault, Chauncey, Hollbrouk, Aldrich. In Eastern Europe, see Dan Healey’s *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

<sup>402</sup> For England see Seth Koven, *Slumming*. Chapter 1. 25-88; for France, Peniston, William A. *Pederasts and others : urban culture and sexual identity in nineteenth century Paris*. New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004, 149-177.

<sup>403</sup> This cut across the different legal and political constellations around homosexuality and was characteristic of both places where homosexuality was criminalized as well as places that it was not. Tamagne, *The History of Homosexuality*, 11-13.

homosexuals.” Such distinction was predicated on the scientization of sexuality, a move away from religious morality, and on an assumed proliferation of urban heterogeneity, which all of these men shared.<sup>404</sup> At the same time that they helped to create and draw on anxieties and fantasies about same-sex sexuality during the first decades of the twentieth century, *Sinful Budapest* and *Sinful Love* were important precisely because they represented respectable homosexuals as living proof of Hungary’s place in the modern Western world. Thus, speaking out on behalf of and advocating for the protection of “good” queers—who, apart from their non-normative sexual orientation, were respectable and productive members of society—was a way that Budapest could demonstrate its Western modernity and thus its place in the West. Creating an image of respectable homosexuals as full citizens of Hungary was an unprecedented contribution of Tábori and Székely. Their publications helped to promote and disseminate the idea not only to a greater readership in Budapest but also, through the national distribution of the books and their reviews, throughout Hungary. While subsequently written out of Hungarian history, their works were the first widely read reports on non-normative sexuality. They offered to their contemporaries an alternative conceptualization to the dominant view that homosexuality was simply a filthy and sick consequence of urban modernity. By creating a category of “respectable homosexuals” alongside their portrayal of “bad” queers, Tábori and Székely had an enduring impact on how their contemporaries and future Hungarians throughout the interwar years perceived and represented male homosexuals.

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<sup>404</sup> The seminal work on the relationship between the scientization of sexuality and emergence of homosexuality is Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

### *Conclusion*

Tábori and Székely's writings demonstrate the historical existence of an extensive and vibrant homosexual culture in Budapest that pre-dated the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Budapest was claiming its place within the European metropolitan network of sex, both homo and hetero. I argued that specific circumstances in the early 1900s facilitated the arrival of the "Hungarian homosexual" in the popular discourse, namely liberal politics with an active socially progressive intellectual segment, who believed in making Budapest into a modern (Western) metropolis; the rise of mass media and lax regulations; the presence of German discourses (medical and legal) of non-normative sexuality; and a growing Hungarian sexual subculture of queer men.

Tábori and Székely's representation of same-sex relationship and desire reflected elements of the various understandings of non-normative sexuality that co-existed in European capitals at the dawn of the twentieth century. Their terminology and contradictory accounts of homosexuality were indicative of the confusion of how to think and deal with people genuinely desiring their own sex. Ambiguity aside, Tábori and Székely, just like the authorities discussed in chapter one, distinguished between "respectable," authentic homosexuals and those seen as immoral or inauthentic homosexuals. Moreover, in their publications, the journalists exhibited an openly tolerant attitude toward "respectable" homosexuals. Considering the effect of their publications, I argued that as well as portraying a "model" of how men could become "respectable homosexuals," Tábori and Székely's depiction of queers influenced both contemporary

public perception of homosexuality, and the ways in which authorities (legal, police, and to some extent, medical) interacted with, and treated same-sex sexuality.

The outbreak of what came to be known as the Great War (World War I)—with its mass mobilization of men in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and subsequent unprecedented deaths and prisoner of war camps—marked a transition in the experience of men who had sex with men. Consequently, the effects of the first “total war” on the understanding and treatment of non-normative sexualities are the subjects of the subsequent three chapters. In the next chapter, I turn to the Soviet Republic of Hungary that came into existence following the dismantling of Austro-Hungary after the war. Tracing how the Experimental Criminology Department of the Communist Revolutionary Tribunal understood and treated queer sexualities, I delineate how communist ideology fashioned a rehabilitative approach towards non-normative sex.

### Chapter Three

#### Rehabilitating “Sexual Abnormals”: Queers and Hungary’s 1919 Soviet Criminology Tribunal

As the previous chapters discussed, until the end of World War I in 1918, Hungary was part of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy of Austro-Hungary. During this time, Hungary’s wealthiest aristocratic families continued to run the country, with an electorate system that essentially excluded a great majority of the population.<sup>405</sup> And since with the exception of Budapest and a few other towns, the country was dominated by agriculture, ideas of change in the form of liberalism, social democracy, and communism, were largely relegated to the few urban centers and had not caused major distractions until WWI.<sup>406</sup> As the war went on however, and especially by its last year in 1918, there was a growing demand for change, and protests became commonplace in Budapest. The news of the fall of the Central Powers in the autumn of 1918 was a catalyst for change. Like in Vienna, liberal and social democratic oppositions in addition to ending the war, wanted comprehensive political reforms.<sup>407</sup> Their efforts, accompanied by a hungry populous and returning soldiers culminated in the so-called Aster Revolution in October 1918. The principle impetus for the revolution was the lost war. Some of the other major contributing factors included the fact that governments prior to and during the war could

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<sup>405</sup> Prior to 1914, women were excluded completely from voting and, it was less than 6 percent of the male population, who thanks to the exclusive language and franchise requirements, were eligible to vote. Pető Andrea, and Szapor Judit. “A Női Esélyegyenlőségre Vonatkozó Női Felfogás Hatása a Magyar Választójogi Gondolkodásra 1848–1990” (The Effects of Women’s Perspective on Women’s Equal Opportunity on Hungarian Legal Thought 1848-1990.) *Recepció És Kreativitás*, n.d. [http://www.phil-inst.hu/recepcio/htm/7/705\\_belso.htm](http://www.phil-inst.hu/recepcio/htm/7/705_belso.htm). Last accessed July 3, 2012.

<sup>406</sup> This was not the case in Budapest. As the previous chapter discussed, there had been organizing and social unrest among urban workers, whose number was rapidly rising.

<sup>407</sup> For the different political and social programs of the social democratic, liberal, and communist opposition parties, see Siklós András. *A Habsburg-birodalom Felbomlása, 1918: A Magyarországi Forradalom* (The disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, 1918: The Hungarian Revolution). Budapest: Kossuth, 1987, 145-272.



not satisfy the growing demand for national independence, expansion of voting rights, and land reform. In addition, similarly to many other capital cities, by the last two years of the war, the political leadership in Budapest could not diffuse social tensions stemming from lack of food and basic supplies.<sup>408</sup>

Named after the supporters wearing an Aster leaf, the leader of the revolution Mihály Károlyi, a progressive left-leaning aristocrat, supported comprehensive reforms to make Hungary a democratic nation; starting with giving women the vote and carrying out a large-scale land reform.<sup>409</sup> Following the declaration of the Hungarian Democratic Republic on November 16, 1918, Károlyi became president and the country's new government embarked on democratic changes. All of this was occurring while victorious powers were deciding the fate of former empire(s) and foreign armies were still occupying Hungarian territory or fighting with the Hungarian Army.<sup>410</sup> The broad social support that initially surrounded the establishment of democratic republic did not last long. The social democratic leadership was rapidly lost control over the ever-growing problems of the country. Amidst the increasing difficulties faced by the Károlyi led

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<sup>408</sup> Kornfeld Móric, *Reflections on twentieth century Hungary : a Hungarian magnate's view*, Boulder Colo.; Chichester: Social Science Monographs ;John Wiley distributor, 2007, 219. For the different social, political, and economic issues that European capitals faced during WWI see J.M Winter and J-L. Robert. *Capital Cities at War : Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. For how food shortage became politicized in Berlin Belinda Davis' study *Home Fires Burning : Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000 is most instructive. For the situation of Vienna during the war see Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire : Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>409</sup> The land reform consisted of the redistribution of land formerly owned by elites to peasants. Tibor Hetés, *A Magyarországi forradalmak krónikája 1918-1919: közreadja Hetés Tibor*. Budapest: Kossuth könyvkiadó, 1969. 61 – 101. In addition, for the comprehensive program of Károlyi and the Hungarian Democratic Republic see Schönwald, Pál. *A Magyarországi 1918-1919-es Polgári Demokratikus Forradalom Állam- És Jogtörténeti Kérdései* (The Civil State and legal history questions of the 1918-1919 Hungarian Democratic Revolution and). Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1969.

<sup>410</sup> World War I saw the fall of four Empires; German, Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian and consequently the formation of new nation-states. Following the end of the war, Romanian, Czechoslovakian and Serbian armies took control and were occupying formerly Hungarian territories. The post-war Entente supported these occupations and the eventual annexation of former Hungarian territories, despite of the fact that they included significant Hungarian population.

government, the communists under the leadership of Béla Kun rapidly mobilized and through a “second revolution” in March, 1919 established the Socialist Governing Council that proclaimed Hungary a soviet republic.<sup>411</sup>

In this chapter, I analyze the recently recovered files of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the court system of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the unique approaches it took towards non-normative (queer) sexuality. On March 21, 1919, Hungary became the second country after Russia to declare a Communist-run Soviet (Council) Republic or *Tanácsköztársaság*.<sup>412</sup> During the brief five months of Communist rule, authorities, applying their revolutionary ideas to the justice system, established the Experimental Criminology Department of the Revolutionary Tribunal. The horrors of the Revolutionary Tribunal and politically motivated executions and sentencing are well known. Most historians stress the mass terror, ad hoc actions, and overall negative consequences of the Hungarian Communist Revolutionary regime.<sup>413</sup> Without denying

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<sup>411</sup> The nature of take over Communist takeover has been debated. Historians debate whether it was a revolution or coup de tat. During Communism historians stressed the extent of popular support (see for instance Siklós András. *A Habsburg-birodalom Felbomlása, 1918: A Magyarországi Forradalom*. 190-191), since 1989 there have been historians who argue that the actual communist takeover happened without most people being aware of it, and lacked any significant popular support. See Ignác Romsics’ *Hungary in the twentieth century*. Budapest: Corvina ; Osiris, 1999. Nevertheless, what can be, without a doubt stated, that the workers in Budapest looked to and supported the Communists as the only viable alternative.

<sup>412</sup> In Russia following the February Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power from the provisional government during the October Revolution and set up what eventually became the Soviet Union in 1921. The Republic, which lasted for 133 days, has had a fought history even before it fell. While already during its days it was despised and blamed by many for its brutality and for Hungary’s “mutilation,” and the Treaty of Trianon that led to the loss of two-third of the country’s former territory, such accusations became extreme immediately following the fall of the Soviet Republic and remained so throughout the interwar period. After World War II, with the onset of the Cold War and the establishment of Hungarian Communist one party system, the revolutionaries of 1919 were rehabilitated and became national heroes. Since the fall of Communism in 1989, in yet another turnaround, the days of *Tanácsköztársaság* (Council Republic or Soviet Republic of Hungary) are considered as a dark and increasingly as a shameful spot in Hungary’s history. Historians outside of Hungary to a great extent also share this view.

<sup>413</sup> This is despite of the fact that the actual number and extent of “Red Terror” along with the numbers of the subsequent “White Terror” following of the return of Conservatives remain one of the most contested issues among Hungarian historians. Sándor Szilassy, *Revolutionary Hungary, 1918-1921*. Astor Park Fla.:

any of those claims, in light of recently emerged evidence, the meaning of the brief existence of the revolutionary regime needs to be rethought, in one broadly significant area at least. More specifically, the surviving documents of the Experimental Criminology Department of the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal speak not of the terror and political motivation, but rather a serious effort to judge crime through the eyes of a comprehensive socio-medical approach, an approach that also incorporated psychoanalytical theories. In the name of Communist revolutionary ideology, the courts adopted a methodology in which the personal case/life histories of individuals became the centre of understanding sexual crimes, as well as the basis of their rehabilitative (rather than disciplinary) treatment. And despite the fact that this new revolutionary era of conceptualization and treatment of crime proved to be as ephemeral as the existence of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, by institutionalizing sociology and psychology and psychoanalysis, and incorporating them into the justice system, the Experimental Criminology Department represented a radical break in the history of the understanding and treatment of criminal behavior.<sup>414</sup>

This chapter focuses on the Department and its methods in dealing with non-normative sexuality. I draw on the archival collections of the Experimental Criminology Department of the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal, and of the National Criminology

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Danubian Press, 1971. János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok : a magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története*.

<sup>414</sup> In less than three months, on August 8, 1919, after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, all of the power granted to the Experimental Criminology Department was revoked and the vanguard discipline of especially psychoanalysis, along with its extended influence, was pushed back to the margins, where it would remain for the next seven decades. For the history of Budapest Psychoanalytical School see Harmat, Pál. *Freud, Ferenczi És a Magyarországi Pszichoanalízis a Budapesti Mélylélektani Iskola Története, 1908-1983* (Freud, Ferenczi And the History of the Hungarian Psychoanalysis, Budapest Analytical School). Bern: EPMSZ, 1986. At the same time it is worthwhile to mention that comparatively speaking, psychoanalysis in Hungary (along with Czechoslovakia) in contrast to other countries in the Eastern Block enjoyed limited freedom from the 1960s.

Institute, both housed in the Budapest City Archives. In addition, I rely on issues of *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség hivatalos lapja* (Proletarian Law: The Official Journal of the Association of Socialist Lawyers), published during the existence of the Soviet Republic, that addressed and provided detailed accounts of the ideas, legality, and operation of the Experimental Criminology Department.<sup>415</sup> Using the surviving primary documents and available secondary sources of the Experimental Criminology Department, I argue that the department embodied a novel approach in the understanding of treatment of non-normative sexuality, not only within the Hungarian context, but also in the larger international scene. By turning scholarly attention towards the treatment of sexual (rather than political) crimes, highlights how during the Hungarian Soviet Republic the courts were willing to consider sexuality as malleable and unfixed, and sexual history as an important determinant of people's action. Intimately tied to, and at the same time attesting to the Hungarian Communist leadership's aim to radically reform society, the Experimental Criminology Department's treatment of non-normative sexuality highlights the genuine belief of the leadership that most people were malleable and, further, the interest of the leadership to transform them. Whereas during the days of Austro-Hungary prior to 1918 the treatment of male homosexuality was a means to assess Budapest's place in the modern Western world, during Communism non-normative sexuality was considered as the "ill-fated byproduct" of the bourgeois ruled modern West.

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<sup>415</sup> The Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Kísérleti Kriminológiai Osztály és az Országos Kriminológiai Intézet iratainak gyűjteménye, housed in Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár, from now on BFL. The journal *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség hivatalos lapja* is located at the Hungarian National Library. An important secondary source is a full issue of *Levéltári közlemények* (Archival Releases), that provides a comprehensive analysis of the surviving historical documents as well as, the legality, and not last, of the actual functioning of the Department. Issue XXIX, 1959.

In contrast to the prevailing contemporary conceptualizations of homosexuality and non-normative sexuality more generally as a medical condition and/or deviant behavior, during the Communist dictatorship, “abnormal” sexuality was considered as a “condition” that resulted from socio-economic circumstance and personal psychological history. Reflecting the newfound influence of psychoanalysis, psychology, and sociology, for the first time, the justice system placed psychoanalytical and psycho-social frameworks at the center of understanding sexual criminal behavior.<sup>416</sup> Unlike authorities discussed in chapter one and the investigating journalists in chapter two, the experts of the Experimental Criminology Department considered sexual crimes and non-normative sexualities more generally, as symptoms of unresolved traumas. They believed that aside from a small number of authentic innate homosexuals, sexual “abnormalities” were neither innate, nor necessarily immoral or criminal acts. Rather sexuality was thought of as “situational” and “personal” acquired through developmental and environmental factors. Such conceptualization also meant that those who were deemed curable were to be reintegrated into the future Communist society. Treating most queer sexualities as curable defects of personal and societal psychological health, set the Experimental Criminology Department apart from contemporary European criminal justice. This distinctly psycho-social approach was a break from the common practice of law enforcement in capitals prior to World War I. On the international scene, the Department represented a vanguard approach to sexuality and its methods foreshadowed similar

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<sup>416</sup> Psychoanalysis was not the only discipline that benefitted from revolutionary politics. Other previously marginalized disciplines such as psychology and sociology were also granted unprecedented institutional recognition.

approaches of the interwar period in Germany and Russia.<sup>417</sup> Finally, inserting the history of the Experimental Criminology Department into the history of Hungarian sexualities provides insights to the subsequent treatment of homosexuality under the authoritarian conservative interwar government. As ephemeral as the existence of the Department was, its novel approach and its personnel (who continued to work long after the Communist days were gone) proved to have long-lasting effects on the treatment of non-normative sexuality.

*Unlikely Entanglements: The politics of science and medicine in the Soviet Hungarian Republic and the case of Sándor Ferenczi*

During the brief time (133 days) of the Communist revolutionary government – the new political elite instituted fundamental changes within Hungarian society. Aside from the separation of state and church and the achievement of universal suffrage, the Communists also instituted radical changes within the structure of arts and sciences and higher education.<sup>418</sup> On a purely ideological level, the Communists supported psychology, sociology and psychoanalysis as revolutionarily virtuous in part because of their status as previously marginalized fields. As Sándor Ferenczi, the famous Hungarian psychoanalyst in his article “Psychoanalysis and Social Policy” in 1922 expressed, revolutionaries supported and gave institutional power to the previously marginalized (sciences) by principle; “....revolutions are accompanied by a phenomenon, which is to say that revolutionaries out of principle tend to support new and radical –

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<sup>417</sup> This approach preceded similar approaches in 1920s Soviet-Russia, as well as the establishment of Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin in February 1920.

<sup>418</sup> Universal suffrage meant voting rights were extended to all Hungarians over 18 years old with the exception of political enemies and members of the clergy.

previously officially ignored – ideas and trends.”<sup>419</sup> In contrast to the customary depiction of psychoanalysis as a “bourgeois” science, by both contemporaries and also historians of the period, the new evidence about the Experimental Criminology Department along with Ferenczi’s appointment and institutionalization of psychoanalysis presents a more complex picture.<sup>420</sup> For both the social democratic and especially for communist leadership in 1918-1919, the incorporation of psychoanalysis signified going against the old system, while at the same time their conscious attempt to institutionalize it, was part of their attempt to change traditional hierarchies not only within medicine but also within society at large.<sup>421</sup> Under Károlyi’s Social Democratic government and particularly Kun’s Communists rule, psychoanalysis along with psychology and sociology all received institutional support. As part of creating a socialist society, the Communists set out to radically transform social, and public health care systems.<sup>422</sup> As the rest of the chapter will demonstrate, in this process, the Communist leadership granted a central role to the ideologies and approaches of these “new” disciplines. The

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<sup>419</sup> Sándor Ferenczi, “Pszichoanalízis és társadalompolitika,” *Nyugat*, no. 8 (1922).

<sup>420</sup> The associating of psychoanalysis as a bourgeois science is longstanding. Stalinism and orthodox Marxism believed that psychoanalysis was not a “science” but rather an ideology, which served to mold the individual to fit in a bourgeois worked. Accordingly, psychoanalytic practice would be incapable to truly transform individuals. In addition, (In addition, they also considered psychoanalysis a pseudo-science based on its “unscientific” methodologies.) Aronowitz, Stanley. *Science as Power : Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 111, Two of the most influential historical works that highlight the bourgeois (and Jewish) connection are Carl Schorske’s *Fin-de-siècle Vienna : Politics and Culture*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf distributed by Random House, 1979, and Peter Gay’s *The Bourgeois Experience : Victoria to Freud*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

<sup>421</sup> The Faculty of Hungarian Medicine was notoriously hierarchical and, after the Theology Department, was considered the most conservative university department. Despite growing pressure for integrating some of the novel approaches within medicine the established disciplines of psychiatry and neurology made sure that at the end of Dual Monarchy, psychoanalysis and psychology were still on the periphery of the Hungarian faculty of sciences. On the anti-psychoanalysis see Harmat, Pál. *Freud, Ferenczi És a Magyarországi Pszichoanalízis: a Budapesti Művelődéskutató Iskola Története, 1908-1993*. Budapest: Bethlen, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1994.

<sup>422</sup> For instance, all medical establishments were nationalized; hospital care became free for every worker on salary. For a comprehensive lists of policies see, Dósa, Rudolfné, Ervinné Liptai, and Mihály Ruff. *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság egészségügyi politikája* (The Public Health Policy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic). Budapest: Medicina, 1959.

influence of psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology reached not only the medical field but also the justice system.<sup>423</sup>

Aside from an ideological basis, the newfound importance attached to previously marginalized disciplines to great extent was a reflection of the genuine interest of the Hungarian Communist regime in facilitating cutting edge scientific work.<sup>424</sup> The radical reforms, which brought fierce revulsion within existing and highly hierarchical establishments of universities – aimed to modernize and elevate Hungary’s science and university education to be the best of the international elite.<sup>425</sup> Part of this aspiration included the process of integration of new “modern” areas of science that had been previously met with institutional and personal resistance. At the same time, some recently surfaced documents make it apparent that many of the reforms within higher education and to some extent even in medicine that the Communist instituted had actually been initiated during the preceding democratic Károlyi regime. This is significant as it explains why some of Hungary’s intellectual and professional elites, many of whom did not sympathize with or were openly anti-Communist, were willing to cooperate with the Communists.<sup>426</sup> As the case of Experimental Criminology Department will demonstrate

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<sup>423</sup> The study of psychology was similarly to psychoanalysis a relatively new science, which had been professionalizing – but had only achieved partial success, due to the stern resistance of established medical professions and hierarchical institutional structures of organized sciences. Sociology was associated with *Huszdik Század* (Twentieth Century) and the *Társadalomtudományi Társaság* (Sociological Society) and under the Károlyi government there initiatives to strengthen sociology but it was only with the Communist coming to power that the Faculty of Social Sciences was established in 1919. However, before the first semester would begin the Soviet Republic of Hungary failed and sociology would be pushed to the margins until post World War II.

<sup>424</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919 Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Kísérleti Kriminológiai Osztály és az Országos Kriminológiai Intézet iratainak gyűjteménye 1919, 684 -85.

<sup>425</sup> Ferenc Erős, “Ferenczi Sándor professzori kinevezése : háttér és kronológia,” *Thalassa* 20, no. 4 (2009): 3-28. Even before the fall of Austro-Hungarian Monarch there had been voices calling for structural reforms and more specifically the integration of psychology and sociology into the University.

<sup>426</sup> This is significant and goes against even the older historiography that was favorable towards both the Aster as well as Communist Revolution. Nevertheless, historians writing prior to 1989 argued that “the Aster Revolution and the overall, the Károlyi government was much less about radical reforms and



by focusing on and investing purely in “scientific endeavors” reform minded experts could minimize “politization” of their work and maneuver between different governments.<sup>427</sup>

Overall, the pioneering approach of the Communist justice system to criminal behavior, including homo- and non-normative sexual acts, was the result of the complex interplay between the events of Hungarian politics following World War I, and preexisting social and intellectual movements. More specifically, the new political situation facilitated the rise of people who not only had been active in leftist political movements, but who were also either practitioners of sociology, psychology, or psychoanalysis, or the very least were influenced by their ideas. It was the particular combination of three factors that facilitated the institutionalization of a psycho-social understanding of crime and consequently a novel approach to non-normative sexuality. For one, there was a genuine ideological belief in the power of a scientific approach, which was shared by the new political elite.<sup>428</sup> Intrinsically connected to this, was the fact that many social democrat and communist individuals had their own experiences and

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restructuring of the old power structure than a mere shift within among the already powerful groups. See Tibor Hajdú's *A Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság*, Budapest: Kossuth, 1969. Published in English under the title *The Hungarian Soviet Republic*, Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1979. Historiography since the late 1990s has tended to focus on the shortcomings of both Károlyi and Kun regimes and particularly on the role they played in Hungary's disastrous peace treaty at Trianon. For the most recent work see János Gyurgyák's *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok : a magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története*, Budapest: Osiris, 2007. In addition, literature on the history of psychoanalysis until very recently had either not considered the era of Soviet Republic in any detail such as the seminal work of Ernest Jones's *Life and work of Sigmund Freud*, S.I.: The Hogarth Press Ltd, 1962 or Eli Zaretsky's *Secrets of the soul : a social and cultural history of psychoanalysis*, 1st ed, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, or based on the correspondence of Freud and Ferenczi, characterized it within the larger post WWI narrative of increasing hostilities and growing anti-Semitism that psychoanalysts faced in the countries of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Hannah Decker, “Psychoanalysis in Central Europe : The Interplay of Psychoanalysis and Culture,” in *History of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology* (Springer, 2008), 587-628.

<sup>427</sup> In addition, the new evidence about the link between reform aims of the democratic and communist governments also explains the speed of which the Communists were able to carry out and institute some of the reforms. And this piece of information is important to keep in mind when considering the swift rise of psychoanalysis and psychology and their incorporation into the Communist medical and justice system. Of course, not all reform aims were shared, nor were all Communist reforms swiftly instituted.

<sup>428</sup> Hajdú, Tibor. *The Hungarian Soviet Republic*. Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1979, 78.

often, personal connection to these “new” sciences.<sup>429</sup> In turn, there was a political will to implement fundamental changes that was present during the days of Soviet Republic of Hungary.<sup>430</sup> The coming together of these factors was essential in establishing a new approach to sexuality. In the following, presenting what happened to psychoanalysis and the leading Hungarian psychoanalyst *Sándor Ferenczi* provides a more tangible illustration of the dynamics that were in play in 1918-9. The brief recounting of events around the status of Hungarian psychoanalysis will also help to contextualize the situation of the Experimental Criminology Department.

In the winter of 1918-1919 medical students in Budapest petitioned the president of University of Medicine to make Ferenczi a lecturer.<sup>431</sup> The Board of the University had previously rejected the habilitation (“second dissertation”) and appointment of Ferenczi, who (with his friend Sigmund Freud) was one of most influential psychoanalysts of his time, founder of the Budapest School of Psychoanalysis, and president of International Psychoanalytical Association. By the end of November 1918, following the declaration of the Hungarian Democratic Republic, students collected over one thousand signatures on Ferenczi’s behalf and in two months they submitted their petition to the Minister of Education.<sup>432</sup> The students asked for Ferenczi to be granted the

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<sup>429</sup> Hajdú, Tibor. *A Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság* (The Hungarian Soviet Republic), Budapest: Kossuth, 1969, 82.

<sup>430</sup> The following monographs – even if written during the socialist period – underscore the comprehensive aims of the Communist leadership. Hetés, Tibor. *A Magyarországi Forradalmak Krónikája 1918-1919* (The Chronicle of Revolutions in Hungary 1918-1919). Budapest: Kossuth könyvkiadó, 1969; Petrák, Katalin. *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Szociálpolitikája* (The Social Policy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic). Budapest: Gondolat, 1959.

<sup>431</sup> In October 1918 a petition was circulated with 180 signatures, requesting the rector of the university to allow Ferenczi to give a course on psychoanalysis. Phyllis Grosskurth, *The secret ring : Freud's inner circle and the politics of psychoanalysis* (Reading Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1991), 79

<sup>432</sup> Following the death of murder of István Tisza and Mihály Károlyi becoming the Prime Minister on October 31st, the National Council declared the Hungarian Democratic Republic on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Michael Schröter “Egy eredeti Freud-szöveg megkerülése” (The discovery of an original Freud text), in *Thalassa* 2009/4, 33.

opportunity to teach a class on psychoanalysis, which they claimed should be a part of the Medical School's curriculum. Freud wrote a passionate letter on behalf of the students and psychoanalysis, under the title of "Is it necessary to teach psychoanalysis at the University?" which was published in the leading Hungarian medical journal *Gyógyászat*.<sup>433</sup> In his letter, Freud expressed that even though the importance of psychological and emotional factors in medical diagnosis and treatment had been established; the Hungarian medical training had no training in psychology. He then, asserted that psychoanalysis is "more adept than any other systems, to teach psychology to medical students."<sup>434</sup> Besides, he reasoned, "an additional role of psychoanalysis would be to prepare students for studying psychiatry."<sup>435</sup> Freud also highlighted how in America, where they had already discovered how "psychoanalysis, as the first experimental branch of 'deep-psychology' is able to conquer issues that had been unresolved in psychiatry, lectures on psychoanalysis are taught at many medical universities."<sup>436</sup> Thus, Freud, in a persuasive manner, argued for the necessity of the institutionalization of Hungarian psychoanalysis at the university level. His words fell on deaf ears.

Four days following the establishment of Soviet Republic of Hungary on March 25, 1919, the Medical Board of the University of Science had a meeting where almost the entire teaching faculty was present.<sup>437</sup> At the meeting the Board addressed the issue of the petition, which called for both Ferenczi's appointment and for the incorporation of

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<sup>433</sup> The article "Kell- az egytemenen pszichoanalizist tanítani?" was published on March 30, 1919 in *Gyógyászat*. Cited in Erős Ferenc; Ferenczi professzori kinevezése: háttér és kronológia, *Thalassa* 2009/4. 17

<sup>434</sup> Republished in Michael Schröter "Egy eredeti Freud-szöveg megkerülése" in *Thalassa* 2009/4, 36.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> Pál Harmat, *Freud, Ferenczi és a magyarországi pszichoanalízis a budapesti mélylélektani iskola iskola története, 1908-1983* (Bern: EPMSZ, 1986), 70.

psychoanalysis into the University's curriculum. Most of the doctors on the Board, who were all representative of the former established bourgeoisie of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, were less than enthusiastic about the idea.<sup>438</sup> One member of the Board, professor Ernő Jendrassik, stated the following:

The erroneous subject of psychoanalysis is not part of any university curriculum anywhere else in the world, and the most renowned scholars, such as Westphal, Embden, Oppenheim and others – reject this ‘pornography and interpretation of dreams’ that calls itself psychoanalysis.... The foundation of their [psychoanalysts'] study is young women, with whom they talk about sexual things *ad infinitum*, even though it is a known fact that these women can be quite easily manipulated.... We know many instances when such irritating analysis was greatly detrimental to hysteric women and neither we, nor any other *male* professional doctors, have seen any benefits to this method. Most of the modern sexual literature is trash dressed in scientific form, and contributes significantly to the decline of morals. Freud's teachings are the epitome of this.<sup>439</sup>

Jendrassik's statement, which the Board unanimously accepted, is illuminating. By citing reputable German medical personnel, the statement illustrates the categorical rejection of psychoanalysis on behalf of established medical departments across Europe, in spite of the growing cult around Sigmund Freud and talk therapy's partial success in gaining legitimacy in during World War I.<sup>440</sup> At the same time, the statement itself is a

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<sup>438</sup> On the history of medical doctors in Hungary, see Kovács, Mária. *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. In tandem with law and engineering, Kovács provides a history of the medical profession and personnel from 1867 to 1945.

<sup>439</sup> Quoted in Harmat, 71.

<sup>440</sup> Psychology and especially psychoanalysis gained more official recognition by the end of World War I. During the war the issue of war neurosis was becoming a growing concern for all fighting armies and their respected governments. Although psychiatry and specifically electroshock remained the dominant method of treatment, the end of the war increasingly saw psychoanalysis as a more humane and possibly more successful alternative to the brutal methods of psychiatry. In Vienna throughout the war, Freud testified regularly in court cases on behalf of the soldiers charged with malingering and trying to avoid military service. By defending these soldiers on the basis of their psychological state, Freud played a key role in broadening the awareness and to some degree gaining greater legitimacy for psychoanalysis. From 1916 in especially the Central Powers (Habsburg and German Empire) psychoanalysis was increasingly favored and was seen as more successful in reintegrating soldiers into both the army and civilian life. On the issue of psychoanalysis in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, see Ferenc Erős' Gender, hysteria, and war neurosis in Agata Schwartz (ed.), *Gender and modernity in Central Europe : the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and its legacy* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010). Ferenc Erős, István

testament to the multiplicity of opinion that existed about sexuality and studying sexuality. The particular ways in which Jendrassik presents his argument--emphasizing both how it was women who asked for psychoanalysis to become part of the curriculum, as well as how it was because of (hysterical) women that psychoanalysis made a name for itself to begin with—also exemplifies the medical profession’s conservative and highly gendered worldview, a view which many contemporary Hungarians shared.<sup>441</sup> Even though women had been present at the medical University since 1895 a lot of people in Hungary continued to disapprove of female physicians and a significant segment of the male medical professionals remained unwelcoming towards women in their ranks even two decades later.<sup>442</sup> Furthermore, the fact that according to Jendrassik’s statement no real male (Hungarian) physicians would practice psychoanalysis underscores the association of psychoanalysis with “un-Hungarianness.” Considering the (imagined and actual) close ties between Jewish people and psychoanalysis, the statement reflects prevailing anti-Semitic views within the medical community.<sup>443</sup> The assertion that “psychoanalysis is not part of any university curriculum anywhere else in the world”: seems to suggest that Hungarians were certainly not going to accept it if no other country hadn’t already done so. In other words, there is a sense implied here that, as pragmatic conservatives, the Hungarian medical establishment would not put themselves at the

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Kapás, and György Kiss, “Pszichoanalízis a hadseregben 1914-1918” (Psychoanalysis in the army), *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1 (1988): 141-148.

<sup>441</sup> I have no information on the gender break down of the petitioners. For attitudes towards women in the public sphere see Pető Andrea, and Szapor Judit. “A Női Esélyegyenlőségre Vonatkozó Női Felfogás Hatása a Magyar Választójogi Gondolkodásra 1848–1990.”

<sup>442</sup> From 1895 women could attend three faculties; arts, medicine and pharmacy. Katalin Kéri, *Magyar nők a dualizmus korában (1867-1914 között)* (Hungarian Women in the Dual Monarchy). PhD thesis -(JPTE-BTK, Pécs, 1997.) 71-79 <http://iqdepo.hu/dimenzio/21/> last accessed July 17, 2011.

<sup>443</sup> Because of the peculiar development of medical profession in Hungary, Jewish people were largely overrepresented. Such over representation could be the source of antisemitic voices. Many non-Jewish doctors shared antisemitic sentiments. However, whether it was based on “professional jealousy” or “real” belief in antisemitic claims is unclear. Mária Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust*, 107-108.

forefront of any new thinking. Ironically, soon they would have no choice. At the end of the meeting the Medical Board categorically denied both the necessity and the validity of psychoanalysis consequently, they decided to turn down the students' petition. By denying Ferenczi's lectureship, the Board sent an unambiguous message that psychoanalysis was to remain outside of the university based and established medical professions.

Little did the medical community and actually Hungarian psychoanalysts themselves know that the Communist leadership within the new Soviet Republic of Hungary had quite different ideas about the fate of psychoanalysis. The Communists set out to restructure the medical system and in their vision, psychoanalysis would play an important role. Thus, when less than two months later, on May 12, 1919, Sándor Ferenczi, became a lecturer and full time professor at the Medical University, along with the medical community who clearly had not expected it, Ferenczi himself was equally surprised. Under the new leadership, psychoanalysis was institutionalized as part of the medical university and Ferenczi was made the head of the new department. By being appointed a lecturer, Ferenczi became not only the first psychoanalyst in the world who was appointed as a psychoanalyst professor at a University, but also the head of the first psychoanalytical department at a Medical University in the world.<sup>444</sup>

Nevertheless, as he expressed in his letter to Freud three days later on April 15, Ferenczi was rather ambivalent about the changes of official attitudes:

Psychoanalysis has been getting wooed by all sides, and it has been taking a lot of my energy to stem the advances. Yet, yesterday I could not avoid complying with the direct order to take over a state hospital ward. In this new era all medical

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<sup>444</sup> There were psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud, who had completed their "habilitation," and therefore could teach privately, but not at a University. See Erős, "Ferenczi Sándor professzori kinevezése: háttér és kronológia," 4.

practices are nationalized and there will be no private praxis. Psychoanalysis will be institutionalized and placed within hospitals.<sup>445</sup>

As this statement reflects, Ferenczi was far from ecstatic by the sudden interest and official endorsement of psychoanalysis. In general, he had been depressed about the dismantling of Austria-Hungary and was deeply concerned about the future fate of psychoanalysis in the new nation state.<sup>446</sup> Although Ferenczi welcomed the reforms, unlike Freud, who initially considered the institutionalization of psychoanalysis in Hungary a promising beginning, Ferenczi remained reserved. Along with most of the medical profession, Ferenczi, even as he himself was benefitting from it, was skeptical of the drastic structural changes that were taking place around him without the consultation of the medical community. Nevertheless, his skepticism about nationalizing medicine, and ambivalence towards institutionalizing psychoanalysis within the hospital, did not stop him from accepting the position that the Communist government bestowed on him.<sup>447</sup> In fact, he was active throughout the existence of the Soviet Republic; giving lectures on the importance of psychology, not just to medical students, but also to legal scholars, justices, and judges; and he also published in Communist journals.<sup>448</sup>

Hungarian psychoanalysis overnight gained international significance, which for a brief moment made psychoanalysts around the world including Freud himself believe that Budapest might become the next center of the new profession.<sup>449</sup> Not only was Ferenczi granted a position and along with it a psychoanalytic department, but a number of other psychoanalysts (along with sociologists and psychologists) were also given appointments

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<sup>445</sup> Erős and Kovács, 233.

<sup>446</sup> Grosskurth, *The secret ring: Freud's inner circle and the politics of psychoanalysis*, 79.

<sup>447</sup> For Ferenczi, as for many doctors and scientists the first and most important consideration was the assurance of the continuation of their medical and scientific endeavors.

<sup>448</sup> Neumann Antal, "Az orvospszichologus szerepe az igazságszolgáltatásban" (The role of medical-psychologist in the justice system), *Proletárjog*, August 2, 1919, 92.

<sup>449</sup> Freud-Abraham 2002, 382, cited in Erős Ferenc's "Ferenczi professzori kinevezése," 8.

within the medical and political spheres, and, as the case of the Experimental Criminology Department demonstrates, within the justice system as well.<sup>450</sup> However, this new revolutionary era of psychoanalysis and its sociological and psychological counterparts proved to be transient. In less than three months, on August 8, 1919, after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, all positions and power granted to psychoanalysts were revoked and psychoanalysis, along with its extended influence, was pushed back to the margins, where it would remain for the next seven decades.<sup>451</sup> Yet, as brief as it was, the Hungarian Soviet Republic, by institutionalizing psychoanalysis and incorporating it into the justice system, represented a break in the history of the understanding and treatment of non-normative sexuality. Believing in the transformative power of psychoanalysis queer sexuality was conceptualized as situational and temporary. This had very different short and long-term consequences of homosexuality.

The fact that both psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts themselves (along with sociology and psychology) for a passing moment were granted unprecedented power and became the trendsetters not only in medicine but, as I will show in official understanding and treatment of communist subjects within the justice system, was intimately tied to Hungary's political situation. Most pertinently, psychoanalysis could not have emerged and risen to such prominence if the movement and people who were informed by it, themselves had not been professionally and in many instances politically active within the social democratic and communist organizations during the prior decades. Generally

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<sup>450</sup> For instance, Jenő Varga (1879–1964), who was a member of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Association in 1919, was appointed People's Commissar for Finances under Béla Kun's Soviet Republic.

<sup>451</sup> During the interwar period, with growing antisemitism in Austria and in Germany, the centre of psychoanalysis moved to New York, and in more generally North America. Harmat, Pál. *Freud, Ferenczi És a Magyarországi Pszichoanalízis: a Budapesti Mélylélektani Iskola Története, 1908-1993*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 495.



excluded from the traditional Hungarian elite, psychoanalysts and a considerable portion of the members within emerging sciences, such as sociology and psychology, along with some of the established ones such as physics, came from recently assimilated and most often Jewish families.<sup>452</sup> For these emerging professions and emerging professionals, social democratic and communist ideologies provided political appeal and many took active roles within these parties supporting democratic reforms and structural changes.

Early twentieth-century Marxism in particular resonated with psychoanalysts, because it embodied fundamental change and a reorganization of the world. As Pál Harmat, a historian of psychoanalysis, notes, at the beginning of twentieth century, as opposed to later eras, psychoanalysts and the political left could mutually find each other attractive chiefly because communist ideas had not been compromised by dictatorial regimes (such as in some aspects of the Kun regime and later on the Rákosi era 1948-1953).<sup>453</sup> In turn, communists during the first two decades of the twentieth century also considered psychoanalysis an ally, a viewpoint reciprocated by many psychoanalysts.<sup>454</sup> In this particular moment in history, psychoanalysis and left-leaning ideologies found a common ground in Central Europe because they both shared a sense of idealism that centered on structural, social, and personal reforms.<sup>455</sup> The only other place aside from a

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<sup>452</sup> Mária Kovács, *Liberal Professions and Illiberal Politics: Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust*, 20-29.

<sup>453</sup> With the (re)establishment of the Communist dictatorship in 1948, psychoanalysis was condemned as a bourgeois science, and consequently, the Hungarian Psychoanalytical school was banned. Pál Harmat, *Freud, Ferenczi és a magyarországi pszichoanalízis a budapesti mélylélektani iskola iskola története, 1908-1983*. Bern: EPMSZ, 1986, 46.

<sup>454</sup> Of course there were many psychoanalysts who were at least sceptical of communism if not anti-Communist.

<sup>455</sup> While there are historians who support this view, such as Elizabeth A. Danto *Freud's free clinics : psychoanalysis & social justice, 1918-1938*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, there is a disagreement over Freud's and essentially psychoanalysis's political "stance." For a discussion of different views see the introduction of Damousi, Joy, and Mariano Ben Plotkin. *Psychoanalysis and politics : histories of psychoanalysis under conditions of restricted political freedom*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.

brief period in Hungary where psychoanalysis was officially supported was in the Soviet Union during the 1920s.<sup>456</sup>

The reasons why psychoanalysis rose overnight to the limelight in Hungary also had to do with the personal relationships between leading psychoanalysts, such as Sándor Ferenczi with members of the journal *Huszadik Század*, and the Galilei Circle.<sup>457</sup> Both of these had played a significant role in the intellectual and political preparation of the Democratic Revolution at the end of World War I, and the subsequent democratic reforms. Ferenczi was a supporter and a patron of the Galilei Circle, whose members were interested in psychology and the literature on the unconscious. Considering the high percentage of medical students within the membership of the Circle it is not a surprise that many members of the Galilei Circle later became psychoanalysts.<sup>458</sup> In addition to the personal influence, as a number of recent publications have shown, by WWI psychoanalytical theories had made their way out from their initial “scientific realm” and were regularly discussed within literary, intellectual, and political circles in

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<sup>456</sup> The history of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union has an extensive historiography. Some of the most important works include: Martin A. (Martin Alan) Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*, New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 1998; Martin A. (Martin Alan) Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*, New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 1998. In terms of the implementation of psychoanalysis see Gregory Carleton, *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, Pitt series in Russian and East European studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. Dan Healey, *Bolshevik sexual forensics : diagnosing disorder in the clinic and courtroom, 1917-1939*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009. Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Frances Bernstein, *The dictatorship of sex : lifestyle advice for the Soviet masses*, DeKalb Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007; Eric Naiman, *Sex in public: the incarnation of early Soviet ideology*, Princeton University Press, 1997.

<sup>457</sup> *Huszadik Század*, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was progressive journal of social sciences that lead discussions around the most pressing social issues. The Galilei Circle was a freethinking student movement that was established by leftist mostly Jewish university students in Budapest in 1908. The Circle’s primary aim was to facilitate discussions around - and disseminate ideas of bourgeois radicalism and propagate new social sciences among workers and university students. It was banned during the Soviet Republic in 1919. Tibor Hajdú, *A Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság*, 82. Lendvai, *A fiatal Lukács útja Marxhoz, 1902-1918* (The young Lukács’s path to Marx, 1902-1918). Budapest: Argumentum, 2008, 328.

<sup>458</sup> Pál Harmat, *Freud, Ferenczi és a magyarországi pszichoanalízis a budapesti mélylélektani iskola iskola története, 1908-1983*, 46.

Budapest.<sup>459</sup> In sum, while the recognition and institutionalization of Ferenczi and psychoanalysis in Hungary happened suddenly, keeping the larger political and cultural context in mind, their new privileges within the Soviet Republic of Hungary seem less of a surprise. But psychoanalysis was not only the benefactor of Communism. Rather, as the next section and the case of the Experimental Criminology Department will demonstrate, it was one of the new sciences that the Communists came to embrace.

*Revolutionary Justice: The establishment of the Experimental Criminal Department and its novel approach to sexuality*

The Experimental Criminology Department embodied the aim of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's leadership to build socialism.<sup>460</sup> The reorganization of society along Bolshevik principles also called for a new (revolutionary) justice system. After the immediate suspension of the function of the "bourgeois" courts and the persecution of their personnel, the Revolutionary Council established the system of Revolutionary Tribunals.<sup>461</sup> Considerable attention of the new court system was aimed at "immediate dangers," hence political cases dominated the works of the courts. As historians have

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<sup>459</sup> Pléh Csaba. "Pszichoanalízis, Pszichológia És a Modern Magyar Irodalom.: 1910 Ferenczi Sándor: Lélekelemzés" (Psychoanalysis, psychology and modern Hungarian literature: Sándor Ferenczi :psychoanalysis, 1910). In *A Magyar Irodalom Története I.: A Kezdetektől 1800-ig*, Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2007, 771–790; Vera Békés' "A konstruktív pesszimizmus forrásvidéke. A magyar tudományos műhelyek 'utolsó polihisztorai' és 'titkos klasszikusai' a 20. század első felében" (The source region of constructive pessimism. The Hungarian scientific workshops 'last polymaths' and 'secret classics' of the first half of the twentieth century), in Békés, Vera (szerk.) *A kreativitás mintázatai*, Budapest: Áron. (2004) 130–177.

<sup>460</sup> While it the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" only lasted 133 days, its aims included the fundamental restructuring and rebuilding Hungarian society (as a step in achieving communism world wide) along Marxist – Leninist principles. For the "Red Book" of Hungarian communists see Gerencsér, Miklós. *Vörös Könyv, 1919*. Lakitelep: Antológia Kiadó, 1993.

<sup>461</sup> Order no. 1 of the People's Commissar of Justice suspended the previous court and prosecution system on March 22, 1919. Order no. 4 established the Revolutionary Tribunals. Up to date the most comprehensive book on the system of revolutionary tribunals remains Béla Sarlós' *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényszékei* (The Revolutionary Councils of the Hungarian Soviet Republic). Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Kiadó, 1961.

pointed out, the methods and decisions of the Revolutionary Tribunals were to a great extent politically motivated and most often lacked any legal protection for the accused and granted ultimate authority to the council of judges.<sup>462</sup> Shifting the focus away from the politically charged cases however, and looking at the so-called *közönséges bűnügyek* or ordinary crimes, provides a strikingly different picture. Accordingly, the incorporation of recently emerged documents about a supplementary institute of the Tribunal, the Experimental Criminology Department, can demonstrate how the revolutionary justice system strove to incorporate “revolutionary” ideas from psychoanalysis, psychology, and sociology as part of the establishment of a justice system in keeping with the principles of a Communist society.<sup>463</sup> The incorporation of new modern sciences into the Criminology Department and into the justice system more generally was part of assisting the comprehensive reforms of Hungarian society. The founding of the Experimental Criminology Department itself was a testament to a new Communist justice system, where “scientific objectivity” would prevail. Science was the means through which Hungarian society would be transformed into a modern communist society. In this respect, the Hungarian Communists were in the forefront of granting unprecedented power to science to manage the population.<sup>464</sup> The Department was to provide “scientific” opinions about people who had been charged with non-political crimes, with

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<sup>462</sup> The tribunals, initially operating under a martial law ordered hundreds of executions, many of them based on the charge of “enemies of the revolution.”

<sup>463</sup> The documents have been processed in the Budapest City Archives in 2010. According to secondary sources, most of the documents on the Revolutionary Tribunals as well as on the City Archives have perished during World War II. “Források és tanulmányok a Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Történetéhez” (Sources and studies in the history of Hungarian Soviet Republic) *Levéltári Közlemények*. no. XXIX. (1959): Introduction.

<sup>464</sup> Scholars of Russia and the Soviet Union have shown the utility of conceptualizing modernity as a framework within which Russians (and non-Western countries) understood and related to “Western” modernity. For a succinct discussion of this approach see Hoffmann, David L, and Yanni Kotsonis. *Russian modernity: politics, knowledge, practices*, Houndsmills; New York: Macmillan Press ; St. Martin’s Press, 2000, especially the introduction.

the understanding that the opinions would contribute to a more impartial and just treatment of the accused.<sup>465</sup> It was set up as the model criminology institute for the future Communist justice system. As part of the official effort to “liquidate the old bourgeois legal system,” pending and ongoing legal cases were transferred into the Experimental Criminology Department.<sup>466</sup> Over the course of its existence the Department considered over three thousand cases.<sup>467</sup>

In stark contrast to most contemporary reports and subsequent historical accounts on the nature of the Kun regime and the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the Experimental Criminology Department was a protected intellectual place of intense scientific exploration. In turn, aside from enabling more freedom from explicit ideological pressure, facilitating scientific creativity and research was the other primary intent behind the establishment of the institute. As the Statutes of The Experimental Criminology Department of the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal attest the Communists, at least theory, did envision the creation of an institute where creativity and freedom were the guiding principles.<sup>468</sup>

The Criminology Department is foremost a scientific institution, and it is the honorable duty of its workers to do their best with cases that are transferred to the Department.

The workers are bound not to office type of work rather to time and quantity. And since their work needs to be above certain quality, the fundamental characteristic of the work regulation is freedom, which is the basic precondition for all scientific work.

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<sup>465</sup> Sarlós, *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényszékei* 58.

<sup>466</sup> “A jogszolgáltatás régi szervezetének likvidálása” (The liquidation of the old legal system), *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, 7 (1919): 55, Cases were transferred from liquidator committees and from revolutionary tribunals. Bónis, György. “Levéltári Közlemények.” *Adatok a Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Történetéhez*, no. XXIX. (1959): 307.

<sup>467</sup> The last number in the index of the Criminology Department was 3258. Bónis, György. “Levéltári Közlemények.” *Adatok a Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Történetéhez*, no. XXIX. (1959): 308.

<sup>468</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919 Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Kísérleti Kriminológiai Osztály és az Országos Kriminológiai Intézet iratainak gyűjteménye 1919, 684 -85.

In addition, the Employee Work Rules read as follows:

In order to regulate the freedom as well as to make the most use of each colleague's experience in the development of the Institute, the following guidelines should be respected:

- I. The sociologist and the medical doctor keep it in mind that the given case should be treated most thoroughly with the least amount delay or wasting time.<sup>469</sup>
- II. The order and schedule of sociological and psychological examinations are determined based on the mutual agreement of sociologists and doctors who are assigned in the same group, and can be done at any time.
- III. The members of the Institute hold sessions on every Thursday at four o'clock with the heads of the sociologists and physicians presiding. The attendance is mandatory for all employees. The subjects of the sessions can be the following:
  - i. Motions for the work schedule and concerning the rules of organization
  - ii. Lectures
  - iii. Introductions of new ideas
  - iv. Critical and constructive comments

In light of the newly emerged documents concerning the Experimental Criminology Department, I argue that in fact the words of the Statues and Work Rules of the Department were indeed adopted. The surviving evidence, which contains the transcripts and reports of numerous lectures and seminars, overwhelmingly suggests that during its brief existence the Experimental Criminology Department was the home of intense "scientific" research and education.<sup>470</sup> If anything, the documents reveal an exciting working environment with intense intellectual labor. Consistent with the Employee Work Rules of (ii) and (iii), we find well-known sociologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts who lectured and talked about the latest international theories in the

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<sup>469</sup> The underlined words are in the original document.

<sup>470</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919. The subsequent history of communism in Eastern Europe should not prohibit us to take these words at face value.

conceptualization and treatment of crime.<sup>471</sup> It is important to remember that following five years of war, ongoing military action, and severe economic hardship were present in Budapest in 1919, thus the establishment and operation of a scientific institution faced real and continuous difficulties. But even if the country was tormented socially, economically and militarily, there were people, like Sándor Ferenczi and members of the Criminology Department, who believed that it was through continuing their medical and scientific work that they could most successfully survive the hard times and contribute to Hungary's stabilization. And it was such individuals who, often regardless of their personal political beliefs, earnestly believed in the scientific mission of Experimental Criminology Department and worked for it tirelessly during its existence.<sup>472</sup>

Turning to the issue of sexuality, it was within this context that the Experimental Criminology Department and more generally the Communists came to embrace and advocate formerly marginalized views on sexuality.<sup>473</sup> Namely, going against the overt medicalizing and pathologizing of sex and sexuality, which psychiatry and neurology had been pursuing since the late nineteenth century, the Communist came to embrace a more “nurture” based psycho-social understanding of sexuality. Rather than emphasizing the

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<sup>471</sup> BFLxxx; Kádár Imre. “Aktuális Kriminálpolitikai Reformok.” *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, no. 11 (1919): 76–78.; Bónis, György. “Levéltári Közlemények.” *Adatok a Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Történetéhez*, no. XXIX. (1959): 307.

<sup>472</sup> It is difficult to know the political or ideological inclinations of the experts and workers of the Department. For one there is no comprehensive list of the employees, nor there is in the existing records ever a mention of the political views of the staff.

<sup>473</sup> The historical relationship between communism and (non-normative) sexuality was by no means homogenous, and as more recent scholarly attention has demonstrated, was highly variable. More specifically, even in the “model” country of the Soviet Union, in 1919 and throughout the 1920s, there were competing views on “communist sex,” or the role of sex in Communism. See for instance, Eric Naiman’s *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*. Princeton University Press, 1997, (especially chapter 1), where Naiman delineates Bolshevik ideologies on sex and argues that rather than a “clear” perspective, it was political and ideological anxieties that shaped communist public discourse around (heterosexual) sex and sexuality. In addition, more specifically about non-normative sex, Dan Healey in *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* also shows that Soviet authorities held a wide array of views about sexual difference and deviance.

organic or innate biological factors in sexual irregularities, medical experts under the Communist leadership considered people's sexuality, both normal and abnormal, as acquired through, and determined first and foremost by social and environmental factors.<sup>474</sup> Following the methodological incorporation of psychology, psychoanalysis and sociology, the Experimental Criminology Department's conceptualization, ruling and recommended treatment for sexual crimes illustrate an understanding of sexuality that was much more malleable and situational. That is, unlike official attitudes and approaches to "abnormal" sexualities, or their popular representations discussed in the first two chapters, within the records of the Experimental Criminology Department, non-normative sexualities and sexuality more generally, were thought of primarily as "situational" and acquired through developmental and environmental factors. They did not abandon biological factors entirely, but they foregrounded the effects of environment to an unprecedented level. In so doing the Communist institutionalized a novel approach to sexuality. Furthermore, not only did the experts consider nature and the environment decisive factors in shaping sexuality, but following in the footsteps of psychoanalytic theory, they also considered sexuality as an important aspect in determining human behavior. Consequently, interrogating the environmental and personal influences that shaped one's sexual, and as a result personal history and personality, became central in understanding, assessing, and judging crime.<sup>475</sup> The "situational" nature of sexuality, and

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<sup>474</sup> The difference between psychiatrists and neurologist and psychoanalysts and psychologists in their assessment of the role of innate biological factors vs. nurture and environmental factors played human sexuality was in the weight they assigned to each. Whereas psychiatrists and neurologists tended to stress the role of innate organic factors, psychoanalysts and psychologists stressed the role of environment and personal development. George Chauncey, "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and Changing Concept of Female Deviance," *Salmagundi*, no. Fall 1982/Winter 1983 (1983). Kim Phillips, *Sexualities in history : a reader* New York: Routledge, 2002, introduction.

<sup>475</sup> The surviving sources that speak about the Experimental Criminology Department underscore the novel approach and stress the centrality of personal history. In addition secondary sources that share this view



in fact of human character, offered revolutionary possibilities for “remaking” both sexuality and character.<sup>476</sup>

Before examining two cases charged with sexual perversion that were examined by the Experimental Criminology Department of the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal in 1919, I want to call attention to the following questionnaire, which the staff of the Criminology Department had to use for the assessment of all suspects when they conducted their examinations. As stated in the Charter of the Department, unlike the methodologies of the former “capitalist bourgeois” system, which inherently protected the upper classes and was discriminatory towards the masses, the new Communist approach and the guiding principle of the Experimental Criminology Department would be more just by being more scientific.<sup>477</sup> Accordingly, cross-examinations by a sociologist and a medical-psychologist were instituted to ensure that the actions of the suspects would be considered in a holistic and comprehensive way. In other words, that rather than the immediate details and milieu of the crime, it would be the intimate personal histories of the accused that were in the center of the examination.<sup>478</sup> The official Communist law journal provides a comprehensive report on the logic behind and the actual operational functioning of the sociologist-psychologist “team.” Having pointed out that the former bourgeois system could not adequately assess the accused, the article describes how, “today, when we have understood the possibilities of our

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include; Sarlós’ *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényszékei*, 106-111.; Bónis György. “Adatok a Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Történetéhez.” *Levéltári Közlemények* 29. évf. (1958): 293–312.

<sup>476</sup> This aspect in theory could encompass what Jochen Hellbeck in the context of the Russian Revolution called the “productive self-creating.” “Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts.” *Russian Review* 60, no. 3 (2001): 340–359, especially 340-342, and the introduction of *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

<sup>477</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 615 – 632, Bónis György. “Adatok a Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Történetéhez,” 306.

<sup>478</sup> BFL 382/1919; Kádár Imre. “Aktuális Kriminálpolitikai Reformok.” *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, no. 11 (1919): 76–78.

unconscious life, and the centrality of our unconscious acts in shaping our conscious self... it is no longer the criminal act that matters, rather the motives and personality of the person who committed it.”<sup>479</sup> Thus, the author opined, “the accused stands in front of the sociologist as a social being, while in front of the psychologist as an individual.”<sup>480</sup>

The questionnaire was developed as the first step in the process of establishing the Communist justice system, with the purpose of evaluating the accused as they entered the Justice system.<sup>481</sup> Used universally and regardless of the nature of the crime, the questions in the questionnaire reflect the Institute’s intent of combining medical, psychological/psychoanalytical, and sociological approaches, towards the goal of accurately understand people’s motives, and judging their actions. In addition, this comprehensive “background study” is one of the most compelling surviving pieces of evidence attesting to the extent which the Experimental Criminology Department of the Communist regime granted central place for psycho-social and psychoanalytical approaches in the assessment of crime (including of sexual crimes).

A study of the questionnaire reveals how theories of sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis were all integrated in order to assess people in light of the potential ills and harms of their social and psychological histories. We can see how the assessment of detained people comprised of a comprehensive examination of the person’s personal, familial, professional and socio-economic background. In addition to inquiries about people’s socio-economic background, there were questions on the development of personal relations and sexuality; including childhood memories, family relations,

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<sup>479</sup> Neumann Antal, “Az orvospszichológus szerepe az igazságszolgáltatásban,” *Proletárjog* 13-14: 92.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>481</sup> This is with the exception of people accused of political charges, for whom the Communist justice system assigned a different treatment. Consequently, the Revolutionary Tribunal of Budapest only sent non-political cases to the Experimental Criminology Department.

personal relationships with friends, colleagues and also romantic love and sexuality. The comprehensive questionnaire placed psychoanalysis and psychology along with sociology at the center of the examination. The following is the questionnaire and basic instructions that the staff of the Criminology Department had to use for the assessment of suspects.

<i>“Környezettanulmány” or “Environmental/Background Case Study”</i> <sup>482</sup>	
I.	
1. <i>Questions concerning, the father, mother, grandparents, siblings</i>	Has any of them had a history of neurosis, suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, abnormality in their character, eccentricity, criminality, or being a genius?
2. <i>Questions about the circumstances of the suspect's birth and childhood</i>	Was he/she born “normally”? at the expected time? Which child was he/she? How old were his/her parents at his/her birth? Were his or her parents drunk at the moment of conception? Did he/she have any child diseases especially spasmodic, jittering ones? Whose milk did he/she have and for how long?
3. <i>Physical and emotional disorders in childhood</i>	Gigantism or dwarfism, rickets, hydrocephalus... bedwetting at night, excessive shyness, initial criminal activities, stealing, lying, torturing of animals, alcoholism, excessive fantasizing, who did he/she sleep with, for how long? What kind of relationship did he/she have with his/her parents, siblings and friends?
4. <i>The sketching of the early childhood milieu:</i>	The parents' relationship towards each other and to their child: excessive rigor, excessive love; the intelligence of the parents, social and economic background; the child's disposition to humor, when did he/she start walking, speaking? Did he live in a village or in a big town?
5. <i>Primary schooling:</i>	Where, how did he/she study? How many times did he/she change his/her schools, why?
	How many years of schooling does he or she have? How did he/she behave with his/her teachers and with his classmates? In what subjects was her/she particularly strong or weak at?
6. <i>The time of first sexual feelings:</i>	When? early – late; for women, the time of their first period; physical abnormalities; noticeable paleness!, obesity, persistent headaches

<sup>482</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919.

Emotional abnormalities: changes in personality/character, general nervousness, introverted, aggression, masturbation, propensity for sin!, signs of neurosis
7. <i>Questions regarding adolescence/puberty:</i>
Economic, social circumstances: question, reasons of choosing a profession, evolution of his/her personal/love/sexual life; alcoholism, criminality, intellect, books, knowledge, social life, work life, discipline; worldview /political, religious, social/, conflicts with his/her environment, physical health, emotional problems, separation from parents' influence/environment, attempts of suicide, vagrancy etc.
8. <i>From adulthood to the present</i>
<u>The expressions of his/her instincts/</u> : sexuality, circumstances of marriage, abnormalities, unjustified outbreaks of temper;
<u>Intellectual capabilities</u> : his/her knowledge base, interests;
<u>Emotional life</u> : likes, dislikes, within and outside of the family, noticeable mood swings; neurosis, suicide, lues and other sexually transmitted disease, alcoholism, drug addiction, criminality, eccentricity, or being a genius, character <sup>483</sup>
Circumstantial factors:/standard of living, food, personal achievements in terms of socio-economic status, with women, the number of pregnancy, number of birth, and number of abortions
II
The immediate milieu of the crime... <sup>484</sup>

Of course, the novel approach of Experimental Criminology Department did not mean abandoning of biological theories of crime.<sup>485</sup> Questions about the mental and physical health of parents clearly reflect that Communist approach were to also include a link between criminal behavior and biological defects and abnormalities. In accordance with the (transnationally accepted) criminal discourse and practice of the day, the questionnaire opened with the medical history of people's parents, in order to determine the presence of assumed biologically inherited traits such as neurosis, suicide, and

<sup>483</sup> Underlining is in the original document.

<sup>484</sup> The rest of the questionnaire is missing – but is unlikely that there were additional fixed questions. Rather, it was an “open” discussion with the experts and the description of the criminal act that completed the questionnaire.

<sup>485</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century biological theories of crime believed that criminal behavior was determined by biological and therefore innate factors. Thus, it was believed that criminals were biologically predisposed to crime and had inherent “defects,” which could be detected through “scientific” examination.

alcoholism, which would indicate that the suspect had been biologically predisposed to criminal behavior.<sup>486</sup> Additionally, throughout the questionnaire we find questions that bear the marks of connecting crime to innate and biological attributes. For instance, inquiries on physical abnormalities or alcoholism both attest to how the new Communist regime when assessing crime continued to rely on biological determinism. In line with recent research on Communism and eugenics in various countries, the questionnaire and records of the Hungarian Soviet Republic underscore the comfortable coexistence of (Hungarian) Communism and eugenic beliefs in hereditary and biological traits.<sup>487</sup> The official publications show how from the very top of the leadership down to the level of professional experts, the Communists believed in Social Darwinism and eugenic ideas about the health of the Hungarian nation. The Proletariat law journal, the mouthpiece of the Communist leadership, articulated what this would mean in practice; people who were biologically unfit to serve the Hungarian stock were to be stopped from marrying and reproducing. Otherwise, they were to live a “full and productive life.”<sup>488</sup> Those people, who could not live self-sufficiently, were to be placed in institutional care, supported by the communist state.<sup>489</sup> However, in the case of the great majority of people, who were deemed biologically “normal,” the Experimental Criminology Department was granted freedom to assess, and to configure the most fitting approach to

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<sup>486</sup> Florence Tamagne, *The History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*, Introduction, Jens Rydstrom, *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950*.

<sup>487</sup> Some of the latest works that show link include Turda, Marius, and Weindling, Paul. “*Blood and Homeland*” : *Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2007, and Bucur-Deckard, Maria. *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.

<sup>488</sup> “Tervezett Házasság jogról” (On the Proposed Marriage Law), *Proletárjog*, 2: 21.

<sup>489</sup> “Az elmebetegügy ideiglenes rendezése” (The temporary arrangement of the issue of the mentally ill), *Proletárjog*, 8:61.

rehabilitate the individual.<sup>490</sup> “Criminal psychology and sociology had proven that in the majority of cases, criminals have no biological abnormalities.”<sup>491</sup> Consequently, it was the psychological and sociological factors that came to weigh the heaviest in the assessment of crimes and designing plans of people’s reintegration.

By being grounded in psychological theories the majority of questions represent a break from biological theories of crime.<sup>492</sup> And this is where the novel approach of the Experimental Criminology Department most visibly manifests itself. The intent behind many of the questions was to uncover the evolution of emotional histories of the accused in order to map the mental and emotional traumas and conflicts that could have caused criminal behavior. Thus, unlike approaches that looked for somatic, physiological explanation of “abnormal” and criminal behavior, the experts of the Experimental Criminology Department assigned crucial importance to the examination of psychological behavior and the emotional and sexual histories of the subjects.<sup>493</sup> Having incorporated psychoanalytical and personality theories into their understanding of crime, in the eyes of the medical experts of the Communist regime, criminal behavior could serve as a mere symptom of underlying psychological disorder(s).<sup>494</sup> For that reason,

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<sup>490</sup> Östreicher Andor, “A bűnözés és büntetés fogalmához” (The concept of crime and punishment), *Proletárjog*, 9-10: 73.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> A shift in focus to environmental factors did not mean the abandonment of biological and physiological components. Freud and psychoanalysis along with psychologists in general, all acknowledged the connection between biological-physiological factors and sexual perversions. At the same time, the novelty of their approach laid in the fact that they emphasized the role of psychological, cultural, sociological factors and especially in terms of psychoanalysis, the role of intrafamilial relations as most important determinants and molding agents of human sexuality and character. Előd Halász, *A freudizmus*. Budapest: Gondolat, 1988, 190-192.

<sup>493</sup> One of the most crucial aspects of Freud’s theories is that he assigned meaning to behavior. That is he and the Budapest Psychoanalytical School under the egis of Ferenczi in general believed that by analyzing people’s psychological motives behind their criminal (or abnormal) behavior was the only way to truly understand their action.

<sup>494</sup> Psychoanalytic theories and the writings of Ferenczi assign a crucial importance to early child – parent relationship. In general, psychoanalysis of the time believed that there were three major mechanisms,

questions on the questionnaire about *emotional disorders in childhood, early childhood milieu* and about *primary school experience* (question #3-5) all aimed to detect those moments in the suspect's early life that indicated moments and ruptures when he or she diverged from what was understood as the "appropriate" and "normal" path. Rather than innate and biologically predetermined crime was seen as the consequence of "improper" personality development. In contrast to prewar European practices that wanted to isolate, medicalize and treat individuals for diverging from normative behavior as "sick," the Experimental Criminology Department's approach implied that rather than certain *individuals*, it was certain *practices* that were "sick" or at fault for causing non-normative behavior.<sup>495</sup> And such an interpretation could open the possibility not just to "forgive" and reintegrate people into society but also for the complete remaking of individuals and society at large.

The socio-economic background of suspects was also given an important consideration. As a number of questions on the questionnaire reveal, such as those pertaining to the suspects' *standard of living, food, achieved success within the person socio-economic status*, and of course about their *profession*, the Criminology Department assigned great significance to people's background. While psychologists examined the

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which controlled human action: the id, ego and superego, and that it was the relationship between these three that determined how humans behaved. The id, was the home of unconscious (particularly sexual) desires, the ego was the conscious mind, and the superego, which had two functions; on the one hand it acted to inhibit those instinctual desires that violated social norms and on the other it also contained internalized representation of parental standards. Hence, since in the formation of both the ego and the superego parents were vital, psychoanalytical theory assigned a fundamental role for the child-parent relationship in shaping human character. Consequently, in the eyes of psychoanalysts and most psychologists the "abnormal" or criminal behavior of a person, regardless of his or her age, was a manifestation of early developmental problems, most often resulting from traumatic experiences within the family.

<sup>495</sup> Such a view denied the existence of identity formation around non-normative practices, such as the homosexual as an identity category. In this regard, the Experimental Criminology Department actually returned to older ideas that punished acts without associating certain non-normative behavior with criminal or abnormal character.

conscious and subconscious emotional worlds of the accused, sociologists studied their physical and social environments. As the case studies on sexuality will illustrate, the experts, along the lines of Communist ideology, assigned a pivotal role to people's environment both in their understanding of a person's sexuality, as well as in their evaluation of the person's (criminal) acts. Together, the sociologist and the psychologist were responsible for evaluating the degree to which people's socio-economic environment contributed to a person's emotional being and consequently, to the given criminal act. Last but not least, following the guidelines of the Communist regime, the experts were required to, not so much to investigate the ideological view, but rather the specific details of the socio-economic background of the accused. Unlike the revolutionary tribunals, most of which operated and practiced justice along political principles, the records of the Experimental Criminology Department do not contain evidence of using political beliefs and socio-economic background as "sufficient" evidence of people's crime.<sup>496</sup> While people were not punished for their anti-Communist beliefs and capitalist and bourgeois background, when the suspects came from the "the materially exploited lower classes," their class background was always a mitigating factor in the assessment of their crime and lead to a more lenient punishment.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Based on people's political, religious and class affiliation the tribunals, which sprung across Hungary sentenced thousands of people and ordered hundreds of executions under the charge of "enemies of the revolution." In contrast, evidence on the Experimental Criminal Department suggests that its experts actively avoided having to use political affiliation as scientific evidence and consequently in the opinions we found very little reference to it. In addition, as both primary and secondary sources stress, the Revolutionary Tribunals avoided sending political cases to the Criminology Department. "It is obvious that in political charges, there was no need for criminal examination." Ferenc Rákosi, quoted in Bónis György. "Adatok a Budapesti Forradalmi Törvényszék Történetéhez." *Levéltári Közlemények* 29. évf. (1958): 309.

<sup>497</sup> This of course was in direct correlation with the socio-economic and ideological position of the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunals, most of whom were either working class or supporters of Communist ideology, according to which the seeds and the origin of crime (of the lower classes) lay with bourgeois (capitalist) exploitation. Rákosi, Ferenc. *Állam És Alkotmány a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságban*. Budapest: Jogi Kiadó, 1953, 76-103.



Intrinsically connected to the Experimental Criminology Department's psycho-social approach was the systematic examination of the sexual feelings and sexual history of the accused. The fact that sexuality and sexual history, regardless of the nature of the crime, occupied a central place in the examination process underscores the influence psychoanalysis and in more general psychology played in the assessment and treatment of suspects. Psychoanalysis in particular ascribed a fundamental role to sexual history as a reflection of people's character development. Questions starting with the *time of first sexual feelings* (question #6) to the detailed history of people's sexual life (question #7) that encompassed both physical and emotional relationships reflected the significance that the experts of the Experimental Criminology Department assigned to sexual experience. Following the footsteps of psychoanalysis the experts studied if, when, and how exactly the suspects exhibited "abnormal" sexual and emotional behavior, which they connected, again not to physiological or innate quality but rather to the working of the unconscious, which they believed regulated human behavior.<sup>498</sup>

Overall, stepping back and looking at the trajectory of communist politics, the ideas expressed in the questionnaire seemed to foreshadow the practices of Communist parties across Europe during the coming decades. The intent of building socialism and "making" good communist subjects that would come to characterize the Soviet Union and eventually China and the Eastern Block during the 1950s was implicitly already present during the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919.<sup>499</sup> And while due to the embattled

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<sup>498</sup> Kádár Imre. "Kriminológiai Alapkérdések" (Basic Questions in Criminology), *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, no. 12 (1919): 84.

<sup>499</sup> For the Soviet Union in addition to Jochen Hellbeck's *Revolution on My Mind*, Igal Halfin's *Language and Revolution: the Making of Modern Political Identities*. London; Portland, Oregon: F. Cass, 2002, and Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain : Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995 explain the discursive and lived experience of making of communist subjects. For Chinese Communism I found Paul Byrne's *The Chinese Revolution : the Triumph of Communism*. Minneapolis,

circumstances of post war Hungary and ultimately the abrupt end of the Communist regime in August 1919, the radical aims of the Experimental Criminal Department and the Hungarian Communists more generally never materialized, it seems that they were possibly one of the earliest, if not the earliest example of trying to make communist subjects.<sup>500</sup> But what did it such practices mean for non-normative sexuality and heterosexuality in particular? By turning to two surviving case studies of the Experimental Criminology Department that explicitly deal with sexuality the following section will address the implications of the novel Communist approaches on queer sexualities.

Before doing that however, a brief note on the ideas of Hungarian Communist regime towards *normative* sexuality is in order. The evidence is limited but there are solid clues that suggest that the Communists imagined a society, where sexuality would have been no longer a taboo; women and men were equal; people married for love; and female prostitution vanished. To facilitate these radical transitions sex and sexuality had to be talked about. Thus, according to many of the Communists, unlike the prudish “bourgeois” norms, and against the “antiquated” teachings of the Church, sexuality was to be openly discussed and possibly, more openly practiced.<sup>501</sup> Such ideas seemed to motivate György (Georg) Lukács, who under the Kun regime served as the Deputy

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Minn.: Compass Point Books, 2007 useful. For East Germany see Jarausch, Konrad Hugo. *Dictatorship as Experience : Towards a Socio-cultural History of the GDR*. New York: Berghahn Books, 1999, especially the chapter by Thomas Lindenberger “Creating state socialist governance: the case of the Deutsche Volkspolizei,” 263-273.

<sup>500</sup> The Hungarian Communists most likely were preceded by some of their Russian counterparts. Peter Holquist for instance argues the ethos of self- mobilization and building revolutionary subjects in Russia began with the total mobilization during World War I, *Making War, Forging Revolution : Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002.

<sup>501</sup> There are superb and comprehensive analyses of Communist party's approach to sex in the Russia. These include the already mentioned book by Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, and also Gregory Carleton's *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.

People's Commissar of Education, in instituting a revolutionary sexual education program in schools.<sup>502</sup> And while the initiative was short lived it nevertheless, suggests that many Hungarian Communists believed that talking about sexuality was an important endeavor, not just for promoting sexual health, but equally importantly as part of the process of secularizing the population, and not least, for lessening the power of the parents over their children.<sup>503</sup>

One of the first laws the Communists passed was the secularization of marriage and liberalization of divorce laws.<sup>504</sup> At its core, improving and protecting the health of the Hungarian *faj* (akin to race, however more inclusive, which could include anyone who was culturally Hungarian, regardless of their biological/racial background) became the basis of the new Communist society.<sup>505</sup> What this meant for sexuality was that sexual health became a precondition for marriage, and transmitting sexual diseases became a crime.<sup>506</sup> Normative female sexuality was to be protected and anything that would endanger women's reproductive health was to be "quarantined." As part of protecting the health of women and therefore, the future of society, female prostitution was prohibited. Prostitutes, along with other former outcasts of society, were to be "rehabilitated" as

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<sup>502</sup> I have not been able to locate primary documents on what exactly Lukács' proposed as sexual education in schools, but there are secondary sources – which describe how during his time as Deputy People's Commissar of Education he ordered mandatory sexual education in schools. For instance in László Szabó, *A bolsevizmus Magyarországon: a proletárdiktatúra okirataiból*. Budapest: Athenaeum, 1919, 73; Miklós Gerencsér, *Vörös könyv, 1919*. Lakitelep: Antológia Kiadó, 1993, 397.

<sup>503</sup> It seemed that instituting mandatory sexual education, especially in rural areas met serious local oppositions and stirred disagreements even within the Kun government. This was also the case in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, where peasants were highly antagonistic towards the "Godless" Communist views on sexuality.

<sup>504</sup> "The legal age for marriage for men became 16, while for women 14 years of age. In addition to granting equality between men and women in marriage, the Communists also believed in protecting the rights of the children, even vis-à-vis their own parents. "A kommunist állam csáldjoga" (The family law of the communist state), *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, 1:5.

<sup>505</sup> In addition to sexual health, only those who were deemed mentally and physically healthy could marry. *Ibid.*

<sup>506</sup> Although a comprehensive and comparative study of the Communist's health and social policies in the European context is beyond this dissertation, it is much needed.

productive members of society. With men, however, the Communists seemed much more lenient. As long as men were free of sexually transmitted illnesses, and engaged in consensual sexual activity, they were left alone. In the short term, this included homosexuality. As *Proletárjog*, the official legal journal declared, “Perversion between men needs not to be punished, unless it impedes on personal autonomy, because this act, from the perspective of the health of our “faj,” poses no danger for the public. In this case, we are faced with nature’s aberration, which from the perspective of “faj” health makes no sense to criminalize.”<sup>507</sup> Furthermore, in sharp contrast to female prostitution, male prostitution was considered much less of an issue in terms of the health of society: “At any rate, if a man prostitutes himself, from the perspective of the society this has nowhere near the dangerous consequences than if a woman does it.”<sup>508</sup> The precise reasoning for this statement is unclear. However, a few reasons were likely. Sex between men did not preclude healthy children with a woman, given the men were free of venereal disease. Amidst the upheaval of the war, prisoner of war camp life, separation of men and women across the home and war fronts, made sex between men less problematic than between female prostitutes and men.<sup>509</sup> Moreover, according to Communists ideology, female prostitutes were being exploited by men, their work was non- and un-productive, and they were vector for disease, potentially entering the Hungarian family. In contrast, sex between men, in the eyes of the Communists authorities, did not required punishment because the act itself did not hurt, or endanger the biological health of the society, as long as both parties were free of sexually

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<sup>507</sup> Födesi Kálmán, “A proletárállam büntetőjoga Különös rész” (The criminal law of the communist state: Exceptional part), *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, 2:13.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> A more detailed analysis of the effects of the War on the treatment of sexuality will be subject of chapter 5.

transmitted disease. The overtly gendered approach of the Communist towards sex is evident. The excusing of male sexuality, whether it was hetero or homo, was predicated on the assumption that it was women who shouldered the future of (Hungarian) race. While the short life of the Hungarian Soviet Republic disallowed the codification of a new criminal law, the available evidence indicates that consensual homosexuality, as it would be the case in the Soviet Union in 1922, would have been granted legal protection.<sup>510</sup> But what exactly did this mean for queer male sexuality in practice? Through two specific case studies of the Experimental Criminology Department, the remainder of the chapter examines Communists' ideas and treatment of non-normative male sexuality.

#### *Case Studies of the Experimental Criminology Department*

Among the few surviving documents, the case of Gy. F., a thirty-five year old day laborer provides the most comprehensive evidence of the methods and approach of the Experimental Criminology Department towards sexuality.<sup>511</sup> F was charged with perversion following his attempt of making an offer to provide sexual services to a man (who turned out to be a secret police officer) in front of a café in Budapest. Following the protocol of the Criminology Department a sociologist and a medical doctor examined F, and subsequently wrote up and sent their medical opinion to the Tribunal. The extensive and detailed case study on the personal life history of F provides a unique window into the ways in which the experts understood non-normative sexuality.

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<sup>510</sup> Same-sex relations between consenting adults were decriminalized in the Soviet Union in 1922. Following the solidification of Stalin's power, homosexuality was recriminalized in 1934. For the history of legal debates in the Soviet context see Dan Healy's *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*, especially chapter 4.

<sup>511</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 615 - 632.

First we learn about the suspect's mother and father;

His father, who is 75 years old, is an alcoholic, rough and impatient character. The suspect's mother only married him because of the parental pressure... They never lived a happy family life; his father mauled his mother and would even kick her... His mother gave birth 9 times, 6 of them are still alive today, three children died in their childhood...<sup>512</sup>

Then we learn about all the siblings' character and some additional family members, followed by a detailed analysis of the suspect's birth and early childhood;

... he was too timorous as a child, was afraid to stay by himself, and so he slept with his mother, and when he became older he slept on a couch next to his mother's bed. He was very scared of his father, since he was a rude man who would hit him often for no reason. His siblings did not like him and chased and teased him constantly...<sup>513</sup>

Eventually we are presented with the analysis of his first sexual encounter:

He was 13 years old, when he watched how a female servant was having sex with a young man. She was a pretty girl... and F told the girl that she had to also have sex with him; otherwise he would tell everyone about the man the girl had sex with. The girl gave in and within a few days F had sex with her, which they repeated a couple of times. Soon the girl became ill and moved to another place in the countryside. During that time F saw another boy masturbating, which he also tried and since he found it pleasurable and since he had no girl acquaintances, he continue to masturbate.<sup>514</sup>

We also learn about F's first homosexual encounter:

During this time there was a civil servant who worked for the country, who rented a room at the house. He invited F to his room and asked him to suck his penis. Initially, F was apprehensive, but since the clerk paid him some money he would do it. He sucked the semen drops, and then washed his mouth. A few days later the clerk would invite F to his room again. He would lie down and have F lay on top of him and they would suck each other's penis until ejaculation.... The man lived at the house approximately for year and the "relationship" between him and F continued until he left.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 616.

<sup>513</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 617.

<sup>514</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 618.

<sup>515</sup> "Parentheses" are in the original document BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 618.

And for the rest of the case study we get a detailed description of F's sexual history, which included both men and women. F moved to Budapest when he was still in his teens and soon found himself among homosexual men often of high stature, as well as soldiers and military officials.<sup>516</sup> It is in this context we learn that F, in the company of a general and three other high-ranking officials, went to *Hungaria* Restaurant or to the *Hungaria* Bathhouse where they engaged in homosexual encounters. He was caught a number of times by the police and always sent back to his hometown in the countryside where he could never stay more than six months so he would go back to Budapest. The last time on May 26, 1919 he made an offer to an unknown man who ended up being the secret policeman who turned F in to the district headquarters of the red guards. He could not account for the motive of his action; according to himself he was led by his sick inclination.<sup>517</sup>

As much as these surviving records are informative about F and in more general the homosexual subculture and the practices of Budapest's Metropolitan police, the experts' descriptions are also revealing about the ways in which the Criminology Department approached and conceptualized sexual crimes. In their understanding, when assessing and treating perpetrators of sexual crimes, the environmental and psychological factors should be emphasized over innate biological factors. The following Medical Opinion of F, the last surviving document in his file, explains F's "abnormal"

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<sup>516</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 623-5.

<sup>517</sup> Although it is difficult to be certain as to how F (and in general the subjects of the Experimental Criminology Department) thought of his non-normative sexuality, the scattered sources imply that he thought of himself of "having sick inclinations." This would seem to suggest that by the late 1910s in Hungary the medicalized discourse of homosexuality and conceptualizing homosexuality as an illness, was widespread and cut across class and age.

homosexual behavior as acquired and “situational,” and on the whole as a result of his personal psychological development.

His father was a drunkard, and F suffered a head injury at the age of 7. His schooling was sporadic and he could not write or read properly. His knowledge base is quite limited ...He is aware of his limitations and in fact, he tends to over exaggerate them.

As for the motivations for his perversion, he gave various reasons during his examination. In part this was due to him being in a psychologically agitated state and also, him not knowing what would help his release.

His genitals are well developed along with the secondary sexual marks. It is likely that he was coerced by an older man during his younger years. In fact, he received money for his perversion during his younger years when he was in all respect “*non compos*.”<sup>518</sup> Later, due to his mental weakness, using his sexual services as a means to earn money became standard. Which is also understandable considering without any money and being mentally weak he could not have gone to women. [In other words, he was too poor to buy a prostitute or marry a woman.]

Although he is aware of the criminality of perversion, in terms of his criminal offense he has to be considered *non-compos*. Without any medical attendance there is no expected improvement.<sup>519</sup>

In F’s case study, along the lines of the questionnaire, social and environmental factors constitute the majority of information and overall, the experts’ opinion hinges heavily on psycho-social and implicitly psychoanalytical explanations. From the detailed descriptions of his parents to his upbringing and encounters with men, the medical opinion focuses on F’s personal history. Rather than trying to fit him into a medical category or pathological type, the experts focus on the specific and individualized (psychological) reasons why F became homosexual. The experts do not label him as a criminal, nor do they label him as a homosexual. On the contrary, they see him as innocent and conceptualize his (abnormal) sexuality as a result of his troubled

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<sup>518</sup> The use of Latin was commonplace until the end of World War II in both medical and legal documents.

<sup>519</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 629.



psychological development and disadvantaged socio-economic history.<sup>520</sup> Implicit in this view is the conceptualization of sexuality as “malleable” and fluid.

Furthermore, as we can see the Criminology department granted a central role to psychological factors in determining the suspect’s accountability. Stressing the effects of early childhood experiences and their role in developing homosexuality reveals not only the integration of socio-economic and psychological factors but also the influence of psychoanalytical explanations. The influence of psychoanalysis is embedded in the ways in which questions were asked so experts could analyze the emotional motivations, their origins, and ultimately, to “get to the suspect’s unconscious.”<sup>521</sup> The psychologist expert examined early childhood developments in order to identify the ways in which “normal” childhood development had been halted or ruined, which in turn would have helped to explain “abnormal” sexual behavior later in life. The uniqueness of the Experimental Criminology Department lay in the ways in which psychological factors, such as F’s personal relationship throughout his life or his character and emotional development, were incorporated into both the experts’ view of his sexuality as well as into the assessment of his crime.

Just as significant was the experts’ reliance on socioeconomic and class backgrounds. As they stated in their opinion, it was the economic hardships, which F had constantly struggled with throughout his life that served as the most important “causal” factor of his homosexuality. Ascribing non-normative and particularly, homosexuality heavily to one’s socio-economic situation was a distinct feature that set the Experimental

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<sup>520</sup> In this respect the Experimental Criminology Department’s approach closely resembled methodology and understanding of non-normative sexuality in both Germany and England. Insert lit

<sup>521</sup> The question about childhood fantasizing reflects psychoanalytic and more specifically Freud’s interest in the interpretation of dreams and an assumed connection between dreams and people’s subconscious.

Criminology Department's approach apart from both the pre War era and from the interwar years. With that said, it is important to point out the inherent contradictions between the experts' opinion and official ideas on non-normative male sexuality. As situational as the medical opinion makes F's sexuality, the Communists, similarly to the previous liberal regime, believed that there were some "authentic" homosexuals and thus also, some "inauthentic" ones.<sup>522</sup> Yet, as the case of F demonstrates, in cases where they thought innate biological homosexuality was not present, the experts argued that homo and non-normative sexuality was the result of environmental and psychological factors. In the majority of cases, where there was "evidence" suggesting acquired homosexuality, the Criminology Department could prescribe therapy in order to "heal" and reintegrate people as heterosexuals. Such was the case with F, whose concluding medical opinion stated; "with medical therapy the suspect could "heal," (i.e. become heterosexual).<sup>523</sup> Mirroring the teachings of Freud and Ferenczi, the Criminology Department granted unprecedented power to "talk therapy," and to tending to people's psyche.<sup>524</sup> Believing that through proper psychological help that a suspect could become a normal heterosexual being, the experts psycho-sociologized sexuality rather than medicalized it. To reiterate, sexuality was not necessarily a "pathological" innate biological issue, as the dominant medical discourses of the day (and of the interwar period) claimed. Instead the Experimental Criminology Department understood it as both social (shaped by one's physical, social, and cultural environment) and also individual (unique to a given person

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<sup>522</sup> Födesi Kálmán, "A proletárállam büntetőjoga Különös rész," *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, 2:13.

<sup>523</sup> BFL 2818/1919, 2236/1919, 629.

<sup>524</sup> Both Freud and Ferenczi thought that there were biologically innate homosexuals, who could not be "converted." Yet, in the majority of cases, they believed that there were developmental and environmental factors that "caused" homosexuality. In these cases, there was potential to steer people back to heterosexual life.

based on his or her experiences). Thus, by granting a much greater role to environment the Communists' conceptualization of homosexuality differed from that of Tábori and Székely's a decade earlier.

This in turn suggested that in most instances, homosexuality was treatable using psychological treatment and social interventions. This shift in the conceptualization of sexuality on the one hand explains how consensual homosexuality and other non-normative sexualities could go unpunished. On the other hand, the novel conceptualization of the Experimental Criminology Department opened the possibility of reintegration to society. This was precisely the intent of the Communist leadership and the driving force behind the establishment of the Criminology Department. Instead of locking up people for abnormal sexual activities, the communist justice system offered an alternative: by providing emotional and psychological assistance as well as work, people charged with sexual crimes could be "healed" and reintegrated into society.<sup>525</sup> As the official legal journal of the Communists declared, the mission of the Department was to "reform and focus on prevention instead of giving out barbaric punishments."<sup>526</sup> In cases where psychological help would not be enough, people would be placed in a "gyógyintézet," a healing institution specifically designed for criminals.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Sarlós in *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényszéke* talks about how when they believed that person under investigation was not a "recidivist offender" the Experimental Criminology Department in collaboration with the Budapest Revolutionary Tribunal arranged a job (often in a factory), as they believed that providing economic livelihood and social structure was the most beneficial "punishment" for both the accused as well as for the communist society as a whole. 110-112.

<sup>526</sup> Depending on their "condition" reforming people would take place at different reformatory camps, where they would be required to work. Kádár Imre. "Aktuális Kriminálpolitikai Reformok." *Proletárjog: a Szocialista Jogászszövetség Hivatalos Lapja*, 11 (1919): 78.

<sup>527</sup> The phrase "gyógyintézet," literally means "healing institute," which implies a friendlier and perhaps more personal approach than the expression medical hospital.

The second case study involved A. H., a Red Guard who had been accused by his wife of sleeping with his non-biological daughter...as well as with his dog.<sup>528</sup> The case of A.H. is not about homosexuality, yet as historians of sexuality in other contexts have demonstrated, examining the ways in which the experts made sense of his sexual “abnormalities,” offer further insights into the Experimental Criminology Department’s treatment of sexuality.<sup>529</sup> Therefore, even though the conjuncture of bestiality and non-normative penetrative sex in this case, is coincidental rather than conceptual, in light of the dearth of surviving documents on the Experimental Criminology Department, I believe an examination of the case is necessary.<sup>530</sup> Since A.H. was a member of the Red Guards, the official army of the Communist regime, the case was tried by the Military Tribunal. It is in and of itself significant that the Military Tribunal, notoriously guarded about its power, would send one of their own to be examined by the Experimental Criminology Department. While there is no question that A.H. would have been guilty under the old “traditional” system of justice, the guiding principles of the new communist “revolutionary” justice offered the possibility of his acquittal. Indeed, coming from the exploited working class, enlisted to be a member of the Communist regime’s new armed force, and being a useful member of the forming new proletarian society. The surviving medical description of A.H. stated;

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<sup>528</sup> Following the Soviet model, Red Guards were the members of the Hungarian Soviet Republic’s armed forces.

<sup>529</sup> Jens Rydstrom in *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950*, convincingly illustrates how discussing bestiality and homosexuality in the tandem, provides important insights to how non-normative sexuality and particularly same-sex sexuality was historically understood. More specifically, Rydstrom argues that male same-sex sexuality and bestiality as sexual practices were linked in both legal and medical discourses and also in practice in rural societies. With society’s transformation from rural to urban, penetrative sodomy was no longer associated with bestiality, but rather with homosexuality.

<sup>530</sup> To be clear, I do not see evidence of equating homosexuality with incest and bestiality either in medical or legal discourse, or in practice, in 1919.

A.H. is forty-two year old day laborer. His perception and memory are both good. He has acquired appropriate knowledge from his schooling and profession. His interest is mostly of things that directly affect him. He is a hard working and diligent worker with the intention to further his material position. In 1916 he was hit by a grenade exposition, following which he was treated for complaints of nervousness ... He has nervous irritability, which manifests itself also in the fact that small shocks can have much greater psychological effects than would be the case with normal individuals.

His sexual life shows no abnormal signs, according to him it was neither too intense nor perverted in its object choice. The suspect categorically denies the charges.

Based on the symptoms of nervousness [neurosis], his accountability needs to be seen as limited.<sup>531</sup>

Following the detailed analysis the medical opinion concluded that,

Mrs. H, thirty-eight years old suffered an accident in January 1919, when a heavy wood stump fell on her head. She had a long recovery and according to her she has never recovered her work stamina and has also become more forgetful. According to acquaintances, her character has changed since the accident; she has been quarreling more with her children and has been also rougher with them then she used to be.

She exhibits some psychological weakness. She has an intense forgetfulness both for old and new things. Her ability to judge and perception are limited. Her acquired knowledge is small and it is likely that she has always been feeble-minded (gyenge felfogású).

The symptoms of her current mental weakness coincide with the injury she suffered in January. It is probable she had a concussion, which explains her current state.<sup>532</sup>

It is highly probably that from 1909 to 1912 the suspect raped his 6-9 years old non-biological daughter, a criminal act that fulfills §235 of the Penal Code.

It is also likely that he committed the given crime repeatedly within this time frame, and also caused an infection with the Plaintiff that took over 20 days to recover from. That he had sex with the dog is questionable.

Having announced the suspect committed these “crimes,” the opinion goes on to declare that nevertheless, there were “extremely mitigating circumstances,” including; the

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<sup>531</sup> BFL 12/658, 138/1919, 669/a.

<sup>532</sup> BFL 12/658, 138/1919, 669/b.

suspect's lack of adequate moral defense against his own sick (beteges) inclination, the lack of his proper education, his low intelligence level, and through no fault of his own, his very meager living conditions, and the indifference of his surroundings. An additional mitigating factor was that H. had no prior criminal record. The crucial mitigating factor the opinion cited was the fact that because of his incredibly hard working nature H had been a useful and productive member of society.<sup>533</sup> Finally, the report concluded that,

It is not necessary to take any action against the suspect. Since the time of his crime, over seven years, he has exhibited impeccable sexual behavior, which makes the probability of the repetition of his crime highly unlikely. Individual prevention is unnecessary, social prevention, the motive for punishment in this particular instance is not as significant as the fact that Mrs. H is mentally weak and has limited working abilities, so the family of the suspect (A.H.) cannot do without him.<sup>534</sup>

H's medical opinion conveys a number of telling details about wider norms and understanding of sexuality. The obviously gendered and age-blind consideration of the crime points to a considerable gap between Communist theory and practice. As previously pointed out, immediately after coming into power the Hungarian Communists granted equality to women and unprecedented rights to children. However, as the case of H. demonstrates the formal declaration of women's equality and the protection of children, did not necessarily mean changes in practice. The rights and well-being of the male breadwinner continued to be more important than of those the wife and child(ren.) In fact, one could make the argument that because in the former system the sexual assault of children was punishable, in this instance, the Communist justice actually placed women and children in a more vulnerable position.

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<sup>533</sup> BFL 12/658, 138/1919, 669/b.

<sup>534</sup> BFL 12/658, 138/1919, 669/b, BFL 12/658, 138/1919, 669/c.

Moreover, similarly to the case of F., the experts' statements bear the signs of a socio-psychological approach, which stresses the psychological as well as socio-economical factors that facilitated the crime. In this particular case, the economic health of the family supersedes the psychological health of the family. According to the opinion, the fact that the suspect had been a productive worker basically overrode any claims about his non-normative sexual behavior and bulk of the blame goes to the former bourgeoisie and capitalist system that exploited its poor labor force. In line with Communist ideas of justice, which propagated that "only those activities can be considered criminal, which are deemed dangerous to the present and future socialist society," the opinion excuses H's actions, as they no longer posed a threat to society.<sup>535</sup> By using psychological and socio-economic reasoning the experts simultaneously acknowledged the validity of the wife's allegations while also dismissing them. Mrs. H's psychological problems along with her and her daughter's dependence on the accused H were sufficient justification for the dismissal of the case.

But what is interesting in terms of the conceptualization of sexuality is the way in which the experts explained H's sexual aberration and crime. Once again, similarly to the previous case non-normative sexuality was not a medical condition, nor was it pathologized. Instead, it was conceptualized as a state that arose from structural and psychological traumas and the experts understood as a "situational." As the records of H's personal history illustrate, because he had been exploited materially and consequently, was psychologically deficient, H's sexuality was a result of environmental factors. In other words, it was acquired. One was not born with abnormal sexuality. One became sexually abnormal due to abnormal personal and emotional developments

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<sup>535</sup> Sarlós, *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényszékei*, 106.

that were most often the consequences of social and environmental circumstances. Moreover, if abnormal sexuality was acquired and in case of the working class through no fault of their own, sexual offenses, which would have been punished under the old justice system, would often go unpunished. In accordance with the Communist leaderships' goal for the Experimental Criminology Department it seems that similar to the other *közönséges bűnügyek* (ordinary crimes), there were only a very few cases when people were found guilty of sexual crimes. The principles of the courts: comprehensive evaluation and a plan for rehabilitation, applied to sexual crimes as well. However, if the perpetrators came from the former exploiting capitalist classes there was no room for Communist empathy. Scholars of other regional communist tribunals have found that when the accused were from a "formerly exploitative" background, they were severely punished.<sup>536</sup> The methods and surviving evidence from the Experimental Criminology Department suggest that a similar dynamic occurred within its cases as well.

### *Conclusion*

The work of the Experimental Criminology Department of Hungarian Soviet Republic represents a radically different approach to sexuality. It was an approach that centered on a psycho-social analysis and the examination of suspects' personal and sexual history. Thus, rather than focusing on a given crime and its circumstances or motives, the experts of the Experimental Criminology Department looked to the "background study" and the intimate personal histories of individuals. This was not a method and perspective that had been the case previously, nor would it be after the brief

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<sup>536</sup> According to surviving statistics of the work of the Revolutionary Tribunals there were only a few cases where people were charged for sexual crimes. However, the few cases where the documents survived suggest that if the perpetrators came from the former exploiter capitalist classes they were severely punished. A váci, 1920. augusztus 11-13i jegyzék 18.t. a. cited in Sarlós, *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényeségei*, 191-192.



existence of the Communist regime. The thorough examination of the suspect's family history and the consideration of the emotional and sexual feelings of individuals attest to the centrality that sexuality, psyche, and socio-economic circumstance played in both the assessment of crime, as well as in the treatment of suspects. Having incorporated ideas from psychoanalytic, psychological and sociological theories experts considered same-sex sexuality and non-normative sexuality more generally to be primarily "situational". Importantly, akin to most psychoanalysts, the Communist also believed that there were "authentic" and biologically innate homosexuals. And in fact, when a case was deemed to involve an "authentic" homosexual, the Communists planned to protect them, as long as they were productive members of society was this clear enough in the, who engaged in consensual sexual activities, and did not spread sexually transmitted illnesses. But apart from those deemed "nature's aberrations," sexuality was considered as fluid and not innate. The opinions of the Criminology Court experts reveal how in their medical approaches to sexuality, experts regarded and explained sexual crimes and non-normative sexualities, as symptoms of unresolved traumas from people's pasts. Consequently, non-hetero and non-normative sexuality was overwhelmingly conceptualized neither as an innate condition, nor necessarily as an immoral or criminal act. Implicit in this conceptualization was the belief that since sexuality was "situational," sexuality could be changed and abnormal sexuality could be "healed." There were three reasons why such a distinctive approach could come about.

First, the Experimental Criminology Department's conceptualization and treatment of non-normative sexuality was intimately tied to the Hungarian Communist leadership's aim to radically reform society, and the belief that people were malleable.

The ultimate goal of the Communist leadership was to create a socialist society and thus, confidence in the malleability of human beings was essential. As this chapter demonstrated, ideas around sexuality embodied this Communistic vision. Echoing Communist authorities' aspiration to transform people into communist subjects, the experts of the Experimental Criminology Department believed that the majority of "sexual abnormals," could and should be rehabilitated into a heteronormative lifestyle. In this respect, the Department's approach towards queers reflected the larger revolutionary project that aimed to transform society by turning Hungarian subjects into Hungarian communist citizens. The "scientific" methods of the Experimental Criminology Department were in the forefront of this process.

Second, the presence of novel Communist principles within the justice system was instrumental in making environmental factors solely responsible for sexuality, which ultimately enabled homosexuality to go unpunished. If we place the study of non-normative sexuality within the non-politically charged ordinary crime cases of the Hungarian Soviet Republic we gain significant insights. The records of the Experimental Department Criminology Department and particularly, the two case studies considered in this chapter, bring to light a principle of the Communist justice system which stood in contrast to the liberal justice system of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the future courts of the conservative Horthy regime. Specifically, unlike any other justice systems, during the brief Communist rule in 1919 non-normative sexuality and even violent sexual crimes could go unpunished as long as they did not directly pose a threat or endangered the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Enacting the communist legal philosophy, "...even if a deed might fall under a paragraph of the existing criminal code, but it poses no

danger to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the person who committed the deed cannot be considered guilty of a crime,” the Experimental Criminology Department did not punish people for their sexual aberrations.<sup>537</sup>

Third, was the institutionalization of formerly marginalized sciences—a process closely linked to both Communist ideas of justice and of reforming society. In part because of the genuine interest of the Communist regime in establishing cutting edge scientific work and partly because of the strong connections between Communists and the new sciences, the emerging professions of sociology, psychology, and psychoanalyses could endorse the Communist vision. The Communist leadership embraced these three sciences and bestowed upon them a central place in the justice system. These new sciences became the means to enact scientific judgment and the primary tools for the successful reintegration of those who were deemed curable. Together, these aspects of the Hungarian Communist rule contributed and facilitated to the radically different approach of the Experimental Criminology Department, which was radical in its understanding and treatment of non-normative sexuality not only within the Hungarian context but also, in the larger international scene.

It is crucial to consider the implication of the Communist approach to sexuality for homosexuals and non-normative sexuality more generally. The Communist approach was radical, not only in its rehabilitative and social approach to non-normative sexual crimes but also because of the allowance it left for communist subjects to be not strictly heteronormative. According to the Communists, engaging in consensual same-sex activity did not necessarily harm the health of the Hungarian society. As long as they were otherwise productive workers and were healthy (free of sexually transmitted

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<sup>537</sup> Sarlós, *A Tanácsköztársaság forradalmi törvényszékei*, 106.

illnesses), homosexual and queer men for the first time could legally fulfill their sexual desires. However, such recognition and protection of homosexuality would have been short lived. Even though the Communists believed that there were innate homosexuals and queers who could not be rehabilitated at the time, over the course of turning Hungary into a socialist society, the socio-economic and personal circumstances that enabled homosexuality for the majority of people would wither away. Believing that sexuality for the great majority was fluid and that it was the wrong social and socio-economic environment along with unfortunate family dynamics that *caused* homo (and non-normative) sexuality was a short relief for homosexuals. Such an understanding of sexuality, although it offered a temporary relief, as it made homosexuality not punishable, in the long run likely would have prohibited the idea not only of respectful homosexuality but the very notion of homo and non-normative sexuality.

Paradoxically, in terms of queer sexualities, and most certainly “respectable” homosexuality in the long run, the Communist approach would have offered much less space than both the previous and subsequent political system. As discussed in the previous chapters, the liberal justice system during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, even though it criminalized male homosexuality, in practice was actually quite lenient. By only punishing those homosexual behaviors that involved other criminal activities or disturbed the public the liberal justice system not only offered a considerable space for urban homosexuals but at times even active protection. Similarly, the next two chapters will demonstrate how following the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and the consolidation of power in the hands of Admiral Horthy, the interwar political system, in its treatment of homosexuality adopted the prewar liberal practices. In addition, not only

did the conservative authoritarian political regime continue the practice of the pre-1914 authorities, but also by enforcing a particular silence around homosexuality, it in fact facilitated a growing homosexual subculture.

As ephemeral as the existence of Communist regime and the Experimental Criminology Department was, their approach and ideas about queer sexuality had lasting effects. Despite of the radical political changes that followed the fall of the Communist Republic, the idea that sexuality was malleable and that some forms of homosexuality was “curable” remained influential throughout the coming decades. The international legacy of the novel approaches of the Experimental Criminology Department would be assured by the immigration of some of the major Hungarian psychoanalytical figures.<sup>538</sup> Their resettling in Germany, England and the United States ensured that the legacy of the Hungarian Communist approach would continue. Moreover, even if the heyday of Hungarian psychoanalysis (and more generally the reign of science) was over, the Hungarian psychoanalytic school continued to operate throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>539</sup> While Experimental Criminology Department was closed, the personnel who had been informed by and believed in the power of science to change people’s sexual orientation continued to work in both official and private practice.<sup>540</sup> The next two chapters will demonstrate that the Experimental Criminology Department, not unlike

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<sup>538</sup> With the passing of anti-Jewish laws in 1920 and establishment of an authoritarian antisemitic government Hungarian psychoanalysts, and professionals of Jewish origin left the country in waves. Some of the most influential psychoanalytical theorists who left included Géza Roheim, Géza Révész, and Dezső Rapaport. Sándor Ferenczi died in 1933.

<sup>539</sup> For a detailed history of the psychoanalyst movement during the interwar years see Harmat, Pál. *Freud, Ferenczi És a Magyarországi Pszichoanalízis: a Budapesti Mélylélektani Iskola Története, 1908-1993*.

<sup>540</sup> According to some sources, for instance Ferenczi’s ability to “cure” people of their homosexuality was so internationally renowned that he received patients from as far as the United States during the 1920s. Eszenyi, Miklós, and László. Zahuczky. “Ferenczi És Kortársai a Homoszexualitásról.” *Thalassa* 21, no. 4 (2008), 96.

Tábori and Székely the two investigative journalists, had a lasting influence on official understandings of homosexuality.

## Chapter Four

### Peepholes and “Sprouts”: Servant Voices Speak of Same-Sex Sexuality in Interwar Hungary

From 1867 to 1914, Hungarians, often pompously, demonstrated their supposed cultural and economic superiority over all other East-Central Europeans, despite their continuing inferiority complex with regard to Austria. Refusing parliamentary representation of non-Hungarians, forced Magyarization, and economic subsidies to ethnic Hungarians were crucial components of every Hungarian government throughout the years of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>541</sup> It was not only non-Hungarians who were discriminated against. The Hungarian political elite systematically failed to grant civil liberties to Hungarian peasants and raise the standard of living for most of its rural population.<sup>542</sup> Thus, even as modernization accelerated in urban areas, the life in the *puszta* and *falu* (Hungarian word for rural land and village) remained relatively untouched. Traditional social norms and the Catholic Church governed people's lives.

At the same time, the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century constituted the most liberal and socially progressive era in Hungary's history. Major urban centers across the country, and Budapest in particular, became hotbeds of cutting edge intellectual, artistic, and progressive work. Popular democracy was also stretching its wings, albeit slowly, meeting with little success until

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<sup>541</sup> The efforts to assimilate ethnic minorities mirrored contemporary policies of Germany and Russia. The Magyarization of non-Hungarian population was incredibly success. Between 1880 and 19010 approximately 700'000 Jews, 600'000 Germans, 400'000 Slovaks, 100'000 South Slavs and 100'000 person of other origins declared themselves Hungarian. Lendvai, Paul. *The Hungarians: a Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003, 328.

<sup>542</sup> According to the Law XXXIII of 1874, only those men with property (land or minimum of three bedroom town apartment) or with independent own business and those with University diploma. Consequently, prior to WWI, about 6-7% of the population was eligible to vote.

the end of the War.<sup>543</sup> There was considerable room for political, social, and cultural debates, as long as discussions were not overtly anti-Hungarian or anti-governmental. As a consequence, in politics, as well as in the cultural and social spheres, there was diversity. Parties and groups ranging from the very conservative to the very liberal were represented and active.<sup>544</sup> In addition, there was a considerable German and increasingly significant Jewish minority, whose economic and cultural influence was exceptionally strong in Budapest.<sup>545</sup> Urban areas also tended to be much more secular than their rural counterparts. One signal of this increasing secularization was that intermarriage between religions became more common.<sup>546</sup> In sum, by facilitating the exposure to difference, a more tolerant social environment, and less oversight by the Church, life in the city offered more room for people to challenge traditional norms. Thus, living in a city made it much more difficult to adhere to the traditional customs of the countryside.

Tension between liberal and conservative ideas had been brewing before WWI. Essentially, these competing ideologies held radically different goals for Hungary's future; the first was a more exclusive, ethnic, and religiously defined vision, while the other was based on secular principles, and aimed to pursue the more inclusive politics of

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<sup>543</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, there were a number of parties from right to left on the political spectrum. For instance, for a brief time there was a National Antisemite Party that could delegate seventeen members to the parliament in 1883. On the other hand, soon after the Social Democratic party was established in 1890 they were able to muster around 200,000 members in their union. In addition there was also the emerging Catholic party, Christian socialist and Peasant parties.

<sup>544</sup> Kozári, Monika. *A Dualista Rendszer, 1867-1918*. [Budapest]: Pannonica, 2005, 143-150. Mérei Gyula, and Pölöskei Ferenc, eds. *Magyarországi pártprogramok : 1867-1919*. Budapest: ELTE-Eötvös kiadó, 2003.

<sup>545</sup> By 1910 over thirty percent of the inhabitants of Budapest identified as Jewish.

<sup>546</sup> This was greatly aided by the secularization of marriage in 1894, by the law XXXI. For a history of the legal evolution of the institution of marriage in Hungary see, Dr. Herger Csabáne. "A Polgári Házasság Kialakulása és Rendszere Magyarországon Nemzetközi Fejlődés Tükrében," (The evolution and establishment of Civil Marriage in Hungary from an International Perspective). Pécsi Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Karának Doktori Iskolája, 2005.



Western European countries.<sup>547</sup> By the late nineteenth century, conservative political voices emphasized that Hungary's future lay in the strengthening of the (ethnic and religious) purity of Hungarians.<sup>548</sup> These voices associated urban life with decadence, immorality, and the weakening or dilution of the Hungarian *faj* [race].<sup>549</sup> They believed that the country could prosper without reforming the embedded social relations that made upward social mobility almost impossible and kept most of the ethnic minorities, rural Hungarians, and women outside of formal politics.<sup>550</sup> In contrast, most people on the political left and in liberal political groups (in the capital and in other cities) stressed the importance of economic liberalism along with the necessity of land reform and the incorporation of ethnic minorities, urban workers, and women in the national community through the extension of voting rights.<sup>551</sup> According to this liberal rhetoric, the feudal hierarchical social structure coupled with limited voting rights, were two of the greatest barriers to the country's modernization. The key to Hungary's future, they argued, was the extension of mandatory secular education to even the smallest village. While most of the traditional Hungarian nobility and middle class sided with conservative ethnic Hungarians, Jewish and German urban middle classes and a new generation of urban lesser nobility supported radical reforms.

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<sup>547</sup> Of course, each of these, loosely defined sides were heterogeneous and included multiple competing visions. For a discussion of social and political tension at the end of the nineteenth century see Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*. 70-88.

<sup>548</sup> The infamous *Lex Apponyi*, the law that made Hungarian the mandatory language in all secular and religious educational institutions in 1907 was hailed as a success. At the same time, these conservative voices were against secularization and believed that the (Catholic) church should play a greater role in governing Hungary's internal affairs.

<sup>549</sup> However, it is important to point out that at this point apart from the insignificant Anitsemita Párt (Antisemite party), *faj* and the strengthening of the nation was thought be achieved through cultural and religious assimilation.

<sup>550</sup> Deák, István. *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*. New York, N.Y.: Institute on East Central Europe Columbia University, 1989. 9-11.

<sup>551</sup> Prior to WWI the number of eligible voters were between 6 and 7 percent. In comparison, in Austria it was twenty, while in France it twenty-eight. Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*, 20.

The tension between these different visions increasingly came to define not only politics, but also the cultural and intellectual landscape. Those who prioritized the importance of strengthening ethnic Hungarians by focusing on installing core Hungarian values and traditions tended to be less inclusive, often antisemitic, and occasionally anti-German. Those with left-leaning and liberal world views, continued to emphasize the importance of catching up with and taking part of the ongoing process of (Western) European modernization and cultural progress. They tended to be more accepting and welcoming of ethnic and religious difference and wanted to incorporate Hungary into Western European discourses.

While the war years exacerbated the existing tensions, it was the subsequent Aster and Communist revolutions that brought them into sharp relief. The loss of WWI and the disintegration of the Monarchy came as a shock for most Hungarians. Due to the long reign of the Austro-Hungarian empire (spanning nearly three hundred and fifty years), “the proclamation of a sovereign Hungarian state was met with widespread rejoicing.”<sup>552</sup> For the first time, there was a real possibility for comprehensive democratic reforms. Consequently, the declaration of an independent Hungarian Republic, led by social democrats, was seen as an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of democracies in the West. This idea proved to be short-lived. In addition to the inadequacies of the Károlyi-led government which failed to implement comprehensive reforms fast enough, the blatant anti-Hungarian measures of the Entente delegitimized pro-democratic and pro-Western groups.<sup>553</sup> The brutal attacks of the Communists on the traditional ruling

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<sup>552</sup> Deák, István. *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*, 1.

<sup>553</sup> Despite that the “winners” right to dictate and shape the peace terms, the Treaty of Tiranon turned out to be an absolute diplomatic failure on the part of the Entente powers. By failing to redraw the map of East-Central Europe along more or less ethnic lines, most especially the French

classes, private property, and religion, discredited the political left not only within the eyes of the educated classes, but also contributed to an increase in antisemitism in the countryside.<sup>554</sup> The loss of the Hungarian Red Army--that led to the fall of the Soviet Republic, and consequent occupation of Budapest by the Romanian army--closed a chapter in Hungarian history. Up until the end of World War II, both pro-democracy and pro-socialist voices were tainted by the legacy of the Károlyi and Kun regimes. Their aim to remake Hungary as part of the international democratic or communist world also ensured that the focus of the ensuing conservative political regime would be exclusively nationalist.

The organization of counter-revolutionary forces, known as the Whites, was already taking place during the Communist rule.<sup>555</sup> The militant anticommunist forces gathered around Admiral Miklós Horthy in the southeastern town of Szeged. Upon the withdrawal of Romanian forces in November of 1919, the counterrevolutionary army entered Budapest.<sup>556</sup> Even before it arrived to the capital, the so-called “White Terror” began. The retaliation against communists and their alleged sympathizers was incredibly brutal. Without formal trials or any attempt of judiciary intervention, counter revolutionary forces targeted communists, socialists, leftist intellectuals, and Jews. The

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leadership, made a fatal error and contributed to future (and still ongoing) ethnic/national tensions in the region.

<sup>554</sup> A great majority of communists were Jewish and thus, the backlash to communism exacerbated antisemitism. Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*, 20- 24.

<sup>555</sup> Paksa, Rudolf. *A Magyar Szélsőjobboldal Története* (The History of the Hungarian Far Right), 44-61. Zinner, Tibor. *Az Ébredők fénykora, 1919-1923*. (The Golden Age of the Awakenings) Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989.

<sup>556</sup> In August 1919, the Romanian forces, with the exception of Dél-Dunántúl, occupied the entire country. Following increasing pressure from the Entente powers Romania finally withdraw its forces. And while they left Budapest in November, they continued to occupy the southern part of the country until April 1920. Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*, chapter 5: Az ellenforradalom hatalomra jutása és a trianoni békeszerződés (The coming to power of the Counterrevolutionaries and the Treaty of Trianon).

exact number of people who were executed without a trial is still debated.<sup>557</sup> Recent scholarship estimates that between one and two thousand people were killed.<sup>558</sup> The number of people who were imprisoned by the Whites is also contested, but the number was most certainly in the tens of thousands. In addition, tens of thousands of people fled the country to escape retaliation.<sup>559</sup> Amidst the brutal attacks and executions, which Admiral Horthy and his close echelon endorsed, the counterrevolutionary forces established tight control over the country. Horthy's personal connection to the White Terror--as well as the personal involvement of many of his political leaders in the siege--set the tone for the establishment of a repressive conservative political system. By March 1920, the new Hungarian political order was in place.<sup>560</sup> Hungary became a Constitutional Monarchy without a king. Admiral Horthy, as Regent assumed many of the king's privileges, which he made use of until his abdication of power in 1944. Between 1920 and 1944, Hungary was a rightist country with authoritarian measures, ruled by a competing old conservative Right and a new Radical Right.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> There were competing accounts of the White Terror from the onset. While, communist émigrés accounted for huge numbers, the sympathizers of Horthy denied the Terror and put the blame on the Soviet Republic. During the communist era between 1948 and 1989, the numbers of White Terror were highly exaggerated. Since the 1990s, there have been different interpretations. The best summary of different numbers and accounts of the events is Bődök Gergely. "Vörös És Fehér: Terror, Retorzió És Számonkérés Magyarországon 1919–1921" (Red and White: Terror, and Retaliation in Hungary 1919-1921). *Kommentár*, no. 3 (2011). [http://kommentar.info.hu/iras/2011\\_3/voros\\_es\\_feher](http://kommentar.info.hu/iras/2011_3/voros_es_feher). Last accessed July 10, 2012.

<sup>558</sup> Prior to 1989, according to the accounts of communist historians the numbers of executed was five thousands, there were 75'000 people imprisoned, and about 100'000 emigrated. See for instance, Unger, Mátyás, and Ottó Szabolcs. *Magyarország Története: Rövid Áttekintés* (History of Hungary: a brief overview). 4th ed. Budapest: Gondolat, 1979, 308.

<sup>559</sup> Bődök Gergely. "Vörös És Fehér: Terror, Retorzió És Számonkérés Magyarországon 1919–1921."

<sup>560</sup> Horthy was named regent of Hungary on March 1, 1920.

<sup>561</sup> As historian István Deák, succinctly states throughout the interwar years, "the rivalries between these two closely related, overlapping, and yet often bitterly antagonistic forces caused a constant shifting in Hungarian politics between parliamentarism and fascism, between an anglophile and germanophile foreign policy." *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*, 2-3.

Three months following the consolidation of Horthy's power, Hungary's new "mutilated" borders were granted legality by the Western powers. The signing of the Treaty of Trianon in June 1920 brought about the greatest disaster in Hungary's history since its defeat by the Ottomans in 1526.<sup>562</sup> It was a political, economic, and social catastrophe that affected all Hungarians. The country lost sixty-seven percent of its pre-WWI territory and fifty-three percent of its pre-war population. Without counting the non-Hungarian population, it is estimated that about 3.2 million ethnic Hungarians found themselves stranded outside of Hungary's new borders.<sup>563</sup> Hungary entered World War I as part of one of the prominent continental powers and finished it as one of the most battered. At the onset of the war, Hungary was one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Europe; following the Treaty of Trianon, it became one of, if not the most, homogenous.<sup>564</sup> The new, conservative leadership had no choice but to sign the Treaty and renounce its validity from the onset. Thus, the renegotiation and revision of the Treaty became a foundational goal of the Horthy regime.

In sharp contrast to any of the previous political regimes that were in power between 1867 and 1920, the counterrevolutionary forces under the aegis of Admiral Horthy established their rule based on two principles: Christian nationalism and irredentism. In contrast to the immoderate liberal times prior to the Great War and the "horrificing deeds" of the Social Democrats and the Communists in 1918-9, Horthy and his conservative government wanted the new Hungary to be firmly grounded in

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<sup>562</sup> Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*. Budapest: Osiris, 2010, 147.

<sup>563</sup> In addition to the territorial and population loss, almost half of the country's industry was now outside of Hungary. With such drastic reduction of land, the country's agriculture was no longer sufficient to supply even the remaining population. Even the remaining industry had a difficult time as the great majority of regions that used to supply raw material was now outside of Hungary.

<sup>564</sup> In 1914 Hungary was truly multiethnic, Hungarians comprising barely over 50% of approximately 20,8 million population of the country. In contrast in 1920, less than 10 percent of Hungary's now 7,9 million population was non-Hungarian. Romsics, Ignác. *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*, 188.

conservative ideology. The ideology was simple; “anti-Bolshevism, historical values, positive Christianity, order, authority, and opposition to Jewish influence.”<sup>565</sup> In addition to the retaliation against the Communists and their sympathizers, the institution of censorship in the media, art, and politics, along with the passing of the first postwar anti-Jewish law in Europe, were the hallmarks of the Horthy regime during the first five years of the 1920s.<sup>566</sup> To heal the traumas of WWI and subsequent revolutions, the Hungarian conservative elite aimed to (re)create a class-based society guided by Christian faith.<sup>567</sup> Unlike neighboring Czechoslovakia, France, England, and Weimar Germany which all held multiple political discourses during the 1920s, conservative nationalism went unchallenged in Hungary. Having ousted or annihilated proponents of communism, social democracy, and liberalism, the Hungarian elite was united in their belief of Christian conservatism and irredentism.<sup>568</sup> But what did such extreme nationalism and Christian governance mean for the understanding and treatment of non-normative sexualities? How would the view of homosexuals change from their former status as symbols of Hungary’s modernity during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and as

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<sup>565</sup> Deák, *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*, 20.

<sup>566</sup> The so-called Numerus Clausus was first passed in Hungary in 1920 and limited the number of Jewish university students to 6%. The strict censorship was lifted in two years. Even if the official rhetoric remained strictly conservatism from 1922 there was a wide range of political and ideological voices that could be published.

<sup>567</sup> And where every Hungarian would be educated about and working on correcting the horrific injustice of the Treaty of Trianon. With immigration of Hungarians from the new nation states from the former territories of Austro-Hungary Horthy was to rein the densest country in the Carpathian basin. On the history of Christian churches and Hungarian politics see Hanebrink, Paul. *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944*.

<sup>568</sup> More recent Hungarian scholarship stresses that the extent of and degree of conservatism in deed varied throughout the 1920s and especially from 1925 until 1930 conservatives did make some concessions in order to please the Entente and the international community. For the some of the latest see for instance, János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok: a magyar nemzeteszme és nacionalizmus története* and Romsics’ *Magyarország Története a XX. Században*, However, it the readjustment of national territory was a fundamental goal of every government of interwar Hungary.

malleable Communist subjects who could be rehabilitated as productive heterosexual members of the Hungarian Communist society?

The current and the following chapter will aim to answer these questions, albeit using very different case studies. While the next chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the legal prosecution of homosexuality between the two World Wars, in this chapter I examine a single case--interwar Hungary's most notorious scandal in which the country's leading women were implicated as being homosexuals. Paying close attention to medical and legal experts of the trials, I will show how despite a deeply conservative climate during the Horthy regime, there were clear continuities in the conceptualization of homosexuality from the liberal Austrian-Hungarian era, as well as from the time of Soviet Republic. In the process of contextualizing the scandal, I will explore why, although a national sensation at the time, the charges of female homosexuality did not damage Hungary's two most prominent conservative women of the interwar period. An analysis of the highly charged political circumstances of scandal aside, the "shocking" details of the trial that fascinated contemporaries, such as the Count's order to have a peephole drilled into the ceiling of his wife's bedroom in order to spy on her activities, also offer a rare and indispensable view of contemporary conceptualizations of female (homo)sexuality. Through the particularly intriguing voices of the servant witnesses in the case, I will assert that despite urban-rural differences in the language of female homosexuality neither country folk, nor sophisticated urbanites, could imagine female same-sex sexuality outside of a strictly heteronormative framework.

The names of Oscar Wilde, Radclyffe Hall, or even Prince Eulenburg need no introduction; their place for historians of sexuality is forever secured. In this chapter,

however, I turn to an individual of international reputation and contemporary prominence, whose scandal of female homosexuality—despite its high political stakes, juicy bedroom details, long line of distinguished witnesses, and rampant press coverage—was largely forgotten. The first part of this chapter will consider why a divorce and libel case involving two of Hungary’s leading women, that became a national sensation during the interwar period, could have been subsequently forgotten. Using an analysis of the political context and roles of the major characters involved, I will argue that the very reasons the case was scandalous for contemporaries also ensured its erasure from historical memory. While the protagonists’ class position, political conservatism, and disavowal of homosexuality created a national scandal at the time, their story—unlike Wilde’s or Hall’s—was of little use for historians (and the homosexual community itself) who were reclaiming more triumphalist gay identities and history. The reconstruction of the trials offers an invaluable window into the competing discourses and expressions of sexual knowledge. Placing the divorce and libel cases in the cultural context of post-Trianon and post-Soviet Republic Hungary, I will examine how newspapers, legal and medical experts, the protagonists, and the servants expressed and negotiated their understandings of female same-sex sexuality. Analyzing the records of the trials of Hungary’s two most powerful women reveals how the logic of constructing the trials around servant testimonies and knowledge, namely because of their insider position within the world of the aristocracy, also assured the eventual discrediting of those testimonials. Last but not least, by placing servant voices center stage within concurrent legal and medical discourses, it is possible to discern the strong presence of a vernacular



understanding of homosexuality that was specific to issues of gender, class, and geography.

### *Contemporary Fame & Future Oblivion*

The political and social implications at stake in the divorce trial of Count Rafael Zichy and his wife, Eduardina Pallavicini, along with the fame of the implicated third person, Cecilé Tormay, made scandal inevitable. Cecilé Tormay and Eduardina Pallavicini were two of the most influential, politically active, and publicly visible women of the reigning conservative regime during the interwar period.<sup>569</sup> In the eyes of many people in the interwar years, Cecilé Tormay represented the “Great Saving Soul” of “Mutilated Hungary.” For most Hungarians, as well as foreigners, she was known as the writer of “*Bujdosó könyv*,” or *An outlaw’s diary*, an internationally-acclaimed book about the evils of communism.<sup>570</sup> This work was allegedly an account of her personal experience of the horrors of the so-called Aster Revolution following WWI and the subsequent short-lived Soviet Republic of Hungary.<sup>571</sup> Written in first person, the Tormay spoke on behalf the Hungarian gentry and privileged classes whose former way of life and power was wiped away by the Communists.<sup>572</sup> Considering the prevailing fears of the ruling classes across

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<sup>569</sup> The reverberating consequences of the Communist regime’s treatment of sexuality will be the subject of the next chapter. Nevertheless, the current chapter’s investigation of a high-profile divorce and libel case involving charges of female also has to be seen in the post Communist era.

<sup>570</sup> Cécile Tormay, *Bujdosó könyv feljegyzések 1918-1919-ből*. Budapest: Pallas irodalmi és nyomdai r.t. kiadása, 1921. Following the Hungarian edition the book was translated into English, German, and French, and according to contemporary as well as current works on Tormay acclaimed great success. The most comprehensive contemporary account of Tormay is by János Hankiss, *Tormay Cécile* (Budapest: Singer & Wolfner, 1939). The latest current manuscript on her life is Krisztina Kollarits’ *Egy bujdosó írónő--Tormay Cécile* (A fugitive writer: Cécile Tormay). Vasszilvágy: Magyar Nyugat, 2010.

<sup>571</sup> Since 1989, historians have revealed that Tormay could not have been present at many of the events she recounts as an “eyewitness.” Between 1920 and 1921 the book was translated into English, French and German and received international appraisal.

<sup>572</sup> Tormay was a representative of Hungarian gentry and many of the aristocracy, whom blamed Hungary’s as well as their own decline on the Jewish community.

Europe about the spread of the “Communist Menace,” we can understand why Tormay’s book was so well received, not only in Hungary but abroad as well.

Tormay, who had previously been recognized as a literary writer for her novels *People between the Stones* and *The Old House*, changed her genre and became political with the publication of *An outlaw’s diary*.<sup>573</sup> More like her male counterparts, and perhaps to a greater extent than most of them, in *An outlaw’s diary* Tormay was extremely expressive of her political views. The book begins with the fall of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the establishment of independent Hungary. The following is a short excerpt where Tormay describes her feelings as she stood in front of the Hungarian Parliament when the establishment of the Hungarian Democratic Republic was announced publicly on November 16, 1918:

It is to our everlasting shame that no single Hungarian rose to choke these words. In the Hall of Hungary's parliament Lenin's agent could unfurl at his ease the flag of Bolshevism, could blow the clarion of social revolution and announce the advent of a world revolution, while outside, in Parliament Square, Lovászi and Bokányi, accompanied by Jászi, informed the people that the National Council had proclaimed the Republic. On the staircase Károlyi made another oration. Down in the square, Landler, Weltler, Preusz and other Jews glorified the Republic--there was not a single Hungarian among them. That was the secret of the whole revolution. Above: the mask, Michael Károlyi; below: the foreign race has proclaimed its mastery.<sup>574</sup>

As the excerpt reveals, Tormay despised both the Social Democratic government and the subsequent Communist rule as alien to Hungary and to “true” Hungarians. In fact, no excerpt can sufficiently reflect the extent to which the two volumes of *An outlaw’s diary*

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<sup>573</sup> Tormay began to write novellas in 1900 but only gained recognition with her first book *Emberék a kövek közt* (People between the stones) and truly became popular with her second book *Régi ház* (The Old House) in 1915.

<sup>574</sup> Cécile Tormay, *An outlaw’s diary*, London: P. Allan & Co., 1923, Volume I, 141. With the exception of Mihály Károlyi, every single person Tormay mentions were Jewish members of the Hungarian National Council, the Károlyi led government that ruled between November 16, 1918 and March 20, 1920.

are full of blatant antisemitic, anti-liberal, and anticommunist views. Tormay's rants against Jews and Communists and the detailed description of their horrible misdeeds were accompanied by her narration of an emerging Hungarian resistance and the sacrifices made to reclaim Hungary for Christianity. The story of counter-revolutionary forces as the true representatives and heroic saviors of the nation assured that once Admiral Horthy and the conservatives forces secured control over the country, the book would gain literary success and its writer would come to cultural and political prominence.<sup>575</sup>

With the restoration of conservative power in Hungary in 1920, Tormay's celebrity was unsurpassed. She remained one of the most visible and intellectually-recognized Hungarian female figures, who also achieved considerable international attention until her death in 1937.<sup>576</sup> In 1923, the year of the scandal, Tormay became the editor of the most important conservative literary journal, *Napkelet* [Eastern Sunrise], which she directed until the end of her life.<sup>577</sup> Neither before nor after would a woman lead a conservative journal in Hungary. The other woman involved in the scandal, Eduardina Pallavicini, was from a distinguished aristocratic family, who also took a remarkably active role in Hungary's internal affairs. Eduardina Pallavicini along with Tormay, was part of Admiral Miklós Horthy's (Regent of Hungary during the interwar

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<sup>575</sup> As I explained at the beginning of the chapter it was actually Romanian forces who drove the Communists out. Horthy and the White forces arrived subsequently.

<sup>576</sup> Tormay (1876 -1937) was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature twice (1936, 1937) and following the death of Marie Curie in 1935, she was selected into the Committee of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations. She did not live to see World War II and the consequent Communist Dictatorship. As an aristocrat and ardent anti-communist her name and works were silenced throughout Communism. Since 1989 Tormay and her books have re-emerged. While it is most of the time the praise of the conservatives who reclaimed her as Hungary's "matriarch", there have been instances when liberals and the political left highlighted Tormay's anti-Semitism and her alleged homosexuality.

<sup>577</sup> *East* emerged in 1923 as a direct Catholic-conservative counter to *Nyugat* [West], the most prominent literary journal/periodical in the first four decades of the twentieth century, with liberal political attitudes and readership.

period) closest political and cultural circle.<sup>578</sup> They were all arch supporters of Horthy's conservative, catholic, and irredentist political stance.

Pallavicini's husband, Count Rafael Zichy--who initiated the divorce and the ensuing scandal--came from one of the noblest Hungarian families which had been prominent in Hungarian history since the thirteenth century. Members of his family served in the highest economic, political, and cultural positions. Count Zichy was a member of the Hungarian upper house in the parliament.<sup>579</sup> The potential break up of the marriage of a Pallavicini and a Zichy represented a threat to the historic alliance between two of Hungary's most powerful aristocratic families. Thus, though news of bickering aristocrats was not a novelty for Hungarians, the divorce case ignited serious power struggles among the political elite, as well as provided endless entertainment to people on the streets of Budapest and its surrounding areas.

It was the sexual nature of Count Zichy's 1923 divorce petition that ensured both its immediate notoriety and its scandalous place in the public eye for years. As the previous chapters discussed, reports on and about homosexuals--or the "Knights of Sick Love," as some contemporaries referred to men who had sex with other men--had been present in the press since the late nineteenth century. With the explosion of the penny press and daily newspapers, there were more opportunities for sensational stories as well

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<sup>578</sup> The Pallavicini family was one of the few margrave (marquis) families in Hungary. The family is one of the oldest Italian noble families documented back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Hungarian branch of Pallavicinis had existed since 1827 and their title was confirmed in 1868 for Austria-Hungary. The family had considerable influence over Hungary's internal affairs. Eduardina Pallavicini was incredible active throughout her life and served in the highest positions of social and cultural organizations and also played, albeit less visibly, an important role in Hungary's political affairs.

<sup>579</sup> The Hungarian Parliament had a chamber of deputies and an upper house from 1867 except the period between 1918 and 1928 when the parliament was unicameral.

as semi-official reports about same-sex affairs.<sup>580</sup> However, Hungary had not had a high-profile case or scandal about homosexuality prior to the Zichy trial. Only one earlier incident held a similar potential for scandal—the blatant and numerous homosexual escapades of Colonel Alfred Redl, the Chief of Counterintelligence of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, on the eve of World War I.<sup>581</sup> The Habsburg Monarch Franz Josef was able to strategically suppress the Redl scandal. Instead, the case of Zichy was more similar to the inability of Kaiser Wilhelm II to limit public knowledge of Prince Philip Eulenburg’s homosexual relationship with General Kon von Moltke. Considering that the Zichy case implicated Admiral Horthy’s beloved friend and “the greatest Hungarian woman,” Cecilé Tormay, it is no question that Horthy was just as eager as the both the Kaiser and Monarch had been in the previous instances to prevent a scandal. Horthy’s failure to do so was in large part due to the political and social consequences of ten years of turbulent history that separated the Redl and Zichy events. In particular, two factors contributed to more intense and public coverage of the Zichy-Tormay case—a less controlled professional press who found ways to publish news of the trial, and the triple impetus that Zichy, Tormay, and Pallavicini (the accused lover of Tormay) collectively represented three of Hungary’s most prominent and politically powerful families and individuals.

On October 30th, 1923, Count Zichy filed for divorce based on charges of *termèszetellenes*, an “unnatural” relationship between his wife and Cecilé Tormay.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> For instance, as I pointed out in chapter one and two, the Oscar Wilde trial and the Eulenburg scandal were both reported in contemporary newspapers.

<sup>581</sup> While he was the chief intelligence for Austria he was also the chief spy for tsarist Russia. Allegedly, the Russians used his homosexuality as blackmail against him. Redl committed suicide after being exposed in 1913. However, Emperor Franz Joseph of Austro-Hungary took the most cautionary steps not to have the scandal exposed and ordered complete veil of secrecy.

<sup>582</sup> Budapest City Archives VII. 2.c. Royal Court of Budapest 45162/1923 (From now on: Divorce Suit)

Count Zichy charged that his wife and Tormay had been involved in a sexual relationship, and although female same-sex sexuality was not criminalized in the Hungarian Penal Code, it was legitimate grounds for divorce under the Civil Code.<sup>583</sup> Citing an illicit sexual relationship as the cause for divorce most likely would have generated wide interest no matter who was involved. The passionate and visible role these women played in the (re)building of Christian and conservative Hungary, however, caused the case became a national sensation. Headlines screaming such titles as “Today the court begins hearing juicy episodes of the most scandalous aristocratic legal suit in decades” appeared in papers across Hungary.<sup>584</sup> Despite the fact that the divorce suit and the subsequent libel case were not open to the public, all major newspapers, even conservative ones, provided extensive commentary on the scandalous details that leaked out of the courtroom. As one tagline from the daily newspaper the *8 O’clock News* stated,

Despite the fact the libel case is tried behind closed doors, it can be safely stated that perhaps the entire city is informed about the testimonials and statements on a daily basis. As we all know, typewritten reports are circulating around city, and were even distributed in the parliament.<sup>585</sup>

The news of the “Bickering Aristocrats,” as many of the headlines initially labeled the case, did not stop at the outskirts of the capital. Although, as with the press in Budapest,

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<sup>583</sup> The petition cited *természet elleni fajtalanság* unnatural fornication (or perversion against nature) under the Marriage Law of 1884:XXXI §76 and the intentional and serious breaching of the marriage contract under §80; by leading an immoral life. Divorce Suit 2.

<sup>584</sup> “Gróf Zichy válópörének epilógusa” (The epilogue of the divorce suit of Count Zichy), *Az Est*, November 19 1925, 4.

<sup>585</sup> “Gróf Zichy Rafaelné a katolikus vallás törvényeire való hivatkozással az ítélet ellenére sem hajlandó elválni férjétől” (Despite the ruling of the court Countess Zichy with referring to the laws of the Catholic religion, refuses to divorce her husband), *Esti Kurir*, 28 November 1925, 5. In addition, some of the papers that provided extensive coverage included *Pesti Hírlap*, *Magyar Hírlap*, *Esti Kurir*, *Népszava*, *Pesti Napló*, and *8 Órai Újság*.

newspapers in the countryside were not allowed to provide explicit details, the rumors about the case spread rapidly across the country.

The divorce and libel case were both tried in three different courts and involved nearly 100 witnesses ranging from the cream of the Hungarian aristocratic elite and medical doctors to numerous servants. Each of the three courts denied Count Zichy's appeal for divorce.<sup>586</sup> Despite the fact that Eduardina Pallavicini did not want to divorce her husband-- and in fact, they remained married until the Count's death in 1944--in 1924, Cecilé Tormay and the Countess sued the Count and four servants for lying under oath and libel.<sup>587</sup> The criminal libel suit was also tried in every court possible; in each decision the Count and the servants were found guilty and in 1927 sentenced to jail.<sup>588</sup>

Contemplating the likelihood of a sexual relationship between Tormay and the Countess Zichy would have certainly intrigued contemporaries. The Count's sexual affairs with other women, and a long-time love affair with one woman in particular, appeared to many observers to be his ulterior motive for instigating the scandal. The *Pesti Hírlap* (The Gazette of Pest) stated that "the origins of this entire case began years ago when Count Zichy was introduced to a woman whose beauty was renowned in the capital. Until then the Count and the Countess had no marital problems." For most papers, and likely for most readers, Count Zichy's long time affair with a notoriously

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<sup>586</sup> Following Count Zichy's appeal after the decision of the Royal Criminal Court, the Royal Tribunal (Appeal Court) as well as the Royal Curia (Hungary's Highest Court of Justice) sided with the Royal Criminal Court both denying Count Zichy's petition and not granting the divorce.

<sup>587</sup> Budapest City Archives VII. 5. c. Royal Criminal Court of Budapest 4516/1924 (From now on: Criminal Suit).

<sup>588</sup> The Royal Curia found Count Zichy and the servants guilty on November 18, 1927. Interestingly, while the Criminal Court sentenced the Count for a year and a half in prison, the Royal Curia significantly lowered the punishment, and sentenced the Count for only 14 days in the lightest form of confinement.

beautiful woman seemed just as solid a justification for divorce.<sup>589</sup> According to sexual customs of the time, learning about the infidelity of male aristocrats and their occasional attempts to divorce their wives for younger women would have not been new, or necessarily interesting for contemporaries.<sup>590</sup> This is evident even in the papers' generic and matter of fact references to the Count's infidelity. Statements such as "[T]he Count grew cold towards his wife ten years ago, and for years he had been thinking about a divorce in order to marry someone else" were regurgitated in most papers.<sup>591</sup> In contrast, hearing about an allegedly sexual relationship between two well-known women certainly would have offered a fresh topic for hungry readers.<sup>592</sup> Indeed, the headline of another daily paper *Esti Kurir* (Evening Courier) attests to the complete fascination that readers had for the case: "[I]n the past few decades there has seldom been a criminal suit in Hungary that has generated such great interest as the case of Count Zichy Rafael and his fellow culprits."<sup>593</sup> While the papers had to carefully play with words when discussing female--especially *respectable* female--sexuality, to the delight of many people the case of Countess Zichy and Tormay introduced a new and scintillating topic.

As to contemporaries' thoughts on the actual nature of the relationship between the two women, since both women (Tormay especially) lived publicly active lives and were representatives of the "New Woman," their scandal could have offered an

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<sup>589</sup>"Gróf Zichy Rafalék házasságának históriája" (The history of marriage of the Count and Countess Zichy), *8 Órai Újság*, 28 November 1925, 5.

<sup>590</sup>Géza Buzinkay, *A magyar sajtó története I.: a kezdetektől a fordulat évéig*. Budapest: Ráció, 2005.

<sup>591</sup>"Gróf Zichy Rafeal másfélèvi börtönre ítèlte a bíróság" (The jury sentenced Count Zichy for a year and a half in prison), *Pesti Hirlap*, 27 November 1925, 4.

<sup>592</sup>Number of papers note how the entire city was sparked by and talking about the case.

<sup>593</sup>Gróf Zichy Rafaelnè a katholikus vallás törvényeire való hivatkozással az itèlet ellenère sem hajnadó elválni fèrjètòl," *Esti Kurir*, 28 November 1925, 5.



opportunity for a recognition and discussion of female same-sex sexuality.<sup>594</sup> The appearance of the New Woman and an increase in women's public role was apparent especially in Budapest despite of the trauma of Trianon and consequent (Communist and Counter) revolutions during the 1920s.<sup>595</sup> Tormay and Countess Zichy in this sense were representative of changing gender norms. Both women were involved in various social and cultural organizations and, although not necessarily formally, they were much more politically active than women of previous generations. However, in spite of the "modern" way these two women lived (e.g. one was single and both took public roles), Tormay's and the Countess' conservative politics and gender views were much more representative of a kind of "conservative modernity" that would have secured their "innocence" in the eye of their contemporaries.<sup>596</sup> That is, not only did they believe women's place was in the home, but they also actively propagated the reinstitutionalization of traditional gender order through various national organizations.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> Scholars have noted the interrelationship between the New Woman and the discursive appearance of female homosexuality in various settings. One of the most groundbreaking works is Judith Halberstam's *Female masculinity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. The most recent works include Laura L. Doan's *Fashioning Sapphism* (Columbia University Press, 2001) and Martha Vicinus' *Intimate friends : women who loved women, 1778-1928* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). In addition, I found the Ph.D. dissertation of Marti M. Lybeck "Gender, sexuality, and belonging: Female homosexuality in Germany, 1890—1933," University of Michigan, United States -- Michigan. (Publication No. AAT 3287575) especially helpful.

<sup>595</sup> Szécsényi Mihály. "Kalausz nők Konfliktusai a Villamoson : Társadalmi Nem És Térhasználat Budapesten, 1915-1920" (Conflicts of Female Tram Conductors on the Trams: Gender and Social Space in Budapest). *Sic Itur Ad Astra* 20. évf. (2009): 149–179, Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris, 1998).

<sup>596</sup> For the origin of the term "conservative modernity" see Alison Light, *Forever England*. Routledge, 1991, and for its definition Laura Doan and Jane Garrity, *Sapphic modernities : sexuality, women, and national culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

<sup>597</sup> For instance through the publications of Magyar Asszonyok Szövetsége. In addition to their regular speeches, books, and other publications, the National Association of Hungarian Women's own publications, which included *Magyar Asszony* (Hungarian Woman) and *A Magyar Asszony Divatlapja* (The Style Magazine of Hungarian Women) also served as a mouthpiece of traditional gender norms. It is important to point how this was by no means a particular phenomenon to Hungary. Even the most liberal European countries, as work of Roger Chickering and Nancy Reagan among others, in the case of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany discuss, experienced a similar phenomenon. Chickering, Roger. *We men who feel most German : a cultural study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914*. Boston: Allen & Unwin,

In fact, Tormay's *An outlaw's diary*, which by the time of the trial made her a legendary icon, dedicates significant space to documenting how she and her dear friend Baroness Eduardina Pallavicini (Countess Zichy) took a leading role in organizing female resistance and in founding of the National Association of Hungarian Women (NAHW) during Communist rule. Regarding the details of establishing the organization, which under the sponsorship of Tormay and Pallavicini became the most important women's organization of the interwar period, the book provides us with Tormay and Pallavicini's vision of the past, present, and future of Hungarian women:

In the history of Hungary women have not often appeared. They have never had to fight for their rights, because there is no code in the world which protects the rights of woman so well as ours did - even in the darker centuries. They could live quietly in those days, and the handsome narrow faces of Hungarian women shone only in the mild light of the home fire. Those were Hungary's happy days. But when the land was afire and misery was reaping its harvest, then the Hungarian women rose to the occasion and stood in the forefront of the fight. Our country has never suffered greater distress than now, and, as we sat there, we all knew that the women would respond to our call and would sow the seed of the counter-revolution. *Not at meetings, not in the market-place, but in their homes, in the souls of their men exhausted by the hardships of war, men who are down-hearted to-day but who, to-morrow, will not dare to give the lie to (fail) women who believe in their courage.*<sup>598</sup>

In their view, women in Hungary up until World War I enjoyed a sheltered and fulfilling life in the home. In these recent horrible times, it was also there, in their homes, where Hungarian women would become members of the counter-revolution. Thus, ironically, very unlike Tormay herself who was unmarried and had a visible public profile, and even unlike Pallavicini who, even though she was married lived a very active public life, Tormay believed that women should help to reclaim Christian Hungary only by providing moral support to their husbands at home. What Christian Hungary required from

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1984, Reagin, Nancy Ruth. *Sweeping the German nation : domesticity and national identity in Germany, 1870-1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>598</sup> Tormay, *An outlaw's diary*, 182-3. Italics are mine.

women, according to Tormay, was “the Holy Trinity for which we meant to stand: a Christian and patriotic policy, the integrity of the country, and the sanctity of the family.”<sup>599</sup> Like other right wing and conservative women’s movements of the interwar period, the Tormay and Pallavicini led NAHW, which by 1921 had over a half million members, believed that women should “complete” their male counterparts within the private domestic sphere and live by patriotic and above all, Christian principles.<sup>600</sup> Tormay and Pallavicini’s vision came to define the official rhetoric on womanhood throughout the interwar period.<sup>601</sup>

It is no wonder then that Count Zichy’s charges of a homosexual relationship between Tormay and Countess Zichy created such scandal. There were many people who felt outrage about the women’s hypocrisy. They would have found the Hungarian proverb “he preaches water but drinks wine,” more than fitting. There were even more people who, because of the two women’s conservative views, were hesitant to believe anything that would have implicated them. Even though it was precisely the accusation of female same-sex desire (and acts) between Tormay and Countess Zichy that caused sensation, their very honored position within society also made many question the validity of such claims. When it came to (the denial of) sexual and romantic liaisons, the

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<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.* 182-3.

<sup>600</sup> For the history of feminism and women’s movements in Hungary see Andrea Pető, “Minden tekintetben derék nők: A nők politikai szerepei és a nőegyesületek a két világháború közötti Magyarországon” (Right women by all accounts: Women’s roles and women’s associations in interwar Hungary), in *Szerep és alkotás: női szerepek a társadalomban és az alkotóművészetben*, Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 1997, 268-279 and Maria M. Kovacs, “Hungary,” in *Women, gender, and fascism in Europe, 1919-45*, 79-91. Of course by the 1930s the rhetoric of women staying at home became impossible to support, as it was no longer a viable option for most. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of separate spheres remained a stable feature of NAHW.

<sup>601</sup> Bacchetta, Paola, and Power, Margaret, eds. *Right-wing Women: from Conservatives to Extremists Around the World*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Kevin Passmore, *Women (ed.), gender, and fascism in Europe, 1919-45*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003. In actuality, many women, especially in the lower classes as well as the young educated continued to defy the rhetoric. Andrea Pető, *Társadalmi nemek képe és emlékezete Magyarországon a 19-20. Században* (The Gender image of society and its commemoration). Budapest: A nők a valódi esélyegyenlőségért alapítvány, 2004.

trustworthiness of aristocratic men in the eyes of contemporaries was questionable at its best. However, their female counterparts enjoyed a much greater respect. Nevertheless, even if most people would have sided with the women, the divorce and subsequent libel suit provided a platform for a broad spectrum of Hungarian society to reflect on female same-sex sexuality outside of the professional fields of law and medicine.

Despite the stronghold that female respectability held in interwar Hungary, the positions of these two women meant there was a lot at stake and it would have been in the greatest interest of the interwar political leadership to clear the names of Cecilé Tormay and Countess Zichy. As is often the case, the question of sexuality in this case was deeply political. Thus, the trials reveal as much about Hungary's internal politics of the 1920s as about discourses of sexuality. By the mid-1920s conservatism was deeply entrenched, with the historically rooted aristocracy continuing to control politics and keeping in check (and often strictly censoring) the socialist and communist parties and left-leaning voices.<sup>602</sup> The influence of the upper classes in decision-making and the frequent bias of the courts towards the well-to-do was of course not a unique feature of Hungary.

Nevertheless, Hungary did have some uncommon characteristics when it came to the socio-economical makeup of the country, which in turn helps to illuminate some of the less obvious aspects of the case. Hungary's social make up was uniquely "top heavy" even during the days of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. While the proportion of commoners to nobility in other places in Central Europe or in Italian kingdoms (before

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<sup>602</sup> For the most recent comprehensive political history in English see Ignác Romsics' *Hungary in the twentieth century*. Budapest: Corvina ;Osiris, 1999. The traditional elite, while had no tolerance for communists had also cracked down on far right groups and openly revisionist voices, since during the 1920s, they still believed – incorrectly – that they could convince the Allies and the International Community to "correct the fatal mistakes of Trianon" without arms.

unification) were anywhere from 828:1 (in Bohemia) to 300:1 (in Venice and Lombardy), in Hungary the figure was 8:1 among Hungarians.<sup>603</sup> At the same time, as I already discussed in the previous chapters, most of the middle and lower segments of the nobility over the course of the nineteenth century became landless and penniless, and ultimately comprised the new gentry class. In most of Western and Central Europe it was burghers who formed the middle classes but in Hungary it was the gentry, the down-and-out historical nobility, who by default comprised the middle class. On the other hand, the two thousand richest magnates, many of whom, like the Pallavicinis, came from former Habsburg lands, made up an entirely separate class who were almost as untouchable for the gentry as they were for lower classes. As Paul Lendvai aptly notes: “The wealth of many of these aristocrats was so great they did not even know what they actually owned or where it was.”<sup>604</sup> The members of this elite, of whom the Zichy and Pallavichini families were some of the most influential, lived in a complete bubble, which both separated them from the rest of Hungarians and connected them to the richest families across Europe.<sup>605</sup> With the fall of Austria-Hungary and the Treaty of Trianon, the proportion of nobility in Hungary further increased as the result of the confiscation of properties and denial of rights of ethnic Hungarians in the new neighboring nation-states. Between 1918 and 1920, an estimated 400,000 people, mostly of the middle class, immigrated to Hungary, making the country the most densely populated in the Carpathian basin. One-sixth of the population lived in the critically overpopulated Budapest.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Paul Lendvai, *The Hungarians : a thousand years of victory in defeat*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003, 322.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.* 319.

<sup>605</sup> And most of Hungarian elite split their time between Vienna, Paris, London and places like the French Riviera and often only came back to Hungary after months of travelling.

<sup>606</sup> József Szekeres, *Budapest története a forradalmak korától a felszabadulásig*, ed. László Gerevich, vol. 5, Budapest története. Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1980, 259-261.

Amidst unstable economic times, it was increasingly difficult to provide jobs for the rapidly increasing numbers of nobility. In addition, there were also greater number of high aristocrats who, having moved their primary residence into Budapest from now non-Hungarian cities, wanted more of a say in politics. In this respect, the trials reflected the gradual movement away from a society ruled solely by the old landed aristocracy, toward a more complex society, where the old nobility had to share power with the middle and lower-middle classes.<sup>607</sup>

In this milieu, the divorce and subsequent libel case of Count Zichy, his wife, and Cecilé Tormay represented a power struggle within ruling political circles, with the outcomes on one hand pointing to the strength of Admiral Horthy, and on the other hand, as will be discussed further below, reaffirming the class bias of the legal system. The ruling of the courts, which ultimately placed all faults on Count Zichy and his servants and denied the possibility of a sexual relationship between the two women, was evidently a kick in the teeth to Count Zichy. It was also a disappointment to those who would have liked to see a more transparent justice and court system.<sup>608</sup> Initially, the political nature of the case was confined to Count Zichy's attempt to use his political capital to influence the court. Events took an unexpected turn when the Regent, Admiral Horthy himself, got involved. Then, the political opposition and marginalized Social Democrats picked up the case in order to openly expose the corrupt nature and hypocrisy of the political system.<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> Deák, István. *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*, 3.

<sup>608</sup> During the years of the divorce and libel trials there were number of parliamentary speeches that explicitly referred to the case (i.e. nemzetgyűlés -parliamentary session 475/1925).

<sup>609</sup> Most notably the social democrat Imre Györki

There are indications that the decisions made were influenced by some of Hungary's highest political forces. The diary of Páter Zadravecz, who was the Bishop of the Hungarian Military between 1920 and 1928 and a close friend of Admiral Miklós Horthy, provides the most explicit and direct evidence of these maneuverings. In his *Secret Diary of Father Zadravecz*, the former bishop recalls the time when Horthy ordered him to intervene with the judges and make sure that Count Zichy would lose on all accounts. The following excerpt is from Zadravecz's diary: [accent marks missing from Cecilé's name in the quote. Like this in the original? If so, leave it; otherwise, fix]

Admiral Horthy had tremendous respect for Cecilé Tormay. Whenever her name came up, he (the Admiral) would tell me that "Cecilé Tormay should be cast in gold!"... Cecilé Tormay never boasted and especially not about the great influence she had over the Admiral. On the contrary, with her beautiful writing and leadership of NAHW (National Association of Hungarian Women) she achieved great deeds. At the national platforms of her organizations, which took place in many towns across the country, her eloquent talks, which at core were about patriotism and loyalty to Horthy, had a sensational effect... Tormay joined forces with Countess Zichy and brought her into the closest circle of Horthy... Countess Zichy benefited from this friendship. It was the Admiral on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1925 who told me the following; "I held today as my most triumphant day because today that scoundrel Rafael Zichy was sentenced for a year and a half in prison for slander. This verdict comes only a result of my forceful personal intervention. The Minister of Interior himself questioned whether the court would even announce Zichy guilty.... But I put the pressure on."<sup>610</sup>

Zadravecz's diary speaks of a special relationship between Tormay and Horthy.<sup>611</sup> The Admiral and Tormay did in fact share some history and remained close until Tormay's death in 1937. Born into gentry families both of them were in some ways outsiders to the world of Hungarian high aristocracy, and for many of its historical members they remained outsiders regardless of their achievements. They both benefitted from the Aster Revolution and their stars began to rise on the day of Horthy's arrival to the "Sinful

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<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.* 216-217.

<sup>611</sup> The first, balanced assessment of Horthy's life in Hungarian is recently published by Dávid Turbucz, *Horthy Miklós*. Budapest: Napvilág, 2011.

City,” as they both liked to refer to Budapest.<sup>612</sup> Tormay was one of the people who welcomed “the Admiral on horseback” and their alliance proved beneficial for both. Horthy held Tormay in the highest regard and had a direct role in making her the first female editor in chief of the most prestigious literary journal of the time, *Napkelet* [Eastern Sunrise]. As the celebrated writer of the *An Outlaw’s Diary*, Tormay remained loyal to Horthy, and throughout her active public life as the president of NAHW she propagated the official Christian nationalist conservative doctrine.<sup>613</sup>

In sum, the political views and self-fashioning of Tormay and Countess Zichy as conservative catholic national patriots, in tandem with their relentless denial of same-sex desire, and, last but not least, their importance for the political leadership of interwar Hungary, ensured the outcome of the trials.<sup>614</sup> Just as importantly, it is likely that the “disappearance” of all sensitive materials relating to the charges of homosexuality from the court records including witness and expert testimonials, was no accident. Despite the colossal legal documentation of the case, the only materials that survived were the decisions and sentencing of the courts and the testimonials of the servants. None of the minutes, expert opinions, and testimonials of prominent witnesses survived.<sup>615</sup> One could

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<sup>612</sup> Their reference of “Bűnös Budapest” or Sinful city echoes the Tábori and Székely’s book series. Thomas Sakmyster, *Hungary’s admiral on horseback : Miklós Horthy, 1918 – 1944*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994.

<sup>613</sup> Miklós Szabolcsi, *A Magyar irodalom története 1919-től napjainkig* (History of Hungarian Literature). Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966, “Tormay Cecile,” 168. Judit Kádár, “Az antiszemitizmus jutalma. Tormay Cécile és a Horthy-korszak” (The rewards of antisemitism. Cécile Tormay and the Horthy era), *Kritika*, no. 3 (2003): 9-12. János Hankiss’ biography *Tormay Cécile*. Budapest: Singer & Wolfner, 1939, remains one of the most comprehensive books on the details of Tormay’s life albeit omitting any information that might negatively portray her.

<sup>614</sup> On a more general level, the successful lobbying of Horthy and for the most part, undamaged respectability of Tormay following the case signified the political shifts of interwar Hungary, where albeit still considerably powerful, the former historical aristocracy was losing power vis-à-vis the petit bourgeoisie and gentry. Deák, István. *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*, 3.

<sup>615</sup> Alternatively, it is also true that during Hungary’s Communist era, the Party kept a tight control over all archives, and historical inquires, as well as participated in the censoring of histories. During the changes of 1988-9 the Ministry of Interior and Secret Service destroyed vast amounts of



only speculate as to why, but clearly it was in the best interest of the leadership to make sure that almost no evidence implicating the two women survived. This is important especially, since as we will see, the court essentially based its ruling not on the opinions of experts but rather “based on the common (contemporary) view of life.”<sup>616</sup> It is more than likely that the documents of the trial were destroyed in order to make sure that the experts’ views, which implicated that the Countess and Tormay could have been sexually involved, would never surface again.

Despite the disappearance of parts of the trial, the surviving civil and criminal court records along with contemporary news coverage of the cases offer a window into popular, medical and legal discourses of female same-sex sexuality in Hungary during the 1920s. An examination of the voices of key witnesses, the servants, also provides insights into the evolution of the conceptualization and construction of Hungarian female homosexuality in the 1920s.

### *Legal Battles over Defining Female Homosexuality*

The following description is from Count Zichy’s petition for divorce. It is the Count’s account of how the alleged homosexual relationship developed between his wife and Tormay.

The defendant (Countess Zichy), who according to herself is one of our country’s most beautiful souls, and who cultivates great admiration for intellectual excellence, was undoubtedly fascinated by Cecil Tormay’s literary talent, and even more so by her fame and far-reaching wonderful literary success, powerfully suggestive oratorical skills, organizational talents, and unquestionable prestige--which she enjoys mainly among women. This wonder and admiration was the

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materials and reclassified some others. There could be no definite answer as to why the files of the divorce case, with the testaments of the main actors and experts as well as of the witnesses were destroyed.

<sup>616</sup> P. III. 4997/1924. 2. Divorce Suit, 30.

instigator of further psychological processes. This admiration and amazement was requited by a kind friendship and in the pleasure, which is similar to the delight of a sower - who sees the springing of his sowing, but also to the pleasure of the conqueror, who sees enemies at his feet.<sup>617</sup>

It was Tormay's intellectual brilliance and charisma that initially enticed the Countess.

The account paints Countess Zichy as initially gullible, while Tormay is the active pursuer. As the Count's appeal goes on to explain, "[T]his admiration, this veneration, this bowing before the preeminence of intellectual spiritual power is itself the passive component within the relationship of the two women."<sup>618</sup> Female homosexuality is portrayed as a transformation from (a passive) intellectual and emotional admiration to physical devotion.

This spiritual devotion then gradually, or less gradually, skidded into the world of corporeality. And considering that even the most conventional contact between two women - counter to men's - is not without its physical moments, over time as the inhibitions gradually faded, the power of instincts grew and eventually came to prevail.<sup>619</sup>

According to the Count's appeal, considering the fact that women in their friendships were much more physically expressive than their male counterparts--that they kissed, hugged, and embraced each other as part of their friendship--once there were romantic feelings involved, a sexual relationship came about more easily. Interestingly, if we did not know the context in which this description appears, one could even make the argument that the Count was defending his wife and justifying her actions. This relationship is a relationship between two venerable women, where emotional and spiritual connections had come to full bloom in a sexual relationship. It is only the conclusion of the delicate description, where the narrative turns towards the corporeal,

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<sup>617</sup> BFL VII.5.C. 4516/1924, 125.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*

i.e. the sexual, nature of the women's relationship that female homosexuality emerges and consequently, the basis for Count Zichy's divorce petition.

The servants' testimony became central in the divorce suit because even though female homosexuality was not illegal in Hungary, the courts' civil decision about granting a divorce eventually came down to whether there had been a sexual relationship between Countess Zichy and Cecilé Tormay or not. As the only eyewitnesses (rather than experts) willing to testify, the servants became the key players in the trial. Count Zichy appealed for divorce on two legal points. First, §76 of the Marriage Law of 1894, explicitly stated that divorce could be requested by someone whose spouse committed adultery, or *természet elleni fajtalanság*, "unnatural fornication."<sup>620</sup> Unnatural fornication in Hungary generally referred to a same-sex sexual encounter. Although the Criminal Code only criminalized sex between men, the Marriage Law considered sex between two women as grounds for divorce.<sup>621</sup> Count Zichy had no first-hand knowledge about his wife's alleged sexual relationship with Cecilé Tormay, but in his case he alleged that the servants did.

Secondly, the Count invoked clauses *a* and *c* of §80 and argued that his wife's behavior and actions had intentionally violated their marriage contract and that she had led an immoral life. In order to support those claims the Count testified that his wife was "cold, unkind, derisive and exhibited a desire to be authoritarian. In front of their children, servants, and strangers she strove to undermine his authority and respect; disagreed with and countered his intentions in regards to the education of their

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<sup>620</sup> "Unnatural fornication" – from the German "widernatürliche unzucht." Tribadism was defined as "mutual rubbing of the genitals."

<sup>621</sup> Criminal Code 1878 V. §241. According to the actual legal definition, perversion against nature was defined as perversion between men, or with animals and could be punished with up to one year in the lightest form of imprisonment.

children.”<sup>622</sup> According to the plaintiff this often led to him being publicly disgraced. The Count also stated that Countess Zichy was a lavish spender. Finally, he stated that instead of the “normal physical relations” of a married couple, the Countess demanded “mutual *digital manipulation* combined with masturbation like coitus.”<sup>623</sup> This assertion was made to illustrate that Countess Zichy preferred hands to penises, implying that she could only have learned this from being sexually active with another woman. Thus, a preference of sexual position and a particular way of being pleased was supposed to prove the Countess’ homosexuality. From the vantage point of the present, the Count’s reasoning and interwar Hungarian social norms and marriage laws seem highly sexist. That a husband and his lawyers could make a legal argument that his wife’s preference for sex involving hands was unnatural is telling, and underscores both the sexist and highly gendered nature of Hungarian attitudes on sexuality and pleasure during the 1920s.

A brief look at how the courts defined and dealt with the charge of tribadism--the only stable characteristic of contemporary legal discourse on female homosexuality--reveals that it was heavily influenced by ideas of class and gender.<sup>624</sup> More specifically, the divorce and libel cases conveyed a prevailing notion of the purity of upper class

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<sup>622</sup> Divorce Suit, 2.

<sup>623</sup> Italicization is mine to indicate the two words that were written in Latin rather than in Hungarian in the court records.

<sup>624</sup> Tribadism was the expression that contemporary medical and legal language used for female homosexuality, but as we will see what constituted as such was far from stable. This of course was not unique to Hungary. The contemporary legal ambiguity of female homosexuality has been subject to considerable scholarly attention. Some of the seminal works include Newton, Esther. “The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman.” *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984): 557. Duggan, Lisa. “The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology and the Lesbian Subject in Turn of the Century America.” *Signs* (1993): 791–814. More recent works on the subject include Matysik, Tracie. “In the Name of the Law: The ‘Female Homosexual’ and the Criminal Code in Fin De Siècle Germany.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, no. 1 (2004): 26 and Doan, Laura, and Jane Garrity. *Sapphic Modernities : Sexuality, Women, and National Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. On the origins of the word see Judith Halberstam’s *Female Masculinity*, 8-10.

women and a very narrow conception of what defined a female sexual act and female sexuality. In all three courts, through extremely circuitous processes, every single accusation except tribadism was dismissed. If proven, it would have served as the only legitimate reason for granting a divorce.<sup>625</sup> The courts rejected most of the husband's accusations by invoking the so-called "sitting at the same table" principle.<sup>626</sup> The lower courts argued that because the Count continued to dine with his wife even after he had been informed of her alleged sexual encounters with Cecilé Tormay, he could no longer bring suit for past occurrences involving "moral grounds."<sup>627</sup> The courts reasoned that the sheer fact that the Count did not halt his regular routine of eating with his wife proved that the charges of tribadism could not have been possible, because "having considered the personal character and social status of the plaintiff (Count Zichy) it is impossible he would have continued to keep up with his regular contact with his wife had she committed such a thing."<sup>628</sup> The verdict went on to state that it was "inconceivable" that a married partner who was "convinced of his partner's sexual misconducts" would have "continued to have the same regular contact with her unless he had forgiven her."<sup>629</sup>

In the same decision, again citing the sitting at the same table principle, the judges denied a divorce based on female homosexuality on other, contradictory principles. The contention that the Count wouldn't have tolerated his wife had he truly believed she was having an affair with Tormay, and if he actually did, that meant he had most certainly

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<sup>625</sup> Thus, the outcome of the divorce and subsequent criminal suit rested on the substantiation of tribadism.

<sup>626</sup> This was part of an older legal code that was invoked only rarely by the 1920s.

<sup>627</sup> Furthermore, the courts in rejecting granting the divorce on moral grounds according to §80, also cited that by hiring someone to spy on his wife whom he had a sexual relationship (one of the female servants) along with the fact that he moved out not for the reason of the Countess' tribadism but rather his own affair with another woman made the Count's appeal for divorce on moral grounds objectionable. Divorce Suit, 19-20.

<sup>628</sup> Divorce Suit Decision of Royal Tribunal, 27.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid.*

forgiven his wife, and consequently, made the nature of the women's relationship irrelevant. Because Count Zichy continued to dine with his wife, all matters were considered settled and the possibility of divorce was gone.<sup>630</sup> With this line of reasoning, the lower courts essentially refrained from taking a stand on the legal definition of tribadism or female homosexuality. Rather, without having to actually define it, the courts marshaled evidence to corroborate all the reasons why the Countess and Tormay could not have been sexually involved. The reasons for the courts' reticence and difficulty in defining female homosexuality were likely twofold. Potentially, the judges were confused about how to define and interpret female sexual acts, or the judges simply overlooked extramarital sex, even if it was homosexual and the perpetrator was a female, because of their reverence for domesticity and the necessity of upholding the sanctity of marriage.

It was only the highest court, the Royal Curia, which explicitly addressed sexuality and considered the implications of same-sex sexual encounters for women. Interestingly, the Curia reasoned that "sexual acts" between women did indeed fulfill the legal definition of *természet elleni fajtalanság*, "unnatural fornication." In fact, unlike the medical experts, it argued that *only* sexual acts could define a "perverse" relationship between women. While records from the medical experts assigned to the case did not survive, the judges' references to their testimony make clear that the medical understanding of what constituted female homosexuality was much broader and more inclusive. In their opinion, even the non-genital actions attributed to the Countess and Tormay, if true, fulfilled the concept of tribadism. Yet, the Curia, by going beyond the

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<sup>630</sup> It is not difficult to imagine that the sitting at the table principle had been fairly useful to settle marriages and in the case of a non-mutual divorce petition make divorce extremely difficult.

most narrow interpretation of male homosexuality under §241 of the Hungarian Penal Code, resoundingly rejected medical opinions and declared that only absolute proof of sexual acts served as a legitimate reason for divorce. As stated by the Curia:

The opinion of medical experts in which they argued that ... homosexual acts could manifest themselves in acts as simple as hugging, cannot be accepted in the legal decision of the divorce appeal, because such acts alone do not fulfill the conditions that would justify granting a divorce as stated in §76 of the Marriage Law. According to the Curia, *unnatural fornication* as a legitimate reason for divorce stated in §76 of the Marriage Law is only justified if one's *sexual instincts are satisfied* outside of marriage through unnatural (perverse), indecent, and immoral fornicating acts.<sup>631</sup>

Thus, unlike male perversion, which the Criminal Code and legal interpretation said could manifest in anything that imitated “normal,” that is heterosexual sex even if clothed, in this rather ambiguous ruling the Curia defined female sexuality in its most narrow sense—equating it to penetrative sex. Furthermore, the Curia’s statement that female homosexuality existed only “if one’s sexual instincts are satisfied,” is in and of itself intriguing. Would a proof of orgasm be necessary and how could the courts determine that? Deciding that acting on one’s same-sex desire was only definitive as long as it led to sexual satisfaction, the legal decision came to depend solely on the proof and verification of sexual (satisf)action between the Countess and Cecilé Tormay. The burden of proof for this satisfaction lay on the servants’ testimonials.

The servants’ position as low-status dependents assured that the courts’ rulings, in both the divorce and subsequent libel case rejected the authenticity of their testimonials about an alleged “perverse” sexual relationship. Considering the prominent position of the upper social classes in interwar Hungary, it is not surprising that the denials of these high-status women along with that of their enlisted aristocratic witnesses, seemed more

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<sup>631</sup> Divorce Suit. Curia’s verdict, 2. Italicization is mine.

credible than the reports of the servants.<sup>632</sup> To fully grasp the court's ruling and eventual dismissal of the servants' testimonials however, we must remember the effects of Communist rule in which the proletariat and in general the under classes gained overnight the upper hand over their former employers and social superiors. The position of servants during the days of the Soviet Republic had been particularly powerful, as they could have--like their proletariat counterparts--claimed authority over their noble or gentry employers. In actuality, this was most often not the case. Servants not only stayed loyal but shared with the nobility feelings of distrust towards communists and frequently, Jews.<sup>633</sup> Nevertheless, during the turmoil that followed WWI servants became suspect and in the eyes of the ruling classes and their loyalty was seen as ambiguous at best. Cecilé Tormay herself acknowledges this in *An outlaw's diary* when talking about the changed social relations between the classes during the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Describing the novel position of servants within the houses of their "no-longer possessor's homes" she declares that, "[C]lass hatred has established spies and watchers in all the houses of Budapest: the secret agents of the new power are to be found in every house: they watch, blackmail, and report."<sup>634</sup> By painting the servants as untrustworthy and dangerous Tormay foreshadowed the depiction of servants in *Édes Anna* (Wonder Maid), one of the most popular Hungarian novels of the interwar period

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<sup>632</sup> This is no question was not atypical or confined to Hungary. See for instance, George Chauncey's reconstructing of the trial of Reverend Samuel Kent in Rhode Island in 1920 in "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War One Era", *Journal of Social History*, 19:2 (1985:Winter).

<sup>633</sup> The most important reasons for the servants' apprehension towards the Communist lay in their religious beliefs. Communist's ideas on religion and their denial of God made most servants unresponsive to Communist ideology. For the particular circumstances of servants in Hungary see Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig*; János Gyurgyák, *Élet a régi Magyarországon*. Budapest: Osiris, 2004.

<sup>634</sup> Tormay, *An outlaw's diary*. Volume II. 43.



by Dezső Kosztolányi.<sup>635</sup> While *Édes Anna*, a tale about a servant girl who ends up killing her masters, also presents the complexity of the master–servant relationship and their co-dependency, Tormay’s representation remains much more black and white. According to her, servants were selfish, only cared about themselves, and if it benefited them, would have not hesitated to sell their souls to the devil. When the judges of the courts formed their opinion on the testimonials of the servants, it was Tormay’s representation the courts embraced; servants were out to take revenge on the higher classes.

Class biases and negative presumptions about servants are even more evident if we note that the courts did not stop at the consideration and rebuttal of the actual facts in the servants’ testimonials. Rather, they went on to destroy the servants’ overall credibility. Asserting that their subservient position made them susceptible to outside influence (notably Count Zichy’s) and to gossip the courts discredited the servants by arguing that these factors tainted servants’ perceptions and even their eyesight. The influence of class is perhaps even more blatant if we compare the courts’ treatment of the servants with that of Count Zichy’s. Regardless of how the courts tore Count Zichy’s case apart, cited his infidelity, and tried him in criminal courts for defamation, he was held to a different standard than the servants. Zichy’s social status, and what it implied in terms of intelligence, consciousness, and credibility, meant that he was never fundamentally challenged. He might, as we will see, be deemed selfish and written off as acting out of passion, but not discredited as a lesser human being.<sup>636</sup> Thus, while initially

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<sup>635</sup> Dezső Kosztolányi, *Édes Anna* (Wonder Maid). Budapest: Genius, 1926.

<sup>636</sup> Evidently, the recent arrival of universal suffrage in 1918 had yet to translate into equal treatment in the courts. Although by that point in 1925 even universal suffrage was seriously compromised by

it was their intimate relationship and insight that made servants proxy for evidence, ultimately their unique position within the world of the elite also served as the vehicle to discredit them. Last but not least, the most explicit evidence of class specific standards in the Hungarian justice system lay in the different degrees of punishment meted out for similar offenses. Though the higher courts upheld the severity of the punishment for the servants in the criminal libel suit, they significantly lowered the punishment of Count Zichy.<sup>637</sup> Initially the Criminal Court sentenced the Count to a year and a half in prison, then the Royal Court of Appeals lowered it to ten months in prison, and subsequently, the highest court; the Royal Curia lowered the Count's sentence to only 14 days in the lightest form of confinement.<sup>638</sup>

Having repudiated the credibility of servant testimonials, the courts had a clear mission to redeem and reinstate Hungary's two most important female patriots. In their verdict, the judges made it unmistakably clear both how they perceived and how they wanted people to remember this scandalous legal suit:

On one hand, there stands a person driven by an irresistible passion, who would not even hesitate or feel remorse for a committing crime and living an utterly selfish life. While, on the other hand, there are two intellectually and ethically high standing people who have been making important contributions to the betterment of the public, whose ethical purity has not been the tiniest bit overshadowed by this case.<sup>639</sup>

The courts' decisions constructed a black-and-white interpretation of an evil but noble man, Count Zichy, while simultaneously creating a vision of virtuous women, Cecilé

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the Minister Decree of 1922 and Voting law of 1925 both of which raised the pre-requisites of voting in terms of education and thereby successfully shutting out most of working class votes.

<sup>637</sup> The sentences for the three servants sued were lowered from a year to 10 months, from 7 to 6 months in prison and from 6 months to 4 months in fogház – the lightest form of confinement, respectively.

<sup>638</sup> Criminal Suit. Verdict of Court of Appeal, 136, Verdict of Royal Curia, 167.

<sup>639</sup> Criminal Suit. Royal Criminal Court of Budapest, 86.

Tormay and Countess Zichy. Despite the fact that queer sex and sexuality were supposedly central to the outcome of the legal suits, in the end the courts successfully wrote non-normative sexuality out of their rulings. Thus, in regards to the intimate relationship of the two women, including their nights spent together, the Criminal Court concluded that

[i]t was the most necessary and certainly most understandable and natural progression that in their common and passionate pursuit for public good, with such an extraordinary spiritual talent and leading such sophisticated lives these two women would increasingly become more intimate with each other in their private life.<sup>640</sup>

The court's interpretation of the relationship between the two women as an intimate friendship that was necessitated by their joint passion to rebuild Hungary basically excluded the possibility that any aspect of their relationship was sexual. As a result, the jurists did not have to consider the medical (or any other) perspective that could have offered a different interpretation. Testimonials by medical experts and the servants that could have stigmatized female friendship as tribadic, were discarded. Instead the court reaffirmed friendship between women as pure and asexual form of romance.<sup>641</sup> With this decision the court also assured that the issue of female homosexuality would be re-closeted in legal discourse.

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<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.* 76.

<sup>641</sup> There are different interpretation of the process and timing of the stigmatization of romantic female friendship. Early important works included under footnote 78 of Chauncey's "*Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion?*" For some of the latest conceptualizations see Choquette, Leslie. "Homosexuals in the City: Representations of Lesbian and Gay Space in Nineteenth-Century Paris." *Journal of Homosexuality*. 41, no. 3 (2001): 149; Vicinus, Martha. *Intimate Friends : Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004; and Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women : Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

*Strategic deployment of medicine*

While the courts eventually rejected the opinion of medical experts, the language used to describe (homo)sexuality and the involvement of the medical establishment throughout the case, demonstrates the influence medicine had in defining sexuality by the 1920s. Particularly interesting is the fact that throughout the records we see the presence of both, a biological and organic view of homosexuality, as well as of a psychoanalytical and psychological explanation. The co-existence of biological and psychological explanations of homosexuality reflect continuities in medical personnel as well as in ideas from both the Austro-Hungarian era and from the more recent Communist rule. Despite the fact that the legal definition of homosexuality as a specific act was upheld (even if unintelligibly), a shift in discourse, and the “medicalization” of (homo)sexuality is apparent throughout the entire court proceedings. It was clear that by the 1920s homosexuality could no longer be determined by a single physical act. Homosexuality had become something more than sex between people of the same sex. As the various interpretations of the different courts show the conceptualization of homosexuality became muddier and heavily reliant on contemporary medical theories. Whether a person was a homosexual came to depend largely on the view of medical experts. This is conspicuous not only in the reasoning and rulings of the courts but also in the depositions of both parties. Both the plaintiff and respondent deployed the crème de la crème of the medical establishment to prove their cases, and three of the most distinguished medical experts on sexuality testified as forensic experts on tribadism.<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> Doctors Ignác Fischer, Ödön Németh and Gusztáv Oláh were internationally renowned professors, all receiving their education during the last two decades of the Monarchy, travelled widely and have worked with some of the most influential psychiatrist and neurologists of the time, such as Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris (who among many others also tutored Sigmund Freud.) Doctor Fischer, particularly was one of the

The medicalization of sexuality was often explicit in the proceedings. For instance, in her defense, Countess Zichy and her lawyers, even as they denied all charges, felt a need to make the case that sexuality and sexual acts could not be seen as “rational and intentional deeds” and therefore did not classify as crimes against nature.<sup>643</sup> Relying on the latest organic views on homosexuality, the respondent argued that tribadism could not be a legitimate reason for a divorce because “according to medical opinions tribadism is an unintentional and an impulsive act resulting from congenital brain or rather nerve malfunction, and to grant divorce the law required purposefulness.”<sup>644</sup> In another similarly telling instance, the jury, assuming that there were physical signs of homosexuality (such as an enlarged labia or the growth of a beard), asked the husband whether during the time of his marriage he had noticed any abnormalities in the physique of his wife. Last but not least, the Budapest Tribunal pointed out in its ruling that “tribadism is an uncontainable instinct.”<sup>645</sup> Again, the percolation of medical theories--however mutually contradictory--into legal discourse is legible on multiple registers.

Alongside of medical approaches that stressed inborn and biological reasons for homosexuality, a careful reading of the sources also reveals the presence of discourses on sexuality that were based in psychological explanations. This is evident not only in the medical opinions that the courts cite, but also the ways in which the different courts themselves make their arguments to justify the “uncommonly close” friendship between the two women. For instance, in the divorce suit the Royal Curia (Highest Court) argued

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early advocates of the decriminalization of homosexuality and who during the debate about homosexuality in the Hungarian Lawyers Association in 1909 made a passionate appeal on behalf of the respectable homosexual community.

<sup>643</sup> Divorce Suit. Criminal Court, 3.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid*, 3. Tribadism comes from the Greek *tribas*, which was initially applied to “perverse” women, then later came to signify sexual encounter between women, and most recently the word indicated a non-penetrative sex between scissoring.

<sup>645</sup> P. VII. 2.C. 45162/1923, 19.

that it was understandable that Countess Zichy “would have developed an intimate relationship that was deeper than usual with her lady friend....considering the fact that her husband had broken off his married life with her, [and that she was] devoid of marital love and intimacy.”<sup>646</sup> Arguing that intimacy, both psychical and emotional, were important and basic components of human relations, the Curia applied a psychological explanation to explain why and how two women could have become so close. Countess Zichy, who had been married and therefore, in the court’s eyes had been both physically and emotionally intimate, was going through a withdrawal following her husband’s departure. In such an emotional and psychical void, the Curia argued, it was perfectly *normal* that the Countess opened up to Tormay, who by being attentive and most importantly, *present* in the Countess’ daily life, could fill the gap that Count Zichy had created. Rather than denying the abnormality of the two women’s relationship, by psychologizing it, the Curia ultimately ended up normalizing it. The utilization of psychological explanations to explain the intimacy between the two women reflects the influence of psychological theories that by the mid-1920s were apparent in not only the medical but also in the legal sphere.

Another example of reliance on non-biological explanations of non-normative sexuality is found in the Count’s claim that his wife preferred to be satisfied manually (by a hand), rather than the “normal” way (by a penis). The Count’s lawyers and doctors argued that such behavior implied that she could only have learned this from being sexually active with another woman. According to the lawyers, being exposed and consequently “taught” about lesbian sex, explained the queer sexual preference of the Countess. Consequently, they could declare that there was a direct link between a

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<sup>646</sup> P. III.4997/1924/5 Divorce suit, 33.

particular way of being pleased and homosexuality. Wanting to be satisfied by a hand, argued the Count's lawyers, proved the Countess was a homosexual. The Royal Curia rejected such reasoning. In its opinion that explained why the Count's appeal for divorce was being denied, it stated that "just because the plaintiff (Count Zichy) complained in front of others about how the defendant demanded "*digitais coitus*" during their marriage, that is she wanted him to satisfy her with his hands, does not substantiate the claim that the defendant led an unnatural sexual life."<sup>647</sup>

What these surviving documents along with contemporary medical publications suggest is that the medical establishment and doctors in Budapest during the conservative Horthy regime continued to be informed by, and (selectively) applied the latest theories of European sexologists and psychiatrists.<sup>648</sup> In the absence of the actual testimonials of the medical experts, it is difficult present a more comprehensive account of where the various ideas on sexuality originated and who introduced them on behalf of the different players. Nevertheless, it is evident that the experts on all sides, including the courts themselves, relied on biological as well as psycho-social explanations to make their arguments about homosexuality. Despite the power of medicine, it is obvious that the courts and the parties involved used and applied medical and psychoanalytical discourses on sexuality selectively, citing these ideas in a way that made their particular case most convincing. This is most apparent when we read the opinion of medical experts who contended that "the details of the depositions of three (servant) witnesses (about Countess

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<sup>647</sup> P. III.4997/1924/7 Divorce suit, 35.

<sup>648</sup> Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1999; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, politics, and society : the regulation of sexuality since 1800*. London ; New York: Longman, 1981; Jonathan Katz, *The invention of heterosexuality with a new preface*, Chicago [u.a.]: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007; Edward Shorter, *A history of psychiatry : from the era of the asylum to the age of Prozac*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997. Hungarian medical and legal scholars were familiar with and actively participated in the latest debates around sexuality both in medicine and law.

Zichy and Tormay), if factual, were clear indication of tribadism and those acts described by witnesses would be most certainly the consequences of homosexual acts, and that triadism is nothing other, than an irresistible instinct.”<sup>649</sup> Other than the plaintiff, no one was ready or willing to fully assume this position and its possible consequences. Rather than bowing to medical knowledge and expertise, the courts utilized medical and psychoanalytical arguments in order to support their own agendas. For instance, in rejecting the possibility of a sexual relationship between the two women, the Royal Tribunal stated that “there is not the slightest chance that the respondent, who had a normal sexual life with the plaintiff, who gave birth to five children, and was at an age when her sexual desire was lessening, would have committed unnatural fornication.”<sup>650</sup> While the courts would probably have refrained from making the same claim had the person in question been a man in his mid-forties, they referred to medical theories on sexual desire in order to discredit claims of Countess Zichy as a sexual being. In sum, medical and psychoanalytical knowledge on sexuality by the 1920s was deeply embedded in legal perceptions, and yet the courts and people who brought cases before them were strategically selective in their utilization of medical ideas.

*The Servant Voices: Language, Social Geographies, and the “She-Man”*

Studying the voices of servants to discern their understandings of sexuality in relation to legal, medical, and popular discourses highlights ideas on homosexuality that existed across these spheres as well as across socio-geographical positions within Hungarian society. Servants were among the most mobile people of their time, both in

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<sup>649</sup> Divorce Suit, 18 -19. Medical opinion, Appendix 12.

<sup>650</sup> Divorce Suit. Royal Tribunal, 4.



terms of geography and their exposure to different social worlds. Many of them travelled with their employers from cities to estates in the countryside, or changed employers and relocated to different parts of the country. Some, as this divorce case exemplifies, were exposed both to ideas about sexuality as well as to the most intimate details of different social classes across geographical places. Scholars have repeatedly shown the frankness with which domestic servants could speak about intimate bodily matters.<sup>651</sup> The male and female servants of the Zichys and of Cecilé Tormay--József Walter, Ferencné Poszlik, and Mária Zeisler--were not shy about describing the personal relationship of the two women. In addition, unlike notorious male homosexual scandals, where servants were looked on as participants in rough trade and male prostitution and whose testimonials were accordingly suspect, the servants in the Zichy case were initially seen as the “bearers of the truth” and key witnesses.<sup>652</sup> Whether or not we believe in the authenticity of their claims or question the motives for their depositions, the ways in which the servants use language to explain the relationship between the two women offer a rare opportunity to observe how same-sex sexuality was conceptualized outside of the medical, legal, and urban worlds during 1920s. Thus, focusing equally on “how” the servants expressed these relationships in addition to “what” the servants said is valuable.

What exactly did the servants say they saw, heard, knew, and thought?<sup>653</sup>

According to the Courts’ interpretation, the two women, although acquainted for almost a decade, became very close following the Communist Revolution. Cecilé Tormay would spend extensive time at the Zichy residence in Budapest as well as at the family estate on

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<sup>651</sup> Lawrence Stone’s *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

<sup>652</sup> Examples would include the Cleveland Street scandal or the Oscar Wilde trials.

<sup>653</sup> The testimonials of servants were recorded by public notaries between December 1922 and October 1923.

the countryside.<sup>654</sup> It was during this period that the servants started gossiping about the “unnatural” closeness of the Countess and Tormay. This information eventually found its way to the ears of Count Rafael Zichy, who by 1922, welcomed any news that could help him get a divorce.<sup>655</sup> Having been informed about the strangely intimate relationship between his wife and Cecilé Tormay, the Count ordered the porter and long-time servant, József Walter to spy on the women. When this effort did not lead to the results he had anticipated, the Count arranged to have three holes drilled in the ceilings of the Countess’s bedroom, the Comtess’ (their daughter) bedroom, and the guest bedroom. Moreover, to make sure nothing would be missed, the Count arranged for microphones to be installed in the chandeliers.<sup>656</sup> The porter spent months spying on the women through the peepholes and recorded his observations. These, along with the observations of the rest of the servants, stood at the heart of the divorce case and were the primary subject of the criminal suit.

The reports of servants reflect a gender-based understanding of sexuality where both the sexuality of women as well as their relationship was conceived within a framework of traditional gender norms. Thus, despite of the women’s biological sex and self-representation as women, in the accounts of the servants Tormay assumes a masculine role and the two women are depicted as a “heterosexual” couple. The Countess appears as the feminine, passive, and subservient female. Although her intellectual abilities and powerful personality are revealed in both the trial records and

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<sup>654</sup> The Communist revolution and subsequent communist rule Hungarian Soviet Republic lasted from 21 March to 6 August 1919.

<sup>655</sup> Everybody in and around the family, including the Countess, knew about Zichy’s affair with a wife of a well-known lawyer. Zichy had tried to pursue the divorce, but the Countess was hesitant.

<sup>656</sup> The details of specific technology used, which is considering the time period is in and of itself significant, is part of my dissertation chapter, where I also look at the courts’ examination of the holes and hearing devices in order to determine the authenticity of the servant testimonials.

letters to her husband, her marital status and role as the mother of five assures that she is perceived as feminine. Cecilé Tormay, who had never married, did not have children, worked as an independent writer, and led a traditionally “male” life, was portrayed as a masculine Casanova and a male rival to the Count. The servants’ stories, which they claimed to have seen or heard through the “servant network”, speak of Tormay’s notorious appetite for and success with women, including making physical advances to female maids and having other intimate relationships with women of high social classes. Aside from proposing that Tormay’s behavior was known to the social elite, the testimonials also depict Tormay as a considerable threat to the husbands of her various love interests.

The cook, in particular, portrayed Tormay as a lady’s man, who successfully infiltrated aristocratic families and even prompted the men of these families to take action. In his sworn testimony the cook stated:

A while back Tormay wanted to creep into the D. family as well, while Count D. was not around. When the Count arrived back from Budapest at the train station he rode in his coach home. And on the way he asked his coachman whether there was any news or any guests at the estate. The coachman told him that Tormay was visiting to which the Count ordered him to turn around went back to the station and telephoned home and told the maid the following: “report to the Countess that Tormay must leave immediately, because if I see her there I will shoot her”.<sup>657</sup>

According to the porter Walter, the cook had told him that when he served at the house of D. T., his mother, Gy. B., received regular visits from Tormay. The cook went on to tell the servants at the Zichy palace that the friendship of Tormay and Gy. B. became so intimate and private that when Tormay was present, only one maid was allowed to enter the Countess’ room. And even then, only when they specifically requested food. He went on to say that the son of Gy. B. did not like the intimacy of that friendship. The

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<sup>657</sup> József Walter’s statement 1141/1923 Jeszenszky, 10.

cook believed the son suspected something, because when he saw or heard of Tormay's arrival he exclaimed in front of the servants, "Tormay is coming, watch out or she will fuck somebody!"<sup>658</sup> The cook's recollections did not end there. Since the rest of Gy. B.'s family had become aware of Tormay's nature and wanted to stop her visits, the family arranged a party game. Tormay's prize was veiled and when she pulled off the veil she found an electric monkey toy, which was playing with its penis. On the foot of the monkey there was an engraved sentence that read, "the monkey plays with its pe... the way Tormay plays with her own pe...." According to the cook, after this, Tormay stopped visiting the B's.<sup>659</sup>

While the servants ascribed masculine attributes to Tormay, their conceptualization of the nature of the two women's relationship, and why it seemed "unnatural", adhered to strictly "heteronormative" ideas. The servants perceived Tormay's behavior as unnatural because she was transgressing gender norms and acting like a man. Of course, Countess Zichy herself transgressed gender expectations; she, similarly to Tormay, led an active public life and her intellect was known to be far superior to her husband's. She was a writer and translator and even though according to people, including her husband, had an overbearing personality, the servants constructed the women's relationship in a "heteronormative" framework.<sup>660</sup> That is, rather than same-sex sexuality being understood as a possibly different sexual and gender constellation, the servants viewed the relationship of Countess Zichy and Tormay as a heterosexual affair, by turning Tormay into the male figure. At the same time, analyzing

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<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.* 10-11.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.* 11. Dots are in the original document.

<sup>660</sup> Among other things she translated the speeches of Mussolini. *Mussolini válogatott beszédei 1922-1925* (Mussolini's assorted speeches). Budapest, 1927.

the testimonials and particularly some of the inherent contradictions within the servants' account, we can see that in the servant's imaginings, Tormay became more like a person of the "third sex", even if they were unaware of that designation found in the language and categories of sexologists. The servants did blame the Countess for her coldness towards the Count. They pointed out some of her "odd" behaviors such as making her daughter give up her bedroom, which was right next to the Countess's, whenever Tormay stayed over. One could argue that they faulted her for not fulfilling her womanly responsibilities. Yet, the servants never demonized her sexuality nor was her heterosexuality questioned.<sup>661</sup>

It is not surprising then that the Countess appears as the jealous wife or lover who cannot bear the sight of competition in servant narratives. As one of Tormay's maids recalled, "once I was present when a woman...on the phone was inquiring of Tormay when she could see her. The Countess was present and said to Tormay impetuously, 'I do not want you to see her' to which Cecilé Tormay took the Countess' hand and kissed it." The same maid also told the notary that she had knowledge of the fact that Tormay had been frequently visited by Countess Vay, who was "well-known for her perverted inclinations."<sup>662</sup> According to the maid, Countess Zichy was jealous of Vay and did not allow Tormay to receive her or go to see her. However, on one occasion when Countess Vay came to see Tormay, Countess Zichy was also there and a servant had to tell Vay that Tormay was not at home. Vay wanted to go into the salon to write a few lines for Tormay at which point Tormay locked the door from inside.

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<sup>661</sup> This seems to correspond to existing accounts of female same-sex histories that argue that it was only gradually and over considerable time that the "passive", gender normative partner within lesbian relationships also became pathologized. For instance, see Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984): 557.

<sup>662</sup> Jeszenszky. 105/1922, 2.

*The Curious Appearance of Vay or “D’Artagnan”*<sup>663</sup>

Apart from a depiction of the Countess’s jealousy, the appearance of Sarolta (Charlotte) Vay is interesting for a number of reasons. Sarolta, or rather Sándor (Alexander) as she referred to herself, had been dead for years.<sup>664</sup> This clearly would have been a blow to the authenticity of the maid’s story. Nevertheless, the seemingly strategic mention of Vay and reference to her “well-known perversion” is a testament to the extent to which Vay had become infamous in popular discourse by the 1920s. Vay, born female, but raised as a boy by her eccentric father eventually assumed a male identity as Sándor (and D’Artagnan was “his” pen name). He became a national sensation when he ran off with a woman and they legally wed.<sup>665</sup> It is more than likely that the maid (along with the rest of the servants) had been informed and heard about Vay’s scandalous divorce trial and consequently, about the confusion around her/his biological sex.<sup>666</sup> Clearly, although many were literate, the servants would most likely not have read Richard von Krafft-Ebing or Havelock Ellis’ extensive studies on the sexuality of Vay. Their work described Vay as a congenital sexual invert and essentially

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<sup>663</sup> D’Artagnan was one of Vay’s pen names, but Gyula Krúdy, the famous Hungarian novelist also often referred to Vay as D’Artagnan. See *Szobrok megmozdulnak : írások az irodalomról* (The Sculptures move: essays on literature). Budapest: Gondolat, 1974.

<sup>664</sup> She died in 1918.

<sup>665</sup> Vay was raised as a boy by her father who desperately wanted a son and went on to educate her as him at some of Europe’s most prestigious universities. On the life of Váy, see Anna Borgos’ “Vay Sándor/Sarolta: egy konvencionális nemiszerep-áthágó a múlt századfordulón” (Vay Alexander / Charlotte: overstepping conventional gender roles at the turn of last century) *Holmi*, no. 2 (2007) 185-194.

<sup>666</sup> The trial of Vay took place in 1899 when Vay was sued by her father-in-law for marrying under false pretence and intentionally deceiving her wife and in-laws about her biological sex. Based on the opinion of medical experts who determined that Vay had a congenital and therefore, unstoppable sexual passion for her own sex she was acquitted and continued to live as a man. For an analysis of the greater implications of the trial in English see Geertje Mak, “Sandor Sarolta Vay: From Passing Woman to Sexual Invert,” *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no. 1 (March 8, 2004): 54-77.

a prototypical lesbian.<sup>667</sup> Nevertheless, medical experts and sexologists aside, in understanding Vay's gender many people went along with Vay's self-identification, as a man who until his death lived his life as part of the male gentry of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.<sup>668</sup> Vay's story had even become part of popular culture, mostly thanks to Gyula Krúdy, the prolific writer and journalist who incorporated Vay into some of his novels, as well as wrote some articles that specifically addressed Vay's eccentric life.<sup>669</sup> The testimonial of the maid makes it clear that the servants had heard of Vay, and perhaps they (the ones that could read) might have even read either Vay's own writing, or something about her by Gyula Krúdy.<sup>670</sup> Thus, even if the appearance of Vay in the maid's story showed elements of fabrication it was also a clear testament to the servants' exposure to ideas about non-normative sexualities. As scholars in various contexts have showed by the 1920s, narratives of non-normative (female) gender and sexualities had been circulating even in the broader popular culture.<sup>671</sup>

The testimonies of the servants reveal their exposure to ideas about and narratives of non-normative sexualities. Particularly interesting are the ways in which the maid

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<sup>667</sup> Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia sexualis. Mit besonderen Berücksichtigung der konträren Sexualempfindung. Eine klinisch-forensische Studie*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1892, 311–28; Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol.1, *Sexual Inversion*, London: The University Press, 1900, 94.

<sup>668</sup> Borgos "Vay Sándor/Sarolta: egy konvencionális nemiszerep-áthágó a múlt századfordulón," 190.

<sup>669</sup> For instance, the novel *Hét Bagoly* ([Seven Owls], 1922, Articles include "A fêrfiruhás irónő" (The female writer in male attire) in *Új Idők*. 1924. I. kötet 72-81. 1., republished in *A Szobrok megmozdulnak*, "A magyar George Sand: Vay Sarolta grófnő, a női gentleman" (The Hungarian George Sand: Countess Charlotte Vay, the female gentleman, in *Világ*, 1926. VII. 12. sz., republished in *A Szobrok megmozdulnak* and "Vay Sándor és Simli Mariska kalandregényei" (The adventures of Alexander Vay and Mariska Simli) first appeared in *Mai nap*. 1930. 208. (IX.14.), republished in *Szobrok megmozdulnak*.

<sup>670</sup> Some of Krúdy's pieces (as well as Vay's own) appeared in daily newspapers and were widely circulated and widely read.

<sup>671</sup> Some of the latest works include: Doan, Laura, and Jane Garrity. *Sapphic Modernities : Sexuality, Women, and National Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Rowe, Dorothy. *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2003. Hekma, Gert, and Julie Peakman. *A cultural history of sexuality. 6, A cultural history of sexuality in the modern age : (1900 to 2000)*. Oxford [u.a.]: Berg, 2011.

portrayed the relationship of Tormay, Vay, and the Countess. In terms of gender representation, Vay, while referred to as a *she*, is presented as the pursuer and masculine subject. This is in a sense not surprising, considering Vay's well-known male identification. However, the Vay story aside, it is Tormay who is portrayed as being masculine and her strong masculine characteristics, often surpassing those of her male counterparts, were foregrounded by the servants. This calls for more scrutiny. The appearance and reference to Vay is an instance of which the fluidity of female masculinity and female sexuality more generally surfaces. Unlike in the portrayal of Tormay's relationship to the Countess, in which Tormay appears as the sexual transgressor and as the antithesis of "ladylike" and "feminine" behavior, in the account of Tormay's relationship to Vay, the maid transforms Tormay into a "lady" and thus, the pursued rather than the pursuer. Rather than seeing these different (re)presentations as contradictory, I would argue that they speak of an early twentieth century understanding of queer female gender expressions as much more fluid and encompassing a greater range than other scholars have necessarily shown.<sup>672</sup> Consequently, the servants' representation reflects an older understanding of female homosexuality that was based in the combination of a pre-medicalized and pre-sexualized view of female relations.

In the testimonies Vay is referred to as a *she* when, apart from her birth record; she was raised as a *he* and identified as a man.<sup>673</sup> Medical experts and sexologists aside, most of Vay's contemporaries acquiesced to Vay's chosen gender, who until his death

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<sup>672</sup> For instance, Judith Halberstam in *Female masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

<sup>673</sup> Vay was raised as a boy by her father who desperately wanted a son and went on to educate her as a man at some of Europe's most prestigious universities.



lived his life as part of the male gentry of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.<sup>674</sup> Therefore, it is important that despite the acceptance of Vay's male gender expression the maid in her testimony referred to Vay as a "she." We will never know the maid's precise reasons for this, but an examination of the servants' gendered and class specific language, and their conception of sexuality, offers a possible explanation. Once we take a close look at the servants' voices it makes sense that Vay had to be presented as female, so the maid and the rest of the servant witnesses could envision and present Cecilé Tormay as the sexual transgressor.

The key to understanding the different gender representations of Tormay, whose physical appearance and clothing certainly did not transgress contemporary gender norms, is to look at the specific ways in which people perceived her in her intimate friend- and relationships. She was imagined as masculine when she was seen as the one being in charge, while she was represented as feminine when she was pursued and acted "ladylike." Thus, her perceived masculinity and more generally, the definition of female masculinity in Hungary during the 1920s, had much less to do with women's physically appearance per se, and much more to do with the particular *role* that a woman in a relationship would play.<sup>675</sup>

The different ways servants described Tormay's sexuality also highlight some regional variations in expressing sexual anomalies and perhaps, reflect a more nature centred view of sexuality. Furthermore, these descriptions give us some sense of how the

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<sup>674</sup> Anna Borgos' "Vay Sándor/Sarolta: egy konvencionális nemiszerep-áthágó a múlt századfordulón," 185-194.

<sup>675</sup> I am especially talking about the conceptualization of female masculinity in relation to women who physically and in appearance wise conform to traditional gender norms. Judith Halberstam, *Female masculinity*. A potential analysis would be how the case reflected the tension between two forms of womanhood and sexual respectability.

diffusion of ideas about non-normative sexuality could have taken place among servants. Illustrative of this diffusion is the following conversation that took place between two maids at Sárszentmihály, the Zichy's rural estate, where Tormay spent several months with the Countess. According to Ferencne Poszlik (who was Countess's maid and married to the Count's first manservant), the Countess's daughter's maid (K) told her about a conversation that she had with another maid named S, who was leaving the Zichys to work elsewhere.

Maid S; thank God that I can leave ...because I wouldn't have tolerated what the Countess and Tormay were doing.

Then (according to Poszlik) K laughed at S tauntingly, and asked her what exactly it was that she would not have tolerated?

Maid S; "that Tormay was such a woman who loved the Countess in a way like a man did."

Then K asked again: "what do you mean?"

To answer this S told K that Tormay was a *csira* (sprout) and that she knew this for certain. Then K asked what a *csira* was, because she had never heard of it.

S. told her that "the Countess and Tormay are living as husband and wife."<sup>676</sup>

The word *csira*, literally meaning sprout—a young plant growth such a bud or shoot—in English, came from a regional dialect of Heves County, northeast from Budapest.

According to etymological dictionaries it was used to refer to a person who had both male and female sexual organs. In the medical language at the time this was code for hermaphrodites (which would be labeled as intersexual today).<sup>677</sup> The maid's use of the word *csira* is evidence of the persistence of an older, rural language for expressing "abnormal" sexualities. Thinking about the literal meaning of the word "sprout", it seems reasonable to propose that the maid's language reflects a conceptualization of sexuality that was grounded in nature. This should not be surprise since urbanization and

<sup>676</sup> Poszlik Ferencné – maid's statement. Jeszenszky. 1260/1923, 4-5.

<sup>677</sup> *Csira* in Magyar Etymologiai szótár, (eds.) Gombocz Zoltán and Melich János I. könyv. MTA Budapest 1914-30.

its subsequent/coexisting industrialization had only recently occurred in Hungary. Since even during the 1920s, most people had either direct family ties or were still actually living in rural areas and were involved in agriculture, it makes perfect sense that both the language and interpretation of sexuality were embedded in nature. Moreover, the fact that maid K. had no idea about what the word *csira* meant in the context of sexuality also points to the existence of regional and dialectical variation of expressing non-normative sexualities in 1920s.<sup>678</sup> Regional differences in the language used to express different sexualities would have been particularly apparent during the immediate post-Trianon years and throughout the 1920s when ethnic Hungarians, often with very different local traditions, arrived from the territories of former Austro-Hungary to the new and significantly smaller Hungary. Finally, the conversation between the two maids offers a concrete example of how ideas about sexuality circulated between servants from different regions within the borders of pre 1918 Hungary—by word of mouth.

The maid's use of the expression *csira* also draws attention to the absence of language, and one might add the concept itself, of a female homosexuality that was not strictly based on a traditional gender model. Calling Tormay a "sprout" and saying she loved the Countess "like a man" (along with the tendency of male servants, and according to their testimonials male members of the upper class to attribute a penis to Tormay) suggests that in order for the servants to conceptualize and articulate the "unnatural" sexual relationship between two women, one of them had to have a penis.<sup>679</sup> That is not to say that penetration was the only act that the servants would have

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<sup>678</sup>This supports historical accounts that argue for a more uneven and slower diffusion of medical discourse on homosexuality than initial gay scholarship suggested.

<sup>679</sup> Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radcliffe Hall and the New Woman," *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984): 557.

considered sexual or “unnatural.” Instead, they placed the two women into a heterosexual—an active male, passive female—couple in order to make sense of their relationship. In fact the porter, the main witness who was in charge of peeping through the ceiling holes, recorded a number of “suspicious,” read sexual, activities between Tormay and the Countess that took place under the covers.<sup>680</sup> Yet often, when he was describing what he saw (or thought he saw) taking place between the two women, the porter would directly compare the actions of the women to a heterosexual couple. Even though the porter himself never used the expression, he was describing “tribadism,” which he understood *not* as a heterosexual relation but as a “heterosexual like” sexual encounter between two women. Statements such as “they (Tormay and the Countess) were moving the ways in which a man and a woman would be moving,” underscores the limitations of the porter’s and, in general, of the servants’ sexual framework. Of course, one can speculate about whether the perception of Tormay as essentially a “she-man” had any validity. If she indeed had male sexual organs, the servants’ portrayal becomes self-explanatory. If, on the other hand, we treat their depiction of Tormay as a conceptual framework, their inability to construct female homosexuality as something outside the hetero-normative model becomes striking. Thus, unlike the medical and legal discourses on female same-sex sexuality that by the 1920s constructed at least a distinct vocabulary in order to express sexual desire between two women, the servants’ understanding suggests that the “love that dared not to speak its name” actually had no name in everyday language.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> József Walter’s statement 1141/1923 Jeszenszky.

<sup>681</sup> Even if as studies show neither legal nor medical discourse on female homosexuality was necessarily “intelligible” or stable. George Chauncey’s article “From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and Changing Concept of Female Deviance,” *Salmagundi*, no. Fall

Furthermore, it seems that even the servants who were familiar with the urban “lingo” of expressing male same-sexual desire lacked the capability (or one might say willingness) to think outside of a penis-centered heteronormative configuration. The following excerpt from the key witness, the porter’s, account of comments made by the cook at the Zichy’s rural estate underscores this point;

...during this time K. F. was the cook of the family and when on an occasion he saw Tormay, he raged and upon leaving the kitchen saying that: “this damned *bestia* is again here where I am; she has already caused me trouble.” István Deák, the servant who heard the cook’s fulmination came straight to me and told me that F, the cook, had known Tormay for quite some time and that according to F, “Tormay is a *buzeráns* (poof) and has a bigger dick than a man does.”<sup>682</sup>

K’s reference to Tormay as a *bestia* (a female witch/an old cat with a sexual connotation) and as having a penis, highlights her ambiguous gender position in the servants’ representation. Moreover, the fact that the cook used the word *buzeráns* (poof) is telling. It means that the male servants (at least) had been exposed to popular urban, or more specifically, Budapest’s vernacular language on homosexuality. As I discussed in chapter one, the word *buzeráns* was adopted into the vernacular language of Budapest from Germany during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This became the most common word throughout much of the twentieth century to refer to homosexuals.<sup>683</sup> While the cook, K, did not use the latest lingo, he was evidently familiar with expressions at least for male same-sex sexuality. What is interesting is that regardless of the extent and differences of their exposure to non-normative sexualities, the servants

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1982/Winter 1983 was one of the pioneer works who explicitly addressed the issue, and most recently, Laura Doan and Jane Garrity’s *Sapphic modernities* reiterates this idea.

<sup>682</sup> József Walter’s statement. Jeszenszky. 1141/1923, 9 Italics are mine. István Deák was, and still is, a common Hungarian name. Consequently, there is no connection between the servant and the history professor István Deák.

<sup>683</sup> Nádasy Ádám “Az örömtelen eretnekek” (Joyless Heretics), *Magyar Narancs*, February 15, 2001, 40. The word *buzeráns* was first written in Hungarian in 1896 *Buzeráns* was increasingly shortened to *buzi* after 1900. The word *buzi* was used until the 1990s when the word *meleg* became the politically correct expression of homosexuality.

conceptualized and expressed Tormay's sexuality similarly—as a “she-man.”<sup>684</sup>

Consequently, in as much Tormay was seen as a *buzeráns* (a woman who sexually desired another woman) she was portrayed as embodying a male body and gender expressions.

It is only possible to make educated guesses about how contemporary members of the social and cultural elite thought about female homosexuality. Based on the servants' testimonials, it seems that women and men of the upper classes responded to and dealt with Tormay's “perversity” differently. While as the woman-Casanova, Tormay agitated husbands and drew angry reactions, women were more understanding and accepting of Tormay's allegedly masculine characteristics and same-sex sexuality. The accounts of servants portray angry male relatives and men who cannot stomach Tormay and the Countess' relationship in general. In contrast, women seemed to be more comfortable with non-normative sexuality. A story from one of the servants underscores this point. He tells an account of a lunch that took place at the Zichy palace in the absence of Count Zichy. Explaining how “during sitting down for a family lunch, at the table one of the guests, Countess X, pointed to the chair of Count Zichy and said to Tormay: “Cecilé, sit here, this place actually should be yours,” a servant interpreted Countess X's words as expressing her acceptance and in a sense respect for Tormay's place as head of the Zichy family.”<sup>685</sup> And even if the servants' testimonies had no validity, it is still possible to see

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<sup>684</sup> The way in which the term *buzeráns* circulated, initially from Budapest to the countryside, speaks of what John Howard in *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) describes as centripetal forces of urban centers. That is to say that cities not only had a centrifugal influence but also disseminated knowledge (as well as bodies) of non-normative sexualities.

<sup>685</sup> In Deák István's statement. 1277/1923 Dr. Jeszensky István, notary, 5.

the strength of hetero-gender normativity in the servants' conception of how people responded to the relationship of Countess Zichy and Tormay.

Overall, the difficulty of making sense of same-sex sexuality between women outside of the heteronormative framework cut across class, gender and even urban and rural divides. The dearth of language for expressing female homosexuality was not confined to the servants, a fact apparent in the contemporary news coverage of the case. Along with ordering the trials to be closed, the courts initially tried to limit what papers could report on the case.<sup>686</sup> Nevertheless, most papers were able to tell the gist of the story and made it clear that the authorities' intention of keeping the scandal off the streets was utterly unsuccessful.<sup>687</sup> The censoring of intimate bedroom details aside, the newspaper coverage had a difficult time expressing female same-sex sexual desire and female homosexuality. Using "friendship" in quotation marks or expressions such as "the ink would not be able to handle the nature of the charges," the representation of female homosexuality remained vague, ambiguous, and at times, threatening. It is not necessarily that people of the time were unfamiliar with same-sex love and sex between women but that the language to express it and ideas of "lesbianism" and what exactly it entailed was for many, unintelligible. This was also true for the courts and legal discourse more generally. Since female homosexuality was not criminalized in Hungary's Criminal Code, it was rather rare for the courts to have to define what female homosexuality legally entailed. In Hungary during the 1920s, the legal definition and understanding of homosexuality was clearly contingent on whose sexuality was being discussed. Rulings in the Zichy-Tormay trials attest to both the unintelligibility of the

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<sup>686</sup> Divorce Trial note. However, by the time of the Criminal Court's decision on the libel case, the papers were allowed to address the specific charges, which included the explicit details of the case.

<sup>687</sup> See footnotes 584 and 585.

legal notion of female homosexuality and the malleability of the concept. From the idea of *digitalis manipulation* to explicit penetrative sex, what constituted female same-sex sexuality varied significantly. In the end, in order to arrive at the desired outcome, the courts applied medical views on female homosexuality selectively.

Taking a step back, it is clear that neither the divorce nor the criminal libel suit was aimed at directly attacking or defining female homosexuality. What Laura Doan in *Fashioning Sapphism* argues in regards to England during the 1920s seems to resonate in the Hungarian context. Analyzing the Zichy-Tormay case it seems indisputable that the “accusation of lesbianism was not an end in itself but a means to another end, political or personal in nature.”<sup>688</sup> In this case, the unsuccessfully pursued end was to acquire a divorce and, perhaps to a lesser degree, discredit some of Hungary’s most important political figures. While famous “homosexual” trials elsewhere, notably of Oscar Wilde or Radcliffe Hall, shamed and condemned alleged homosexuals, they were also an important step in creating a language and wider knowledge of the sexually marginalized. The Zichy-Tormay case did not create a more precise language nor did it seem to lead to a wider understanding of same-sex sexuality. Dirtying the names of Hungary’s two most important female spokespersons for the reigning conservative regime was neither desirable nor safe for most contemporary Hungarians. Although contemporary papers did say that the case had “surely given the wrong ideas to young women,” the case’s legacy as a part of the history of (homo)sexuality has yet to be claimed.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>688</sup> Laura L. Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: the origins of English lesbian culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, 32.

<sup>689</sup> This was true for even for non-conservative papers, such as the communist paper *Népszabadság*, which also expressed worry about the case’s potential influence on women.



Interestingly, the courts' intention of "clearing and restoring the name of Tormay and Countess Zichy" has stood the test of time. After forty years of Communist silencing of bourgeois and aristocrat voices, Cecilé Tormay has recently reemerged, precisely in the image the courts would have wanted her to appear. The past five years has seen the reprinting of every book Tormay wrote and conservative parties have happily (re)embraced her as Hungary's ideal patriotic female figure of the past century. Most recently, in March 2012, a statue was erected in Budapest, commemorating her as one of the "Greatest Hungarian Women." Last but not least, the Hungarian Ministry of Education was seriously considering including Tormay in the new national educational core curriculum.<sup>690</sup> Ironically, the politics and discourses that fashioned the silencing of same-sex sexuality in Tormay's lifetime have also proven to be the most enduring agents of silence in the historical memory of interwar (homo)sexuality. In turn, Tormay and the Countess' relationship have been successfully kept in the closet.<sup>691</sup> Decades after the democratization of Hungary in 1989, the lack of sources to "verify" particularly Tormay's sexuality and the nature of the two women's relationship, their affair has not served as a "usable past" for the emerging gay and lesbian community.<sup>692</sup>

Having considered a single scandal in this chapter, in the following chapter I will take a much broader approach and analyze the relationship between male non-normative sexuality and the conservative interwar government. Relying on the documents of the Budapest Criminal Courts, I will analyze the criminal prosecution of homosexuality

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<sup>690</sup> At the end, the final version of the National Core Curriculum that comes into effect in 2013 does not contain any reference of Tormay or her work.

<sup>691</sup> In addition to occasional mention of Tormay's potential lesbianism is passing, there is only one article by Judit Kádár, that indeed examines the uncertainties around Tormay's sexuality. "Az Antiszeizmus Jutalma. Tormay Cécile És a Horthy-korszak." (The Rewards of Antisemitism. Cécile Tormay and the Horthy era.) *Kritika*, no. 3 (2003): 9–12.

<sup>692</sup> In addition to the silencing of the sources, Tormay's antisemitic belief has been also a crucial reason why she has not been embraced by the lgbtq community.

during the interwar years. The court cases of Paragraph 241 and 242 that criminalized consensual and non-consensual sexual activities between men, reveal both how contemporaries understood sex between men, as well as how authorities dealt with homosexuality. I will argue that men's experiences during World War I were crucial in shaping ideas about sexuality and particularly same-sex sexuality. Furthermore, contextualizing the effects of World War I will be key to understanding the overall lenient approach of the authorities towards non-normative male sexuality in the post WWI era. Placing the politics of masculinity and the gender politics of the Horthy regime in the center of my analysis, I will reveal a paradoxical coexistence between the archconservative Horthy regime and tolerance of homosexuality.

## Chapter Five

### Unlikely Allies: Queer Men and Horthy Conservatives

The previous chapter demonstrated that, during the 1920s, the Hungarian authorities had no clear definition of female homosexuality. The fact that there was not one definition did not mean that people were unaware of the concept of women having sex with other women. Furthermore, the way in which people drew on terms such as *buzeráns* and *csira* (sprouts) also partially informed their understanding. The testimonies of the servants of the *Tormay – Zichy – Pallavicini* trials provided compelling evidence that there were different, often competing medical theories, including psychological explanations that were present and which had trickled down even to “ordinary” Hungarians in Budapest and the countryside alike. But female homosexuality, which was not criminalized, remained largely outside of the radar of the police, jurisprudence and the authorities in general, who were, first and foremost, concerned with heterosexual prostitution. Not only was love between women not prosecuted, but there also seemed to be an unspoken consensus on the part of leading voices, that “whatever we do not talk about does not exist”. Fearing that open discussion of female homosexuality would introduce the idea of Sapphic love to innocent women, it was not up for public discussion. When female homosexuality entered the public eye, as it did in the case of *Tormay* and *Pallavicini*, the conservative Horthy regime deliberately minimized and attempted to silence the discussion. Such an approach to female homosexuality took place within a political and social climate in which the subsequent conservative governments prescribed a particular role for Hungarian women. Moreover, as this

current chapter will further elaborate on, during the interwar years, the authorities policed and prosecuted non-normative female behavior, particularly prostitution to a much greater degree than the more liberal governments during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Thus, even though female sexuality became more regulated and policed, female homosexuality never became an openly-discussed issue and was not prosecuted throughout the interwar period.

But what about male homosexuality during the 1920s and 1930s? How did the authorities approach male homosexuality during an increasingly conservative era? In terms of the regulation of same-sex sexuality, the previous chapters illustrated that Hungary, closely following paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code, had criminalized sex between men in 1878.<sup>693</sup> Paragraph 241 of the Hungarian Penal Code criminalized both sexual acts between men and bestiality as *természet elleni fajtalanság* “unnatural fornication,” acts for punishment of up to one year in the least severe form of incarceration.<sup>694</sup> Paragraph 242 made non-consensual acts of “unnatural fornication”, punishable up to five years in prison, with the potential of life imprisonment if the act caused the death of the plaintiff. However, even as it criminalized consensual sex between adult men, Hungarian regulation was much more lenient than the majority of European Criminal codes that also criminalized homosexuality.<sup>695</sup> Furthermore, just because there were concrete laws on the books regarding male homosexuality did not

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<sup>693</sup> Besides countries that did not criminalize homosexuality, in most countries it was “only” sodomy between males that was criminalized. Exceptions include Austria and Finland, where both female and male homosexuality were criminalized.

<sup>694</sup> Florence Tamagne, in *The History of Homosexuality in Europe*, discusses the evolution of the different legal regulations of homosexuality within the Western European states.

<sup>695</sup> Countries, such as France, Holland and Italy did not criminalize same-sexual relations as long as they were consensual and took place outside of the public sphere. However, all the countries that did, in general had assigned stricter punishment than the Hungarian legal code had.

mean that they were necessarily enforced.<sup>696</sup> As the first two chapters illustrated, between 1878 and the end of World War I, the Budapest Metropolitan police practiced modern scientific management by establishing a homosexual registry and tracking male homosexuals. But, being labeled and registered as homosexuals did not mean legal action for most of the men in question. The novel approach of the Communists to decriminalize and re-habilitate homosexuals as heterosexuals in 1919 proved short-lived. During the interwar years, in contrast to non-normative female sexuality (prostitution), the conceptualization, regulation and treatment of male homosexuality shows remarkable continuities from the pre-1918 period. Unlike the case of religious or ethnic minorities, there were no new or further discriminatory legislations against male homosexuality, nor were the existing regulations more thoroughly enforced in the case of non-criminal homosexual men. Despite the growing power of the radical right and rapidly increasing membership and visibility of far-right elements following the onset of the economic depression in 1929, throughout the 1930s, homosexuals were neither the used as scapegoats, nor treated more punitively.

Why would a conservative political system that set out to establish “Christian morality” as the foundation of the Hungarian national community tolerate homosexuality? Why would a system, which, among other things, introduced the first anti-Jewish laws in the post-war period, protect male homosexuals at a time when most European countries were increasingly prosecuting them?<sup>697</sup> Why did this conservative

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<sup>696</sup> Similarly, the lack of criminalization in countries such as France and Italy did not automatically mean freedom and a lack of policing for same-sex and queer sexualities. For the case of France, see Judith Surkis’ *Sexing the citizen : morality and masculinity in France, 1870-1920*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2006 and Julian Jackson’s *Living in Arcadia homosexuality, politics, and morality in France from the liberation to AIDS*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

<sup>697</sup> Nazi Germany led the large-scale persecution of homosexuals, but, as scholars have pointed out, homosexuals were also persecuted in Fascist Italy, and increasingly policed even in France. There is

authoritarian regime that made restoring and protecting the (heterosexual) family a cornerstone of its ideology not target its homosexual minority? Moreover, during 1920s and 1930s, even the right wing elements remained conspicuously silent about Budapest's sizeable homosexual minority. Why and how could this be? What factors produced a highly conservative state that tolerated non-normative sexuality? What were the limits of this tenuous relationship as seen through the lens of the law, culture, and public health?

Grappling with these questions and finding a comprehensive response is the aim of this chapter. The answer is, of course, not straightforward. In fact, only the complicated interplay of various factors can together explain why, despite of the turmoil of 1918-1919, the abandonment of liberalism and the establishment of an archconservative regime in 1919, the new era did not bring a change in the treatment of non-normative male sexuality. The upheavals following World War I, the political, social and economic consequences of the Treaty of Trianon, a particular understanding of post-war masculinities and male sexualities more generally, a focus on the heterosexual transmission of venereal disease, and a carryover of a lenient rehabilitative medical approach to homosexuality, all in conjunction with one another, facilitated the unique co-existence of conservative governance and male homosexuality. I contend that the particular gendered dynamics of social regulation extended to homosexuality, which paradoxically allowed a certain kind of male homosexuality to coexist with conservatism.

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substantive scholarship on Germany; the classic work is Richard Plant's *The Pink Triangle : the Nazi War Against Homosexuals*, 1st ed., New York: H. Holt, 1986. On Italy, see Lorenzo Benadusi, Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. *The Enemy of the New Man : Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*, Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. On France and how the authorities increasingly became concerned and even aimed to criminalize homosexuality during the interwar era, see Julian Jackson, *Living in Arcadia Homosexuality, Politics, and Morality in France from the Liberation to AIDS*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009. On the persecution of homosexuals in the Soviet Union after the recriminalization of homosexuality in 1934, see Dan Healey's *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

*The Life of K, a Hungarian Homosexual during the Interwar Years*

A Hungarian queer or homosexual memoir is yet to be discovered, and, as I acknowledged in my introduction, writing on the history of queer Budapest without the unmediated voices of the actual queer people certainly has its limits. While there is no homosexual memoir or autobiography from the period, at least we have the sustained discussion of a single individual, whose life experiences were recorded by a Hungarian physician, Zoltán Nemes Nagy, during the 1930s. Nemes Nagy actually published a case study of Mr. K. in his 1933 book *Tragedies in Love Life*.<sup>698</sup> Mr. K. was a patient of doctor Nemes Nagy during the first years of the 1930s.<sup>699</sup> As a sexual pathologist and practicing physician with a specialty in sexual “dysfunctions,” Nemes Nagy’s account of K is most certainly biased, as it highlights K’s “peculiar” sexual nature, and, first and foremost, it does so in a publication about so-called sexual pathologies.<sup>700</sup> The placement of K’s story in a book, which discusses all that could go wrong with love, posits K’s homosexuality as a “tragedy.” Nevertheless, as biased as Nemes Nagy’s account is, when read against the grain, it nonetheless provides a valuable window to Hungarian homosexual life in the first three decades of the Twentieth century. Thus, building on Nemes Nagy’s description, in the following I am going to contextualize K’s story within contemporary Hungarian history. As we will see, K’s experiences illustrate how homosexual men could live and conduct their lives relatively freely in Budapest

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<sup>698</sup> Zoltán Nemes Nagy, *Tragédiák a Szerelmi Életben*, Budapest: Aesculap, 1933, 87-99.

<sup>699</sup> Mr. K. was not his original name. Nemes Nagy gave him no name so I took the liberty of making it up. Mr. K was born in 1893. He, like the great majority of inhabitants of Budapest and most homosexuals in the city, grew up in the rural countryside in a village and moved to Budapest in his late teens.

<sup>700</sup> Nemes Nagy was a sexual pathologist and a medical doctor. He published a number of books on sexual pathologies as well as on sexuality from the 1920s to the late 1940s. Other than his publications, there is very little known about his life and practice.

throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and yet it also gives us a darker picture of what being registered on the homosexual registry and feeling the contempt of society could be like in this era.

When World War I broke out in 1914, K and millions of others enlisted to fight for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The horrors and the outcomes of the war are well known.<sup>701</sup> What is less frequently discussed is how, for certain men, being in the trenches and eventually, even more importantly, being prisoners of war with thousands of other men, offered the opportunity for a broad sexual experiences. According to Nemes Nagy, K was one of those men who could actually found, even amidst the gruesome circumstances of the war, a positive fulfillment of his sexual desires. This was particularly the case during his time as a prisoner of war in Russia, where, as Nemes Nagy explains, “K, as an experienced homosexual, he faired pretty well”.<sup>702</sup> In K’s “words”, being an experienced homosexual and being on “friendly” territory, he had a wide range of options, and could pick and choose with whom he wanted to have sexual encounters. Many men who had been at war for years and often not seen women for extended periods of time became more open, and at times eager, to have sexual experiences with other men. In Nemes Nagy’s presentation, K, although aware that many

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<sup>701</sup> World War I was the first total war involving the mobilization of the *home front*. For works that address the everyday experience during the war at the home front see, Belinda J. Davis, *Home fires burning : food, politics, and everyday life in World War I Berlin*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, and Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire : Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. For a comprehensive account of the effects of the War in the Hungarian context, particularly on Budapest, see György Spira and Károly Vörös,. *Budapest története a márciusi forradalomtól az őszirózsás forradalomig*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978, pp 725-744.

<sup>702</sup> Nemes Nagy, 92.



men only acted because of their forced and prolonged sexual abstinence, was glad to offer his services and overall appreciated his experience.<sup>703</sup>

Nemes Nagy's account of K's experience corresponds to the representation of homosexuals across Europe who had fought in WWI.<sup>704</sup> According to these accounts, amidst horrid conditions, both the war, and, for those who were captured alive, the prison camps, offered a strange, almost bittersweet, opportunity to men who had been living a clandestine homosexual life. It is impossible to know the prevalence and/or extent to which sexual activities between men were present in the different armies and on different fronts during the war.<sup>705</sup> K's story and the official Hungarian reports published after the war nevertheless suggest that sexual encounters were common between Hungarian soldiers.<sup>706</sup> Nemes Nagy's account of K's wartime experience also help us to see why, during the interwar years, the Hungarian authorities came to blame WWI for turning a record number of Hungary's finest men into homosexuals. In the eye of the authorities, the prolonged homosocial environment of the war had not only facilitated homosexual contact for men who already knew they preferred their own sex, but had also introduced many other men to the idea and practice of same-sex sexuality. This could not have been totally wrong, since, following the war, Budapest, along with most major European cities, experienced an unprecedented increase of male homosexuality.<sup>707</sup> Although no official

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<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>704</sup> Florence Tamagne, *The History of Homosexuality in Europe: Berlin, London, Paris 1919-1939*, Volume I., 28-33.

<sup>705</sup> In her section entitled, "The front as a school of homosexuality", Florence Tamagne suggests that "by bringing men closer together in situations of extreme danger was fertile ground for the development of homosexual friendship..." and also that the front served not only as a place where sex between men could be openly performed but "it also served as an eye-opener for men, who in normal times, would have looked on such relationships with contempt," 28-29.

<sup>706</sup> Turcsányi, (ed.), *A modern bűnözés I*, 13, 133.

<sup>707</sup> Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 13 - 30, 131, Szántó, "A Homoszexualitásról Különös Tekintettel a Budapesti Viszonyokra," 43.

data about the number of homosexuals exists, various authorities estimated that the number of homosexual men (those who were “authentic”) were over ten thousand by the 1930s.<sup>708</sup>

Following his war experience, which, in spite of his sexual “successes,” also put him through incredible hardships, K finally returned to Budapest. Despite all of the destruction, the loss of men and economic hardship, the city, from 1920 on, saw “a relentless fever of wanting to have a good time.” Residents; young and old, new and previous, were making the most of Budapest’s rapidly re-establishing entertainment industry.<sup>709</sup> K, like most of his counterparts, was ready to start his life again, and also to make use of his now extensive sexual knowledge. In the words of Nemes Nagy, “with his now solid homosexual experience and skill set,” K could pursue his homosexual lifestyle with confidence.<sup>710</sup> Using his fine-tuned ability to recognize homosexual men, K could pick and choose his sexual partners as he wished; on the streets of Budapest, in restaurants, in business meetings, in short, everywhere he went.<sup>711</sup> We learn that, having met and chosen a partner, there were a variety of options where they could go to have sex. Budapest during the 1920s, unlike Berlin or Paris, did not have a lot of openly homosexual public establishments.<sup>712</sup> Nevertheless, as we learn from K, there were plenty of options in Budapest for male homosexuals if they wanted to have some privacy. Shielded from the police, homosexual men could go to certain flophouses or dosshouses,

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<sup>708</sup> Nemes Nagy in 1934 for instance estimates the number to be 15’000. Others, like Captain József Vogl in 1929 suggests that following the war there had been at least 1 homosexual for every 100 heterosexuals. This would also have put the number of homosexuals in Budapest around 10’0000. In Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 133, Jenő Szántó writing in 1933 estimates the number of homosexuals to be around 10’000. In “A Homoszexualitásról Különös Tekintettel a Budapesti Viszonyokra,” 40.

<sup>709</sup> Borbély and Kapy, *A 60 Éves Magyar Rendőrség, 1881 – 1941*, 579.

<sup>710</sup> Nemes Nagy, 94.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.* 94.

<sup>712</sup> Both Berlin and Paris were notorious even for contemporaries for their exclusively homosexual bars and restaurants.

or rent private rooms, as well as choose more *ad hoc* places just for an hour or two, as certain public spaces continued to be safe for men who wanted to have sex with other men.<sup>713</sup> In addition, we learn that once men “become a couple” they would often go hiking in the hills of Buda or on some of the smaller more secluded islands on the Danube.<sup>714</sup> Overall, Nemes Nagy’s narration of K’s extensive and colorful homosexual experiences during the 1920s and the early 1930s seems to underscore the police and medical reports from the 1920s, which emphasized the significant rise and greater visibility of male homosexuals in Budapest.<sup>715</sup> Even if it were not necessarily visible to “untrained” eyes, K’s life attests to an extensive Hungarian homosexual network and elements of a growing homosexual sub-culture.

Nemes Nagy’s accounts of K and the other case studies of homosexuals, which Nemes Nagy published, surprisingly speak very little about either the policing of, or the social stigma around, homosexuality. Considering that male homosexuality was a criminal activity, punishable by up to a year in prison, it is interesting that K’s life story hardly touches on the burdens that he, or other homosexuals, faced at this time. Yet, even if K’s life was, according to himself, “quite diverse, exciting, pleasant and moreover, happy,” examining the details that Nemes Nagy provides about his life more closely, reveals some of the difficulties that living as a homosexual could pose.<sup>716</sup> For one, K’s story provides evidence of the painful economic hardships that people, regardless of their sexuality, had to face both following the war and again during the 1930s. For homosexual men, losing their job carried the added potential consequence of not being

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<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>714</sup> Nemes Nagy, 94-96.

<sup>715</sup> Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 13 - 30, 120-121, Szántó, Jenő. “A homoszexualis férfiprostitúció kérdése,” 826–834, “A Homoszexualitásról Különös Tekintettel a Budapesti Viszonyokra,” 40–44.

<sup>716</sup> Nemes Nagy, 96.

able to stay in the city, a prospect that offered little or no hope for continuing their homosexual lifestyle. Within the new borders of Hungary following the Treaty of Trianon, Budapest remained the only sizeable city that could offer both anonymity and a sizeable homosexual network.<sup>717</sup> Of course, apart from the risk of financial difficulties, homosexual men were always faced with their criminal status under the law, their vulnerability to blackmailing, and their social stigma. K had experienced all of these. He lost his job as a tailor and had to leave the city, he was reported to the police for his alleged homosexuality by one of his ill-wishers, and was more than aware that most people saw his sexuality as an illness or disease.<sup>718</sup>

K also underwent the experience of being registered and prosecuted by the courts. Although he had many homosexual encounters, for over a decade (until 1933), he had managed to avoid any contact with the police or the courts. Actually, he was only arrested by the police on an occasion in which he cross-dressed as a woman, which, according to Nemes Nagy, he occasionally liked to do. Once, even before K arrived in Budapest, a local judge had followed K walking down the street dressed in female clothes and wearing make-up; not only did the local judge summon him and admonish him, he also informed K about homosexual meeting places in Budapest. The fact that it was a judge, an important representative of law and order, who informed and, in a sense, “educated” K about how to navigate his queer sexual life, is telling. As this chapter will argue, the containment and silencing around queer male sexuality was characteristics of the conservative interwar regime. When K finally *was* charged by the Metropolitan

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<sup>717</sup> The only other place where the police indicated the existence of a homosexual subculture was Debrecen, the city of 120’000 inhabitants (after Budapest and Szeged the largest city) in northeast Hungary.

<sup>718</sup> As to how he himself, and men like him, understood their own sexuality we can only speculate. According to doctor Nemes Nagy K thought of himself as “beteges,” medically sick. An analysis of the understanding of homosexuals of their own sexuality is beyond this dissertation.

police of Budapest and prosecuted around 1933, it also occurred while he was dressed up as a woman. During a night out with two German men who believed K to be a woman, K found himself in a violent brawl in a hotel room once the men discovered that he was a man. After the police had taken all three of them to the police station, K had his name placed in the homosexual registry, and the police filed a misdemeanor against him.<sup>719</sup> He was released without charge and resumed his life but he became much more careful about the ways in which he conducted his sexual liaisons. Although Nemes Nagy does not address it explicitly, it is still clear that K knew that society thought of men like him as “abnormal” and sick individuals. While we never know how K actually felt about his own sexuality, according to Nemes Nagy, he referred to his own sexuality as “sick”, and shared society’s view that homosexuality was “abnormal.” It is also evident that K had to be careful and could not be open about his sexuality to most people. He never picked up lovers at his work place and kept his relationships very private. The fact that, in spite of his discretion, he was, at least on one occasion, reported to the police for “unnatural fornication,” (the charge was eventually dropped against him) also illustrates how vulnerable homosexuals were for potential ill-wishers.<sup>720</sup>

The last thing that we know about K is that he was thinking about leaving Budapest in order to stabilize his finances. Following the great financial crisis, he lost his job as a manager in the clothing salon. According to Nemes Nagy’s account, in 1933, K, since he was not able to find a new job and could not obtain any money, actually began to

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<sup>719</sup> Nemes Nagy, 98. <http://www.kislexikon.hu/vetseg.html>, last accessed December, 2011. In addition, the fact that K was socializing with German men attest to the transnational nature of Budapestian queer culture. In return, it is also likely that during the interwar years information about same-sex sexuality continued to travel across national boundaries formally and informally.

<sup>720</sup> In addition, while K only alludes to blackmailing, the vulnerability of homosexuals to blackmail is underscored by virtually all contemporary publications that address homosexuality, including police, medical, legal as well as more popular literature.

consider marrying a woman of decent means. Even though the thought of having to be with a woman “terrified him”, he was seriously considering marrying a female hotel owner from the countryside, whom he met in Pest. The woman fell in love with him and proposed formally to marry him. If this happened, K would have left Pest and moved to a small town in the country. The last thing that we know about him from Nemes Nagy is that while he was dreading the move he also had tired a little of Pest’s exciting homosexual life.<sup>721</sup> Regardless of whether or not he, like countless other homosexual men, ended up married and living with a woman, K’s life story offers at least a partial window into the history of queer Budapest. As the story of Mr. K highlighted, the experience of WWI and prison-camp life was an important chapter in the history of Hungarian male homosexuals. His experience also reveals how it was much less the political changes following the war, than the eventual economic hardship that became the most influential factor in shaping his (homo-) sexual experiences. In addition, K’s life also highlights the presence of the police and the continued relative leniency with which they dealt with men who had sexual encounters with men. In the rest of the chapter. I will explain some of the dynamics that facilitated and structured homosexual experience during this time.

### *Trianon and its Consequences*

Having presented a sketch of some of the experiences that many queer men faced during the 1920s and 1930s, I would now like to put Nemes Nagy’s account into the context of interwar Hungary. The previous two chapters discussed the political and

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<sup>721</sup> Nemes Nagy, 98. It is difficult to determine how “accepted” it was exactly for a woman of means to propose to a man in interwar Hungary but I would think it would have been a rather rare occurrence.

social upheavals following WWI and also touched upon the harsh conditions that the Treaty of Trianon subjected Hungary to in 1920. There are various dimensions of the Treaty that were relevant for the treatment of male homosexuality. One of its main consequences lay in the huge population influx, particularly to Budapest. Following the establishment of new member states, with new national borders, about three million ethnic Hungarians found themselves outside of Hungary. A sizeable contingent of them decided to move within Hungary's new borders and Budapest received about one third of these immigrants.<sup>722</sup> Signing the Treaty of Trianon and accepting the new borders of Hungary meant that almost one in five inside Hungary would live in the capital.<sup>723</sup> With the influx of immigrants from the newly independent neighboring countries, and because of the return of demobilized soldiers, the population of the Hungarian capital saw a rapid growth, quickly surpassing the pre-war era numbers.<sup>724</sup>

The police, just as had been the case during the internal migration of the prewar era, had a difficult time keeping order in the city. The economic hardships that characterized Budapest from 1916 until the mid-1920s and again following 1929 cannot be over-emphasized.<sup>725</sup> Crowded living conditions, high unemployment, and violence all imposed a tremendous burden on both the inhabitants and on the Metropolitan police of

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<sup>722</sup> Miklós Lackó, "Budapest During the Interwar Years; The Impact of War on the City's Demography," in András Gerő and János Poór, *Budapest: History from its Beginnings to 1998* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 141. Romsics, Ignác. *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*. Budapest: Osiris, 1999, 139-147.

<sup>723</sup> Whereas prior to 1918 Budapest had about 4.5% of Hungary's inhabitants by 1930 about 12% and if we include the belt of the suburbs 18% of Hungary's population lived in Budapest, Miklós, 141.

<sup>724</sup> About 10-15 percent of ethnic Hungarians who now were in the new member states, mostly professional and bureaucrats, decided to relocate in Hungary. Their destination was usually Budapest or one of the other (remaining) larger cities. Budapest Székesfőváros Statisztikai Évkönyve az 1944-1946. évekről, KSH, Bp. 1948, p. 14 If we include the outer suburbs, by 1925 the number of inhabitants were closer to 1.300.000. On the (im)migration of the poor see Csaba Csóti's "Vagonlakók, Barakklakók, Menekültek" *Rubicon* 20, no. 4-5 (2010): 54-59.

<sup>725</sup> Gyáni, Gábor, and György Kövér. *Magyarország Társadalomtörténete a Reformkortól a Második Világháborúig*. Budapest: Osiris, 1998, 189-362.

Budapest.<sup>726</sup> As historians have shown in other contexts regardless of what the legal regulations of homosexuality dictated, it was the police on the beat that shaped and determined the policing and prosecution of non-normative sexuality.<sup>727</sup> Budapest, was no different, and thus the fact that the police were understaffed and primarily concerned with keeping violent and dangerous criminals at bay during the first half of the 1920s, and especially after the world financial crash in 1929, was one of the most important reasons why most Hungarian homosexuals were never charged. In this regard, men having consensual sex with other men, especially if practiced in private, continued to be of little interest to the police, whose priorities were the reduction of violent crimes and theft.<sup>728</sup>

Nevertheless, if it had been only a question of capability and priorities, it is unlikely that the registration of an approximately 3,500-5,000 homosexuals by the early 1930s would have taken place.<sup>729</sup> Chapter One explained how the homosexual registry came about and was firmly embedded within the emerging modern Hungarian nation-state. The registry represented a novel form of policing and regulation, in which the collecting of personal and private information about individuals also represented a form of protection from blackmailers and criminals for many “respectable homosexuals.” The authorities believed that the act of registering men who had sex with other men, while itself *not* prosecuting them, would help to reduce crime which, in their view, surrounded

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<sup>726</sup> In 1925 for example, about half of Budapest’s population lived in a one bedroom flat, and almost one third of these people shared their living space with more than 5 other people. Biró, Béla. *A Prostitúció*. Budapest: Magyar Királyi Rendőrség, 1933, 78. Borbély and Kapy, *A 60 Éves Magyar Rendőrség, 1881 - 1941*, Introduction.

<sup>727</sup> Houlbrook, Matt. *Queer London: Peril and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 21., Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994, introduction, Dickinson, Edward. “Policing Sex in Germany, 1882-1982: A Preliminary Statistical Analysis.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (November 19, 2007): 204-250.

<sup>728</sup> Borbély and Kapy, 10-35. Nyigri, 520-525.

<sup>729</sup> According Zoltán Nemes Nagy the number by the 1930s reached 5000, in *Tragédiák a Szerelemi Életben* (Budapest: Aesculap, 1933), 74.



male homosexuality.<sup>730</sup> Throughout the years of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy before 1914, as I argued previously, the Vice Squad pressed charges only in specific cases; non-consensual same-sex sexual acts, the involvement of a minor, sexual acts taking place in public spaces which was also frequented by respectable citizens, and procuring. This did not mean that, over the years, from the 1880s, and especially from the period between 1900 and 1914, the Vice Squad's policing strategies remained the same. As the first chapter argued, similar to the Metropolitan Police of most European capitals, the Vice Squad of the Metropolitan police of Budapest became more institutionalized and their policing techniques more sophisticated.<sup>731</sup> These processes continued throughout the interwar period. That the police had "more important" concerns than chasing homosexual men fails to account for why the Metropolitan Police's homosexual registry continued to expand throughout this period. The surviving documents of the interwar period demonstrate how the Vice Squad was actually quite active in tracking down and registering even those homosexuals who kept their sexual activities private behind closed doors. Nevertheless, even as the number in the homosexual registry was on the rise and the most frequented homosexual rendezvous places came under closer supervision, a significant number of both homosexual men and men who occasionally wanted to have sex with other men could do so in relative freedom.

The conservative regime's policing of sexuality was more intense, yet it continued to tolerate "authentic" homosexuals. Following the unprecedented upheavals between

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<sup>730</sup> It is important to remember that even if being registered on the homosexual registry did not harm an individual's civil rights, the emotional and psychological impact of being on the registry must have been burdensome.

<sup>731</sup> The rate of the number of policeman per inhabitants also increased. Whereas in 1884 there were 673 numbers of inhabitants for one policeman, by 1939 the rate was 220 inhabitants for one policeman. Borbély and Kapy, *A 60 Éves Magyar Rendőrség*, 541. For a comparative European history of the metropolitan police see Hsi-huey Liang's *The rise of modern police and the European state system from Metternich to the Second World War*.

1914 and 1919, and with the establishment of the Horthy regime's punitive regulations to (re-) establish public morality, one would imagine that homosexuality and people on the homosexual registry would have experienced increased persecution. However, this does not seem to be the case. The police did, indeed, diligently track down homosexuals and men who engaged in sex with men and add them to the registry.<sup>732</sup> The registry also became more "sophisticated," and, from the mid-1920s, contained more personal information of male homosexuals, including their profession, personal histories, educational background, and female names.<sup>733</sup> Previously, the police had focused more on the so-called "passive" homosexuals, those men who often demanded some sort of compensation for their services. However, during the 1920s, the Vice Squad became more interested in registering the so-called "active" (authentic) homosexuals.<sup>734</sup> Even so, the attitude and actions of the police did not become more punitive. Unfortunately, there are no surviving written police memos about internal police orders with regard to homosexuals during the interwar era. Apart from surviving medical and legal records, which will be discussed below, what we do have and which speak directly to the behavior of the police are urban legends, which were collected during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>735</sup>

According to these oral histories, during this period, an officer named Czar was heading the Vice Squad, "about whom nothing bad was said in the pages of homosexual

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<sup>732</sup> According to Jenő Szántó, until 1929 the homosexual registry contained about 2000 men by 1933 it had 3500. This is a significant increase, which he attributed to both the rise of homosexuals and greater police attention. "A homoszexualitásról különös tekintettel a Budapesti viszonyokra," 43.

<sup>733</sup> Nemes Nagy, 74. This seems to reflect the increasing ability of the police to police public spaces, and perhaps a greater intention to do so. This is implied in Gyula Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 135.

<sup>734</sup> This is evident in the articles of Szántó, "A homoszexualitásról különös tekintettel a Budapesti viszonyokra," and "A homoszexualis férfiprostitutio kérdése," and also in Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I-II*.

<sup>735</sup> The interviews served the basis for number of chapters of the book *A homoszexualitásról*. Pompeji: T-Twins Kiadó, 1994, edited by László Tóth. Without necessarily taking the contents of the interviews at face value, in light of the scarcity of the sources, the interviews can at least read as indications that at least some members of the Horthy era were "sympathetic" towards men who desired their own sex.

legends.”<sup>736</sup> Officer Czar (who does appear in the court records) was lenient and even the defended some homosexual men during this era.<sup>737</sup> In sum, the policing of sexuality was more intense but the police continued to show leniency for “authentic” homosexuals who acted out of their innate desire for their own sex, as long as the act was consensual and did not disrupt the public order. Furthermore, not only did the police show leniency towards “authentic” homosexuals, but also towards a wide range of men who engaged with non-normative sexual activities.

### *Gender Politics of the Horthy Regime*

It is likely that, even if all of the police documents had survived, there would have been few or no official documents about the treatment of male homosexuality. The answer to why the police and the conservative government continued the practice of the former, more liberal system is linked with the effects and consequences of World War I, particularly in the context of gender politics. As the last chapter illustrated, in the light of World War I and in the turbulent aftermath of the Aster and Communist revolutions, the conservative Horthy regime set out to restore order in every sphere of life. Curtailing many of the rights that the considerably more liberal Austria-Hungary had granted during the three decades prior to the Great War, Hungary experienced a series of backlashes against liberalization. This was especially the case for Budapest, which had been the vanguard of Hungarian modernity and the hotbed of liberal and progressive attitudes. It was no accident that new conservative regime named the capital “Sinful Budapest,” and

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<sup>736</sup> Tóth László: A modern kori homoszexualitás néhány kérdése (A couple of questions about homosexuality in the modern age) in László Tóth, ed., *A homoszexualitásról* (About homosexuality). Pompeji: T-Twins Kiadó, 1994, 76.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*

set out to rid the city of its “filth” and “immoral” elements.<sup>738</sup> Thus, after the Horthy regime had punished the political opposition and had driven many people in exile, it turned its attention to cultural and social elements that were undesirable for the new Christian Hungarian national community.<sup>739</sup> In the name of re-building the nation and restoring the strength of the Hungarian ethnic community, the conservative government took firm actions to reduce female prostitution and to police the districts formerly notorious for their wild parties and sexual activities.<sup>740</sup> In stark opposition to the approach of the Democratic and Communist governments as well as of the policies of the Hungarian governments during the Dual Monarchy, interwar Hungary was firmly grounded in sexual conservatism. That is, the subsequent governments, in close collaboration with the Catholic church, believed that re-instating strict gender and sexual norms at home and in public should be the cornerstone of their policies.<sup>741</sup> Of course, this was far from unique, and, as scholars have pointed out, the attempt to (re) create heterosexual families with as many children as possible, was embraced by most European countries, regardless of the nature of their political governance.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> On Horthy's aversion of Budapest Sakmyster, Thomas. *Hungary's Admiral on Horseback : Miklós Horthy, 1918 - 1944*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994, 1 – 24. The word “bűnös,” which Horthy used in his speech in English can actually mean both “guilty” and “sinful.”

<sup>739</sup> On the role of “Christian values” and more generally the role of Hungarian churches in the interwar years and especially how they collaborated with the conservative ruling elite in order to shape interwar society and national culture, see Paul Hanebrink's *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006. On the history of the Catholic Church and its influence during the same period Gergely, Jenő. *A Katolikus Egyház Története Magyarországon 1919-1945* (The History of the Catholic Church in Hungary). Budapest: Elte-Ujkori Magyar történeti tanszek, 1997.

<sup>740</sup> On the new Biró, Béla. *A Prostitúció*. Budapest: M. Kir. Rendőrség, 1933, 208-219.

<sup>741</sup> The sexual education materials during the period are clear testaments to this. See for instance, Pósch, Károly. *Utam a Gólyafészek Körül: [tanulmány a Nemi Felvilágosítás Problémájáról Szülők És Nevelők Részére]* (My Path Around the Stork's Nest: study on the Problems of Sexual Education for Parents and Educators). Budapest: Szerző, Az Iskola Urániája, 1923, Emődi, Aladár. *Az Elhanyagolt Nemi Betegségek Következményeiről* (The Consequences of Unattended Venereal Disease). Budapest: Teleia Egyesület, 1924.

<sup>742</sup> One of the most compelling argument for a European wide pronatalist policies is made by David L Hoffmann in “Mothers in the motherland : Stalinist pronatalism and its pan-European context,” *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (2000): 35-54.

In Hungary, the Horthy era politicians attempted to establish the ideal Nineteenth century *bourgeois* social structure: a pious and patriotic male head of the household with the purity of the family (and the happiness of the husband) as a wifely responsibility.<sup>743</sup> The protagonists of the previous chapter, Cécile Tormay and Eduardina Pallavicini spent their lives disseminating this conservative traditional perspective.<sup>744</sup> The largest interwar women's organization, the Hungarian National Association of Women, under their *aegis* of Tormay and Pallavicini was the mouthpiece for the conservative government's gender vision. Of course, such a vision never had, and never did, become a reality for many, if not most, Hungarians, just as it did not become a reality for the protagonists themselves, or in most European countries until post WWII.<sup>745</sup> Apart from the privileged upper and middle classes, most women continued to work, and even many of those for whom holding gainful employment was not an absolute necessity were, in practice, more reluctant to embrace the gender bound and unrealistic expectations of the Horthy regime.<sup>746</sup> For the regime, the country's future depended on the moral and physical strength of Hungarians, and not least, of course, on the fecundity of healthy Hungarian women.<sup>747</sup> Although it provided no additional welfare or social support, the Horthy era

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<sup>743</sup> Tormay, Cécile. *An Outlaw's Diary*. London: P. Allan & Co., 1923, 182-183. Pach, HenriK *A Társadalmi Ember Élete*. Népszava-Könyvkereskedés, 1923, 44-54.

<sup>744</sup> Such perspective did include the demand for higher education and the vote for certain (Christian and non-Jewish) Hungarian women. On the issue of higher education and vote for women see Mária M. Kovács' "Hungary" in Kevin Passmore (ed.) *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 79-91

<sup>745</sup> Bonnie G Smith, *Changing lives : women in European history since 1700*, Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1989.

<sup>746</sup> Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig* (Budapest: Osiris, 2003, 152-220, Kovács, "Hungary," 79-91. Gyáni, Gábor. *Identity and the Urban Experience: Fin-de-Siècle Budapest*. Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 2004. Gyáni also argues that men and women's relationship and access to public life also became more equal, 55.

<sup>747</sup> Following an unusually high birth rate in the 1870s and 1880s Hungarian fertility rates began to decline in the 1890s and continued to do so throughout the twentieth century. This became a concern for Hungarian authorities even before WWI, and their concern only increased ever since. For detailed statistics and analysis of fertility trends for the interwar period see Kamarás Ferenc "Születési Mozgalom És

made motherhood a pre-requisite of respectable citizenship for women.<sup>748</sup> In a 1920 article entitled “The Women’s Question,” Gyula Hetényi eloquently articulated the Horthy system’s position on women: “Women should be guided by religious morals as they fulfill their duty to the nation at the sacred place of the home by helping their husbands, giving birth and raising the children.”<sup>749</sup> The conservative leadership saw the establishment of conservative sexual ethics in Budapest as essential for Hungary’s ability to move “forward.”<sup>750</sup> There were a number of concrete steps taken to achieve this. In the name of moral and sexual purity, the state made the media more accountable for their content. Thus, the formerly liberal press, one of the least censored in Europe prior to

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Termékenység” (Pro-Birth Movement and Fertility), In *Magyarország a XX. Században II. Kötet: Természeti Környezet, Népeség És Társadalom, Egyházak És Felekezetek, Gazdaság*, 171–182. Szekszárd: Babits Kiadó, 1997, 173-4.

<sup>748</sup> Women above the age of 24 were granted the vote in 1918, but in actuality could vote only in 1920 for the first time. In 1922, the Bethlen government raised the voting age for women to 30, which remained in effect until the end of WWII. Andrea Pető, *Társadalmi nemek képe és emlékezete Magyarországon a 19-20. században* (The image and remembrance of gender norms in Hungary during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). Budapest: A nők a valódi esélyegyenlőségért alapítvány, 2004; “Minden tekintetben derék nők: A nők politikai szerepei és a nőegyesületek a két világháború közötti Magyarországon,” 268-279. This was of course by no means unique to Hungary, and in fact the strengthening of the connection between respectability motherhood was characteristic of interwar Europe in general. George Mosse, *Nationalism and sexuality: respectability and abnormal sexuality in modern Europe*, 1st ed. (New York: H. Fertig, 1985), 93-98, Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, *Mothers of a new world: maternalist politics and the origins of welfare states*, New York: Routledge, 1993, especially Susan Pedersen and Sonya Michel’s pieces. In terms of social welfare between the wars, the subsequent governments under the Horthy regime did set out to establish a basic social net. But while both social security and national health insurance were announced in 1921 their implementation did not begin until 1927 and even then it only applied to urban workers, excluding agricultural workers and their families. In 1928 the Bethlen government introduced a compulsory “old age, disability, orphan hood and widowhood” insurance, but just like with the basic social and health insurance its implementation was limited to the cities. In addition, child allowance was finally introduced in 1938 and the National Population and Family Conservation Fund was established in 1940. Romsics, Ignác. “A Horthy-rendszer Szociálpolitikája” (The Social Policy of the Horthy regime), *Rubicon* 1, no. 6 (1990): 24–25, and the section on “Welfare and Social Policy” in Gyáni, Gábor, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch. *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*. Boulder, Colo.; Highland Lakes, N.J.; New York: Social Science Monographs; Atlantic Research and Publications; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 2004, 470 – 492.

<sup>749</sup> Gyula Hetényi, *A nőkérdés* (Budapest: Szociális Missziótárs, 1920), 117-228. In actuality, between 1920 and 1939 both the fertility and the marriage rate declined in Hungary. “Születési mozgalom és termékenység,” <http://mekniif.hu/02100/02185/html/179.html>. Last accessed on January 15, 2012.

<sup>750</sup> While Budapest, as “the centre of sin” received considerable attention, the conservative leadership in a close collaboration with - and often through - the Catholic Church, also targeted the rural areas. One of the top priorities during the interwar era was to reverse the demographic decline and attack the so-called “etykèzèst,” the growing family practice of having only one child. Fülep, Lajos. *A magyarság pusztulása* (The dying of Hungarians). Budapest: Magvető, 1984.

1914, became significantly more conformist by the 1920s.<sup>751</sup> The state also tackled prostitution – drastically halting the issuance of brothel permits and soon revoking all existing permits.<sup>752</sup> The regulation to criminalize prostitution was a clear break from the past and reflected the Horthy regime’s belief that brothels and prostitution had been responsible for destroying the moral fiber of Hungarian society. In contrast to previous rhetoric that stressed poverty and argued that destitution drove women to prostitution, the conservative rhetoric placed more responsibility and blame on women for becoming prostitutes. As a police doctor in an education book promoting family health expressed in 1928, “[t]he commonly held assumption that it is poverty that drives most girls to prostitution is incorrect.... It is a person’s low quality (in a moral sense), while her economic situation is only secondary in turning someone a prostitute.”<sup>753</sup> Along similar lines, some argued that it had been the war that had made women in Budapest more decadent than ever.<sup>754</sup>

In addition, the authorities also stepped up the prosecution of midwives and doctors providing abortion services.<sup>755</sup> Considering the changes in the treatment of prostitution, the place of women in society, and the overall more restrictive policies and policing of people, one would have expected that the treatment of male (homo-) sexuality would have followed suit. However, as the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, this was not the case. The conservative Horthy regime and its various governments, which, in theory, prescribed a strict gender order for both men and women, while, in

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<sup>751</sup> Kókay György and Buzinkay, Géza. *A Magyar Sajtó Története I. : a Kezdetektől a Fordulat Évéig*, 160-200.

<sup>752</sup> In 1926, the government enacted a change in the regulation of prostitution by no longer issuing brother permits and as of May 1st, 1928 revoking existing permits.

<sup>753</sup> Biró Béla, in Somogyi, Béla M. D (ed.) *A Család Egészsége: Népszerű Orvosi Tájékoztató És Tanácsadó* (The Health of the Family: Popular Medical Guide). 2nd ed. Budapest: Dante Könyvkiadó, 1928, 124.

<sup>754</sup> Turcsányi, Gyula, ed. *A Modern Bűnözés I-II*, 33.

<sup>755</sup> Lukács György. *Népegészségügy Magyarországon*. Budapest: M. Tud. Társ. Ny., 1924, 16-18.

reality, it disproportionately enforced gender roles for women. In other words, they were much more willing to show leniency towards men in terms of their behavior.

Paradoxically, while Hungarian men were supposed to embody the country's honor and strength, authorities on the ground believed that most men, and especially those who had experienced WWI, would not live up to conservative gender expectations.

On the one hand, the virility and moral strength of Hungarian men was lauded as the foundation for regaining the territory lost in the Treaty of Trianon. The experience of war prompted the Hungarian élite to focus on the physical strength of its men.<sup>756</sup> As a defeated country, the national army was restricted, and conscription was not introduced until 1939. Nevertheless, from the 1920s onward, the Hungarian authorities systematically manipulated administrative and bureaucratic procedures in order to recruit and train soldiers.<sup>757</sup> For example, the establishment of the "Levente" law and the consequent "Levente" movement, essentially mandated the physical education of men between the ages of twelve and twenty-one.<sup>758</sup> From 1924 onward, the Levente Associations ensured that all young Hungarian men, even those who were not in school, received physical training. In addition, authorities were particularly active in supporting

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<sup>756</sup> This was a general European wide phenomenon. Nye, Robert A. "Western Masculinities in War and Peace." *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (April 2007).

<sup>757</sup> According to the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary could have a maximum of 35'000 voluntary soldiers. Mandatory conscription was introduced only in 1939. Nagy-Vargáné Juhász, Ágnes. "Az Önkéntes Hadero Tartalék Biztosításának Szervezési - Vezetési Kérdései" (The Organization and Leadership of Voluntary Military Manpower). Zrinyi Miklos Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem, Hadtudományi Kar, 2010, 20-23.

<sup>758</sup> The law "Lex Karafiáth," as the so-called physical education law, which became adopted in 1921 and implemented by the Order, V.KM 9000/1924, codified Levente or "paladin". The law stated that ensuring physical education of the Hungarian people was the responsibility of the state. For this reason the state establishes the Levente Associations, which were to facilitate of all men between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, who are not in school. Kerepeszki, Róbert. "A Horthy-korszak Politikai Irányzatai a Leventemozgalomról" (The Political Perspectives of the Horthy era on the Levente movement), *Rubicon* 20, no. 4-5 (2010), Tigyi Zoltánné Pusztafalvi Henriette. "Az Egészségnevelés Intézményesülésének Folymata Hazánkban A Dualizmus Korától A Második Világháború Végéig" (The Institutionalization of Health Education in Our Homeland: From the Age of Dualism until World War II). A Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Oktatás és Társadalom" Neveléstudományi Doktori Iskola, Ph. D. Thesis, 2011, 18-21.



the Hungarian Scouts Association “*Magyar Cserkészszövetség*,” whose numbers rose during the 1930s.<sup>759</sup> In addition to the building of the physical strength and virility of Hungary’s future soldiers, both of these organizations, along with the education system, and, of course, the Catholic church, set out to provide them with a solid Christian moral foundation.<sup>760</sup> The following statement, which is from a lecture series directed to educators as well as parents, sums up what such “foundations” were to look like:

The Treaty of Trianon will be sanctified by the Hungarian children’s room, and our nation’s great prayer that it will be our sons who will say the saving, liberating and glorifying ‘Amen.’ Therefore, the primary aim in our education is to educate good mothers, and make our sons to be men, not babies whom were taught to be tender, fearful or arrogant, or to exhibit excessive modesty and cringing incompetence. If the homes of our children are aware that our daughters should not be educated for the public and outside world that is shallow, and would not allow them to satisfy society’s need for glamour and decadence; but rather aim to educate our daughters to be good mothers and housewives, while in our sons improve their self-worth, work ethic, self-sufficiency, patriotism, strength, and character, than despite our dreadful present, we can expect our resurrection, regeneration, and a great and prosperous future.<sup>761</sup>

According to the Catholic conservative principles, women were to be good mothers and housewives, while men were to be physically, mentally, and morally tough.

On the other hand, despite the rhetoric of making military masculinity and moral purity the cornerstone of Hungarian masculinity, regulatory bodies were painfully aware that most men were not ready to fulfill the expectations of the Horthy regime. All Hungarians shared the government’s belief in territorial revisionism and most ethnic

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<sup>759</sup> By 1938 there were about 50’000 boy scouts in Hungary.

<sup>760</sup> Count Kuno Klebelsberg, who was the Minister of Religion and Public Education between 1922-1931, was the central figure coordinating the new national discourse on public morality. The importance of physical education in strengthening the morality and ethics of Hungarian youth was recognized by the 1920s and increasingly built in the education system, which expanded substantially under Klebelsberg. Tigyi, 87-94. On the Hungarian education policy between the two World Wars, see Miklós Mann’s *Oktatáspolitikusok És Konceptiók a Két Világháború Között* (Education Experts and Concepts of Education Between the Two World Wars). Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, 1997.

<sup>761</sup> Pósch, Károly. *Utam a Gólyafészek Körül*, 55.

Hungarians were willingly embracing nationalism.<sup>762</sup> Yet, this did not mean that men were readily embracing the prescribed moral and even physical guidelines. In a striking testament of men failing to live up to these norms, despite all of the efforts that interwar governments invested in recruiting men to serve the country, the army struggled to meet even the Treaty of Trianon's enlistment quota, which had punitively limited the permitted size of an independent Hungarian army.<sup>763</sup> But it was not just that men, in the light of the very modest compensation offered, were unwilling to join the army. Rather, as the issue of female prostitution and particularly male homosexuality reminded the authorities, many men were unwilling and/or incapable of enacting the prescribed masculine Christian morality. Thus, even though the authorities declared an open war against prostitution, they did so in a way which, by and large, placed both the burden and the blame on female prostitutes and women in general.<sup>764</sup> Certainly, all official and unofficial commentators acknowledged the role of men and their "insatiable need" for sex as a necessary part of continuing prostitution. Yet, they continued to provide various excuses for men seeking prostitution, by ultimately blaming the loosening female morality as the root of the problem.<sup>765</sup> Perhaps, no other issue exposes the simultaneous

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<sup>762</sup> Except the Jewish and German minorities.

<sup>763</sup> Hajdú, Tibor. "A Hadkötelezettség És a Haza Védelmének Eszménye" (Military Conscription and the Ideal of Protecting the Nation). *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1. (2003), available at: <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00018/00023/08.htm>, last accessed February 25, 2012.

<sup>764</sup> Putting more blame and policing their behavior was of course nothing new. Even during the liberal era prostitutes were policed and punished significantly more than their male clientele. For the gender politics of prostitution pre 1918 see Susan Zimmermann's "Making a living from disgrace': the politics of prostitution, female poverty and urban gender codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860-1920" in: Malcolm Gee, *The City in Central Europe : Culture and Society from 1800 to the Present*. Aldershot; Brookfield VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1999, 175-196. Furthermore, all commentators agreed that poverty was the greatest procurer.

<sup>765</sup> The rhetoric was no longer that prostitution was the "necessary evil." Rather, according to the new official discourse prostitution was the product of urban poverty and lack of morality. Consequently, authorities argued that prostitution could and should be eradicated. By allocating the responsibility of ending female prostitution to women – and if they failed, to the police – the conservative regime continued to submit women to double moral standards. There were social critics actually explicitly acknowledge this. See for instance, Viktor Áldor in Weisse, S, Áldor Viktor, and Kurt Moreck, *A Titkos Prostitúció És a*

fragility of male masculinity and the leniency of the authorities to accept it than the issue of male homosexual prostitution. As the following section will evince, the experiences of fighting in WWI and subsequent hardships in prisoner-of-war camps, even if not necessarily acknowledged publicly, were both understood and used by authorities as excuses for male behavior during the interwar period.

### *Male Homosexual Prostitution*

Before turning to the legal prosecution of homosexuality, in the following I will examine an often overlooked, yet important, aspect of male urban homosexuality, male prostitution. Including male prostitution can yield important insights into the police treatment of homosexuality. Specifically, the issue of male prostitution neatly accentuates the discrepancies between the rhetoric and the intent of the conservative interwar governments and the actual situation on the ground.<sup>766</sup> The publications of Tábori Kornél and Székely Vladimir in chapter two revealed that male homosexual prostitution, by the turn of the Twentieth century, was a staple component of Budapest's urban landscape. Not necessarily visible to an "unfamiliar" eye, but, as the journalists told their readers, the "Knights of Sick Love" had a considerable supply of men who would offer their services. At the time of writing in 1908, Tábori and Székely hoped that, by paying more attention to the factors that drove (even) men to prostitution, they would

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*Félvilág*. Vita Sexualis 5. Budapest: Sándor József és társa, post 1929, introduction. Of course, this was not unique to Hungary and was characteristics of many European countries at the time. See Dagmar Herzog's *Sexuality in Europe: a Twentieth-century History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 7-10.

<sup>766</sup> Re-constructing the history of contemporary male prostitution in Budapest alongside the more general view of homosexuality can help to get a better sense of the authorities' view on male homosexuality. The seminal approach of looking at male prostitution in conjunction with the regulation of homosexuality is Jeffrey Weeks' "Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", in: Salvatore J. Licata and Robert P Petersen (eds.), *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality*. New York: Haworth Press : Stein and Day, 198, 113-135.

help reduce the harmful effects of the practice. But even Tábori and Székely, who not only established the investigative journalism of the Budapest underworld, but were also probably more familiar with male homosexuals than most of the police, could not have imagined the exponential expansion of male homosexual prostitution that took place in Budapest in the 1930s. The large and visible increase in homosexuality in most major cities following the war was a European-wide phenomenon that many officials attributed to the conditions of the war and especially connected to prisoners of war, who being in the homosocial prison-camp environment for years, had returned in large numbers as homosexuals.<sup>767</sup> As K's experience demonstrated, this could have been the case for many men returning to Budapest.

Indeed, we learn from Jenő Szántó, a practicing physician that “[p]erhaps there is not even a single bar or a busier café, where we would not occasionally come across a male prostitute.”<sup>768</sup> Writing in 1934, Szántó even provides a sketch of some the most important homosexual gathering places and establishments in the Hungarian capital, such as the infamous squares of Kálvin-tér, Berlini-tér, Erzsébet-tér or Emke corner.<sup>769</sup> Szántó, who was a regular contributor to *Népegészségügy* (Public Health), the official public health journal published by the Ministry of Interior, and other medical journals, gives, perhaps, the most comprehensive account of the authorities during the interwar period. In addition to his illuminating insights about male prostitution during the interwar years, Szántó's articles also provide a rare window into the minds of Hungarian professionals and bureaucrats whose job it was to make Budapest a healthier urban

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<sup>767</sup> Péter Héczey in *A modern bűnözés I*, 13 - 30, 120-121.

<sup>768</sup> Szántó, Jenő. “A homoszexuális férfitprostituáció kérdése.” *Népegészségügy*, no. 20–21 (1934), 829.

<sup>769</sup> In addition, Szántó mentions public baths, certain promenades by the Danube and even business that specializes in providing male homosexuals.

metropolis.<sup>770</sup> His position – as a doctor who was involved both in research and in the treatment of both non-normative sexuality and sexually-transmitted illnesses, and as an inside participant of the police department – makes Szántó uniquely suited to provide essential insights.<sup>771</sup>

In the same year, Doctor Szántó published another article entitled “The issue of male homosexual prostitution,” which provides further insight into the homosexual registry.<sup>772</sup> Accordingly, we learn that:

“In the confidential registry of the Metropolitan Police, there had been 1695 individuals until May 1932, of whom we can safely conclude that they were prostitutes because, by their own admission, it was monetary reasons that had driven them to the male homosexual crowd.”<sup>773</sup>

Szántó goes on to say that, in registering these people, the police used a special label, the word “*érdek*” (interest in) to differentiate them from other homosexuals in the registry. Similar to his previous article which was concerned with male homosexuals in general, Szántó presents detailed statistical breakdowns of the male prostitutes in terms of their socio-economic, occupational and age background.<sup>774</sup>

Occupation of 1695 male prostitutes	#94	Occupation	#4
Private office-holder, factory owner, factory worker, day laborer, house servant landowner, property owner	541	Publican, barber, doctor, undertaker, painter (23)	69

<sup>770</sup> Gerelyes, Ede, and Horváth, Miklós. *Budapest története a forradalmak korától a felszabadulásig*, town: pub house, year, 124-258.

<sup>771</sup> Szántó was practicing as a chief medical doctor and explicitly acknowledges in the article that he was in contact with the police. I have not been able to track down where he actually practiced, but it is likely that he was affiliated with both a private practice and the public medical establishment. In 1933, a year before his article on male homosexual prostitution, he publishes an article on homosexuality in Budapest, where he notes his close connection to the police. In 1933 he published an article on “About homosexuality with especial attention to the circumstances in Budapest,” where he in great detail describes what homosexuality was in order to disperse what he perceived as common, yet “unfounded” beliefs about it. Jenő Szántó, “A homoszexualitásról különös tekintettel a Budapesti viszonyokra,” 21-27; 40-44. The circumstances and actual details of Szántó’s connection to the Vice Squad in Budapest remain unknown.

<sup>772</sup> *Népegészségügy*, no. 20–21 (1934): 774-779; 826-834.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.* 827.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.* 828.

Civil servant, civil worker	33	Artist, actor	9
Tailors (both for men and women)	124	Butcher, slaughterer	30
Ironworkers, chauffeurs	180	Engineer, architect, chemist	2
Waiters, bartenders,	80	Nurse, masseuse	6
Carpenters, masons,	109	Artiste, dancer	17
Gardener, digger	128	Musician	14
Baker, cook, confectioner	53	Textile worker, weaver	19
Shoemaker	86	Bookbinder, printer	7
Manservant	48	Soldier (incomplete data)	7
Jeweler, artificer, optician, photographer	82		

What is interesting about this categorization is that, according to the source, none of the male homosexuals were “unemployed” or perceived as “full-time prostitutes.” However, rather than assuming that the police believed that none of these men worked as full-time prostitutes, it is more likely that the occupations listed on the registry referred to the occupational background and qualifications of the men, rather than their actual occupation. Most of the 1,695 male prostitutes came from the lower classes, and, according to Szántó, sold their sexual services to men for similar purposes as their female counterparts. In the same way, many women in low-paid jobs turned to the oldest profession in the world in order to supplement their income, and more and more men with dire salaries followed the footsteps of the women. In this regard, Szántó’s observations about Budapest underscore the growing visibility of male homosexuality in all major metropolitan centers in the interwar period, which was as much due to a growing supply as to a growing demand.<sup>775</sup> We also learn that most male homosexual prostitutes were between eighteen and thirty years of age, and that “prostitutes over thirty

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<sup>775</sup> Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: a Twentieth-century History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 45-95.

are superannuated.”<sup>776</sup> Last, but not least, we learn that the actual number of juvenile male prostitutes was much greater than the 64 under 18 year olds who were registered for male homosexual prostitution in 1932. The reason for the low number of juvenile registries lay, according to Szántó, in the attitude of the police. As he states: “Out of humanitarian reasons, the police postpone the registering of youth until there is no hope left for these young people to amend their life and leave this kind of lifestyle.”<sup>777</sup>

Szántó’s articles are testaments to the fact that the authorities were fully aware that male prostitution was part of Budapest’s urban landscape. It would have been rather difficult for it not to be so, since, as all surviving sources remind us, the number of homosexuals during the 1920s and beyond was visibly rising, and male prostitution was also on the rise. What is more interesting, however, is the way in which Szántó’s publications expose the inherent contradictions of the authorities’ treatment of male sexuality. For one, the physician reminds us of “the double moral standards, which burden male homosexual activity as immoral and a perversion, while ignoring female homosexuality with a smile.”<sup>778</sup> On one hand, Szántó’s observation highlights a general aspect of interwar Hungary, namely, that culturally, there was a continuing acceptance of men visiting female prostitutes, and, to some extent, of male same-sex sexual encounters.<sup>779</sup> On the flip side, however, in contrast to the regulation of female prostitution, where the conservative regime enacted severe laws and regulations, as Szántó points out, there continued to be no regulations directly dealing with male

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<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.* 828.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>778</sup> Szántó, “A homoszexuális férfiprostitúció kérdése.” *Népegészségügy*, 21: 829.

<sup>779</sup> On the cultural acceptance of prostitution; Anka, László. “A Budapesti Prostitúció És Szexpiac Története a Boldog Békeidőkben.”

prostitution.<sup>780</sup> His observation, as I will elaborate upon later, is in line with the evidence from the legal system, where, throughout the interwar years, there were neither changes in the regulation of homosexuality nor attempts to introduce specific regulation for male prostitutes. Other than male homosexuality being a criminal activity in itself, which, again, was not often invoked, there were no attempts either to make the existing laws harsher or to address male homosexual prostitution legally.<sup>781</sup> In contrast to female prostitution, which was a regular topic of lawmakers, public health and city officials, there are no public records on male homosexuality in either the parliamentary memos or in the memos of the city council. Paradoxically then, even if female prostitution was more accepted socially, the consequences of growing conservatism actually imposed much greater burdens on female prostitutes.

The conjunction of cultural acceptance of female prostitution with the increasing regulation and policing of female sexuality created a situation in which many male prostitutes fared better than their female counterparts. Szántó aptly illustrates the gendered dynamics of social regulation that was a central feature of Hungarian (and European) state during the interwar years.<sup>782</sup> He believed that female prostitutes, whom the Vice Squad of the Budapest Metropolitan Police registered as prostitutes, were humiliated and disenfranchised by the process. In contrast, he argued that this was not case for the treatment of male prostitutes. In his words,

While the regulation puts a burdensome and humiliating shackle on female prostitutes, it does not concern itself with male prostitution. Thus, it is almost

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<sup>780</sup> For a concise summary of regulations of female prostitution, see Anka László's article.

<sup>781</sup> In spite of paragraph 241 ("unnatural fornication") and the approximately registered 3,700 homosexuals and at least twice as many other homosexual men who lived a homosexual life in Budapest, the number of charges remains incredibly low.

<sup>782</sup> Thus, Hungary seems to fit with what Dagmar Herzog recently argued was a European wide phenomenon. In *Sexuality in Europe : a Twentieth-century History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 45-83.



impossible to re-integrate oneself from female prostitution into respectable society, but for those burnt out male homosexual prostitutes, with the help of their well-to-do friends, the door is wide open to become a successful and respected member of bourgeois society.<sup>783</sup>

This is, of course, a sweeping generalization and unquestionably minimized the difficult circumstances with which male prostitutes had to contend. Nevertheless, Szántó was right to point out that the conservative Horthy regime's drastic change in the regulation and policing of female prostitution placed all those women who sold their sexual services in a difficult position. At the same time, evidence attests that female prostitution continued to prosper and remained widely accepted (most certainly by male members of society) as part of life.<sup>784</sup> The culture continued to accept men seeking female prostitutes and in general thought nothing less of these men. In fact, masculinity continued to be reinforced by visiting "butterflies of the night." Whereas femininity was forever tainted by involvement in prostitution, and the chances of a woman having a decent life following her sex work, were slim. In contrast, Szántó believed that those men who sold their bodies, even if society - overall - considered their trade to be more shameful, often had, in the long run, better prospects in life. Szántó argued that male prostitutes fared better than their female counterparts because their male homosexual customers would be much more likely, willing, and able to look after them, than the heterosexual male customers would be able to look after female prostitutes.<sup>785</sup> As historians of sexuality in other

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<sup>783</sup> Szántó, "A homoszexuális férfitróstitúció kérdése." *Népegészségügy*, 21: 829.

<sup>784</sup> Hungary's confinement of prostitution in fixed state-controlled brothels was similar to Fascist Italy's treatment of prostitution. On the Italy, see Victoria De Grazia, *How fascism ruled women : Italy, 1922-1945*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1992, 44.

<sup>785</sup> Indeed, surviving sources including court cases do suggest certain camaraderie within Budapest's homosexual subculture. Mr. K's experiences in Nemes Nagy's account directly speak to how, particularly in cases of newcomer homosexuals to the scene, older more experienced and often well-situated homosexual men would take young men under their wings. Some of the legal cases also suggest that, at the same time as blackmailers were out there to take advantage, there were homosexual men who were genuinely looking after their community.

contexts have showed the illicitness and social stigma around male homosexuality facilitated a structure within homosexual prostitution that was often more “egalitarian” and communal than within female prostitution.<sup>786</sup> Being marginalized by their own sexuality, many men who paid to have sex with other men were protective of their former (paid) lovers. Szántó also noted that the same authorities that had passed draconian regulations for female prostitution in the 1920s simply avoided the question of male prostitution and deferred its treatment to the police.

Not being directed (or bound) by any legal regulations, it was up to the police to decide upon how to deal with male prostitution. Following the establishment of the conservative regime, the police did indeed attempt to make some changes. They began registering men as male homosexual prostitutes and, according to the surviving sources, their number in the registry increased exponentially from 1,696 to 1,932.<sup>787</sup> The Vice Squad monitored the most frequented pick-up places, and those who were repeatedly caught were charged with “loitering with intent” and sent back to their place of origin in the countryside.<sup>788</sup> However, by and large, the police and the Vice Squad continued the pre-1918 practice, according to which, while all men who were caught with other men (both prostitutes and homosexuals) were registered, the majority of them were not prosecuted unless their action disturbed the public, was non-consensual, or involved blackmail. The case of K also seems to suggest that, although homosexual men dreaded being registered, being on the male homosexual registry (even as a male prostitute)

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<sup>786</sup> Matt Houlbrook’s “Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys: Homosex, Masculinities, and Britishness in the Brigade of Guards, Circa 1900-1960.” *Journal of British Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003): 351; Jeffrey Weeks’ “Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in: Salvatore J Licata and Robert P Petersen (eds.), *Historical perspectives on homosexuality*. New York: Haworth Press : Stein and Day, 1981, 130-132.

<sup>787</sup> Szántó, “A homoszexuális férfiprostitúció kérdése.” 21: 829.

<sup>788</sup> 1913. évi XXI. Törvénycikk: A közveszélyes munkakerülőkről.

entailed fewer negative consequences than was the case for female prostitutes. Szántó, writing in 1934, certainly believed this was the case and maintained that the male registry, in sharp contrast to the female registry, “was not accompanied by the same degrading obligations and it also did not impinge on the civil rights of the individual.”<sup>789</sup> Rather than stripping individuals of their human dignity, Szántó continued, “the sole purpose of the registry was so the police could get to know the prostitutes and, if necessary, track them.”<sup>790</sup> According to him, in this way, the police were more successful in knowing where soliciting was taking place, and were better placed to separate notorious pimps and panders (who recruited from the young and innocent) from those who were soliciting out of desperation.<sup>791</sup> Overall, tracking, rather than punishing, allowed the police to acquire more knowledge of the world of male prostitutes and also helped them to dissuade those men who were not authentic homosexuals from the trade.<sup>792</sup> No police memos or internal orders remain to substantiate Szántó’s claims further. Nevertheless, the existing evidence corroborates that, the police only concerned themselves with a particular type of non-normative male sexuality, which explains why a considerable segment of male prostitution could remain unregulated and, according to Szántó, go relatively undisturbed.

In order to arrive at a more comprehensive answer, we have to consider the contemporary understandings of male sexuality. Although the conservative regime set

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<sup>789</sup> Unlike in the case of women, it did not require any deeds or actions on behalf of the men, who were registered. According to Szántó the 1695 registered male prostitutes faced no (forced) medical exam and did not have to file paperwork for permits or go through regular check ins with the Vice Squad.

<sup>790</sup> Szántó, “A homosexuális férfiprostitúció kérdése.” 21: 830.

<sup>791</sup> Szántó, “A homosexuális férfiprostitúció kérdése.” 21: 831.

<sup>792</sup> In addition Szántó advocated for paragraph 66 of the municipal order 881-1008/1907 of 1907 that (grants license to restaurants and cafes to have prostitution) to be implemented for male prostitutions as well. Thus, those establishments (cafes and restaurants) should be granted a permission to host and facilitate homosexual prostitution.

out to raise the moral fiber of both men and women, the members of the police and of the criminal system - not to mention the medical profession – were all too painfully aware that the majority of men, regardless of their sexual orientation, fell short of living by the creed of Christianity. Equally important was the experience of World War I, which left many men not only physically, but also psychologically, damaged. As I discussed in Chapter Three, even before the war ended, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists were actively involved in the treatment of “shell-shocked” men.<sup>793</sup> Following the war, there was both concern and anxiety, which was present in most of the countries which had fought in the war, about the re-integration of these men into civil society.<sup>794</sup> Post-war violence was a consequence of men experiencing unprecedented brutality at the front, as well as experiencing the harsh condition of prison camps.<sup>795</sup> Sources attest to the acknowledgement that many men who came back suffered not only from what we would today call “post-traumatic stress disorders,” but also sexual “dysfunctions.”<sup>796</sup> That many men had a difficult time re-adjusting themselves to civilian life and heterosexual relationships is evident. And it is against this background that, in Budapest, the actions of the police in terms of male homosexuality make more sense. Non-normative male

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<sup>793</sup> Hospitals were set up in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from 1916. On the relationship between soldiers’ trauma on the front and interwar medical practices and gender politics in the German context, see Paul F. Lerner’s *Hysterical Men : War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.

<sup>794</sup> Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur-Deckard (eds.), *Gender and War in Twentieth-century Eastern Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, Introduction and especially Maureen Healy’s “Civilizing the soldier in postwar Austria,” which is a more specific case study and analysis of Central Europe post WWI., Robert A Nye, “Western Masculinities in War and Peace.” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (April 2007).

<sup>795</sup> Harmat, Pál. *Freud, Ferenczi És a Magyarországi Pszichoanalízis a Budapesti Mélylélektani Iskola Iskola Története, 1908-1983*. Bern: EPMSZ, 1986, Erős, Ferenc és, and Anna Kovács, (eds.), *Sigmund Freud - Ferenczi Sándor Levelezés*. Vol. 2. II. Budapest: Thalassa Alapítvány - Pólya Kiadó, 2003. Borbély, Zoltán, and Rezső Dr. Kapy. *A 60 Éves Magyar Rendőrség, 1881 - 1941*. Budapest: Halász Irodalmi és Könyvkiadó Vállalat, 1942.

<sup>796</sup> Foscher László, “A nemi élet zavarai” (The problems of sexual life), in Somogyi, Béla M. D. *A Család Egészsége: Népszerű Orvosi Tájékoztató És Tanácsadó*. 2nd ed. Budapest: Dante Könyvkiadó, 1928, 588-590.

sexual practices could be overlooked or at least looked upon with the understanding that the experience of WWI had deeply unsettled the masculinity and “normal” sexuality of men. Szántó himself openly acknowledges that most men were neither living up to the state’s expectations, and that they were not able to, even if they had tried:

“there are very few men, whose sexual life would at all times and in all respects meet the requirements of religious ethics... In terms of sexual life, we cannot talk about normal and abnormal, otherwise two-thirds of the men would have to be labeled as pathological.”<sup>797</sup>

We can only speculate about the specific basis upon which Szántó made his claim. It is most probable that he used the term “pathological” in a broader sense, encompassing medical and psychological “abnormalities,” as well as moral shortcomings. Reading Szántó’s statement from this perspective, he basically argues that two-thirds of Hungarian men failed to fulfill the medical and/or cultural pre-requisites of Hungarian manhood. Consequently, the fact that, during the interwar years, the police continued to play a practical role by recognizing the *de facto* status of existing sexual morals, while protecting public morality, should come as no surprise.<sup>798</sup> Wishing homosexuality would go away was one thing. But perceiving and accepting that homosexuality and even homosexual prostitution was an integral part of modern urban life was another thing entirely. These aspects were far from being mutually exclusive and were simultaneously present throughout the interwar years.

In spite of the Horthy regime’s attempts to make the urban population (re-) absorb traditional religious sexual ethics, we also find that the idea of the fulfillment of sexual desires as an important factor for an individual’s health, was also present. By the 1920s

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<sup>797</sup> Szántó, “A homoszexuális férfiprostitúció kérdése,” 831.

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*

and most definitely by the 1930s, the idea that sex and sexuality were central in determining individual and societal health and character had been making its way not only into popular culture, but also into the thinking of the regulatory authorities.<sup>799</sup> Szántó's articles demonstrate that the idea that engaging in sex and pursuing sexual satisfaction was one of the driving forces of human existence could be part of the official language of the public health officials and the police, but not the politicians. Accepting that men were inherently sexual served to legitimize the *de facto* existence of female prostitution, and also served as an excuse that could be used to explain forms of male sexual behavior, even outside of the monogamous heterosexual relationship.<sup>800</sup> In turn, by making sexuality a central component of human life, and with the understanding that there were people who had been inherently born homosexual, Szántó could defend homosexuals. Although he might have been unique in his frank statement that "the church from its high ground can demand self-restraint, but the great majority of male homosexuals could not bear to be excluded from experiencing the most basic manifestation of zest for life," he most certainly was not the only one who made sexual satisfaction (hetero or homo) an imperative for human existence.<sup>801</sup> It seems that even

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<sup>799</sup> Official publications that demonstrate this include: Zoltán Borbély and Rezső Kapy's *A 60 Éves Magyar Rendőrség, 1881-1941*, and the Interior Ministry's official public health journal *Népegészségügy*. Interwar psychiatry, neurology, and psychoanalytical medical publications also underscore the wide phenomenon of the centering of sex.

<sup>800</sup> No other issue highlights the *de facto* acceptance of men being active sexually than the campaign against venereal diseases, which intensified during the interwar years. While rhetoric could still praise abstinence and sexual monogamy, authorities were also much more pragmatic about sexual education and providing necessary information about causes, treatments and cures of sexually transmitted illnesses. György Lukács, in his report on Hungary's public health points out how 50% of infertility is caused by sexually transmitted diseases in *Népegészségügy Magyarországon*. Budapest: M. Tud. Társ. Ny., 1924, 16. Doros, Gábor. *A Prostitúció Kérdése* (The Question of Prostitution). Budapest: Osiris, 1935. Anka, László. "A Budapesti Prostitúció És Szexpiac Története a Boldog Békeidőkben."

<sup>801</sup> Szántó, 830, The statement could also be interpreted as manifestation of a greater cultural change, where at least in some people's view the satisfaction of individual desire became a basic principle of life. On the relationship between sexology and cultural shift to a consumerist culture and society see Matt Cook in *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University

those who opposed homosexuality as an immoral and perverse deed, admitted that the sexual drive was fundamental in shaping human behavior.<sup>802</sup> Thus, it was not difficult to argue that, in a modern society, individuals should be entitled to fulfill their sexual drives as long as it did not harm others. As the first two chapters illustrated, the notion of individual sexual rights had been present both in the discourse and in most of the practice of Hungarian authorities prior to 1918. In this regard, Szántó's approach to (homo-) sexuality was not novel:

We must facilitate these (homosexual) people so they can fulfill their instinctual desires although, only as long as they do not harm or endanger the rights of the individual or the collective, and as long as they do not impinge on the interest of the state, and as long they do not offend the moral view of the majority with outrageous behavior.<sup>803</sup>

The fact that Szántó could unreservedly say in the official publication of the authorities in 1934 that, the sexual activities of two adults, within four walls, behind closed doors, based upon consent and mutual understanding is nobody else's business, is quite surprising. But even more surprising is Szántó's subsequent assertion, according to which, engaging in homosexual acts does not impede the interest of the state nor offend the moral view of the majority.<sup>804</sup>

Another equally important concept was the idea that sexuality was fluid. Such an idea had, of course, been around, and, as I showed in previous chapters particularly in terms of homosexuality, helped to make sense and differentiate between different types of homosexuality. Reading publications of the police and public health officials of the

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Press, 2003, 82 and Harry Oosterhuis in *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2000, 80.

<sup>802</sup> Turcsányi, Gyula, ed. *A Modern Bűnözés I-II*. 2 vols. 1929.

<sup>803</sup> Szántó, 830.

<sup>804</sup> And he was of course not alone he made this argument. György Pál for example presents a similar argument in *A Homoszexuális Probléma Modern Megvilágításban*. Budapest: Mai Henrik Kiadó, 1927.

interwar period, it is clear that they all, to varying degrees, embraced the idea that, developmentally, people were on a spectrum of sexuality. That is, according to them, there were people who were believed to be “authentic” heterosexuals or homosexuals with no ability to change, while most other people in certain environments could develop a desire for their own sex.<sup>805</sup> Such a conceptualization could foster the continuing acceptance of “authentic” homosexuality.<sup>806</sup> But what such an understanding of fluid sexuality could also facilitate was a more rehabilitative approach to non-normative sexuality. A survey of contemporary police, public health, and legal opinions illuminates how the Hungarian authorities during the interwar era tended to agree that, while there was a category of authentic homosexuals who were born with homosexuality, many more people acquired homosexuality. And it was the process of acquiring homosexuality which, first and foremost, concerned the authorities. In the eyes of the authorities engaging in homosexual encounters did not mean that one was, or would necessarily become, homosexual. Consequently, men who sexually engaged with other men could be seen as “suffering” from the post-traumatic experience and “were replicating” the experience of the war. In addition, economic hardship and necessity could also drive men, who having had the experience with homosexuality during the war, would sell their services to men. In these cases, the members of the police and the legal representatives of the judiciary system could remain lenient in their assessment and treatment of homosexuality despite the reigning conservatism. As the next section on the

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<sup>805</sup> Again this was shared from representatives of the police, to journalist to legal scholars.

<sup>806</sup> There were many ways that the spectrum could be divided and different people had different ideas on the number of different categories of homosexuality. With that is said authorities continued to uphold two important assumptions from the prewar era: that there was a category of “authentic” homosexuals, “who simply could not help their sexuality” and second, just as importantly that a “normal” person would never become homosexual. József Vogl, “Homosexualitas” in Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 115.



courts will demonstrate, what this ultimately meant was that the authorities did, indeed, differentiate within the category of “unnatural” or “abnormal” sexualities, and while they stepped up the prosecution of “real” criminal elements, people who stole, used force, had sex with the underaged or blackmailed, while at the same time leaving “authentic” non-criminal homosexuals to a considerable degree “alone.”<sup>807</sup>

Before turning to the courts and the legal treatment of homosexuality I want to briefly bring attention to the issue of sexually transmitted diseases in relation to homosexual men because it can provide an additional piece to the puzzle. During the interwar period Hungary had one of, if not *the*, highest rates of sexually transmitted diseases in Europe.<sup>808</sup> While there was not a day that the papers did not talk about venereal disease in connection with female prostitution, male homosexuals were conspicuously absent from public or official discussions.<sup>809</sup> Considering the high rates of syphilis and gonorrhea the lack of acknowledgment of the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases among male prostitutes and their clientele was a notable shortcoming of the Hungarian authorities.<sup>810</sup> The conservative regime could talk about male and female sexuality in the context of heterosexual sexual relations, although it was by no

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<sup>807</sup> This approach stood in sharp contrast to the approach of Nazi Germany, where authorities used the idea of “fluid sexuality” for punitive effects. See Chapters 1-3 in Dagmar Herzog’s *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*.

<sup>808</sup> Hungary had 68 people with sexually transmitted diseases/10’000 inhabitants, while Germany had 58, Sweden 23, and Norway 30. However, considering that about 70% of STDs were concentrated in urban areas and that Budapest was an urban monopoly in Hungary the rates of STDs in Budapest were seriously alarming. Doros, Gábor, and József Melly. *A Nemi Betegségek Kérdése Budapesten I-II* (The Question of Venereal Disease in Budapest). Székesfővárosi házinyomda, 1930, introduction. While, in 1932, there were nine facilities, by 1940, there were thirty-two facilities that specialized in treating venereal disease. “Nemi beteg gondozók működése” (The operation of treatment facilities for venereal disease). KEIOK, <http://orvosoktatas.keioKhu/node/109>, last accessed February 12, 2009.

<sup>809</sup> The organized fight against venereal disease and sexually transmitted diseases in more general started just before and during World War I under the *aegis* of Professor Nékám Lajos. Especially from the late 1920s, the works of the Anti-Venereal Association received wide attention in official publications as well as in the print mass media. The issue of venereal diseases was also regularly discussed in the parliament throughout the 1930s.

<sup>810</sup> In fact, sex between men was just as likely to spread gonorrhea, cancrroids and syphilis.

means necessarily educational; same-sex sexuality did not enter the discourse, official or unofficial.<sup>811</sup> Hardly any news articles or official memos directly addressed the question of homosexuality. Even those few public health documents that raised the issue of male homosexuality in the context of sexually transmitted diseases do so in passing. During the interwar years, the widely accepted idea that sexuality was fluid meant that people's sexuality was considered malleable. Most people, according to reigning interwar ideas on sexuality, acquired their homosexuality through exposure to homoerotic ideas and homosocial environments. Hence, the last thing officials, the spokespersons of conservative, Catholic ruling classes, and even the far-right ring wing elements or the small more liberal opposition and their media outlets wanted, was to introduce the concept of homosexuality into public discourse. One contemporary judge and legal scholar opined, "in their approach to homosexuality public authorities must be extremely cautious and discreet so they will not cause a public scandal in instances when the deed (homosexuality) would have vanished without a trace in the filthy den which it came from."<sup>812</sup> The notions that "what is not discussed does not exist, and the less we talk about it the better," were shared across the political and social sphere during the interwar years.<sup>813</sup> Strengthening the morality and virility of men could go hand in hand with the acceptance of men's fragility in both of those areas. And this goes a long way towards

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<sup>811</sup> In fact, it was clear that making the Church the sole authority in the dissemination of sexual knowledge, which only praised simply traditional values and abstinence before marriage was not exactly. Furthermore, none of the very few publications with explicit sexual education content address same-sex sexuality. In addition, encouraging the parents to set a venerable example was also inadequate.

<sup>812</sup> Illés II. 296 cited in Angyal, Pál. *A Szemérem Elleni Büntettek És Vétiségek Magyar: Büntetőjog Kézikönyve 14*. (Crimes and Misdemeanors Against Morality: Handbook of Criminal Law: 14). Budapest: Attila-Nyomda, 1937, 86.

<sup>813</sup> The lack of public acknowledgment went hand in hand with the lack of sexual education. Hungary similarly to other conservative nations, such as England, refrained from providing sexual education until post World War II, with the exception of during the wars, when young adolescence and men received mandatory sexual health education. Tigyi Zoltánné Pusztafalvi Henriette. "Az Egészségnevelés Intézményesülésének Folymata Hazánkban A Dualizmus Korától A Második Világháború Végéig," 18-21.

explaining why containment through silence came to be a defining feature of the conservative Horthy regime's approach to male homosexuality.

### *Homosexuality at the Courts*

Making any general claims about the attitude of Hungarian authorities towards homosexuals requires an analysis of the executive branch of the justice system. In the following, I will consider the surviving criminal court cases in Budapest from 1917 until the outbreak of World War II in September 1939. The data comes from the Budapest Criminal Courts' annual indexes and its cases of "unnatural fornication" between 1918 and 1940. More specifically, I will present the main characteristics and overall trends of the courts' discourse around, and treatment of, homosexuality. First, I will look at the period before "Black Tuesday" and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, and then I consider the effects of the economic depression on the treatment of homosexuality throughout the 1930s.<sup>814</sup>

The very first documented legal case under the charge of §241 *természet elleni fajtalanság* (unnatural fornication) dates back to 1904, when K.L., a thirty-one-year-old carter, was prosecuted for bestiality (more specifically, for having sex with a horse).<sup>815</sup> Although K.L. vehemently denied the allegation, according to the verdict, since there were two witnesses whom, under oath, looked straight into K.L.'s eyes and declared that "they saw the accused, once he narcotized a horse in a barn, had sexual intercourse with

<sup>814</sup> While scholars point out that the Hungarian countryside actually experienced economic contraction as early as 1927, Budapest only experienced it from 1930 onward.

<sup>815</sup> BFL VII. 13. b. 1904 JB XV. 326/5,1. Similarly to many other Penal Codes (such as the German or the Swedish) the Hungarian Penal Code criminalized male homosexuality with having sexual intercourse with animals under the same paragraph. For a comprehensive history of how bestiality and homosexuality came to be codified under "unnatural fornication" in the Swedish context, see Jens Rydstrom's *Sinners and Citizens: Bestiality and Homosexuality in Sweden, 1880-1950*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

it...”<sup>816</sup> The judges maintained that, while the considerably low intellectual capacity of the accused served as a mitigating circumstance, his criminal record was an aggravating circumstance. K.L. was sentenced to fourteen days in *fogház* (the most lenient form of prison).<sup>817</sup> Following this incident, another §241 case does not emerge until 1917. This is not because there were no prosecutions or legal cases brought against homosexuals. As the previous chapters (and contemporary sources) make clear, the police tracked and also prosecuted men based upon charges of §241 “unnatural fornication” during the first two decades of the Twentieth century. The lack of court cases are the result of World War II and the direct hits that the judicial buildings took during the street battle between the retreating German and Arrow Cross Hungarian armies and the advancing Soviet army in the winter of 1944.<sup>818</sup> Therefore, most court cases prior to 1918 were destroyed and many records of the interwar period were also damaged. Nevertheless, with the help of the annual index books and the surviving documents, it is possible to re-construct the general tendencies of the treatment of homosexuality within the Hungarian legal system.

The charge of “unnatural fornication” between 1918 and 1940, which included §241 (consensual) and §242 (non-consensual), was reserved exclusively for male homosexual activity.<sup>819</sup> During the tumultuous years of 1918 and 1919, there were fourteen documented cases under these codes, which almost always indicated the charge

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<sup>816</sup> FL VII. 13. b. 1904 JB XV. 326/5, 1.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>818</sup> During WWII, Hungary fought on the side of Axis powers and until October 15, 1944 Hitler allowed Admiral Horthy and the Hungarian government to manage its internal issues. When the defeat of Germany and the Axis was imminent, and Horthy was looking to switch sides and declare war on Germany, the German leadership sent its forces and put the Hungarian Arrow Cross party (Nazi party) in charge. The siege of Budapest lasted 108 days October 29, 1944 – February 13, 1945.

<sup>819</sup> In this period I found no surviving court cases that prosecuted bestiality under “unnatural fornication.”

of public male same-sex activity.<sup>820</sup> Following the re-establishment of the justice system after the fall of Hungarian Soviet Republic and its Revolutionary Tribunal system, we discovered that, in 1920, there were a mere 10 cases. Beginning in 1921, the number of cases rose to 16 peaking in 1924 with 61 cases. Prosecutions appear to have declined afterwards because between 1925 and 1930 the number of cases ranged between 7 and 48.<sup>821</sup> In 1931, there were only 9 cases, while, in 1932, there were thirty-three cases. Between 1933 and 1940, the number of cases ranged from 32 and 40.<sup>822</sup>

The low number of court cases of “unnatural fornication” does not mean that homosexuals were not prosecuted for other reasons. Between 1926 and 1929, there were about 600 people from the homosexual registry who were prosecuted for misdemeanors and crimes.<sup>823</sup> However, these men were prosecuted for crimes other than “unnatural fornication,” which explains why the actual cases of §241 or §242 remained very low between these years and beyond. Men were prosecuted for stealing, bribery, petty crimes as well as for libel and perjury. József Vogl, a police chief in 1929, argued that “about one third of homosexual men come into conflict with the Penal Code.”<sup>824</sup> Thus, from the mid-1920s onward, the police were actively filing charges against homosexual men who

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<sup>820</sup> My data comes from the documents of the Budapest City Archives (BFL). Specifically, I am relying on the indexes as well as the actual documentation of court cases within the Budapest Criminal Court system. VII. 13. b. indicates cases of Royal Central District Courts of Justice to Budapest. VII. 5. C stands for the cases tried at the Royal Court of Justice to Budapest, which served as the appeal court for the decisions of the District Courts of Justice. According to the index in 1917 there were no criminal charges of homosexuality at the courts in Budapest.

<sup>821</sup> I arrived to this data by going through the annual indexes of the criminal courts and catalogued the number of cases with the charge of crime against nature.

<sup>822</sup> One out of the three index books for 1930 is missing. Therefore, there is no total count for that year. Furthermore, there are no, or partial, index books for the years of 1933 and 1934. One index book is missing for 1939. In 1935, 32 cases, in 1936, 35 cases, 24 in 1937, 32 in 1938, 30+x (one book is missing, and 40 cases in 1940.

<sup>823</sup> József Vogl “Homosexualitas” in Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 142. The numbers Vogl cites come from the police’s statistics between 1926 and 1929. During this time, according to Vogl, there were 345 people on the homosexual registry who had been already prosecuted and an approximately similar number who were being prosecuted at the time of his writing the report.

<sup>824</sup> *Ibid.*

were caught for crimes other than homosexuality. Reflecting the conservative regime's aim to "clean up" and rid the "sinful" capital of its criminal and illicit elements, the Metropolitan Police of Budapest stepped up its activities in every sphere, which seems to have included the registration of homosexuals. Whether they caught people in the homosexual act or caught people who were involved in some unlawful activity who also happen to be homosexuals, homosexuals faced greater likelihood of being arrested and prosecuted. Accordingly, "unnatural fornication" charges were pressed in cases of sex with minors, boys under eighteen, and in cases of non-consensual sex. In both of these cases, the accused, if proven guilty, faced harsh punishment.<sup>825</sup>

However, homosexuals who did not commit any crimes other than that of their desire for their own sex, continued to be left alone and, at times, were even protected by the police. For one, throughout the entire interwar period the number of cases in which people were reported to the police for their alleged homosexuality or their alleged same-sex sexual relationships remained relatively rare. One reason for this, of course, has to do with the fact that "authentic" homosexuals and people with experience of homosexual activities, looked for homosexual sex among people whom they trusted and with whom they knew they would be safe. It was unlikely that a homosexual person would approach and make a sexual advance to a stranger, unless they were re-assured through the "homosexual communication channels" that the person understood and was open to the idea of homosexual encounters. Reading through the court documents, we only find one

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<sup>825</sup> Sex with a minor: VII. 5. C - B.X 5083/22/1923, VII. 5. C - 13295/4/1924 (one month), VII. 5. C 15222/7/1926, B III, 13331/2/1928, VII. 5. C - 1779/6/1928 (BfXIV), VII. 5. C - 7093/3/1928, VII. 5. C - 12237/7/1929 (Bfl) Penalties ranged from one month (in the case of having consensual sex with a seventeen year old) to a year and a half (for having sexual acts with boys under fourteen.) In terms of non-consensual sex between adult men (§242) VII. 5. C - 11928/20/1922, VII. 5. C - 13295/4/1924, VII. 5. C - BIX 7310/18/1925 (6 honap borton) depending on the severity of harm and the level of force applied, the sentences ranged from six months in prison to two and a half years.

or two cases in which someone was charged with *attempted* homosexual activity.<sup>826</sup>

Another reason for the low numbers of §241 charges had to do with the fact that many people who could have informed the police about homosexuals did not do so for their own personal benefit. In fact, the greatest danger facing homosexuals in Budapest was those criminals who, using their (often intimate) knowledge of people's sexuality and sexual practices, bribed them or blackmailed them for silence. While the police would register them and they would therefore have a police record on file, the consequences of being bribed or blackmailed were significantly worse.<sup>827</sup>

When and how were people actually prosecuted in the courts for “unnatural fornication”? The Criminal District Courts tended to pursue the charges of homosexuality upon the recommendations of the public prosecution office.<sup>828</sup> In general, men were apprehended by the Vice Squad in public venues, lavatories, city parks, and public baths, where men would engage in what were considered to be “unnatural” acts, ranging from having sex with another man to the “inappropriate” touching of another man's genitals. Similar to most countries that criminalized male homosexuality, different Hungarian courts and legal scholars had varying understandings of how “unnatural fornication” should be defined.<sup>829</sup> Nevertheless, considering that, in most cases, throughout the entire interwar period, there were no arguments between the judges, the defense and the public prosecutors about the parameters of “unnatural fornication,” it is

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<sup>826</sup> Part of the reason why there were only a few cases might also have to do with the fact that the Penal Code made it difficult to charge people with §241 based on attempted “unnatural fornication.” Because even as the interpretation of what exactly counted as “unnatural fornication” between two men varied throughout the years and in between different courts, it would have been very difficult to prove that attempted homosexuality fulfilled §241. Vogl in Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 142.

<sup>827</sup> This is emphasized in every publication of interwar period, medical, legal or police.

<sup>828</sup> Ügyészség in Hungarian.

<sup>829</sup> A detailed description of what some of the major contemporary differences were both in other countries as well as in Hungary is provided by Angyal, Pál in *A Szemérem Elleni Büntettek És Vétiségek. Magyar Büntetőjog Kézikönyve 14*, 80-83.

likely that there was a tacit understanding within the judicial system that the actions with which the police were charging men, if proven to be true, would fulfill the conditions of “unnatural fornication.” This is supported by the fact that, between 1918 and 1940, the defense of the accused rarely contested the charges upon the basis of “not meeting the criteria of §241.” It seems highly likely that the police only filed charges against those men who had incontestably committed acts of “unnatural fornication.”<sup>830</sup>

In the great majority of cases during this period, the charges were made against working class and men with low social and economic status. Thanks to the diligence of Hungarian legal bureaucracy, the surviving documents provide a comprehensive picture of the backgrounds of the men charged with homosexuality. For one, we learn that, overwhelmingly, these men were born outside of Budapest, mainly in rural areas and in small towns. They had all moved to the capital for work. Almost all of them performed manual labor and were essentially working class.<sup>831</sup> Not surprisingly, men with the means to conduct their sexual encounters in private, were greatly under-represented.<sup>832</sup> In terms of marital status, about 80 per cent (or four out of five men) were unmarried at the time at which they were caught and charged with §241.<sup>833</sup> Most men were Roman

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<sup>830</sup> It is likely that while following the arrest and registering men who were allegedly homosexuals, unless their acts could be definitely labeled as “unnatural fornication,” the police let the men free without any charges. VII. 5. C - 9302/9/1925, VII. 5. C 15222/7/1926.

<sup>831</sup> Out of the approximately 55 cases between 1910 and 1930 and 40 cases between 1930 and 1940, there were only 7 cases when people with social and economic means were involved.

<sup>832</sup> The vast overrepresentation of low socio-economic class men charged with homosexuality in general was true for both places where homosexuality was criminalized and even for those places where it was not. For a comparative European account, see Florence Tamagne’s *The History of Homosexuality in Europe*, for London, Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: the Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*. London; New York: Longman, 1981 and Matt Houlbrook’s, *Queer London: Peril and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005, for Paris, Jeffrey Merrick’s *Homosexuality in Modern France*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996., for New York George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

<sup>833</sup> 10 out of 55 men were married between 1918 and 1930 and 8 out of 40 cases between 1930 and 1940. Considering the marriage rate in Budapest, the percentage of men who were married among the



Catholic, as were most of the Hungarian countryside. Along with Catholics, Jewish men were slightly over-represented among the accused.<sup>834</sup> The ages of the men varied between 17 years of age to mid-60s, with the majority being in their 20s and 30s.<sup>835</sup> In sum, most men who were accused with homosexuality between 1918 and 1940 were of rural origin, and similar to their international counterparts, in their 20s and 30s, working class and unmarried.<sup>836</sup>

The charges for consensual public homosexual acts, which were prosecuted based upon §241 during the 1920s, ranged from a financial penalty to a few weeks in the lightest form of confinement. Considering that, according to the Penal Code, if the accused were found guilty of “unnatural fornication”, the punishment was up to one year, it is noteworthy that the courts rarely assigned a sentence of more than ten days or more than a few weeks for consensual sex.<sup>837</sup> In fact, if men had no prior criminal history, in the majority of cases the courts often suspended the punishment. The rationale behind this leniency was that the courts expected that “it would have a positive effect on the

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accused was much lower than average marriage rate in Budapest during this period. The marriage rate for men between 20 and 60 in Budapest during the 1920s and 30s, was about fifty five percent. Doros, Gábor, and József Melly. *A Nemi Betegségek Kérdése Budapesten I–II*, 123.

<sup>834</sup> About 200'000 Jews lived in Budapest during the interwar period, constituting over twenty percent of the population. In contrast to the criminal cases, in the homosexual registry, Jewish men were actually under-represented. The study of the reasons for higher representation of Jewish men in the criminal system would be an important inquiry. In this regard, the situation of Budapest would make an interesting comparison to London, where, according to Matt Houlbrook in *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*, Jewish men were systematically under-represented.

<sup>835</sup> If the accused were under 18 years old the court would direct their cases to the juvenile criminal court.

<sup>836</sup> In all countries where homosexuality was criminalized (and to a large extent even where it was not), working class men were disproportionately overrepresented in cases with charges of homosexuality. Average age for marriage for men in Hungary was 27 in 1930. Tomka, Béla. “Social Integration in 20th Century Europe: Evidences from Hungarian Family Development.” *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 2 (2001): 327–348, 323.

<sup>837</sup> Of course, the actual sentence depended on the specific circumstances as well as the defendant’s mental and physical wellbeing. For this reason, the courts required a forensic medical opinion as far as I can tell in all of the cases.

accused and would deter him from repeating the same deed again in the future.”<sup>838</sup> The result was that first-time offenders often received only probation. On instances in which they were charged for first-time offenses, the penalty was most often a fine. Considering that most people were working class, this could still be a hardship. If they could not pay, if they repeated offenses, or if they were charged for multiple sexual acts with multiple people, the punishment ranged from a week to a few weeks in the lightest form of confinement.<sup>839</sup>

By no means did the public prosecutor’s office always have its own way. In 15 per cent of the cases, the courts dismissed the charges of “unnatural fornication” for lack of sufficient proof.<sup>840</sup> This was true for both the 1920s and 1930s. Judges were fully aware that an accusation of homosexuality placed men in a vulnerable position. Thus, unless the judges were fully convinced that “unnatural” acts between two (or more) men had indeed taken place, they were reluctant to pursue a charge of §241. Being charged with homosexuality probably tainted one’s public image, and the judges knew all too well that it was much easier to *make* accusations of “unnatural deeds” than to prove them untrue.<sup>841</sup> The surviving documents speak of a legal process that reflects a conscious effort on the part of the judges to protect people until they were unquestionably proven guilty. The courts not only questioned the authenticity of independent witnesses, but also

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<sup>838</sup> The cases in which the punishment was suspended include: BFL. VII. 13.b – 12970/1919, VII. 13.b - 22050/1921, VII. 5. C. - 7550/1922, or when the fine was suspended VII. 5. C - 12600/6/1921, VII. 5. C - Bf II 4051/7/1926, VII. 5. C - Bf V. 13298/3/1927, VII. 5. C - 8614/15/1930 (BXI)

<sup>839</sup> The Hungarian prison system consisted of three tiers, *fogház*, the most lenient form of prison, *börtön*, and *fégyház*, the most severe and strict form of incarceration.

<sup>840</sup> 8 cases (VII. 13.b - 17438/1919, VII. 13.b - 21944/1920, VII. 5. C - 16136/9/1921, VII. 13.b - 19630/1921, VII. 5. C - 8785/5/1922, VI B 78/1926, VII. 5. C - 5552/7/1927 (BXI), VII. 5. C - 3259/5/1930 (Bf II)) out of 55 were dismissed for the lack of adequate proof during the 1920s and 5 (B.I. 31406/2/1931, B. X. 31917/14/1934, Bf. I. 6045/17/1939, Bf. II. 3546/6/1939, Bf. I. 18270/7/1942) of 40 during the 1930s.

<sup>841</sup> Social commentators such as György Pál, as well as every practicing physician that I mentioned, highlighted the social stigma that surrounded homosexuality.

even interrogated and, at times, *dismissed* police reports and the testimonials of detectives if they thought that they were unconvincing or inadequate to prove the charges. This fairly established legal culture of impartiality, which had been carried over from the Austro-Hungarian days, is an important reason why the courts could continue to approach charges of homosexuality in a fairly similar manner to the way they did prior to WWI.<sup>842</sup>

Despite the definite political turn toward a more authoritarian conservatism and right-wing politics throughout the 1930s, the Hungarian legal system actually tried fewer cases for the charges of “unnatural fornication.” After Black Tuesday in 1929 and the subsequent world economic crisis and depression that characterized the first part of the 1930s, the number of “unnatural fornication” charges actually declined, while the crimes associated with economic destitution, such as stealing or soliciting saw an enormous rise.<sup>843</sup> Similarly to the 1920s, during the 1930s many homosexuals were charged with petty crimes, but not with being a homosexual. In fact, although it is difficult to verify the exact numbers, according to contemporary medical, police and legal sources, the police persecuted criminal homosexuals with renewed vigor. The homosexual registry was expanding and had a sub-division for male homosexual prostitutes.<sup>844</sup> Even though Admiral Horthy bestowed power to progressively more right-leaning governments from 1932 onward, the judicial treatment of homosexuals remained unchanged.<sup>845</sup>

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<sup>842</sup> In addition, quite often when the suspect had been in custody and the courts granted an actual prison sentence for consensual homosexuality, the courts would rule to have a prison sentence as long as the accused had been in custody, which meant very soon following the trial the person was set free. See for instance, VII. 13.b - 26199/1920, VII. 5. C - BIX 13589/17/1927, VII. 5. C - B XII. 8990/8/1927.

<sup>843</sup> Insert statistics about overall charges for crimes. In 1931, I found only 7 cases in the Criminal Courts of Budapest, while in 1932-1936 the numbers ranged from 25 to 36.

<sup>844</sup> It is implicit in Captain József Vogl's work (in Turcsányi, ed., *A modern bűnözés I*, 133-143), while explicitly stated in Szántó's work on male prostitution.

<sup>845</sup> The Bethlen government collapsed in 1931. Under the subsequent governments of Károlyi (1931-1932), Gömbös (1932-1936), Darányi (1936-38), Imrèdy (1938-9) and Teleki (1939-1941), the centralization of power that began during the 1920s accelerated. The first half of the 1930s also saw the establishment of

The records of these cases reflect a legal procedure in which the courts considered homosexuality to be a condition that played a role in criminal activity. We still find a number of cases in which men were charged with §241, because they had engaged in sexual activities with their own sex. In these cases, men were caught in public areas, such as parks, public baths, or on public property.<sup>846</sup> The Vice Squad kept a close eye on well-known homosexual gathering places, and it was usually undercover detectives who caught men “in the act” and consequently brought them in to the police station. Once they were registered on the homosexual registry, it was up to the police to decide whether or not to press charges. In most cases, they did not and rarely did these cases come before the courts.<sup>847</sup> However, even when they did, the courts applied the similar legal approach that they had applied prior to the 1930s. Thus, the courts continued to be diligent in their assessment of the alleged crime and only pronounced men guilty of “unnatural fornication” if they found that there was uncontested evidence. Fully aware of the social stigma surrounding homosexuality and the power of accusation, it was rare for the courts to pronounce someone guilty of §241 based upon one witness alone.<sup>848</sup> And, even when they found men guilty, they punished the men relatively lightly. In most instances, very much like during the 1920s, first-time offenders were either let off with a

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far right movements that modeled themselves on the Nazi party, such as the *Kaszáskeresztes Mozgalom* and the eventually prominent *Nyilaskeresztes Párt*. The Gömbös government was also the first government explicitly pro-Hitler and saw a close alliance with Germany as the most viable solution to achieve the revision of the Trianon borders.

<sup>846</sup> i.e. BIII. 36130/2/1930, B.III. 12534/7/1930, B II. 21.366/49/1932, B II. 4066/6/1936, B IX. 29861/6/1936, B.X. 46564/18/1936, BVI. 40774/4/1938, B. VIII. 7988/22/1939

<sup>847</sup> I make this statement based upon the fact that while there were almost 4,000 homosexual men in the homosexual registry by 1935, the number of prosecution for homosexuality remained consistently low, anywhere between 7 and 40 throughout the 1930s.

<sup>848</sup> That was at times true even when the witness was a policeman.

suspended charge, or had to pay a fine, rather than receiving an actual prison sentence.<sup>849</sup> And when they did receive a prison sentence, the duration ranged from a few days to two weeks. Overall, in these instances, while following the Penal Code and punishing people for their non-heterosexuality, the courts punished their acts, first and foremost, for breaching public morality rather than for homosexuality.

With the exception of cases in which both the young men were prostitutes (in which case both men were prosecuted), cases of consensual sexual encounters with men under the age of 18 were considered a more serious offense.<sup>850</sup> The most severe sentences were reserved for men who had sexual encounters with boys under the age of 12. In this instance, similarly to adult men who had non-consensual sex with other adult men, people were charged with §242 “non-consensual sex between men.”<sup>851</sup> Consequently, minors could not “consent” to sex - unless they had already had sex sufficient to be “ruined.” In the eyes of the authorities, forced sexual encounters damaged men not only physically, but were also morally detrimental. This was especially the case with men who had not reached full psychical and emotional maturity. For young men, non-consensual “unnatural fornication”, according to courts, caused “moral decay.” Physically-, emotionally- and morally-violating men, and particularly young men through forced homosexual sex, harmed not just the individuals against whom the crime was committed but also the greater community. Thus, in the context of

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<sup>849</sup> In the case that they did not have enough money, the fine would be substituted with the lightest form of confinement. Depending on the person’s financial means, the exchange rate between the currency (Hungarian pengő) and the number of days of confinement ranged between 5 to 10 pengő per day.

<sup>850</sup> Again, it is impossible to provide exact statistical breakdown of the percentage of “unnatural fornication” cases in which minors were involved. Nevertheless, out of the x surviving cases, there were 7 cases. VII. 5. C - 8614/15/1930 (BXI), VII. 5. C. – B.VII. 1920/7/1930, B IX. 36393/7/1931, B II. 16116/25/1931, B II. 21.366/49/1932, B. II. 40130/13/1937, B. II. 34158/5/1940.

<sup>851</sup> Cases of §242 include B. VII. 5315/8/1934, BXI 7687/5/1937, VIII 2825/3/1938, B VIII. 9551/6/1940, VIII 7157/10/1940, B VIII. 360/4/1941.

minors and non-consensual sex, the courts considered homosexuality to be an additional criminal factor. Because the harm was done to men, homosexuality was seen as weakening Hungary's manpower, and, hence, Hungary's future. Last, but not least, during the 1930s, men were charged with §241 in cases of theft, stealing and bribery. About one in five cases of "unnatural fornication" during the 1930s involved theft or stealing.<sup>852</sup> The cases, which often involved more than two men, centered around stealing and theft, while homosexuality was usually a facilitator of the crime and always a secondary consideration of the courts. The theft generally happened during a homosexual encounter or within the context of a longer same-sex relationship that took place usually between a man of reasonable means and a man or men of poorer classes. In these instances, the person who suffered was still charged with §241, but received a lenient punishment. In contrast, the punishments for the thefts were much more severe.<sup>853</sup>

Overall, reading the case records of the interwar period suggests that the judicial approach to homosexuality was lenient and gave the accused the benefit of the doubt. Based upon the surviving court documents, it is safe to say that the judicial approach and treatment of male homosexuality was remarkably stable throughout the interwar years. This is true in terms of the conceptualization of male homosexuality, which remained similarly murky when it had to be defined by precise physical actions, and also in terms of the legal system's lenient prosecutorial attitude towards homosexuality.<sup>854</sup> The legal procedure and legal opinions on male sexuality continued to uphold a lenient attitude

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<sup>852</sup> Theft and stealing; VII. 5. C - 11539/3/1929 (BXXII), B. XIX. 119/2/1936, B XXVIII 8522/3/1936, B XXX. 12060/13/1936, B. VIII. 13359/10/1936, BXXX. 741/4/1938, B. XXVIII. 11.012/3/1938, B. XXIX 10566/5/1941, Bribery; VII. 5. C - 11985/10/1920, B.V. 11082/6/1939.

<sup>853</sup> Punishment ranged from a months to years in prison (fogház).

<sup>854</sup> As I expressed previously the definition of "unnatural fortification" were in fact unstable and kept changing. With that is said a detailed examination of the history of the legal definitions and arguments made about §241 and §242 is in order.

about non-normative forms of male sexual behavior that were not seen as an endangerment to others or as a harm to the public morale. Consequently, even as Nazi Germany (the country which Hungary has historically emulated the most, and the country with which it would align itself in WWII) began to harass and persecute German homosexuals, Hungary continued to treat them with lenience.<sup>855</sup> In spite of the growing appeal and influence of Nazism and the increasingly Nazi-friendly governments after 1935, homosexuals continued to remain outside the reach of the increasingly conservative state. The fact that the Hungarian authorities refrained from openly attacking or changing their approach toward homosexuality, even though, following the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, eugenic ideas were increasingly gaining official and public attention, is significant.<sup>856</sup> The debates at the Hungarian Legal Association in 1936 and subsequent

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<sup>855</sup> On the Nazis' treatment of homosexuality, see Richard Plant, *The pink triangle : the Nazi war against homosexuals*, 1st ed. (New York: H. Holt, 1986). Günter Grau, Claudia Schoppmann and Patrick Camiller, *Hidden holocaust? : gay and lesbian persecution in Germany, 1933-45* (Chicago IL: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1995). Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*. Chapter 1.; and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism Volume 11, Number 1 and 2, January/April 2002, In addition, William Spurlin, *Lost intimacies : rethinking homosexuality under national socialism*, New York: Peter Lang, 2009; Edward Dickinson, "Policing Sex in Germany, 1882-1982: A Preliminary Statistical Analysis," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (November 19, 2007): 204-204-250. As recent scholarship points out the treatment of homosexuals was by no means uniform and varied considerable in the Third Reich. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that in comparison to the Weimar Republic homosexuals (both male and female) in Nazi Germany were policed and prosecuted to a much greater degree.

<sup>856</sup> In Hungary, eugenic ideas had been present since the late Nineteenth century and became more widely discussed from 1910s. On the evolution of eugenics in the Hungarian context pre-1918, see Marius Turda, "The First Debates on Eugenics in Hungary, 1910-1918" in: Marius Turda and Paul Weindling (eds.), "Blood and Homeland" : Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940. Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2007. In addition, there is no comprehensive history of eugenics in the interwar era Paksa, Rudolf's *A Magyar Szélsőjobboldal Története* provides a useful summary of the relationship between different political actors and eugenics in Hungarian politics. As far as I can hypothesize, the role and influence of economic conditions (the state was broke) and the Church's resistance to negative eugenics played an important role why eugenics, particularly negative eugenics did not become more pronounced. To be sure, following WWI, it was not only members of the educated classes that embraced eugenic and Social Darwinist ideas, but also the public. In term of eugenic ideas about homosexuality, there was a spectrum and actually different ways in which eugenic ideas could be applied to homosexuality. Many condemned it as a form of degeneration or "mental weakness", but one can find a different approach such as György Pál, in: *A Homoszexuális Probléma Modern Megvilágításban*, where he argued that "nature's eugenic law created homosexuality as a creative impotent

legal publications demonstrate that the applicability of eugenic ideas in “dealing with” homosexuality was openly discussed.<sup>857</sup> Indeed, we find that there were medical and legal debates which explicitly discussed the possibility of the sterilization of homosexuals.<sup>858</sup> Yet, despite these debates, negative eugenic ideas never changed with regard to the treatment of homosexuality. The period between 1935 and 1940 saw no change in the actual laws in terms of the policing, registering or the prosecution of homosexuals. The evidence from the courts suggest that, despite the closer alignment with Nazi politics, especially as Hungary began to define its citizens based upon the Nazi example and passed anti-Jewish laws from 1938 onward, the authorities did not alter their formal approach toward homosexuality.<sup>859</sup>

### Conclusion

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by-product of nature, and homosexuals are infertile but not without life power. That is their power lies not within procreation but rather in the ability to color life and enrich its experience.” Pál, 14.

<sup>857</sup> This series of lectures and debates at the Hungarian Legal Association requires further study. So far, there is no study that addresses its content or significance either from a legal or social or cultural perspective. What we know comes from the official publication *Magyar Jogi Szemle* (Hungarian Law Review) of the Association that published the lectures on the topic of eugenics and law.

<sup>858</sup> Debating sterilizing certain populations was of course not unique to Hungary. Rather as scholars in various European countries and in the US have shown, it was characteristics of the interwar period. Angyal, Pál. *A Szemérem Elleni Büntettek És Vétiségek: Magyar Büntetőjog Kézikönyve 14*, 8-20, 71-87; *A negatív eugenikai irány büntetőjogi vonatkozásai* (Criminal law aspects of Negative Eugenics). 1936, Finkey Ferenc “Az eugenika jogászai szempontból” (Eugenics from a legal point of view), *Magyar Jogi Szemle*, 12 és 13. évfolyam, Irk, a sterilizáció és kasztráció kriminálpolitikai szempontból, Finkey Emlékkönyv, 1936 133. For a general overview of eugenics movement in Hungary and in Central Europe, see the introduction of Marius Turda and Paul Weindling (eds.), “*Blood and Homeland*”: *Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*. Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2007. On the interwar years, see Maria Bucur-Deckard, *Eugenics and modernization in interwar Romania*. Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.

<sup>859</sup> In May 1938, following the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany, the Hungarian government enacted the first of a series of Anti-Jewish laws. Between May 1938 and August 1941, emulating the Nuremberg Laws, anti-Jewish laws defined Jews as a “racial” rather than a religious group. First severely limited and eventually prohibited their participation in the economy, civil service and professions, and finally in 1941 prohibited the intermarriage between Christians and Jews. In addition, from 1939 Jewish men were assigned to mandatory to labor force, specifically designed for Jews. For a succinct account of the origins and implementations of the anti-Jewish laws see Molnár Judit, ed. *Számokba Zárt Sorsok* (Fates Enclosed by Numbers). Budapest: Holokauszt Emlékközpont, 2012.



In this chapter, I set out to explain why homosexuality and a deeply conservative political regime could co-exist in Hungary in the interwar years. The re-construction of contemporary gender politics, the attitude of the police and their treatment of non-normative sexuality, along with a close analysis of the legal system, offer a complex answer. The upheaval of World War I and the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon were fundamental in shaping both official attitudes and the treatment toward male non-normative sexuality during the 1920s and 1930s. The conservative regime set out to reform Hungarian society both morally and psychically. But they did so in a particularly gendered way. They attempted to establish a moral order in which strong Hungarian men would be aided with virtuous women, and education, the Church, and various official, religious, and social organizations all worked toward these ends. Nevertheless, the process of implementing this vision resulted in a situation in which women became the bearers of the burden of national and social health to a much greater degree. The conservative rhetoric enacted specific policies according to which women were to embody the nation's moral purity and were responsible for both the health of the family and the support of the male head of the household. It was not just "fallen" women who experienced harsher treatment; women were actually to be banned from attending university, and, in general, there were new barriers that restricted women from joining the labor market.<sup>860</sup> World War I played a crucial role in advancing these views as conservative voices categorically blamed and punished women for supposedly selfishly-advancing their own independent careers during the war years while Hungarian men were

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<sup>860</sup> In 1920, women were to be banned from participation in higher (university) education. But thanks to the lobbying of the National Association of Hungarian Women under the *aegis* of Tormay and Pallaccini, women were spared and *Numerus Clausus* was enacted, instead. For a further explanation, see Mária M. Kovács' "Hungary," in: Kevin Passmore (ed.) *Women, Gender, and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*, Manchester-New Brunswick NJ: Manchester University Press, 2003, 79-91.

sacrificing their lives. Consequently, the interwar period saw a concerted effort to “(re-) traditionalize” women by policing and regulating their behavior. In contrast, in the case of men, the rhetoric and actual practices in place were less congruent. Men, who were not just to defend but also to reclaim the country’s honor and territories, underwent physical and moral training. At the same time, the authorities also granted them a greater flexibility during the 1920s and 1930s. The experiences that Hungarian men had undergone during World War I and in subsequent military engagements served as a justification for their “non-normative” behavior.<sup>861</sup> This leniency on the part of the authorities was an important factor in explaining why homosexuality could co-exist with conservative politics.

Having surveyed the opinions of the Hungarian authorities and social critics on male homosexuality and non-normative male behavior more generally, some distinct features emerge. Budapest’s image in the eyes of the governing conservatives as the “Sinful City,” in sharp contrast to the perceived purity of the countryside, a pastoral image, in many ways served as a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>862</sup> As the experiences of K evinced during the interwar years, the capital of the now “mutilated” Hungary remained an urban metropolis that continued to have its decadent side. Ironically, amidst growing conservatism, male homosexuals experienced a growing sub-culture and some “queer friendly” establishments. The co-existence of a nationalist Christian conservative regime

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<sup>861</sup> As many scholars in European capitals showed women just because they were not on the fronts were by no means sheltered from the war and endured tremendous hardship. Jay Winter, and Jean-Louis Robert. *Capital Cities at War : Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning : Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin*. Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000; Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire : Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>862</sup> On the intellectual debates between so-called urbanus (urban) and nēpi (folk) groups, see János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok : a magyar nemzeteszme és nacionalizmus története*, 150-300; Gábor Gyáni and György Kövér, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig*.

and a visible and acknowledged homosexual presence in the Hungarian capital was, above all, the result of the social and economic aftermath of WWI and the Treaty of Trianon, which ensured that the police and the authorities in Budapest were overwhelmingly concerned with national security and public order. In this regard, policing or prosecuting consensual male homosexual activity, especially conducted in private, was very low on the police agenda. Furthermore, I contend that the Vice Squad of the Metropolitan police, while continuing to register both “authentic” and “inauthentic” homosexuals as well as male prostitutes, only pressed charges in certain instances, when sex was non-consensual, when it took place in public, when it involved minors, and, in cases where there were additional ulterior motives, such as bribery or theft.

Greater policing of male sexuality was neither necessarily detrimental for certain homosexuals nor implied greater prosecution. Following World War I and the subsequent revolutions, the conservative authorities set out to impose greater control over non-normative forms of sexual behavior. This was part of a greater process of state intervention into people’s lives that did not stop at the bedroom. In wanting to assure the future strength (moral, physical, and numerical) of the country, interwar governments increasingly made “normal” sexuality a pre-requisite of citizenship.<sup>863</sup> The highly gendered notion of “normal” sexuality was accompanied by a highly sexed and gendered policing. As this chapter has demonstrated, the ways in which the authorities in Budapest approached and handled male and female prostitution demonstrated how the conservative

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<sup>863</sup> This was a characteristic that by no means was restricted to conservative states or Hungary. Rather as scholars in various countries have shown greater state involvement in sexuality and non-normative sexual behavior was a shared European phenomenon between the two world wars. For a comparative, transnational approach of the interwar period, see Chapter Two in Dagmar Herzog’s recent book *Sexuality in Europe : a Twentieth-century History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 45-95.

state channeled much greater resources into policing female and especially non-normative female sexuality.<sup>864</sup> However, the authorities did not turn a blind eye to non-normative male sexual, especially to homosexual forms of behavior. In fact, during the interwar years, the Vice Squad of the Metropolitan police increased the policing of homosexual activities. However, it did so in a specific way. It differentiated between “authentic” men, on the one hand, who, even if not innately homosexual, nonetheless engaged in homosexual activities because of their sexual inclinations and, on the other hand, those men who only engaged in, or were associated with, homosexual activities for truly immoral reasons with ulterior motives. Even though there was an increase in the policing of male sexuality, “authentic” homosexuals could - paradoxically - benefit from the increased presence of the state. By focusing more closely and imposing harsher measures on the exploiters of authentic sexual otherness (blackmailers, thieves, *etc.*), while continuing not to prosecute and, by and large, “ignoring” consensual homosexual activity which took place in private, the Hungarian authorities actually continued to protect and thus partially normalize a form of male homosexuality during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>865</sup>

Perhaps, one of the most perplexing findings about the interwar period, and particularly the 1930s, is the extent to which homosexuality continued to be a low priority item even for the far-right elements. Many historians have demonstrated the success that Hungarian far-right politics could achieve by influencing the ruling

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<sup>864</sup> That is perhaps with the exception of female homosexuality, which not being a criminal activity, continued to receive little attention.

<sup>865</sup> As Laurie Marhoefer, for instance, in the case of Weimar Germany, shows the greater toleration of certain non-normative sexuality was predicated on the more intense policing and controlling over other sexuality in general. “Among Abnormals: the Queer Sexual Politics of Germany’s Weimar Republic, 1918-1933,” Ph.D. thesis. Rutgers University, 2008.

conservative élite. This was particularly the case in terms of the so-called “Jewish question,” where aggressive antisemitic propaganda played a decisive role in the direction that the authorities chose to take with regard to dealing with the Jewish minority.<sup>866</sup> In sharp contrast, staunch conservatives and far-right ideologues and right-wing populists were conspicuously silent about homosexuality. There is no trace/indication of the homosexuals being directly victimized or becoming the scapegoats for the country's social ills. Why this was the case, I believe, has to do with an understanding of sexuality and, in particular, of male sexuality, which was shared throughout the political spectrum. As this chapter has argued, there was a genuine belief (on the part of the authorities) that human sexuality was fluid, and hence, that people were malleable. Such an understanding of sexuality explains why there was no public discussion or official acknowledgment of homosexuality, be it male or female. The authorities believed that public exposure and official acknowledgment of the extent of homosexual activities in Budapest would have only exacerbated the problem by inviting both the curious and those who possessed the possibility of becoming homosexuals. The far right also shared the idea that more exposure and talk of homosexual relationships, even if it condemned it, would have done more harm than good. In this way, they followed the rest of society: with an ostrich policy, hiding their heads in the sand. Hungarian men needed to be strong and ethnically pure, but it seems that the far right either had some concern about the strength of Hungarian masculinity and heterosexuality,

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<sup>866</sup> There is an extensive scholarship on the role of the far right groups and individuals and their effects on the government's policies toward Hungary's Jewish population. The seminal work in English remains Randolph L. Braham's *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981. More recent works by Hungarian historians include, Vera Ranki's *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1999, and János Gyurgyák's *A Zsidókérdés Magyarországon: Politikai Eszmetörténet*. Budapest: Osiris, 2001.

or similar to the police and justice system of the conservatives, was more willing to excuse certain non-normative male behavior.

Paradoxically, the belief in sexual malleability can also explain the lenient treatment meted out to homosexuals by the courts and by the authorities more generally. To be sure, there was no uniform or one-way treatment, and certainly there were many homosexuals who were treated harshly. Based upon the surviving documents, however, it seems that the judiciary's treatment of homosexuals overall remained fair and impartial throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This is significant in the light of the fact that, compared to both the Communist rule in 1919 and the liberal Austro-Hungarian era, the conservative regime was overall much more punitive in dealing with the crime and the forms of behavior that was hurting Hungary's "moral economy." Yet, men who had sex with men were treated no harsher than they had been prior to 1920. Consequently, while crimes such as stealing and cheating were considered as a serious moral crime and were treated harshly, consensual homosexuality between adults continued to receive a merciful treatment. According to the courts, if one was an "authentic" homosexual, even if the person was considered "unnatural," his homosexuality was looked upon as something that was not a moral or personal failure. The courts considered inborn homosexuality something that needed to be tamed and controlled, but, in most cases, they did not consider imprisonment to be a desirable treatment or punishment. In contrast, when proper male sexuality could be "redeemed," that is, when, according to the experts and the authorities, men were not "innately" homosexual, the courts considered men – especially in the cases of first-time offenders – as "saveable." In these instances, the courts believed that these men could be (re-) educated despite having engaged in

homosexual activities. Amidst increasing conservatism and the apparent potency of eugenic ideas among some of the governing élites, when it came to sexual crimes and especially to homosexuality, people were judged and treated as individuals, who could be “saved.” As long as the possibility existed that masculinity and “normal” male sexuality could be restored, Hungarian men were granted a second chance.

## Conclusion

The Anschluss, and Nazi Germany's unambiguous move towards a new war in 1938-9 triggered the radicalization of Hungary's politics.<sup>867</sup> Within less than a year the Hungarian fascist party, the Arrow Cross became a mass party with over 300'000 members.<sup>868</sup> Even if the ruling Old conservatives were united in disliking the rapidly growing Hungarian far right movements, most of them sympathized with Nazi Germany.<sup>869</sup> Moreover, the fact that the Hungarian political and military elite, whose number one objective remained the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, could realistically only look to Adolf Hitler for support, further accelerated the spread of pro-Nazi sentiments.<sup>870</sup> Despite of the fact that Hungary did not become "officially" fascist until 1944, from 1939 on the parliament as well as informal politics became heavily influenced by Nazi ideas.<sup>871</sup> Although, Hungary initially tried to be neutral and avoid direct military

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<sup>867</sup> Until 1938 Fascist Italy was much closer of an ally to Hungary. From 1938 ties with Nazi-Germany became more extensive, including economic, cultural, and eventually military relations. For a comprehensive account of Hungary's political and military history during WWII see Romsics, Ignác, ed. *Magyarország a második világháborúban* (Hungary in World War II). Budapest: Kossuth : Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum, 2011. For a latest book in English see Cornelius, Deborah S. *Hungary in World War II: Caught in the Cauldron*. 3rd ed. Fordham University Press, 2011.

<sup>868</sup> Between 1937 and 1939 there were number of restrictions placed on the leaders of Hungarian far rights movements. Despite of the Conservatives' attempts to curtail Ferenc Szálasi's Nyilaskeresztes párt-Hungarista mozgalom (Arrow Cross Party -Hungarista movement) the party was gaining new members at an unprecedented pace. Ungváry, Krisztián. "A Politikai Erjedés - Az 1939-es Választások Magyarországon" (Political Fermentation – The 1939 Elections in Hungary). *Wayback Machine*, November 30, 2002. <http://web.archive.org/web/20021130044010/http://www.rev.hu/html/hu/tanulmanyok/1945elott/erjedes.htm>, last accessed June 26, 2012.

<sup>869</sup> In addition to the Arrow Cross party, the most influential far right movement, there were number of additional far right groups. Even though Szálasi's previous party, similarly national socialist, National Will was banned in 1937, For the history of the far right in Hungary see, Paksa, Rudolf. *A Magyar Szélsőjobboldal Története*. Budapest: Jaffa Kiadó és Kereskedelmi KFT. 2012.

<sup>870</sup> Paksa Rudolf : Szélsőjobboldali mozgalmak az 1930sa evekben, 275-304 in Romsics, Ignác, ed. *A magyar jobboldali hagyomány, 1900-1948*. Budapest: Osiris, 2009, 275 -304.

<sup>871</sup> At the onset of the war in September 1939, essentially suspended the parliamentary rule of law and granted extensive power to the military and political leadership. Using the 1912 LXIII law, the government introduced the practice of kivétes hatalom (exceptional power.)



conflict while it focused on reclaiming its pre-Trianon territories, by late 1941 it became clear that Hungary had no choice but to join the Axis Powers.<sup>872</sup> The country finally formally entered the war against the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.<sup>873</sup> Despite the heavy losses of the Hungarian forces on the Eastern front, the Hungarian population – having regained territories, with a booming war economy and not being attacked or bombed by the Allies – fared relatively well until early 1944.<sup>874</sup> The last year of the war however, brought physical destruction at unprecedented levels.<sup>875</sup> Following the German invasion and establishment of Ferenc Szálasi and the Arrow Cross Party in power, Hungary fought against the Soviet forces that eventually “liberated” the country in 1945.<sup>876</sup>

The rise of pro-German personnel and overall dependency on Germany brought an end to the precarious coexistence of conservatism and tolerance of homosexuality. From 1938 pro-Nazi, far right politicians succeeded in enacting laws and regulations in

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<sup>872</sup>Between 1938 and 1941 Hungary reclaimed significant part of its pre-Trianon borders, with almost all ethnic Hungarians now belonging to Hungary. This came with a prize. Apart from Italy and Germany no other country recognized Hungary's territorial gains. In addition, Hungary signed the Tripartite Agreement with Germany and Italy in November 20, 1940. This essentially annulled Hungary's neutrality.

<sup>873</sup>Historians debate whether Hungary has acted under German pressure or Admiral Horthy's military leadership took initiative. What is certain is that Hitler initially did not count on or require Hungary's manpower. Nevertheless, by late 1941 the Hungarian army, along German units fought on the Eastern Front. But it was only in 1942 that Hungary was able to commit a full-sized- army with an approximately 200'000 men.

<sup>874</sup>Eby, Cecil D. *Hungary at war : civilians and soldiers in World War II*. University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

<sup>875</sup>Some of the political leadership, knowing very well that Germany was losing the war, from late 1943 was hoping to broker a separate agreement with the Allies. This proved ill fated and ended first with German forces invaded Hungary March 19, 1944, without any opposing Hungarian forces. Most Nazi-friendly personal also remained in place. Hungarian armies continued to fight on the side of the Axis powers.

<sup>876</sup>Following a last desperate attempt of Admiral Horthy to leave the Axis and attain a separate peace with the Allies in October 15, 1944, German forces who had been closely following the Admiral and its close allies, arrested those who were supporting the separate peace. Within hours Horthy declared Ferenc Szálasi as a new prime minister. While Hungary signed a peace agreement with the Allies in January 20, 1945, the actual fights between the retreating German and Hungarian fascists armies and the Soviet forces continued until April 1945. Gyarmati György in Kollega Tarsoly István, ed. *Magyarország a XX. Században I. - Politika És Társadalom, Hadtörténet, Jogalkotás* (Hungary in the XX. Century I: Politics and Society, Military History, Legal Constitution). Babits Kiadó, 1996, 132- 139.

Hungary that mirrored the Nuremberg Laws of Nazi Germany.<sup>877</sup> While Jewish people were particularly targeted, all of those who were regarded as “enemies” of the Hungarian *faj*, and therefore of the Hungarian State, were under attack.<sup>878</sup> Consequently, in addition to six hundred thousand Jewish people, Communists, ethnic-minorities, and anyone who opposed the Hungarian government, were categorically stripped of their most basic rights, incarcerated, or conscripted into forced labor.<sup>879</sup> Initially, homosexuals were not targeted. In the period between 1938 and 1941 there were no additional laws or amendments to the already existing paragraph 241. In addition, based on the court records we can conclude that the number of charges for homosexuality, “unnatural fornication,” during this period did not show an increase and remained as low as it had been pre-1938.<sup>880</sup> Thus, unless the person was considered Jewish, homosexuals, and men who had engaged in sex with other men, were not specifically targeted, nor were they prosecuted more vigorously. But this was to change with Hungary’s entrance to the war in 1941, which brought about a shift in the treatment of non-normative male sexuality. There is no surviving evidence of official orders or policy change in the form of new laws

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<sup>877</sup> The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 introduced laws that defined Jewish people based on their supposed race. However, in determining people’s race, the laws, which made Jewish people second-class citizens, relied on people’s religion.

<sup>878</sup> Anti-Jewish laws were introduced from 1938 onward. By 1941 (law of 1941:XV), Hungary adopted Nazi-Germany’s Nuremberg Laws. For a comprehensive history of antisemitism and the situation of Hungarian Jews during World War II see Braham, Randolph L. *The politics of genocide : the Holocaust in Hungary*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

<sup>879</sup> The so-called megbízhatatlan katonakötelesek (unreliable military aged) was a category created as early as 1920. But it was the new law passed by Ministry of War in 1939 according to which those “unreliable” in military age could be required to perform forced labor service, who set up an extensive, and in many respects unique,) force labor system that operated throughout the war years. The most detailed account of it remains Randolph L. Braham’s *The Hungarian labor service system, 1939-1945*. Boulder [Colo.]; New York: East European quarterly ; distributed by Columbia University Press, 1977.

<sup>880</sup> As I discussed in the last chapter the number of cases between 1933 and 1940 ranged from 32 and 40. In 1935, 32 cases, in 1936, 35 cases, 24 in 1937, 32 in 1938, between 30 and 40, and 40 cases in 1940.

or amendments that directly addressed the treatment of same-sex acts.<sup>881</sup> Yet, looking at the indexes of criminal court records, there is significant increase in the number of charges. In contrast to the previous 30-40 cases per year, in 1941 there were 62 cases in which people were charged, while in 1942 the number was 56.<sup>882</sup> Considering that by this time a significant portion of men between seventeen and fifty years of age were conscripted to the Hungarian army, this increase becomes all the more striking.<sup>883</sup> Thus, in 1941 and 1942 the prosecution of male homosexuals intensified. Moreover, there is reason to believe that similarly to Nazi Germany, Hungarian officials came to consider using the homosexual registry to intern men on the registry and use them as force laborers.<sup>884</sup>

The most explicit evidence that homosexuals, similarly to other populations also became targets comes from a recently resurfaced document from the Military History Archive.<sup>885</sup> The subject of the document is an official request by the State Security Center of the Ministry of Interior to the Minister of Defense, to conscript the registered homosexual individuals of Budapest into force labor service.<sup>886</sup> According to the request, “[T]he State Security Center requests that the registered homosexual individuals (living within greater Budapest) be conscripted into forced labor force within the military.”<sup>887</sup>

The Ministry of Defense denied the request on the basis that homosexuals based on their

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<sup>881</sup> A thorough examination of the Archives holding material formerly belonging to the the National Army and National Guards will require a further study.

<sup>882</sup> For the years of 1943 and 1944 the annual indexes of the Budapest criminal courts are missing. Thus, it is impossible to determine whether the charges continued to rise.

<sup>883</sup> According to the National Security law of 1939 II., during war time and time of alert, all people between 17 and 60 could be called on to work in order to defend the nation.

<sup>884</sup> Plant, Richard. *The Pink Triangle : the Nazi War Against Homosexuals*. 1st ed. New York: H. Holt, 1986.

<sup>885</sup> I would like to thank professor Judit Takács for bringing the source to my attention.

<sup>886</sup> Hadtörténelmi Levéltár (Military History Archive). 1942 HM 68763/Eln.1b. 1– 1942; Homoszexuális egyének bevonultatása munkaszolgálatra (benne névjegyzék a fővárosi lakosokról.) (Conscription of Homosexual individuals into force labor – names of registered people in the capital included).

<sup>887</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

sexuality alone “could not be considered as “unreliable” and unpatriotic to the nation.”<sup>888</sup>

Considering homosexuals were reliable, however according to the response of the Ministry of War, “would have required that they would be conscripted into the fighting units, which was an absolutely undesirable solution.”<sup>889</sup> In the eyes of military officials, having homosexuals around the fighting units was a terrible idea. This aside, the response cited a number of reasons as to why it denied the request, including the fact that military was not a punitive institution and therefore, the “homosexual issue” was a police and administrative not a military matter. The Ministry of Defense argued that the fighting in the military was an honor and “the conscription and placement of homosexuals into a form of military service would hurt the morale of the impeccable soldiers on the front by making it seem like fighting was a punishment.”<sup>890</sup>

Although at the time in December 1942, the Ministry of Defense responded with denying the request, the fate of the 995 registered homosexuals whose name was on the list that the original memo contained, is uncertain.<sup>891</sup> We can only speculate as to that what happened to men on the homosexual registry. Likewise, it is only possible to hypothesize what happened to the actual list that the Ministry of Interior attached to the document. Consequently, the survival of this single document raises more questions than definite answers. What happened to the actual list? Since it was attached to the memo, it would have most certainly survived the war. Furthermore, could have the document, which ultimately does not implicate Hungarian authorities (both the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior) been deliberately left in the archives, while later ones were

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<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>889</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>890</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>891</sup> The files of the case at the Military History Archive no longer have the list, which was part of the original document.

destroyed? Were homosexuals and queer men who were registered on the homosexual registry of the Budapest police, similarly to Jewish men, conscripted into force labor battalions later on the war? Ultimately, did the arrival of the Nazis and the establishment of Hungarian fascist rule in 1944 led to an organized attack on the queer sexual community? While the answering of these questions will be the subject of continuing scholarship, in closing, I will contemplate the main reasons as to why by 1942 the coexistence of a conservative state and the tolerance of homosexuality ceased to exist.

The onset of World War II brought significant changes that led not only to the mass mobilization of Hungarian men and eventually the entire population, but also a change in perspective about who was worthy of full membership to the Hungarian national community. Following the footsteps of Nazi Germany, Hungarian authorities came to embrace that the survival of Hungarian nation depended on the purity of Hungarian race.<sup>892</sup> The previously porous boundaries of respectability and membership of the Hungarian *faj*, became much more restrictedly defined. Or it is perhaps just as accurate to say that Hungarian authorities became first and foremost more explicit in defining who did *not* belong to the national community. This was true not just in terms of ethnicity but also for sexuality. What this meant in practice was that rather than focusing on the strengthening of Magyars through positive eugenic measures (i.e. encouraging reproduction), from 1938 on negative eugenics was foregrounded.<sup>893</sup>

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<sup>892</sup>The history of eugenic movements and ideas in Hungary during the interwar period remains to be written. The best existing summary of the period is a chapter by Paksa Rudolf "Fajtudományok" in *A Magyar Szélsőjobboldal Története*, 30-44. For a regional, East-Central European perspective, see Turda, Marius, and Weindling, Paul. *"Blood and Homeland": Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*. Budapest ; New York: Central European University Press, 2007.

<sup>893</sup> Eugenic and social Darwinist ideas had been present since the early twentieth century. Similarly to other European nations, as I discussed in chapter five, the Hungarian state from the late nineteenth century on and especially after WWI introduced positive eugenic policies, such as public health measures and social insurance.

Although the Hungarian state was likely not as methodical as Nazi Germany, by 1942 the systematic oppression and stripping of rights of the Jewish, and increasingly the Roma population also began to encompass homosexuals.<sup>894</sup>

Moreover, the “forgiving” lenient attitude towards same-sexual acts, which characterized official attitudes following World War I, with the outbreak of a new war, took a distinct turn. Authorities and particularly the military leadership were aware that sex between men took place in homosocial environments. The experience of World War I had proved this especially, to be the case when a war dragged on. For that reason preventing known homosexuals, even if they were able and willing, to serve within the military was seen as a crucial step in protecting the “strength” of the army. This seems to be supported by the scant of the surviving documents. For instance, in responding to the Ministry of Interior about conscripting homosexuals into the military, the Minister of War argues that in the presence of homosexuals, “the generally young soldiers fighting on the front would face deterioration.”<sup>895</sup> The fear of “authentic” homosexuals spreading homosexuality among young soldiers was even greater than the potential benefits of their employment. The experience of WWI, and particularly the knowledge that a longstanding war facilitates sexual activity among soldiers called for preventative measures for the “healthy” and punitive measures for those “diseased with same-sex desire.” Such an approach was also paradoxically shaped by the Communist era and the belief that environment was the most important factor in determining people’s sexuality.

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<sup>894</sup> The exclusion of Roma people (also known as gypsies) was much less systematic than the Jewish people. For instance, until 1944 Romas could fight in the Hungarian army. At the same time during the war there were increased number of atrocities against their communities, especially in the recently annexed territories. In 1944 however, the situation of Romas rapidly deteriorated; they were conscripted into force labor and also sent to concentration camps. For the comprehensive history of the Roma during WWII see Karsai, László, *A Cigánykérdés Magyarországon, 1919-1945 : Út a Cigány Holocauthoz.* (The Gypsy Question in Hungary, 1919-1945: Path to Gypsy Holocaust). Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1992.

<sup>895</sup> 1942 HM 68763/Eln.1b. 4.

This fear of degeneration of healthy soldiers and heightened attention to prevention of the healthy was also embedded in an anxious desire to attest Hungarian greatness. It was one thing to declare the superiority of Hungarian race, to prove it was an entire different matter. In the eyes of Nazi sympathizers the outbreak of World War II at the same time as being an opportunity to reclaim Hungarian territories, was a chance for Hungarian men to proclaim their manhood and masculinity on an international scale. Yet, as scholars have repeatedly pointed out the Hungarian army was ill equipped and unprepared for a sustained war evident from the start.<sup>896</sup> Moreover, nor were most Hungarian men seemed to keen for proving their assumed superiority. As historian Cecil Eby notes, “In the streets of Budapest the dominant reaction to the war was apathy.”<sup>897</sup> According to Eby not even the arch supporters of the Rightist were eager to volunteer to join the army. Her summary of the general attitude is telling; “It might as well as have been news of war on the moon. Probably the average citizen with memory of internecine battles between Reds and Whites during the Béla Kun epoch and its aftermath felt that it was good riddance to both if Germans and Russians were killing one another, but that there was no reason for Hungary to pitch in.”<sup>898</sup> Even Hungary’s foremost military ally, Germany agreed that Hungarian forces were poorly prepared.<sup>899</sup> In sum, Hungarian virility was under siege even before Hungary formally entered the war. In this atmosphere, for pro-Nazi authorities who were fast attaining more power both in the government as well as in the military, eliminating elements that threatened the (already precarious) strength of Hungarian man power became an important measure. This view

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<sup>896</sup> On the Hungarian army in World War II in English see Thomas, Nigel, László Pál Szabó, and Darko Pavlovic. *The Royal Hungarian Army in World War II*. Oxford; New York: Osprey Publications, 2008.

<sup>897</sup> Eby. *Hungary at war*, 17.

<sup>898</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>899</sup> *Ibid.*

is expressed by the words of an officer according to who, “it would be undoubtedly convenient if these from nation’s perspective unreliable [homosexual] elements would decay.”<sup>900</sup>

However, an open attack on homosexuality that the new far right called for, also raised problems for the Old Conservative leadership who were acutely aware that there were homosexual officers in the rank and file of the Hungarian army. The response of the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Interior provides a revealing cue. At the end of their long reasoning as to why the conscription of homosexuals to military service within explicit “homosexual battalions” was undesirable (in 1942) the representatives of the Department of Defense state that “[F]inally, it must be pointed out that among those [registered homosexuals] who had served in the military there would be, infect there *will be* [homosexual people] who have attained military rankings and medals.”<sup>901</sup> Here, the Ministry of War voices its concern that the actual enforcement of calling up people from the homosexual registry would expose not only that there were and had been homosexuals within the army, but potentially also that there were homosexuals within the military ranks. Such an explicit acknowledgment of homosexuals in the military by a Colonial General, the head of Hungary’s armed forces reveals the difficulty that Old Conservatives faced.<sup>902</sup> By 1942, Old Conservatives who had coexisted with the idea and presence of homosexuals were under increasing pressure to fall in line with Nazi ideology and practice.<sup>903</sup> In Germany, homosexuals were explicitly targeted and at this

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<sup>900</sup> 1942 HM 68763/Eln.1b.3.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.* Italicization is mine.

<sup>902</sup> Vilmos Nagy de Nagybaczoni, the former Commanding Officer of Hungarian 1<sup>st</sup> Army, was the Minister of Defense between September 24, 1942 and June 12, 1943.

<sup>903</sup> The situation of Nagy de Nagybaczoni clearly illustrates the pressure that Old Conservatives faced to comply with the rapidly radicalizing rightist demands. He categorically rejected the attempts of far right politicians to apply Nazi measures into the treatment the Jews and more generally “enemies” of the state.



point had already been gathered and sent to concentration camps, in part aided by a homosexual registry very similar to Hungary's.<sup>904</sup>

Last but not least, the fact that homosexuality and homosexuals could become more systematically targeted was intimately tied to the expansion of the modern Hungarian state. By the late 1930s, the state apparatuses, including the police and bureaucracy were extensive and highly functional. Consequently, the growing sophistication and competence of the police from the late nineteenth century on to catch, collect information, and keep track of men who had sex with men in Budapest, embodied the evolution of a modern European state. When following the onset of the war, Nazi friendly governments rapidly suspended existing legal structures and centralized power in the hands of a few state authorities; it became possible to both create and apply radical and comprehensive policies. Once homosexuality in the eyes of authorities became irreconcilable with the national community, those in power, for the first time had the means to systematically deal with queer men who had been registered on the police's homosexual registry. Therefore, in addition to the role that the change of official understanding and approach to non-normative sexualities played, the expansion of the

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In turn, Nagy de Nagybaczoni was constantly attacked for being a "Jewish hireling" and anti-Axis. In this respect the request and consequent denial of the conscription of homosexuals by Nagy in December 1942, can be seen as a victory, albeit short term, for the Old Conservatives. Feeling he lost the support of Horthy he stepped down in June 12, 1943. Following the official takeover of (the National Socialist) Arrow Cross party Nagy was arrested in November, 1944.

<sup>904</sup> Heinrich Himmler's enormous campaign against male homosexuals from 1933 has a considerable historiography. Massive raids and incarceration of homosexuals, the revision of Paragraph 175 in 1935 and the establishment of the "Reich Central Office for the Combating of Homosexuality (and of Abortion)" in 1936, assured that homosexuals would be systematically tracked down under many of them would be sent to concentration camps. For a detailed account see Grau, Günter, Claudia Schoppmann, and Patrick Camiller. *Hidden holocaust?: gay and lesbian persecution in Germany, 1933-45*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1995. More recent scholarship emphasized how the Nazi treatment of homosexuals was more complex than simply repression. See for instance, Dagmar Herzog's *Sex After Fascism* and Dickinson, Edward Ross. "Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on Our Discourse About 'Modernity'." *Central European History* 37, no. 1 (2004): 1-48.

state was essential in bringing about a change in sexual politics. Etatisation and the ability to systematically determine the fate of homosexuals went hand in hand.<sup>905</sup>

Over the course of the first three decades of the twentieth century sexuality became an important tool of the state to control its citizens. From the foundation of the homosexual registry as a symbol of state modernity in a monarchy—to its status as a sign of the complexity of urban life—to its use as a means to rehabilitate communist citizens in the hands of a new profession—to its standing as a threat to state authority and a site of silencing in a conservative authoritarian state—and ultimately, its evolution in a state taking steps into fascism to be something incompatible with the Hungarian *faj*; the various state constellations certainly differed in their particular approach to non-normative sexuality. However, what this dissertation demonstrates is that until Hungary's entry to WWII and the rise of the Hungarian national socialist and fascist elements, the different political systems could coexist and tolerate certain non-normative sexualities. This was particularly the case of “respectable” homosexuals, who in spite of the nature of the political regime could live and flourish without relative interference from the state.

This finding is especially timely in light of the fact that the current Hungarian ruling party FIDESZ<sup>906</sup> has been categorically modeling itself after the interwar Horthy

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<sup>905</sup> In this respect the case of Hungary underscores the exponential growth of European state interventions into sexual affairs. For a discussion of this as a European wide phenomenon see Dagmar Herzog's “State Interventions 1914-1945” in *Sexuality in Europe*, 45-96. Similarly, Marius Turda's book *Modernism and eugenics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) discusses the relationship between eugenics and modern European states as a general European phenomenon.

<sup>906</sup> FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Union (Magyar Polgári Szövetség). The party was originally founded in 1988 as a mostly student led liberal party, hence the name *Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége* or Alliance of Young Democrats. In 1994 the party made a distinct political turn and became conservative. The move to the right has not stopped since. In the 2010 election FIDESZ with the Christian Democrats (an even more conservative party) won over two-third of the parliamentary seats. Since in power FIDESZ has been

regime both in its image and its governmental policies. In the name of protecting Christian Hungary, FIDESZ, having a two-thirds parliamentary majority, has recently rewritten the Hungarian Constitution in the spirit of continuing and finishing the work of Horthy's conservatives.<sup>907</sup> So, there are many ways in which the current political system shares ideological, rhetorical and political tenets with its "role model," the Horthy regime.<sup>908</sup> But there are also important differences between the two, even in issues, which nobody (especially from the FIDESZ ideologues) would expect, or probably admit. In fact, this is precisely the case in terms of the two regimes' attitude towards homosexuality. But it would be erroneous to assume that contemporary conservatives, having the historical knowledge as well as the experience of over two decades of democratic political culture, would be necessarily "more tolerant" than their interwar counterparts. One of the important findings of my study is to be able to show how in contrast to FIDESZ, who in its mission to save traditional "normal" families, has been erecting discriminatory policies and has effectively declared open war against Hungarian homosexuals, the Horthy regime until WWII offered a different model.<sup>909</sup> In contrast to FIDESZ, interwar Hungary did not erect additional discriminatory policies against homosexuality, nor, as I hoped to show, did it make homosexuals a scapegoat of the ills of Hungarian society.

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systematically centralizing power in the hands of the government and weakening the institutions of checks and balances.

<sup>907</sup> The new Constitution is openly discriminatory against anyone who does not comply with FIDESZ's vision. Such vision prescribes a national community that is Christian, family oriented with as many ethnic Hungarian children as possible. The Constitution went into affect in January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012.

<sup>908</sup> This process of "convergence" is also aided by the deliberate effort of FIDESZ and its close intellectual circle to "rewrite" the history of interwar Hungary. The efforts of molding twenty-first century Hungary after the Horthy regimes is also significantly aided by new histories of Horthy regime, which depict and highlight the similarities of FIDESZ and interwar conservatives.

<sup>909</sup> *Since FIDESZ came into power in 2010, it has attacked many of the basic human rights that the homosexual community has achieved since the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1961 and especially since 1989.*

This leads me to my final point. The deliberate silencing of non-normative sexualities that characterized political regimes prior to 1945 requires further studies. The destroying of sources, removing particular ones while leaving others, and overall, the selective nature of the surviving sources on queer sexualities in the Hungary points to what scholars in the Western context have been successfully demonstrated; sexuality was an important locus of Hungarian politics. Moreover, that subsequent authorities were invested in silencing, both during their respective times and also retroactively by confiscating and keeping relevant documents, becomes especially important in light of the still undisclosed Communist years. There is reason to believe that following the establishment of the Communist Dictatorship post World War II, sexuality, and especially homosexuality became an important tool for the Communist party in the surveillance of the Hungarian population. This would explain why sources on homosexuality, including the homosexual registry continue to be missing. If homosexuality was used for blackmail and as a means to turn people into informants for the price of keeping their sexuality “secret,” both homosexuals and the Communist Party would have been invested in not talking and revealing information about their tacit agreement. Thus, I believe that the Communist period between 1948 and 1989 further contributed to the historical silencing of queer sexualities in Hungarian (and in more generally East-Central European) societies. In turn, the perpetual silencing resulted in a collective misremembering about the past. According to this popular idea, which ironically unites both the young LGBTQ communities and their harshest adversaries, queer culture came about following 1989 on the wings of liberal democracy and capitalism. Without histories of sexualities of the past to contest this idea, this distorted view serves as a ground for portraying the

existence of sexual minorities as the negative consequence of democratization while providing the queer communities with no basis to counter these arguments. Today, when both liberal democracy and capitalism are under increasing pressure, and viewed with growing criticism, it is all the more important that we break the silence about sexuality and throughout radically different political systems of the past reveal the longstanding presence and tolerant relationship between queers and East-Central Europe.

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